EXPLORING THE MYTH OF THE MODEL MINORITY IN COLORADO
THROUGH A THIRDSpace

by

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A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Educational Leadership and Innovation Program
2015
This thesis for the Doctor of Philosophy degree by

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Date: 11. 19. 2015
ABSTRACT

The experiences of recently immigrated Chinese students have not been examined widely. This paper reports on a study of five Chinese immigrant students in Colorado high schools. Two perspectives frame the study: the Myth of the Model Minority and the Thirdspace. Through these lenses this study attempts to draw a more comprehensive picture and to include how the Myth of the Model Minority interacts with and impacts Chinese immigrant students in Colorado.

This study is designed as a case study using the personal narrative and the Critical Incident Technique as methods of investigation. The five participants were high school students from three different school districts in Colorado. Semi-structured interviews were used with these students and their parents. The results show four key findings that require urgent attention:

1. Lack of guidance and first language support for new immigrants. Participants either showed that they didn’t understand how the educational system works in the US or they expressed their frustration at not knowing about information available to them.
2. Participants have very limited space in their Colorado lives. Participants expressed that they are not familiar with the space around them and have limited a) physical space and b) social space.
3. Participants feel that people in Colorado don’t have a strong sense of the myth of the model minority with regard to Chinese immigrant students. However, in some cases,
Asians are categorized as an enemy when Whites’ positions of power and prestige are threatened.

4. Without the support from a Chinese community (such as Chinatown, or a Chinese immigrant student group), participants still rely on their teachers’ help. However, due to the language barrier or culture differences, they often seek resources from the Internet instead.

The analysis and interpretation of these participants’ experiences will help teachers, educators, and researchers to better understand the Chinese immigrant students’ school experiences in Colorado. Hopefully, it helps attract attention to this group of students, as well as to students in other locations that do not have a large Asian population, helping educators understand what their immediate and long term needs are for a healthy, fair and democratic educational experience.

The form and content of this abstract are approved. I recommend its publication.

Approved: Sheila M. Shannon
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family in Taiwan and in the US:

To my father, Chin-Shien Chang, the center of the family who eventually forgave and supported me in starting a new life on the other side of the world. I am forever in debt for your love and nurture.

To my mother, Rui Tsai-Chang, my greatest role model who passed me strength and showed me how resilient a female can possibly be. Thank you for your love and for allowing me to find my own way.

To my uncle, Chao-Chia Tsai, a respected entrepreneur and intellectual who has advocated for and supported me in all matters. A special thank as well to his wife, my lovely aunt, Su-Hua Chen. Here is my greatest gratitude to both of you for your encouragement and faith in me.

To my husband, Ed Prout, who has been holding my hand throughout this journey with endless patience and love. Thank you for all the sacrifices, tolerance, caring, inspiration, and moral support.

To my siblings, Yue-zi, Cheng-Chang, and Rung-Ren, who showed me that you not only believe in me with heart but also with your actions.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My deepest gratitude goes to my advisor, Dr. Sheila Shannon, who is my mentor, instructor, and great friend. Thank you for lighting the torch of social justice and showing passion for minority groups. Thank you also for inspiring me with critical thinking and helping me to look at the world from a different angle. You have always been by my side in whatever life has brought me. It has been an adventure, and because of you, I feel safe in this foreign land knowing someone will always be there for me.

A great appreciation to my beloved friend, Traci Shimel, who has been an extraordinary influence in my life and has shown me how great a human can be in this process. You are the best editor, writing teacher, and educator who tells the silliest jokes in the world. Thank you for helping me to overcome my language barrier and teaching me how to be a better writer. Thank you for taking care of me since the very first day of our lab together, for all the driving, holiday meals, hanging out, listening and encouragement. Without you, I couldn’t have made it this far.

I am also deeply thankful for the members of my dissertation committees, Dr. Bryan Wee, Dr. Manuel Espinosa, Dr. Faye Caronan and Dr. Kuan-Yi Chang. I am in your debt for your time, instruction and guidance. Thank you for the countless favors and the extra time you took to work with me and share your expertise to better my studies. Thank you for showing me how a true educator and scholar should be. I am grateful having you as my committees. My graduate school life wouldn’t have been the same without the academic discourse and friendship with you all.

A special thanks to Dr. Elyse Yamauchi, you definitely are missed so much by all of us. Thanks to all my lovely friends from lab and UCD, Dr. Austine Luce, Dr. Saj Kabadi. Dr. Paula Gallegos, Dr. Khushnur Dadabhoy and Irdn Nalls. Thank you for meeting up for study groups, sharing your experiences and providing moral support. Most importantly, your friendships made this journey fun and enjoyable.

Last but not the least, thanks to Ryan and Jill Prun for your friendship and your hospitality with all the yummy dinners. Also, my gratitude to my friends in Taiwan, Chao-Yen and Shiu-Man, without your encouragement, this journey would not even have begun.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION................................................................. 1
   Vignette ........................................................................... 1
   Asian Population in the US and in Colorado........................... 3
   Chinese Immigrants’ Education in the US............................ 5
   Problem Space................................................................. 7
   Researcher’s Perspective ................................................ 8
   Significance of This Study ................................................. 9
      Purpose of This Study .................................................. 10
   Chapter Overview......................................................... 11

II. LITERATURE REVIEW ......................................................... 13
   Overview........................................................................... 13
   Asian Americans in the US .............................................. 13
      Asian Americans.......................................................... 13
      The issue with the term Asian American.......................... 14
   Model Minority................................................................... 15
      From “coolie labor” to “model minority”........................... 15
      Model Minority or threat............................................... 17
      Model Minority as outsiders......................................... 19
   Model Minority Myth in Asian American Education ............ 20
   The History of Public School Education for Chinese Immigrants ....... 23
   Issues with Chinese Immigrants’ Education at the Present Time ......... 26
Model minority myth in Chinese immigrant education

Language acquisition

Peer context

Cultural differences

Identity

Summation

III. METHODOLOGY

Contexts

Case Study as a Research Approach

Purposeful Sampling

Snowball Sampling

Criteria

Sample Size

Participant Recruitment

Participants

Data Collection

Researcher’s Reflexivity in the Study

Personal Narrative

Critical Incident Technique

Data Analysis

Analysis using codes and coding

Key-Words-in-Context
Domain Analysis ................................................................. 49
Summation. ................................................................. 49

IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK .................................................. 51
Spaces and Thirdspace .......................................................... 52
Thirdspace as a Space of Resistance ....................................... 51
Classroom as Thirdspace .................................................... 54
Space, Feminism and Identity .............................................. 55

V. HISTORIOGRAPHY OF CHINESE IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR EDUCATION
An Introduction History of Chinese Immigration to the US .......... 59
Chinese Immigrant History in Denver—The Story of Chinatown .... 60
  Location and population of Chinatown. ................................ 60
  Job opportunities ............................................................ 61
  Discrimination: The anti-Chinese riot .................................. 62
  The story of Denver’s mayor of Chinatown ......................... 63
Chinese Immigrants’ Education in Colorado............................. 65
  Chinese schools in Denver ................................................. 66
  Chinese language schools ................................................. 66
  Chinese language school at present ................................... 67
  Chinese immigrant’s public school education in Colorado (early immigration stage) ............................................ 68

VI. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS ............................................. 70
Participant: Lily .................................................................. 71
Participant: Jasmine .......................................................... 73
Participant: Daisy ................................................................. 75
Participant: Acacia ............................................................... 77
Participant: Lilac ................................................................. 80
Results ............................................................................. 82

1. Life History /Experience ................................................. 82
   The key to adapting to life in the US is in providing them with
   the necessary resources; the length of time a student has lived in
   the US is also a consideration ........................................ 84

   Reasons to come to the US /Colorado ............................... 85
   Parents’ involvement makes difference ........................... 87

2. School Experience in Colorado ........................................ 89
   Interaction with teachers ................................................. 89
   Interaction with ELA teachers ......................................... 93
   Interaction with others (including classmates) .................. 95

3. Gender .......................................................................... 98

VII. FINDINGS .................................................................... 101

Finding 1. Lack of Guidance and First Language Support for New Immigrants

   1-1. Lack of guidance in terms of providing information to which all students
        need access ................................................................. 102

   1-2. Lack of first language support .................................... 109

Finding 2. Participants Have Very Limited Space in Their Colorado Lives ...... 114

   2-1. In terms of their physical space .................................. 114

   2-2. In terms of their social space with friends .................. 116
2-3. Creating their own thirddspace through Internet ........................... 119

Finding 3. Participants Feel that People in Colorado Don’t Have a Strong Sense of the Myth of the Model Minority, with Its Exaggerated View of Their Academic Abilities. However, in Some Cases, They Perceived that They are Viewed as an Enemy When Whites’ Positions of Power and Prestige are Threatened by Some Myth of Stereotypical View of Gifted Students ........................................... 122

Finding 4. Without the Support and Resources From a Chinese Community (Such As Chinatown, or a Chinese Immigrant Student Group), Participants Still Rely on the Teachers’ Help. However, Due to the Language Barrier or Culture Differences, They Often Seek Resources From the Internet Instead........................................... 129

Summations.................................................................................. 133

VIII. DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH................................................................. 136

Discussion .................................................................................... 136

1. Participants, especially the newcomers, either showed that they didn’t understand the education system in the U.S. or they expressed their frustration at their inability to access available information.......................... 136

2. Participants expressed a lack of familiarity with the spaces in their environment as well as experiencing the limited a) physical space and b) social space. The participants' daily routines take them mainly only between school and home. Their social space is also limited as Denver has few Chinese immigrant students and provides no space for establishing solid friendships................................................................. 139
3. Participants feel that people in Colorado don’t have a strong sense of the Myth of the Model Minority, with its exaggerated view of their academic abilities. However, in some cases, they perceived that they are viewed as an enemy when Whites’ positions of power and prestige are threatened by some myth of stereotypical view of gifted students.

4. Without the support and resources from a Chinese community (such as Chinatown or other Chinese immigrant student group), participants still rely on the teachers’ help. However, due to the language barrier, they seek resources from the Internet (Chinese version) instead.

Suggestions from the Participants…
a). Suggestion from Daisy…
b). Suggestion from Jasmine…
c) Suggestions from Lily…
d) Suggestions from Acacia who is a long-term immigrant…..
e) Suggestions from Lilac…

Limitations …

Implications, Final Thoughts and Suggestions…

REFERENCES…

APPENDIX A (Flyer for participant recruiting)…

APPENDIX B (Coding sample) …
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE

2. 2013 top 10 school districts Asian students percentage ........................................ 5
3. Participants’ life history and experience ............................................................... 83
4. Interview excerpts of finding 1 ............................................................................. 103
5. Interview excerpts of finding 2 ............................................................................. 115
6. Interview excerpts of finding 2-3 ........................................................................... 120
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE

1. Visual Representation of Conceptual Framework ........................................ 58
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of “talking back”, that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject -- the liberated voice (hooks, 1989).

Vignette

As a very young child in Taiwan, every time the teacher asked us to write an essay about “what do you want to do when you grow up”, my answer was always “I want to be a teacher”. It might sound unimaginative but I held on to that goal and kept working in that direction and became a teacher. My first teaching position was as an elementary school teacher of English as a Foreign Language to children in Taiwan. It was not an easy job especially considering my bachelor degree was in Chinese Literature. The elementary level English classrooms encouraged teachers to use a more interactive western teaching method that required a great deal of training. However, I loved learning the new method and enjoyed teaching my students, from second through sixth graders. To better serve my students, I then came to United States for my master’s degree in Teaching English as a Second Language at Colorado State University. Immediately after graduation I returned to my position in Taiwan; but something had changed in me, and so had the school. After one year of teaching, a meeting with the new elementary school principal planted the seed in my mind that led me to undertake this journey to a Ph.D. I was forced to question myself regarding my core values as an educator. To prepare students for the twenty first century global learning the government of Taiwan mandated English as a Foreign Language in public schools beginning at fifth grade instead of sixth grade as previously required. This policy was implemented throughout
the country including the remote elementary schools in the mountains. In Taiwan, it is very popular to send children to a “cram school” program to acquire the English language. The cram school program is a private tutoring program in which parents enroll children to boost academic success. It also creates a gap between students whose parents can afford these private after school programs, and those who cannot.

This government policy was an attempt to increase students’ English skills and also tried to close the achievement gap between urban and rural schools. I valued my job for the opportunity to provide a strong foundation in the English language to students who couldn’t afford the private English “cram school.” The principal asked me in a meeting to begin testing our young first and second graders even though it was not required by the Education Department. The purpose of the assessment was to push parents of students who received low scores to send them to a private cram school in order to perform better. “I don’t think it’s that their parents don’t have money, I think that they are just being lazy”, the principal said. The decision was made and the value of my position was diminished after that. I couldn’t clearly identify what was missing but I know that I needed to remove myself from that confusing and frustrating environment. After a phone call interview conducted from my elementary school classroom with Dr. Sheila Shannon at UCD, who later became my academic advisor, I returned to Colorado and began my Ph.D. journey. Looking back, I realized that it put me on a path to learn about social justice and a hope to advocate for disadvantaged students. In Taiwan, it was for the students who couldn’t afford the private English programs need this advocacy; in Colorado, I hope to speak for Chinese immigrant students who appear to be doing fine, but have in fact many unmet needs.
Asian Population in the US and in Colorado

From my Ph.D. coursework I have learned that the United States, due in part to many types of diversity, has complex problems with its educational system. In Table 1 one can see that the Asian population in Colorado's public schools was consistently around 3% between the years 2003-2013.

Table 1


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>Asian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2014

The available data does not indicate what percentage of these students were Chinese immigrants. “Asian” is a general term that includes students of many ethnicities. As Tamura (2001) pointed out, “Whereas Japanese and Chinese constituted the largest Asian American ethnic groups before World War II, in 1990 the ethnic groups--listed in descending order by numerical size, were Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Asian Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, Thai, and Hmong” (p. 59). In Colorado, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, the Asian population was 2.8% while Whites were 81%. Within this 2.8%, the population was Chinese .5%; Vietnamese .5%; Korean .4% and other
Another factor that interferes with the effort to identify the number of Chinese immigrants is the issue of people living in the US without documents. According to Capps, Capps and Fix (2004), in 2002, there were 9.3 million undocumented immigrants in the country. They represent 26% of the total foreign-born population. Colorado had between 175,000 and 200,000 people who were undocumented, which is about 40-49% of the immigrant population. In the United States, immigrants from Mexico were about 57% of the total, from other Latin American countries 23%, from Asia 10%, from Canada and Europe 5% and from other countries 5%. The information in Table 1 does not identify students that were undocumented; there is a hidden group of Chinese immigrant students that cannot be ignored.

Without an obvious physical community, around which Chinese immigrants might congregate and live (such as the former Chinatown area of Denver), Chinese immigrants are now scattered throughout the state. Table 2 shows the ten Colorado school districts with the highest number of Asian students in 2013. Keep in mind that the population of Colorado averages 3% Asian but there are school districts that have up to 5.8% or 8.1% Asian students. It is clear that in some school districts the percentage of Asian students is higher than that of the general population. It is likely that some of these students are immigrants from China and that there may be some effort to create small communities of Chinese immigrants in certain areas.
## Table 2

### 2013 top 10 school districts Asian students percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School District’s name</th>
<th>Asian students percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(in alphabetical order)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academy 20</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams 12</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams Arapahoe</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulder Valley</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherry Creek</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver Public Schools</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas County</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson County</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poudre Valley</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Vrain Valley</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2014

### Chinese Immigrants’ Education in the US

People from China have been immigrating to North America for over 150 years. Ma (2000) indicated that the Gold Rush of 1848 brought the first Asian immigrants, who were Chinese, to the United States. Many of the Chinese immigrated during this time to work in the mines, build the Central Pacific Railroad, and offer cheap labor. Zhou (2009) also states, “Chinese Americans are the oldest and largest Asian-origin group in the United States” (p. 43).

During the mid-19th century, Chinese children were subjected to the same requirements to attend school under the segregated schooling practices as certain other racial or ethnic groups at the time (Weinberg, 1997). The law and the segregated schools for Chinese immigrant children were upheld until 1947 (Chin, 1972; Weinberg, 1997; Kuo, 1998; Wang, 2006). During the World War II era, due to the alliance between the U.S. and China, Chinese Americans were considered a “loyal minority” (Koehn and Yin, 2002). The
Immigration and National Amendment Act of 1965 brought a greater flow of new immigrants from countries in Latin American, the Caribbean, and Asia and it also changed the socioeconomic mobility of Chinese Americans (Tang, 2003; Louie, 2004; Zinzius, 2005). As Tang (2003) states “Statistically, the Chinese in the United States have seemed highly successful; in 1990 almost twice as many Chinese as white were employed in white collar work, including professional, managerial, and technical positions” (p. 144).

As Wing (2007) addresses, the educational needs of Chinese immigrant students have received very little attention, for a variety of reasons. In 1966, the model minority myth was introduced and it referred Asian Americans as a model for other minority groups because Asian immigrants had been able to establish themselves successfully in the United States (Suzuki, 1977; S. J. Lee, 1996; R.G. Lee, 1999; Louie, 2004; Ng, Lee & Pak, 2007; Wing, 2007). While discussing Asian American education, Weinberg (1997) stated, “Lacking a realistic alternative explanation, the academic excellence was explained by spongy concepts such as cultural traits”. These spongy concepts, corresponding with the model minority myth, indicate that there was a leveling-off of Asian American academic performance, that all Asians were perceived as high-achievers (S. J. Lee, 1996; Weinberg, 1997). This stereotype not only discredits the effort and hard work that high achieving students have expended in order to reach the high standards to which they are held, but it also draws attention away from the educational needs of low-achieving Asian students (Fu, 2003; Doan, 2003, 2006). This inaccurate perception is widely held throughout schools in the U.S.; in order to ensure a quality education to all Asian students educators need to be reminded that the myth of the model minority is based on a stereotype and truly is a myth.
Problem Space

By 1850, there were more than 20,000 Chinese immigrants in the U.S. and most of them stayed in California. Chang (2003) notes that before the time of the 1870 census, 63,199 Chinese people lived in the United States. 99.4% of them lived in the western states and 78% of those lived in California. Chang also points out that in California, the Chinese immigrants were concentrated in certain areas, so Chinatowns evolved naturally. According to Hooper and Batalova (2015), from 2009 to 2013, 46% of Chinese immigrants settled in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York City. Based on the 2010 U.S. Census, 33% of the U.S. Asian population live in California, while 21% live in New York and Colorado only has .095%.

In the city of Denver, where there is only a small number of Chinese immigrant students, and since a visible space such as Chinatown does not exist, I am very curious about the experiences of Chinese immigrant students. Do they have enough educational support in the space like Colorado which only has a small Chinese population? If they are newcomers, how does it feel to suddenly become a member of a minority group, after spending their early years as part of the dominant group in China? What are their stories about school, home life, and their experiences in a new country? In a space like Colorado, do people also perceive Asian students as model? The literature review (Chapter 2) considers the concept of the model minority to address issues in education toward Asian students. Conceptualized by the framework of *thirdspace* (explored in Chapter 4), this study looks at Chinese immigrants’ *social spaces* in their communities and in educational settings. This study also includes the historiography (Chapter 5) of Chinese immigrants in Denver, in order to begin to understand the experiences that lead us to the present day. The historiography of the model minority
provides the rationale behind the literal meaning of the term to support the theories.

Furthermore, the conceptual framework and research questions served as guides as I started the fieldwork.

Researcher’s Perspective

I did not attend a US school until I enrolled in a graduate program. I was considered proficient as a reader, writer, speaker and listener of English. Regardless, I still faced challenges with the language and had to adapt to the culture. I thoroughly understand the feeling of not fitting in, both in a U.S. school and in U.S. culture. In classes, especially for the first couple of years, I rarely spoke unless it was forced upon me. In the Ph.D. program, I became the mysterious quiet Asian, rather than the model minority Asian student. Somehow wearing this disguise made me feel safe. I used this image to hide the fear of speaking in front of a group of Americans who I perceived as being very smart. To me, they were all Americans with great English skills and were talented in public speaking. Later, I started to realize that there were members of minority groups around me. I have learned that after deconstructing a perception with experience, knowledge and social interaction, I can see a situation more clearly. As a foreign student, the experience of feeling like an outsider surrounded by insiders showed me my perception and understanding should be examined and deconstructed in order to be seen realistically.

I am concerned about the education of Chinese children who are immigrants or whose parents are immigrants. There is an Asian stereotype about students that they all do well in school. Originally, I attempted to the study the education of children in the schools of the Chinatown area of San Francisco schools, which might have high poverty populations and whose parents might be “blue collar” and who do not have the educational background to
support their children’s educational endeavors. However, it was hard to persuade the students in this group to participate. It is still a mystery to me if these students were low achievers because of a lack of parental support. Research shows that educators/teachers often overlook the needs of silent low-achieving Chinese students based on the ‘model minority myth’ of Asian students (Fu, 2003; Doan, 2003, 2006). This is of special concern for new immigrant students whose English language skills are not sufficient to express themselves. They are not only coping with the challenge of learning a new language, but also struggling with cultural adjustment. Therefore by examining the myth of minority in relation to the activities of teachers and other school personnel toward Chinese immigrant children, I will be able to determine if the students’ educational rights and access to a public education are being supported or violated.

**Significance of This Study**

This study intends to explore Chinese immigrants students’ public school experiences in Colorado and examine if the myth of the model minority has an impact on how others perceive them as Asian, regardless if they are recent immigrants or not. The objectives of this study are:

1. Finding the voice for invisible Chinese immigrant students and reminding educators and policy makers of the educational needs of this group that have been overlooked.
2. Comparing the results from similar studies that have been done in New York and California and identifying the findings that are significant from the state of Colorado.
3. Providing information and recommendations that can be used for other areas that have similar or even smaller numbers of Chinese immigrant students.

4. Presenting the history of Chinese immigrants in the Denver, Colorado area as well as the discrimination, marginalization and oppression to this group of people have experienced.

5. Utilizing the concept of thirdspace to remind educators and others of the importance of real social interactions for each individual.

6. Supporting educators as they attempt to break the stereotype and understand that Chinese immigrant students have educational and social needs that are unique.

7. This research is designed as a qualitative study using the methods of personal narrative and the Critical Incident Technique as the means of investigation.

**Purpose of This Study**

This research is designed to search for a hybrid space or thirdspace (Bhabha, 1994) created by Chinese immigrant students in order to cope with others’ views of them through the lens of a model or a peril. The stereotypical views of them are assured because their physical appearance immediately identifies them as Asian. Additionally, in this research I will explore the impact, if any, that the stereotype of Chinese students as the model minority (positive or negative) has on this group, particularly if it’s during the early stages of the acquisition of English by newcomers. Therefore, this research will be guided by the following questions:

1. Does the myth of the model minority have an impact on Chinese immigrant students’ school life in the Colorado public school system, and if so, how?
2. Where and how do Chinese immigrants in Colorado form communities? Do Chinese immigrant students use the communities as resources to help them cope with life in school?

By exploring the Chinese immigrant student’s social space to examine their school life in Colorado, the data will tell whether this group of students is labeled by the stereotypes and if that affects how people perceive them or interact with Chinese students. Not only is the spotlight via critical incidents regarding the myth of the model minority; it is also viewed through the lens of thrirdspace, their social interactions with others will be studied to find out their overall experience in Colorado high schools. Another question this study tries to answer is how Chinese immigrant students develop or participate in their own communities. If the results are positive, do they receive adequate support from their own communities? If not, it is necessary to consider how they survive in a newly challenging environment and how educators can better support them both academically and socially?

Chapter Overview

This dissertation is structured into eight chapters. The first chapter includes the writer’s self-education experiences that led into the interest of the study. A brief overview of the background studies around the problem space is indicated to narrow the scope onto this particular group of people, Chinese immigrant students in Colorado. The second chapter is a review of the literature around Asian American and Chinese immigrant students and their education. This chapter also includes one of the key terms, the myth of the model minority and inspects it through a critical lens. The third chapter explains the methodology for data collection and analysis. It also describes the difficulties in recruiting the participants. The fourth chapter examines the problem space in Colorado from different perspectives via the
conceptual framework that was used. Then the fifth chapter further explains the
historiography of Chinese immigrants in Colorado.

Chapter 6 introduces each participant and compares and contrasts their stories. This
chapter provides details of their stories, their feelings and thoughts related to their social
space in Colorado, as a Chinese immigrant and as an Asian. Chapter 7 then addresses the
findings of these studies that are particular to Colorado and are based on the results and
findings. The final chapter, Chapter 8, addresses the educational needs of Chinese immigrant
students. It is also an effort to draw attention to this group of Chinese immigrant students
living in areas with relatively small Asian populations.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

To understand any educational gaps and needs of Chinese immigrant students, I have reviewed the literature regarding the history of Asians in the US in communities and in schools. In order to better understand the stories and experiences of Chinese immigrants, a brief historical review is provided later (Chapter 5). For this literature review, we will begin with the definition of Asian American and how it links to issues for Chinese immigrants in the educational context. The following section is the discussion of the educational history and needs of Chinese immigrant students in the public school system. The existing literature regarding the model minority phenomenon and its political origins are also explored in this section.

Asian Americans in the US

Asian Americans. The term Asian Americans emerged in the 1960s and it was a movement that Asian Americans intended to be not just a semantic shift away from Oriental but as a means of polictial empowerment and a positive self-conscious identity (Kibria, 2002). According to Liu, Murakami, Eap and Hall (2002), people from many countries were included under this broad term: East Asian countries (China, Japan and Korea); Southeast Asian countries (Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia), and South Asian countries (India, Nepal, and Pakistan). However, there are 48 countries in Asia and the immigrants from these countries are also defined by this term: “Asian Americans are descendents of immigrants from any part of Asia, or are themselves immigrants from Asia to the United States” (Liu et al., p. 2). After the great influx of new immigrants following the
Immigration Act of 1965, which is relatively recently (around 50 years ago), Weinberg (1997) then states “Most Asian Americans are presently immigrants” (p. 2).

**The issue with the term Asian American.** The use of the term Asian American can be problematic. As Kibria (2002) indicates, *racial ethnogenesis*, the idea that immigrants and their descendants will merge into established racial groupings in the United States, has its limitations. Applying this to the concept of the *pan-Asian American*, according to Kibria, is quite limited, because “racial boundaries have not in fact been transformed into ethnic boundaries” (p.14). She explains that in reality, rather than identifying by race, Asians refer to themselves depending on the nation from which they originally immigrated. The term Asian would be used when filling out a form, Kibira explains. Louie (2004) further points out that the term Asian American is an imposed racial label which is part of a system of power utilizing socially constructed labels in the interest of the dominant group. In fact, Asian Americans in the United States, especially after the Immigration Act in 1965, have a very wide range of ethnonational diversity and socioeconomic diversity (Kibria, 2002). However, in the context of the educational system, regardless of their country origin, Asian students are identified and stereotyped under this blanket term as Asian American, as the *model minority* (Suzuki, 1977; Takagi, 1992; S. J. Lee, 1996; Lowe, 1996; Weinberg, 1997; Wong, Lai, Nagasawa, & Lin, 1998; R.G. Lee, 1999; Kibria, 2002; Wu, 2002; Louie, 2004; Zinzius, 2005; Doan, 2006; Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007; S. S. Lee, 2006; Wing, 2007; Li & Wong, 2008; Zhang, 2008). As Louie (2004) states, “Asian Americans, who, as a group arguably hold a special place in the American collective consciousness as one of the quintessential immigrant strivers, especially in education” (p. xiv).
**Model Minority**

What images do Americans picture when they think of Asian Americans? Lee (1999) presents six images of Americans’ perceptions of Asian Americans from the 1960s. They were seen as alien-like, pollutants, coolies, deviants, the yellow peril, gooks and as a model minority in popular culture, imagery, and movies. As Wong, Lai, Nagasawa, and Lin (1998) define model minority:

> The model minority label suggests that Asian Americans conform to the norms of society, do well in school and careers, are hard working and self-sufficient. It follows that Asian Americans are a model for all groups, especially other minority groups. (p. 100)

How has this image changed from a negative concept, such as the yellow peril, to the seemingly positive one: Asian Americans as the model minority?

**From “coolie labor” to “model minority”**. Suzuki’s (1977) analysis looks at the model minority phenomenon from an historical angle to explain why and how the term model minority emerged in the 1960s. He points out that throughout the 150 years of Asian immigrant history, discriminatory laws and practices had denied entry to an equal social status for Asian Americans, most of whom were struggling economically and were forced to work for low wages to make a living. Therefore, upward mobility, particularly through education, provided Asian Americans the opportunity to survive and succeed in American society.

The official term ‘model minority’ began to appear in the popular press in the mid 1960s in articles that chronicled the success of Asian Americans (Suzuki, 1977; S. J. Lee, 1996; R. G. Lee, 1999; Ng, Lee & Pak, 2007; Wing, 2007). The concept of the model
minority emerged from an article in the *New York Times* in 1966. William Peterson wrote the article *Success story, Japanese-American style*, which described how, while Japanese Americans experienced racism during World War II, they still managed to be successful in the United States. The reason, according to Peterson, is that the Japanese can “climb over the highest barriers our racists were able to fashion in part because of their meaningful links with an alien culture” (p. 43).

In the same year, on December 26, 1966, *U. S. News and World Report* published a story titled *Success story of one minority group in the U. S.*, which singled out Chinese immigrants as an independent minority group that did not depend on the government’s welfare checks. “At a time when it is being proposed that hundreds of billions be spent to uplift Negroes and other minorities, the nation’s 300,000 Chinese Americans are moving ahead on their own with no help from anyone” (Lee, 1996). These early publications document the use of the model minority myth in connection to Asian Americans.

As Suzuki (1977) pointed out, initially Asian Americans felt flattered by the rosy image of themselves as role models; however, during the time that American society was experiencing a racial crisis in the 1960s, these success stories were not being widely published and didn’t reflect the reality of Asian American lives. Lee (1999) states, “The yellowface coolie and model minority, despite their apparent contradiction, not only coexist but, in fact, can become mutually reinforcing at critical junctures because neither is created by the actual lives of Asians in America” (p. 12). The model minority concept, instead of reporting the truth, was actually a political tool used by the dominant group to present a false image to cover their inability to provide racial equality.
Model Minority or threat? Contrary to other scholars, Lee’s (1999) discussion of the use of the concept of Asian Americans as a model minority considers its inception as occurring much earlier. Lee states “the representation of Asian Americans as a model minority, although popularly identified in the late 1960s and 1970s, originated in the racial logic of Cold War liberalism of the 1950s” (p. 10). Lee indicates that one of the images that coexists with the model minority concept for White Americans is seeing Asian Americans as ‘gooks’; this term is most commonly used by Americans to describe Vietnamese, whether enemies or allies. Lee argues that all of the images point in one direction: Asian Americans are threats to American families. This explains the portrayal of Asian Americans in American popular movies as alien or enemy-like beings. For example, Lee applies the concept of the model minority to the ‘replicants’ in the popular movie Blade Runner as a portrayal of Asian Americans as perfect workers who are aliens that need to be eliminated.

Lee (1999) further explains that during the Cold War, one of the threats to the United States was communism. At the same time, the inability of U.S. military forces to defeat Asians during the Vietnam War promoted an image of Asian Americans as an invisible enemy. Rather than revealing the fears of the Americans, the term “model minority” offers a perception that Asian Americans can be successful in a democratic society and assimilate themselves into American culture. Lee states that:

On the international front, the narrative of ethnic assimilation sent a message to the Third World, especially to Asia where the United States was engaged in increasingly fierce struggles with nationalist and communist insurgencies, that the United States was a liberal democratic state where people of color could enjoy equal rights and upward mobility. (p. 146)
Lee (1999) points out that this representation of Asian Americans carries “a critically important narrative of ethnic liberalism that simultaneously promoted racial equality and sought to contain demands for social transformation” (p. 145). On the one hand, White Americans were beginning to be challenged in the internal struggle for racial equality (for example, the pressure to integrate schools) and were able to point to Asian Americans as a successful minority. This action from White Americans is what Bell (1980) calls *interest convergence*, meaning the interest of people of color “in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites” (p. 523). The success of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* contributed to the international pressure for racial equality on U.S. leadership, whose image had been damaged by segregationist laws (Bell, 1980). Implicit with the success of Asian Americans was the blame placed on other minorities for their lack of success by comparison. U.S. leadership pointed out to international leaders that Asian Americans were able to be successful; therefore Black and Latino Americans were failing due to their own deficits rather than to any injustice inherent in American society. On the other hand, White Americans were able to rein in the effort to achieve racial equality, in part through the use of the kinds of negative images mentioned previously.

As Lee (1999) states, “by the late 1960s, an image of successful Asian American assimilation could be held up to African Americans and Latinos as a model for nonmilitant, nonpolitical upward mobility” (p.10). Again, this allowed blame to be placed firmly on the shoulders of members of those racial and ethnic groups experiencing success to a lesser degree. The position of Whites in power and prestige remained unchallenged.
Lowe (1996) addresses more recently why the use of the term model minority continued after the 1990s. She points out that Asians are groups of people that are geographically, linguistically and racially at odds with the American concept of “national”. Additionally, national anxieties increased with the success of capitalist economies in Japan, Singapore, Korea and Taiwan in the 1990s. Thus, the stereotypes construct Asian Americans as the ‘yellow peril’ or the ‘model minority’, however contradictory those may be. Their purposeful use in American culture was to aid White Americans as they coped with the challenge presented to them by Asians as well as to offer evidence of the racial equality seen in American society.

**Model Minority as outsiders.** Prior to World War II, Asian immigrants were not granted naturalization and citizenship rights (Lowe, 1997; Lee, 2006). Asian Americans, according to S. S. Lee (2006), “… were delimited by policies and laws that defined them as aliens and racial others and barred them from full and equitable inclusion in the United States” (p. 3). The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was a milestone and the use of the term “Asian American” began (Lowe, 1997). This phrase had previously been used to describe those living in the U.S. who had legally been defined as Asian Americans. American society continues to classify Asians as foreigners, without regard to the cultural background, nationality, first language, or other factors. Asian Americans, it appears, will always be seen as alien and different and are called *forever foreigners*.

R. Lee (1999) states that, “the model minority can operate as the paragon of conservative virtues that all Americans should emulate only if Asian Americans remain like ‘us’ but utterly are not ‘us’”(p. 183). The physical features that are used to identify Asian Americans serve as reinforcement for White Americans and enable them to maintain a
preferred position of superiority. Asian Americans continue to be marginalized based on racial stereotyping. Therefore, Asian Americans are always outsiders, others¹, and foreign, so that they maintain their racial position as subordinates.

S. S. Lee (2006) compares the terms yellow peril foreigners and Model Minority; she points out that these concepts seem contradictory but in fact are interconnected. She uses Wu’s study to explain that the model minority can be quickly redefined as possessing negative attributes during times of competition. “If taken too far, the model minority depiction evokes the yellow peril foreigner” (p. 4), she contends. Kibria (2002) adds that the model minority stereotype also creates “the resentment that surrounds them [Asian Americans] an indication of the barriers that obstruct their integration into the dominant society” (p. 134).

The American misperception of Asian Americans as the model minority helps explain the continued view of Asian Americans as foreigners, or outsiders. This social construction of Asian Americans as ‘forever foreigners’ is a way for White Americans to keep Asian Americans ‘in their place’ and to feel less threatened.

**Model Minority Myth in Asian American Education**

Li and Wang (2008) note that William Peterson coined the term ‘model minority’ in 1966 when new perspectives toward Asian immigrants drew attention to these minority groups from academia. “He [Peterson] has, in fact, started a field of study filled with ideological, political, racial and cultural contestations between the mainstream society (and media) and Asian American researchers and intellectuals and within the Asian American

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¹ See Said (1994) for a thorough discussion of the ‘other’ in Orientalism.
academic community itself” (p. 3).

Li and Wang (2008) also point out that Asian intellectuals and researchers have resisted the use of the term model minority, due to its potentially negative impact on Asian groups, because such a description does not necessarily fit all Asian groups or individual Asian students. For example, Wong et al. (1998) address the fact that the term only applies to higher socioeconomic groups, not necessarily to the Southeast Asian and Pacific Islanders who often have low levels of formal schooling and are underemployed both before and after their immigration. Furthermore, even when an Asian student’s nationality falls into a category considered to be high achievers, such as Japanese, Korean, Chinese or Taiwanese, the term carries burdens as well as benefits. The majority of Americans don’t distinguish between the Asians who fit and don’t fit the model minority myth. Instead it is applied to all Asians unless they need to be portrayed as perils.

When we focus on the model minority myth in the educational setting, “You Asians are all doing well anyway” (Wu, 2003, p. 40) is the attitude taken by others when considering the situation of Asian students in U.S. public schools. Wing (2007) indicates that “in some cases, the myth (of the model minority) has served as a tool to castigate other people of color and to discredit their struggles for equality and social justice” (p. 460). When examining the relative success or failure of racial or ethnic groups in the school population, the success of many Asian immigrants is offered as an example of the opportunities to which all students in the U.S. public school system purportedly have equal access. The blame for failure can then be placed on those less successful students, rather than examining ways in which the school system and society have failed these students. This can create pressure between Asians and other racial and ethnic groups.
Doan (2006) suggests that the educational system neglects at-risk Asian American students. “The image of Asian Americans as the model minority may appear complimentary but it does a great disservice for students who struggle in the classroom” (p.158). In addition, Doan notes that Campbell-Whatley’s (2003) data found an increase of 107% in the number of Asian Americans in special education in the past decade. The stereotype not only negatively influences struggling Asian students but also causes stress to high-achieving students. While discussing the myth of the model minority, Wing (2007) points out that in the 1960s, the stereotype of Asian students made them targets for the anger of both Whites and people of color, who see Asian students as benefiting by aligning with Whites. Contrary to the myth, Wing’s data indicates that the grade point average of Asian students in one high school ranged from very high to very low. That is, Asian students are not necessarily all high-achievers, and those students who do not fit the stereotype may suffer from it. Even to those who fit the stereotype, the new use of the term of model minority in the 1990s, according to Takagi (1992): “At many colleges and universities, white students came to view themselves as ‘victims,’ squeezed between Asian Americans’ achievement and preferential policies for blacks” (p. 110). It seems Asian Americans fit into the image of the model minority as well as that of the yellow peril when it comes to competition. Again, this is an example of the model minority as an interest convergence. When Whites can use Asian Americans to serve the purpose of placing blame on less successful minorities they are the model minority; when Whites’ positions of power and prestige are threatened, Asians are categorized as the yellow peril. The best interest of the dominant group determines the image of Asians that is projected.
The History of Public School Education for Chinese Immigrants

As Spolsky (2004) indicates, immigrant children from China and Japan were not allowed in the regular public school system in the 1930s. Unfortunately, Asian immigrants who came to live in this land, bringing their dreams of a beautiful future, were not treated equally and their succeeding generations did not have sufficient access to education to lead them to success.

The formally established Chinese public schools were actually founded by the Qing dynastic government in the foreign land of the United States. These formally established Chinese public schools were not part of the school systems within communities in America. Upon learning of the lack of access to education suffered by Chinese children in the US, the Chinese government established schools where needed, so that Chinese children in the US were not denied education. In 1874, 120 Chinese youth were sent to Hartford, Connecticut and a Chinese language school was opened to ensure that Chinese students continued learning their heritage language and culture. However, the school had no association with other Chinese communities in the United States (Lei, 2003). There were also quasi public Chinese schools, Da Qing Shu Yuan, directly financed by the Qing government. These generally started with an enrollment of 60 students and 2 teachers. The curriculum was designed to prepare students for the civil service exams in China and several similar schools were established under the management of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (Zhou, 2009).

Lien (2001) cited Lowe’s study indicating that early immigrant Chinese children in San Francisco were excluded from public schools. Their parents struggled for 14 years, petitioning to reopen an evening school for their children.
Wang (2006) points out the racism issues of the nineteenth century. Chinese children experienced a segregationist policy, as they were not accepted for enrollment in public schools. In California, the California Supreme Court upheld this policy in 1860 because the health code allowed the exclusion of “the children of filthy or vicious habits, or children suffering from contagious or infectious diseases” (p. 272). This code was used to justify the exclusion of Chinese children from schools. According to Kuo (1998), early Chinese immigrant children were treated in the same manner as the plaintiff in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka. After settling down in California, particularly in San Francisco, children born in the United States and many of their parents demonstrated their interest in having their children attend public schools. In a critical decision in Tape v. Hurley, the San Francisco School Board settled the case in the same manner as with Black Americans, which is the “Separate but Equal” doctrine. However, as Kuo (1998) addresses, opening a separate school was a long process as well.

Kuo (1998) continues by stating that the first public school for Chinese students was opened in San Francisco’s Chinatown in September 1859, but it only lasted 4 months. Its failure was blamed on low attendance and lack of funding. The superintendent of schools, James Denman, called the Chinese schools “a doubtful experiment” and argued against the use of public money to continue Chinese public schools. After protesting, a new Chinese school was opened in a Caucasian area. As a result, “not only was there a long commute to school, but White school children often insulted, abused and threw stones at the Chinese students” (Kuo, p. 4). The violence continued and led to the decision to revise the School Code in 1870 and 1872, so that Chinese Americans were not even allowed to attend separate schools. The Chinese Schools were then closed in 1871. As a result, for the next 14 years,
Chinese children were excluded from the public school system (Kuo, 1998; Low, 1982). In the case of *Tape v. Hurley*, Mamie Tape was an eight-year-old girl born in the United States. Her father claimed that she was ‘Americanized’ so she deserved to go to an American public school. The Tape family was victorious in the end, which caused the California state legislature to quickly react to enforce the school laws that all Chinese Americans should be in segregated schools. Therefore, the school board established a new Chinese primary school in 1885. Wang (2006) states that in 1902, the Code was amended and even more clearly excluded these children: “When separate schools are established, Chinese or Mongolian children must not be admitted into any other school” (p. 287).

Due to the alliance between the US and China, during World War II the number of Chinese students accepted by public schools increased. By 1923, according to Kuo (1998), there were 900 Chinese American students attending public schools. The segregation of Chinese continued as late as 1926 and the laws and segregated schools were still upheld until 1947 (Chin, 1972; Kuo, 1998; Wang, 2006).

In terms of the quality of the public education, Chinese students were not only the victims of unequal access to education but also faced the challenge of learning the English language. Wang (2006) describes the desperate and disparate nature of the educational experience for immigrant children from China. He indicates that there was no English language proficiency test for Chinese students; therefore, they were placed in classes according to their ages and received a maximum of 50 minutes of English language instruction each day. These English language learners might graduate from elementary school without having enough English proficiency for classroom success. Feelings of hopelessness for their future and frustration about the educational system were common
among students in the Chinese immigrant community (Wang, 2006). Clearly, the education offered to immigrant children from China was not the best education the system had to offer. Wong and López (2000) state that in 1990, 45.1% of the 280,800 school age Chinese were foreign born. Approximately one-fourth of them lived below the poverty line and many attended schools that were less than ideal.

**Issues with Chinese Immigrants’ Education at the Present Time**

Studies have been done regarding the provision of equal access to education and an equal education for Chinese immigrant students in the United States. To address the issues that are currently associated with Chinese immigrants’ education, I address them from the perspectives of the model minority myth, the issue of language acquisition, peer context, cultural difference and issues of identity in the following sections.

**Model minority myth in Chinese immigrant education.** Stereotypes of Chinese people, such as the myth of the model minority, can have a harmful effect on their social status and equal rights in educational and employment access and opportunities (Zinzius, 2005). As a result, Chinese youths tend to negate the value of the Chinese culture and language, and refuse to have anything to do with their parents (Wang, 1972). These Chinese youths try to survive and be successful in American society and eventually tend to abandon their own values as well as the Chinese culture and language. As Kim and Chao (2009) point out, heritage language fluency is not an important component of ethnic identity for second-generation Chinese adolescents. Sadly, this comes at a tremendous personal cost. When discussing the term model minority as applied to Chinese immigrants, Zhang (2008) states, “The broad generalization leads to the neglect of the heterogeneity and diversity within Chinese ethnic groups and to the neglect of their individual needs” (p. 32). Under the broad
category of Asian American and through the perspective of the model minority myth, low achieving Chinese Americans are simply omitted from the discussion (Weinberg, 1997). Some of the literature considers recent Chinese immigrant students specifically. According to Fu (2003), the term model minority has a negative impact on Asian students: “The Chinese students [from Chinatown] I have discussed don’t fit the image or the stereotype of ‘model minority’. This stereotype is harmful to both high achieving and other Asian students. The high-achievers make up only a small percentage of the whole ethnic group” (p.157). Doan (2006) also found that the need for immigrant Chinese students to receive academic support is underestimated and she attributes this to the myth of the model minority. Doan offers data from a participant to indicate the nature of the harm done to members of the community by the myth. She relates the story of Ho, a student from a Chinatown area school in Los Angeles, who said to his teacher, “Miss, I don’t want my friends to see me learn these vocabulary words. They’re in the honors classes; I don’t want them to know how dumb I am” (p.157).

**Language acquisition.** The need to learn English is the first challenge immigrant students face in school and it is a significant predictor of acculturative distress (Yeh & Inose, 2003). Zhang (2008) indicates that, “Due to their [Chinese immigrants] insufficient oral English skills, many Chinese felt that they were suddenly deprived of the most important and most fundamental ability in surviving in a society--communication” (p. 73). According to Fung-Aro (2007), immigrants facing the need of second language acquisition are different than those voluntarily learning a foreign language, because the students are required to use the new language while in the process of acquiring it. This process also affects other dimensions in the immigrant’s life, as Fung-Aro continues, “The linguistic and cultural
transitions necessary in a new country often affect their social and emotional development and academic achievement” (p. 157).

The language issue is not merely related to the immigrant student’s English proficiency. McKay and Wong (1996) present four case studies of Chinese immigrant newcomers who were adolescents in a California middle high school. The study indicates that language learners should be considered complex social beings, which means that in the learning process, individual variables or the social context should be taken into consideration. Their study also describes a Chinese immigrant student who considers himself in a powerless position as an ESL (English as a Second Language) student and this affects his attitude and performance in acquiring the language. The study also points out that language learners historically have specific needs and desires, which determine their investment in learning English.

Fung-Aro (2007) examined 40 at-risk Chinese immigrant students and concluded that the linguistic differences between the English and Chinese languages, the diversity within Chinese American communities, the historical immigrant patterns and their distinct cultural values all serve to complicate the language acquisition process. The study suggested that it is important to provide a curriculum that integrates English language learning in the content classes since students are required to use English in these classes but have limited English proficiency to do so.

**Peer context.** Studies have reported that Chinese American youth have been experiencing peer discrimination and harassment (Qin, Way & Rana, 2008; Greene, Way, N., & Pahl, 2006). In fact, Asian American adolescents perceived significantly higher levels of discrimination by peers than other minority students (Greene, Way, N., & Pahl, 2006).
Qin et al. (2008) conclude that when Chinese students are bullied it is due to (1) their immigration status, (2) being placed in bilingual classes where they are more likely to feel harassed due to the language barrier, (3) issues related to the model minority myth, (4) perceived preferential treatment from teachers (5) physical appearance, or (6) lack of group solidarity among the Chinese American students. The study points out that schools and teachers often overlook dynamics that might impact Asian students other than academic achievement; other students therefore infer that these prejudices are acceptable.

Another factor that affects peer interaction for new Chinese immigrant students in Canada, according to Chuang and Moreno (2011), is the cultural differences between the Canada and China. Chinese students behave and respond differently than others; in the Chinese culture the relationships between children and their parents and those between students and their teachers are more formal. Chuang and Moreno also found differences between foreign-born and Canadian-born Chinese students, “While foreign-born Chinese immigrant students are experiencing difficulties adjusting to the new behavioral and interaction styles in the western culture, the Canadian-born Chinese immigrants are trying to balance their Chinese culture at home with the mainstream culture from peers, which may lead to confusion, frustration and distress in [their] social interactions” (p. 54).

Yeh et al. (2008) studied 286 Chinese immigrant students in New York and conclude “Participants who reported more social support from a special friend had significantly fewer concerns about their intercultural competence” (p. 786). The study also indicates that this result is associated with the Chinese culture, which deemphasizes sharing problems with someone outside of the family. It also suggests that peer or social support is particularly
important for immigrant adolescents when they are coping with difficulties (Yeh et al., 2008; Yeh & Inose, 2003).

**Cultural differences.** In comparing US and Chinese culture, Jason and Wang (2013) point out the Chinese collectivistic culture and the American individualistic culture as one of the differences that needs to be addressed. They further explain the Chinese collectivistic culture, “Members of collectivistic cultures value family, friends and their groups – interacting with and caring for them, more than they value self” (p. 917). The value placed on the family is exemplified by the way the Chinese introduce themselves: the family name (surname) first, and the given name second (Cheng & Berman, 2012). This value is also demonstrated in educational settings, as Chinese immigrant children feel obligated to repay their parents by doing well in school. Zinzius (2005) clarifies, “To maintain face, a Chinese family must have successful children. Successful children are the family’s”(p. 156). Park (2005) conducted 71 interviews with children of entrepreneurial immigrants, 35 Chinese Americans and 36 Korean Americans; in addition, they interviewed ten Chinese American and Korean American children of non-entrepreneurial parents to provide contrast. The studies found that 97% percent of children of entrepreneurial immigrants feel obligated to repay their parents’ hard work by (1) offering a token of their gratitude; (2) demonstrating their own success in education and financial wealth; and (3) providing for their parents’ retirement.

Another factor that contributes to differences between the cultures of China and the US is the influence of Confucianism. This philosophy teaches one to offer absolute respect to teachers but it also results in, as Zinzius (2005) points out, students who “dare not oppose unfairness or make the teacher aware of a mistake” (p. 157). These types of different
interactions or behaviors might cause problems in terms of social adjustments for Chinese immigrant students. As Chuang and Moreno (2011) address, Chinese children are encouraged to learn to be self-controlled, group-oriented, compliant and obedient to the authority but these behaviors might not be viewed as adaptive or appropriate by peers in a western classroom.

A comparison of parenting styles was carried out to identify the cultural differences by Jason and Wang (2013). They found that “Parents in collectivistic cultures are more strict and controlling, and more likely to monitor their children’s activities than are parents in individualistic cultures” (p. 917). Wong-Lo and Bai (2013) also found that the “Chinese parenting style is traditionally considered authoritative, controlling, and demanding” (p. 18). Chinese immigrant parents tended to prefer more homework and exams because parents were from an examination-oriented educational environment (Guo, 2007). Chinese parents provide assistance with homework, supplemental instruction, and extracurricular opportunities to expand their children’s learning (Wong-Lo & Bai, 2013). To ensure that the children have outstanding achievement in school, parents urge them to be “twice as good” to be able to achieve the socioeconomic status and rewards in the US and to overcome racial barriers (Kibria, 2002). Louie (2004) also addresses that Chinese parents push to instill the work ethic in their children and tell them that higher education should be their focus, and expect them to complete a baccalaureate degree at a minimum (Yang, 2007). In terms of college and career choices, Park (2005) explains that the obligation of repayment to the parents affects the children when they are making career choices; 80% of the children of entrepreneurial immigrants choose standard professions that ensure high repayment regardless of their
personal interests. Children of entrepreneurial immigrants from Asia are affected throughout their lives by their parents’ decision to immigrate.

**Identity.** As McKay and Wong (1996) state, “Chinese speaking immigrant students defined ‘being Chinese’ in different ways, depending on their place of origin, family background, and dialect” (p. 588). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the different cultures, identities, immigrant status and historical background of Chinese students affect their social interactions and behaviors in school (Chuang & Moreno, 2011; Qin et al, 2008). Adapting and redefining their identity is an ongoing process, as Pendery (2008) cited Kingston’s work in *Maxine Hong,* “she viewed identity not as an ‘established fact’ but as a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representation” (p. 216).

When new immigrants try to adapt to the new culture, they make adjustments based on how close their perception of the self is to the mainstream culture; in other words, each new student goes through different stages of sociocultural adaptation based on how they redefine their ethnic identity (Tong, 2014). Tong’s study also points out that newcomer Chinese students have a positive attitude and value their bicultural and bilingual identity in their acculturation experience; however, even though they want to integrate, they experience conflicts with their American peers. As Kibria (2002) describes, “Asian Americans seem to be ‘a part yet apart’ from the dominant society” (p. 11). Therefore, the high school program could and should provide support for Chinese adolescents’ cultural adjustment to help them with this transition (Tong, 2014; Yeh, Ching, Okubo, & Luthar, 2007).

With regard to second-generation Chinese students, instead of facing the challenges of language and cultural adjustment, they might be facing confusion or even stress (Chuang
& Moreno, 2011) in balancing their heritage culture from their parents and mainstream culture from their peers. The findings of Park’s studies (2005) indicate how Chinese and Korean second-generation students define their citizenship, identity and nationality by their demonstration of conspicuous consumption that contributes to a capitalistic society. The author found that Asian American children are motivated to prove their success in the areas of education and economic achievement; they view U.S. society as a capitalistic one with a focus on consumerism. Instead of rejection back into their own group as Chinese, this is also considered a way of projection into American society (Zinzius, 2005).

**Summation**

As indicated by the review of work concerning Chinese immigrant students, their stories have many layers which must be unfolded. The students’ educational history and school experiences, identity, exposure to the myth of the model minority, and understanding of cultural differences all play a part in how the students process their experiences. An examination of the needs of Asian students is needed and the stereotypes toward them need continued investigation, as well. It is important to keep lifting the veil of mystery from this model minority group, especially to investigate the influence of the term toward these students in educational settings. Most of the studies mentioned in this literature review are done in California and New York. Based on this literature, this study looks into the social interactions between Asian students and others to further examine their life experiences as Chinese immigrants in Colorado. It is important to keep in mind that each student is an organic individual when I tell their unique stories. This study examines these stories through various lenses, including the lens of Asian students as the model minority and the lens of
thirdspace. In order to clarify the concepts involved, a conceptual framework and methodology are included in the following chapters.
CHAPTER III
METHODODOLOGY

This research investigated how Chinese students, a minority group in the Denver area, are impacted by the widely held myth of the model minority in U.S. society. In addition, this research aimed to uncover how Chinese students’ life experiences, living in an area without a large Asian population, are impacted differently by stereotyping. The last goal was to help Asian American students tell their stories. This research was designed as a case study, using the methods of personal narrative and the Critical Incident Technique, to reach these goals.

Contexts

There are multiple layers of context that need to be taken into consideration for this study. Most research studies regarding Asian Americans or Chinese immigrants have been done in California or New York. In a space like Colorado, which has only about 3% of its total population made up of Asians, their experiences are expected to be different and their stories need to be told. The target population of this study focuses on an even smaller group: Chinese immigrant students in Colorado public high schools. The multiple layers of the context include the context of the various sites, the historical context, and the cultural context. Examining each of these helped to identify the rich layers of information embedded within these contexts.

The first broad context is the physical site context in the Denver area and its suburbs. High school students are selected to explore the Chinese immigrant student participants’ public education experiences and obtain data that truly revealed their school experience. Their maturity and ability to consider deeply their reality sets them apart from students in lower grade levels. These students helped to uncover the layers of context at their individual sites and provided important background information for the participants’ narratives. Another
dimension of the context for these stories was the historical context which came from two resources: (1) the historiography of Chinese immigration in the Denver area, and (2) the participants’ own histories and the stories they brought when they migrated to Colorado from China. These historical aspects played a role in developing their lives in Colorado and both are addressed in subsequent chapters.

The third layer of context is the cultural context. The experiences Chinese immigrants have lived were intertwined with the cultural perspectives of both the Americans with whom the participants interact and the participants’ own Chinese culture. Whether these two cultures are different or similar, they created reactions and interactions at particular moments, for the particular incidents revealed in this study. Considering the layers of context from different angles set the background for this research as well as prepared the researcher for greater in depth understanding of the data.

**Case Study as a Research Approach**

Because of the nature of this study, it was designed as a case study. The case study approach has a long history across many disciplines and it has been advocated as a general approach for educational research (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1988). The definition of a case study is, according to Creswell, Hanson, Clark and Morales (2007), “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (as case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (p.245). Furthermore, as Amerson (2011) points out, “A case study design is useful when the researcher must take into account the contextual conditions of the phenomenon being studied” (p. 427). The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of the phenomenon of the myth of model minority on Chinese immigrants students in the
context of Colorado schools. This was met by utilizing the case study research design to gain a deeper understanding of this particular group of students in this particular location. The research aimed to collect information that was rich in context (Creswell, 2007) and to provide useful recommendations for future research.

**Purposeful Sampling**

I used purposeful sampling strategies to screen and recruit the participants for this study. In qualitative research, even for a single case, purposeful selection of the case allows researchers to understand a phenomenon in depth and gather data from information rich cases to learn about an issue (Patton, 2002). The goal for this purposeful sampling was to hear the stories and experience of a particular group, Chinese immigrant high school students, and to examine a particular issue: Does the model minority myth impact the particular participants’ high school experience? The cases for the study were thus selected from among the Chinese immigrant students attending high school in Denver and its suburbs.

**Snowball Sampling**

In addition to purposeful sampling, snowball sampling was also used to recruit participants. Snowball sampling, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), “identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information rich” (p. 28). As mentioned earlier, Colorado has a small population of Chinese immigrants and lacks an obvious Chinese community as an access point for participant recruiting. In addition, accessing accurate data, which would help identify the high schools with possible participants, proved to be impractical. After obtaining final approval for the research from the Colorado Multiple Institutional Review Board (COMIRB), The Chinese American Council and the Colorado Chinese Language School were contacted as the access points to
begin the snowball sampling. Due to time constraints and the difficulty of recruitment, the interview process started before all five participants were recruited. The snowball sampling method allowed me to connect to additional Chinese immigrants through the original participants so that five participants for this study were identified.

Criteria

The criteria for the research participants were (1) Chinese immigrant students whose parents are both Chinese and (2) currently enrolled in a public high school. Detailed information can be found in the flyer for recruitment (Appendix A). To make this study more meaningful, in the original research design, I intended to find students from lower socioeconomic groups. Another filter I would have liked to use to select participants was the parents’ level of English literacy. I planned to narrow the scope to study students who were not able to receive help with schoolwork from their parents. Personal communication with other educators in Colorado led me to believe that there were Chinese immigrant students who fit the specific criteria sought. However, after the recruiting process started, I realized that I needed to widen the scope to be able to identify participants.

As a Taiwanese, I speak, understand, read and write the official language of China and Taiwan, Mandarin Chinese, fluently. Most of the participants were new Chinese immigrants, who along with their parents, speak Mandarin. This not only gave me the advantage of being able to conduct interviews with the students and their parents in English, Chinese, or a combination but it also gave me a cultural connection with the participants. It helped to create a trusting environment during the interviews and allowed for clear communication. Our common life experiences helped me to develop a rapport that was more easily established than possibly would have been for a researcher of a different racial or
linguistic background.

Sample Size

To reach data saturation in qualitative research five participants were selected for this study. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) cited Sandelowski’s study and addressed this decision, “Sample sizes in qualitative research should not be so small that it is difficult to achieve data saturation, theoretical saturation, or informational redundancy. At the same time, the sample should not be so large that it is difficult to undertake a deep, case-oriented analysis” (p. 281). This approach of multiple-case sampling also added confidence to the findings (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and provided different perspectives on the problem this study tried to address (Creswell, 1998). For the purposes of saturation, analysis, and generalization of the findings, the appropriate sample size for this study has been considered.

Participant Recruitment

The participant recruitment was not an easy process for this research. As the committee members predicted during the proposal defense, this was a difficult task. In this section, I will describe the process in detail to show how Chinese immigrant students are hard to identify and how these students avoid spotlight.

During the COMIRB approval process, COMIRB requested that I locate schools or school districts that would sponsor the research and allow me to observe in classrooms. After working through the research proposal process, the final step was to obtain a school principal’s agreement. However, after multiple attempts to contact principals, I received either no response or rejection from the high school principals. As a result, the COMIRB application had to be amended. The lack of willingness or interest on the principals’ part seems to indicate that educational leaders in Colorado do not believe Chinese immigrant
students have problems needing investigation. It seems that the educational needs of Chinese students rarely draw attention from schools.

The recruiting strategy was changed to utilize the Chinese community as the access point. I began to contact private and non-profit organizations such as The Chinese American Council and the Colorado Chinese Language School to help locate possible participants. I requested that these organizations distribute my flyers to potential participants. Those who were interested could then contact me through email or phone. The Chinese communities are widespread in Colorado and each of the communities had a small number of members, which made the process even more difficult. While waiting for responses, I visited several Chinese restaurants and handed out the flyers but the owners seemed to prefer not to bother customers with them.

Each potential participant’s information was valuable. There were narratives from two students who chose not to participate that I would like to mention here. One was a student with whom I spoke with on the phone at her parent’s suggestion. The parent was eager and wanted me to speak with her child because the student did not perform well in school. However, the student didn’t feel the same. She expressed honestly to me that she did not want to participate in the study because there was no incentive for her. She also didn’t think that she needed assistance in academic or school-related matters because she did not want to go to college as her parents wished. The other one was a parent who works in a Chinese restaurant. During our phone conversation, I explained that I would like to meet to further discuss the purpose of the study. The parent speaks Cantonese, a Chinese dialect, and was not fluent in Mandarin Chinese. When I asked her where the restaurant that she worked was located, she could only tell me its name. Another problem was that she could only tell
me the restaurant’s name in Chinese so I was not able to find the restaurant online using its Chinese name. After searching online, I found a Chinese restaurant that I thought could possibly be her workplace. The restaurant was quite far away and I was doubtful as to the success of this endeavor. Luckily, my hunch was correct and I was able to speak with her during her break. Her first reaction surprised me. As soon as we sat down, she started to cry. On the phone she sensed that I was very supportive of Chinese immigrants in Colorado. She began to share the experiences and difficulties of her life in Colorado. She hoped that someone could help her as well as her son in school. Due to the difference in school calendar, she did not realize that the school here started earlier compared with schools in China. Therefore, her son did not know that he needed to go to school and missed several weeks. She told me that her son seemed to have a hard time in terms of his academic performance; however, she could not support him with homework. Unfortunately, I was never able to talk to her son, but the experience confirmed the importance of this study.

After approximately three months, I received a phone call from a parent whose daughter later became one of my participants and the recruiting process started to progress. I also was able to talk to parents who had arrived from my homeland, Taiwan, about nine years ago. At the time, I held the presumption that immigrants from Taiwan usually had more education than those from China, and this was not the population I sought to investigate. Under the initial criteria, this family would not qualify for the study. However, as Creswell (2007) pointed out, employing maximum variation can provide different perspectives for cases. This perspective led me to adjust the study criteria. This Taiwanese parent and her child not only contributed their voices, but also led me to another Taiwanese immigrant student through snowball sampling.
Participants

There were five students along with one of their parents participated in this study. Coincidently, all of the participants are female in this study due to the difficulties in recruitment. The student participants were from high schools in the Denver area and its suburbs. The reason for choosing high school students was that this group was experienced at self-identification, and they were also more articulate in expressing their feelings, stories, and understanding of the space around them than students from lower grade levels. The parents’ voices were included to complete the understanding of the students’ background stories and their everyday lives as well as to include the parents’ perspectives.

Three of the student participants were new immigrants from China who had just arrived the U.S. within one and half years prior to the data collection period. Two of them attended the same high school in a suburb of Denver. One of these arrived only four months before our first meeting. The other student, who was a new immigrant, attended school in a different school district. During the interviews, she showed curiosity about the other participants after learning there were four others involved. After she posed this question multiple times, I realized she might be interested in the same question: What are the storeis of Chinese immigrant students in Colorado?

The other two participants immigrated from Taiwan at the age of six. They both attended the same high school, but had very different experiences in Colorado. When designing this study, I did not consider Taiwanese immigrants as participants because “A study of class characteristics reveals that the Taiwanese are a select group endowed with higher education and profession” (Tseng, 1995, p. 39), and were therefore less likely to need support. The stories I found proved me wrong and these two Taiwanese immigrant students
provided the study with both variation as well as different perspectives. This was a valuable lesson regarding the biases we hold, often unknowingly.

**Data Collection**

Yin (2003) recommends selecting from six types of sources for data collection: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts. I opted to use two of these strategies for data collection. One was face-to-face interviews with semi-structured questions and the other one was my fieldnotes from observations. I used the guiding questions while maintained the freedom to ask follow-up questions during the interview. These interviews were used to complete information provided by the parents and the students as well as to gain a better understanding of the participants’ experiences. The participants’ experiences of immigrating to the US, from the native country before immigration, and of their reasons for immigration were also part of the interviews. This information was gathered to give each participant the opportunity to tell her story in her own words and voice.

I further explored the critical incidents that the participants recalled and encouraged them to provide more in-depth information regarding the incident. After each interview, I wrote down detailed descriptions in my fieldnotes. I also included my thoughts around the interview and created a list of topics about which I wanted to gather more information from the participant. Some important issues emerged and I explored these later with each participant. This approach gave me a guideline for each interview, and also allowed me to gather data from the participants that could be compared or contrasted.

I conducted four interviews with each student participant and one interview with a parent from each participant that followed the student interviews. The approximate time for
each interview was 45 minutes to one hour unless the participant was willing to share more. The interviews were seven to ten days apart, which allowed the participants time to contemplate the issues that we discussed. I asked the follow-up questions until it reached data saturation.

The interview locations were selected with the parent’s approval. I met with participants in various locations: in the library, in the family’s apartment with parents present, at a tea shop, at a coffee shop, or at a Chinese restaurant where the participant’s parent worked. The locations were chosen based on easy access for the student as well as utilizing public places to help insure the student’s safety. None of the student participants were driving during the time I conducted the interviews. The farthest I drove to an interview site was one and a half hours, which made the research more difficult while simultaneously confirming the small size of the population of Chinese immigrant students in the Denver area.

**Researcher’s Reflexivity in the Study**

As a teacher in a public high school in Colorado, I have an understanding related to students’ experiences in school. The participants had all been raised under the influence of Confucianism in China and in Taiwan. The participant students were very respectful and called me “Teacher Chang” instead of by my first name. At first, I was concerned that this formality would become a barrier to building a relationship between us or further cause them to be unwilling to share their true feelings with me as a researcher. However, I gained their trust in a very short time after sincerely expressing the purpose of the research. I believe that my high school teaching experience and similar background as an international student and an immigrant to the U.S. brought us together while they narrated their stories. The tears, the
laughs, the head nodding, and the expression from their eyes are the evidence supporting this belief.

During the past six years, I have been fortunate to have opportunities to work with or be in contact with Chinese immigrant students in the U.S. Some students have appeared in my classroom to help or just to share their life experience with me. In some cases, the Chinese immigrant students were referred to me by school staff, generally because they needed a translator to talk to their parents. The parents were usually extremely grateful that a native speaker could help communicate with the school personnel. I also witnessed firsthand the model minority myth phenomenon in my classroom. On multiple occasions, non-Asian students teased or verbally attacked Asian students. I knew that something was hidden behind that silence of the Asian students. I wanted to know more.

**Personal Narrative**

What does the life of a contemporary Chinese immigrant student look like? How do they feel in a new and different environment while they are still trying to create their own identity? Have others already identified them? Do they speak out when they are frustrated? Do they need to try exceptionally hard to fit in to this society? The structure of a case study requires the researcher to determine a problem space or an issue to gather information around the issue, and to tell a story (Breslin & Buchanan, 2008). This study aimed to tell the stories of a group of students who might have been ignored. This method of gathering their experience and creating a personal narrative is an important way of “naming one’s own reality” (Delgado, 1989).

As Ladson-Billings (2010) points out, “Stories provide the necessary context for understanding, feeling, and interpreting. The ahistorical and acontextual nature of much of
law and ‘science’ renders the voices of dispossessed and marginalized group members mute” (p. 13). This research attempts to use narrative stories to provide participants’ information, experience, emotions, feelings, and thoughts to paint a whole picture of their life experience in Colorado. To examine a more narrow scope within the phenomena of model minorities, I then used the Critical Incident Technique as a method of investigation.

**Critical Incident Technique**

The Critical Incident Technique (CIT), which began in World War II has been widely used in many disciplines such as communication, counseling, and education (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Maglio, 2005). Butterfield et al. (2005) states that CIT is “a tool to create a functional description of an activity” (p. 278). This study aimed to examine whether the model minority myth had an impact on Chinese immigrant students’ school life in Colorado. The critical incident technique is a tool which helped students identify moments that may be considered turning points in their lives, moments when a match or mismatch between the self and others was brought to light.

Data in the area of critical incidents was collected when participants articulated their experiences with the issue or critical incidents. Butterfield et. al. (2005) cited Flanagan’s design, indicating that the data collection stage, “can be done in a number of ways, such as having expert observers watch people perform the task in question or by having individuals report from memory about extreme incidents that occurred in the past” (p. 478). For example, Shannon and Escamilla (1999) used the CIT method to examine teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about Mexican immigrant children that were witnessed and observed by student teachers. The thirteen student teachers from two elementary schools reflected on their own and others’ experiences; these were gathered to identify the critical incidents that emerged
from every aspect of the student teachers’ educational experiences. The process of reflecting offers the potential to make an enormous impact on these new teachers’ attitude toward Mexican immigrants and Spanish language (Shannon & Escamilla, 1999). By the same token, the opportunity to reflect on critical incidents within their educational setting supported Chinese immigrant students as they seek to name and verbalize their experiences.

Another example using CIT is Gutierrez, Rymes and Larson’s (1995) study. They present the concept of the thirdspace as the social space in which to examine how the counter-hegemonic activity or contestations of dominant discourses exists between students and teachers. The study was designed to investigate situations when a student’s knowledge, experience or behaviors do not comply with the teacher’s. The researchers asked if a new thirdspace would emerge to meet both the teachers’ and the students’ needs. The result reveals that when the teacher ignored the critical incident that involved the student’s own personal experience, or if the critical incident does not fit in the curriculum, the teachers’ chosen role is to direct the dialogue back to match the teacher’s expectation. In the meantime the students’ needs were ignored and abandoned. This CIT method helped identify that thirdspace and the source of its development, if that occurred.

Although I expected to encounter critical incidents regarding the model minority myth, I reminded myself to be open-minded to other kinds of incidents, which played important roles in constructing immigrant students’ high school experiences in Colorado.

**Data Analysis**

The data was examined in an effort to understand the students’ school experiences and their interpretations of those experiences. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the
layers of meaning embedded in the data, three data analysis methods were used, including an early analysis using codes and coding, key-words-in-context, and domain analysis.

**Analysis using codes and coding.** Although I have a relatively narrow scope I intend to address, it is also important to be able to look at the participant as a whole person, who carries a rich story along with the identity of a Chinese immigrant student. To present each participant’s story from the interview data, I first used marginal remarks to give each small segment meaning that also gave me reflective ideas for later analysis. As Miles and Huberman (1994) state, “Marginal remarks, like reflective remarks add meaning and clarity to field notes” (p. 67). I then coded these marginal remarks and clustered them into categories. Those categories led me to understand the participant’s story from several perspectives; for example, life history, school experiences in general, life in the communities, and experiences with the myth of the model minority. After this was done, I wrote the participant’s story in the form of a personal narrative. Meanwhile, I strove to maintain the participant’s voice while I pulled the events together to explain the participant’s experience as a whole.

**Key-words-in-context.** Key-words-in-context is a strategy to see what words appear before and after the key word of interest (Fiddling & Lee, 1998). It revealed the usage of certain words and the context in which those words are used. After reading the fieldnotes and the interview transcripts, I paid attention to see if there are crucial words that repeatedly appear in the data. After identifying the words before and after each term, I extracted the phrases to form clusters and studied the context where the word is located. Using the process to generate meaning behind the clusters, themes then emerged from the data. To determine the existence of an additional layer in the data that was not revealed in the two previous
analyses and to gain a greater understanding of the data, domain analysis was utilized.

**Domain analysis.** As Spradley (1979) indicates, using domain analysis identifies the semantic relationships in the text to discover and decode the cultural meanings behind the symbols. Following this suggested procedure, I started by examining the strict inclusion (X is a kind of Y) domain and used domain analysis worksheets for the analysis. I reviewed the transcripts and field notes to look at what particular issues and experience the participants have with the myth of the model minority. These end results and findings were used to understand the experiences of Chinese immigrant students in Colorado and to inform educators where appropriate.

**Summation**

Through the process of participant recruiting, meeting the participants, interviewing to data analyzing, these students and their parent have offered a rich experience to me as a researcher. The data I have gathered from the participants created an individual story for each of the participants. Here is the brief description of the data analysis. After transcribing the audios into text documents, I first read the whole transcript several times, to have the sense of what topics might be hidden in the stories. I then wrote down a wide range of topics for coding. I later used different colors for coding to help me see the patterns (Appendix B). This process involved adding and subtracting several sub-topics when adjustments were needed. After I laid out the transcripts, important domains and critical incidents then became more and more clear throughout the process. The key-word- in-context search through the electronic transcript files also helped to locate crucial narrative that needed to be addressed. The analysis steps allowed me to break down the data into pieces of information then puzzle them back to study as a whole.
CHAPTER IV
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The experiences of recently immigrated Chinese students have not been examined widely. Furthermore, it is of particular importance to learn of the impact of the model minority myth on Chinese immigrant students living in areas that lack a Chinatown and where others in school have limited exposure to Chinese immigrants. The myth of the model minority and the concept of thirdspace are two important elements to consider in order to frame this study. The conceptual framework is presented (Figure 1) to illustrate my approach to the research question by creating a stage to tell their stories through these perspectives. It is also an attempt to draw a more comprehensive picture to include how the myth of the model minority interacts with and impacts Chinese immigrant students in the space of Denver, Colorado.

In this section, I invite you to imagine yourself in the space of a high school cafeteria. Pretend that you can view it from an elevated position like a movie camera that covers almost every corner of the area and can also zoom in for a close up. What would you see? The popular kids with high energy attract your attention. Their laughter and conversation creates a powerful magnet that makes you wish to be one of them. But, you are forgetting that you don’t share the same attributes. There is an invisible barrier that keeps you away because you don’t even speak the same language. In this big room that contains almost everyone, you prefer to sit together with your own; the very few of your own, as Chinese immigrants, in the corner. You probably also noticed that other minority groups have a similar situation to you but you don’t really feel better. Lunchtime creates a certain tension in your mind.
Sometimes, if you cannot even find even those very few of your own, it’s torture rather than a break.

The cafeteria during lunchtime is a space that is full of noise, voices and music with yelling, smiling, crying, screaming, searching, teasing, laughing and sometimes just staring. There are usually principals or teachers on duty that hope that nothing unusual will happen. They look a bit anxious with their eagle eyes. You can also find the individual alone staring into an empty spot in silence wishing the awkwardness would pass by quickly. Or, they just don’t care anymore. This whole space creates such different dynamics and emotions that are beyond the actual space itself, with no logic that you can explain or control. It is a thirdspace that is organic and created by the interactions between students, friends, teachers, and principals with the different races adding all sorts of energy, stories and emotions; happiness, joy, relax, anger, anxiety, confusion, or isolation. How this thirdspace is created is one of the key angles that help me to see these Chinese immigrant students more clearly. They can be seen through their identity, not just about where they came from. But the space constantly shifts and changes through the stories they live.

**Spaces and Thirdspace**

According to Lefebvre (1991), there are multiple meanings of the term “space”. He pointed out that one might define them as the “first, the physical–nature, the Cosmos; secondly, the mental, including logical and formal abstraction; and, thirdly, the social” (p. 11). Following Lefebvre, Soja (1996) defines space in a similar way, “firstspace perspective and epistemology, fixed mainly on the concrete materiality of spatial forms, on things that can be empirically mapped; and the second, as secondspace, conceived in ideas about space, in thoughtful re-presentations of human spatiality in mental or cognitive forms” (p. 10).
Simply put, the firstspace is a space that we normally perceive in an epistemological way: space in size, of a room, grassland, the sky or even outer space; things or materials that we can measure, touch, or see. Secondspace is our mental image of space; it is the image presented in our minds when we talk about size or measurement. This mental image sometimes correlates with a comparison between certain subjects; for instance, what size tree is considered big or how small a space between two people is considered tight. And the third space, according to Soja (1996), “as a product of a ‘thirding’ of the spatial imagination, the creation of another mode of thinking about space that draws upon the material and mental space of traditional dualism but extends well beyond them in scope, substance, and meaning” (p.11), in which he describes the Thirdspace is space that is both “real-and-imagined” and in this space, things and thoughts are equal. Soja (1996) also explains Lefebvre’s concepts in *The Production of Space*, they inter-relate and are linked: perceived space, conceived space, and lived space. The lived space, according to Soja, is very close to the Thirdspace that he tries to define, “Thirdspace as a limitless composition of lifeworlds that radically open and openly radicalizable” (p. 70). Therefore the Thirdspace, using Lefebvre’s trialectics concept, I interpret as a space that exercises one’s experiences (historical), in a location (spatiality), through the social interactions (sociality) and social constructions-imposition (stereotyping), acceptance, adaptation, and resistance with others.

**Thirdspace as a Space of Resistance**

Moje et al. (2004) present an interpretation of Soja’s thirdspace concept as “a reconceptualization of human interaction around the concept of space. That is an argument for how physical space operates in the socialization of human interaction and concomitantly, how social spaces can shape the physical” (p. 42). This space constantly changes and
transforms; consciously or unconsciously, it shapes our daily life bit by bit through our interaction with others. If human beings cannot fail to learn and we do feel the world around us, this is a space that we experience every moment, every second in everyday life. In keeping with this concept, I further investigated the everyday school lives of Chinese immigrant students in Colorado to examine their social spaces and how these might be influenced by the model minority myth.

Moje et al. (2004) also cited Homi Bhabha’s (1994) definition of thirdspace as something that is “produced in and through language as people come together, and particularly as people resist cultural authority, bringing different experiences to bear on the same linguistic signs or cultural symbols to bear on the same experience” (p. 43). Because of the nature of this social construction, White Americans can construct an image of the model Asian or the perilous Asian. It is in discovering the thirdspace that we can see what new Chinese immigrants do with those images.

hooks (1990) discusses the need for the spaces among marginalized groups; stating that “for me this space of radical openness is a margin – a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary. It is not a safe place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance” (p. 149). Are Chinese immigrant students in Denver public schools a marginalized group? Are Chinese immigrant students being marginalized based on their language, appearance, and stereotypes? If yes, does the Chinese community form a community of resistance to make them feel ‘safe’? Do Chinese immigrant students develop their own thirdspace, physically and mentally, to resist the model minority myth (positive or negative) that is placed on them? Research has shown that the phenomenon exists in the Mexican-American community. Gutierrez (1999) describes how Mexican people watch
Spanish-language films or drink in the neighborhood cantina. “…. [and] significant numbers of working-class ethnic Mexicans continued to follow largely autonomous cultural practices in the new social spaces that in an almost literal sense were situated between the state-centered national systems of the United States and Mexico” (p. 504). I cannot help but ask: What constitutes this great United States of America? A dominant group oppressing minority groups, who in turn resist by secretly creating their own culturally safe thirdspace? In the city of Denver, where Chinatown no longer exists, what do Chinese students’ thirdspace look like? How do they cope in life without a physical ‘safe’ space? I would also like to ask, with the lack of actual community space, how do Chinese immigrant students seek the help of the community? Will these students become even more invisible? If so, does the myth of a model minority still impact them?

**Classroom as Thirdspace**

To analyze the space in the classroom, the diversity of hybridity and hybrid language needs to be taken consideration (Gutierrez, Lopez, & Tejeda, 1999). Gutierrez et al. address the learning context as a hybrid space that contains multivoices and multiscripts. Tensions, conflicts, and diversity exist in a classroom and they constitute the thirdspace in the classroom. The study also points out that this thirdspace emerges when cultural and linguistic resources are organized, so that diverse participants (the students) are be able to promote their learning.

With reference to Chinese immigrant students, my question is this: What if the students are not expressing their voices? What if the teacher operates under the stereotype of the model minority? Would the student miss the opportunity to come into the thirdspace, which is supposed to be a common ground for both students and teachers to be able to
understand each other? Is the student an outsider? Or, would the students need to create their own counter-space, which allows them to seek comfort and understanding?

Another way to look at the thirdspace is as a “counter-space”. When discussing African Americans’ experiences in colleges, Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) point out that a counter-space is needed to allow them to “foster their own learning and to nurture a supportive environment wherein their experiences are validated and viewed as important knowledge” (p. 70). This space provides the student a place to express and share their frustrations in coping with discrimination with others who have had the same experience.

**Space, Feminism and Identity**

If we look at the students as a whole, where would the Asian students be located in the pie chart? In terms of the social interactions, do they pop right in at the center? Do we always expect to hear their voices in public? Or, they are considered one of the marginalized groups because they are different? hooks (1984) defines marginality as, “To be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body” (p. 149). Furthermore, in the sense that Asian students are the ‘Other’, due to their physical attributes, due to their “oriental” culture, due to their differences. They are the Other that is too hard to comprehend, therefore, it is safer to differentiate them as the forever foreigners. As hooks (1984) states:

> the Other is also a mask, an oppressive talk hiding gaps, absences, that space where our words would be if we were speaking, if there were silence, if we were there. This “we” is that “us” in the margins, that “we who inhabit marginal space that is not a site of domination but a place of resistance.” (151)

On what ground are these Chinese students standing? Or, do they even have a marginal spot to grab on, and a place to resist? What are the forces that push them far away to the margin
space so that we barely see them as part of the whole? Is it the quietness, the difference, or the stereotypes?

Stereotypes, the image and concepts rooted in our mind so deep that make us not really see a person. The obvious appearance of an Asian might tell you about their personality or stories before you even interact with them. The identity then becomes a fixed knowledge that someone guides us to the zone that we are more familiar with. We are programmed this way. If we critique the world we live in, the way we conceptualize a concept, as Massey (1994) points out, often times through the dichotomous dualism way. She analyzes that it’s the result of being in a masculine society; which is designed as an easier way for dominant group to resist changes (p. 255).

Through the lens of Feminist theories to examine this identity, and along with that, the stereotype issues, as Young (1989) also states that these values and norms are “derived from specifically masculine experience: militarist norms of honor and homoerotic camaraderie; respectful competition and bargaining among independent agents; discourse framed in unemotional tones of dispassionate reason” (p. 253). Therefore, as Young continues, the rights of minority groups can be easily unemotionally and dispassionately overlooked and treated with injustice. Feminist theory does not only apply to sexism, it also means to stop the oppression, provide the freedom of choices and respect. As hooks (1984) points out, “It can transform relationships so that the alienation, competition and dehumanization that characterize human interaction can be replaced with feelings of intimacy, mutuality, and camaraderie” (p. 34).

In the space of Denver, Colorado, with the identity of being an Asian, a Chinese immigrant, where or is there even a marginal space for them to resist? How important does
this particular locality play a role in the stories of this minority group? As Massey (1994) also pointed out the importance of *locality* and how it relates to the constitution of identity for the *place*. Her definition of *place*, therefore is “formed out of a particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location” (p. 168). Moreover, since the identity is a complex product through social interactions, she states, “this in turn implies that what is to be the dominant image of any place will be a matter of contestation and will change over time” (p. 121).

Therefore, this study is based on the studies of Chinese immigrant students done in New York or California that are attached to their localities and be applied to the locality of Denver, Colorado.

As an international graduate student, I might have fewer constraints compared to a migrant student who crosses the border to pursue his or her dreams. However, we share similar experiences as we struggle to find that safe, home-like atmosphere of the *thirdspace*. As an educator and future researcher, I remember the social spaces that I have experienced and it brings me closer to the people I chose to study. The participants and I have created our own *thirdspace* through the research process.
Figure 1. Visual Representation of Conceptual Framework
CHAPTER V

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF CHINESE IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR EDUCATION

An Introduction to the History of Chinese Immigration to the US

During the early periods of immigration, as Ma (2000) points out, Chinese workers came to the US to provide cheap labor and were considered “culturally and racially inferior”. Following the first big wave of the Gold Rush, there was an economic depression in California. Competition for jobs pitted White workers against the Chinese; additionally, the willingness of the Chinese to work for lower wages created more stress between the groups. A major anti-Chinese movement ensued. Eventually, the U.S. Congress enacted the Chinese Exclusion Act on May 6, 1882 and it effectively ended Chinese immigration for sixty years (Ma, 2000; Wei, 2004). Life in the US for Chinese immigrants finally became a bit easier after World War II. In the early 1970s, the relationship between the People’s Republic of China and the United States began to improve, resulting in increased immigration to the United States. As Zhou and Kim (2006) indicate,

With the lifting of legal barriers to Chinese immigration after World War II and the enactment of liberal immigration legislation since the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Cellar Act, the Chinese American community has increased more than tenfold: from 237,292 in 1960 to 1,645,472 in 1990, and to nearly 2.9 million (including nearly half a million mixed-race persons) in 2000. (p. 4)

At that time, Chinese were the largest Asian American group in the United States (Wong & López, 2000) and this status remains. According to the 2014 U.S. Census, there were 3,941,615 Chinese immigrants in the United States.
Chinese Immigrant History in Denver—The Story of Chinatown

On June 29, 1869 the first Chinese person arrived in Denver and was identified as ‘John Chinaman’ who came from southern China with the dream of earning money to support his family in China (Wei, 2004). According to Paist’s (1992) description, John Chinaman was “short, fat, round-faced, almond-eyed…[and] quite happy to get among civilized people” (p. 8). Wei states that John probably came to California with the first generation of Chinese who came to America during the California Gold Rush. Very likely, he was one of the laborers who worked on the Kansas Pacific Railroad and then was discharged after its completion. Then, he went to Denver to seek job opportunities and started forming Denver’s Chinatown.

Location and population of Chinatown. Wei (2004) offers a descriptive history of the Chinese in the Denver area after examining media publications of the time and interviewing living relatives of known Chinese Denverites. Denver’s Chinatown, as Wei describes, “was the most significant Chinese American community in the Rocky Mountain West” (p. 2). ‘Hop Alley’ is the name White residents in Denver gave this area. According to Wei, ‘Hop’ refers to opium, which was connected to Chinese people at that time. ‘Alley’ described the entrances to the buildings. Wawa Jew, the daughter of Chinatown’s mayor, expresses her memory of Denver’s Chinatown: “Chinatown was just an alley, with only one Chinese store there that sold a lot of Chinese herbs and some food stuff” (Wei, 2002, p. 14). Most of the Chinese in Denver lived in the area around Wazee, Larimer, and Lawrence Streets, also known as Denver’s Chinatown (Voorhees et al., 1969). Wei (2004) applied a
more detailed description of the location found in the *Visitor’s Pocket Guide of Denver*, (1896) which recommended protection for Whites venturing into the Chinatown areas, on Wazee Street, between Sixteenth and Seventeenth; and on Market Street, between Twentieth and Twenty-first. Wei also offers information from a 1909 edition of the *Denver Times*, which described Chinatown as “a dark, narrow alley, a series of dingy entrances, cubbyholes, underground passages, dismal, all-smelling places…” (p. 377).

In 1870, there were only four Chinese in Denver, a city with a total population of 4,759; in 1880, there were 238 Chinese counted in Denver’s total population of 35,629 (Wei, 2004). At the beginning of Chinese immigration, men came to America to earn a living to provide for their wives and families who remained in China. More than half of these men were married and very few Chinese women followed their husbands to the United States after the husband established himself here. According to Wei (2004) there were only 29 Chinese women in Denver in 1880. In 1882, the situation caused by the Chinese Exclusion Act made the opportunities for establishing a Chinese family in the United State even more difficult. The Exclusion Act caused the Chinese population to remain roughly the same during the next 60 years. Also, Wei continues, not one Chinese person entered Denver during this period. When the Immigration Act was passed in 1965, it included a liberal policy, which was based on the principal of equality. Prospective immigrants who had specific skills or who had ties to those already living in the US were given priority. At the same time, the quotas for people of various origins were eliminated. This helped increase the population of Chinese in Denver to 3,897 by 1980, to 8,695 by 1990 and to 15,658 by 2000.

**Job opportunities.** At the beginning of the period of the immigration of Chinese people to Colorado, most Chinese worked on railroad construction and in mining operations;
for instance, Central City and Boulder Creek Mining brought numbers of Chinese
immigrants to Colorado (Voorhees et al., 1969; Rudolph, 1969). However, after the mining
business concluded, the only other employment opportunities for Chinese were in laundries,
restaurants, and as household servants. These jobs were referred to, according to the
Voorhees et al. (1969) report as “women’s work” (p. 8). Wei (2004) distinctively states
“…[and] the city offered few occupational choices. The Chinese were unable to avail
themselves of many of these, being excluded from those occupations that placed them in
direct competition with whites” (p. 381). The harsh situation did not make the Chinese men
give up on searching for opportunities to provide for their families back in China. They
picked up the business that White men avoided, and became well known as Chinese
laundrymen. According to Wei (2004), in 1870 most of the Chinese men in Denver made
their living as laundrymen and they ran 130 of Denver’s 262 laundry businesses by the end of
the decade.

**Discrimination: The anti-Chinese riot.** Descriptions of the discrimination against
Chinese immigrants appear frequently in the studies of early Colorado history. When writing
the story of Chinatown’s mayor, Noel (2006, p.75) describes the situation of Chinese
immigrants in Denver: “Like the Blacks, the Chinese also faced persecution, only they were
disliked even more than the Blacks.” Noel indicated further that “the Chinese faced intense
white prejudice and hatred” (p.75). Others continued in the same vein, indicating that the
Chinese “were soon viewed with hostility because of their willingness to work for lower
wages and in menial tasks” (Voorhees et al., 1969; Zhou, 2009; Wei, 2004).

In 1880, trapped between ethnic conflict and political-party competition, Chinese
people were the targets when the Democratic Party argued against the Republican Party’s
effort to import more Chinese cheap labor (Wei, 2004). Not only was there an anti-Chinese parade, the infamous Denver race riot also occurred the following day on October 31, 1880. Noel (2006) states that the exact cause of the riot is unknown; several versions indicate that it started with a fight between several White men and Chinese men in a saloon. After the rumor spread that a White man was killed in Chinatown, the White crowds gathered in Chinatown and shouted racist phrases, including “Stamp out the yellow plague!”, “Kill the Chinese!”, “Kill the damned heathens!” and “Burn their houses!” (Wei, 2004; Kwong & Miscevic, 2005). The neighborhood and its houses were destroyed, and one Chinese man was found lynched. Luckily, most of the Chinese residents were able to hide and hundreds of them found protection in the county jail (Paist, 1992). This tragedy even garnered the attention of the first Chinese ambassador to the United States in San Francisco, Chen Lanpin. The investigation concluded that the damages came to $53,655.69. Chen appealed to the government of the US and requested compensation for the Chinese residents in Denver, but the U.S. government refused to become involved and claimed that federal power in this case was limited. As a result, no Chinese person was ever paid for their property loss (Wei, 2004; Kwong & Miscevic, 2005). This event, as Wei (2006) states, is “a shameful chapter in Colorado history” (p. 387).

The story of Denver’s mayor of Chinatown. Chin Lin Sou was born in Southern Chan, a village in China’s province of Canton, in 1837 (Noel, 2006; Wei, 2004). Like many other Chinese pioneers, he came to San Francisco by ship when he was around 20 years old and worked as a laborer on the Central Pacific Railroad. Chin was well educated and had strong leadership traits, according to Noel (2006); by 1867, he was a foreman for the railroad, which employed 6,000 reliable Chinese laborers. In 1870, Chin came through Denver while
building the railroad from Cheyenne to Denver, and became one of the first Chinese immigrants in Colorado (Noel, 2006; Wei, 2004). In 1871, he and several Chinese friends established the first Chinese settlement in the mining town of Black Hawk. In 1874, Chin began working in the mining business in Gregory Gulch, where he supervised 300 Chinese miners. Chin earned enough money to bring his wife to the US. The family then moved to Denver’s Chinatown in the late 1870s. Their 6 children were born and raised in the US, making them the first Chinese American family in Colorado.

According to Wei (2004), Chin was over 6 feet tall with blue-gray eyes, which is not the typical Chinese appearance. He was also well educated and spoke fluent English. With his personality and business experience, Chin became the leader of the Chinese community and was honored as Chinatown’s mayor. Chin was seemingly active both in the mainstream society and the Chinese community; Chin was never willing to move beyond Chinatown. He turned down the position of Central City marshal and continued living in Chinatown rather than in the general Denver community. His reason was the same as that of other Chinese immigrants: it is safer for us in Chinatown.

Chinatown, Wei (2004) states “was a place they could call their own, a community that gave them moral support and physical security” (p. 3). After the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, almost no Chinese people entered Colorado for 60 years. The Chinese population reached its peak, 980 people, in 1890 and fell to 306 by the end of the century. With no jobs offered, no opportunities, and the discrimination they experienced, many Chinese people left for California where they thought there were better opportunities. Denver’s Chinatown no longer existed by 1940, and became a forgotten page in Colorado’s history.
**Chinese Immigrants’ Education in Colorado**

As Rudolph (1964) pointed out, Chinese were seen as heathens in this country of mainly Christians; therefore, the first educational effort was to try to convert them to Christianity. He continued, indicating that the first school established for Chinese immigrants was in a church, and the program was designed as an English language course. In Denver, many churches provided this type of service in the 1900s.

**Chinese schools in Denver.** Rudolph (1964) also addressed, to be able to convert Chinese people to Christianity; the first step was to teach them English. Two members of Central Presbyterian Church (at Eighteenth and Champa Streets), Mr. and Mrs. James A. Chain, established the first Chinese school in Denver in 1874. According to Rudolph, the English language classes were first taught in the rear of the Chain and Hardy Bookstore (on Larimer Street) then moved to the church for more space. Rudolph describes the teachers as typically young White girls and the students were generally Chinese men who often attended schools in several of the churches that followed Central Presbyterian’s attempts to reach out to the Chinese community by offering English language programs. Newspaper reports dating back to the 1880’s also indicate that the Chinese people were eager for the educational opportunities that would help establish their life in Denver (The Daily News Denver, 1881). Evidence shows that the Emily Griffith Opportunity School was the seventh school offering English classes, and it opened September 9, 1916 (Rudolph, 1964). This followed the programs at Central Presbyterian Church, Grace Methodist Episcopal Church (on Lawrence Street), the First Baptist Church, both the South Congregational Church and the Second Congregational Church, the Central Christian Church and the Adventist Church. Some of
these organizations were able to maintain the program for a few years but some of them only last for a few months (Rudolph, 1964).

**Chinese language schools.** Another type of Chinese school is called *Zhongwen Xuexiao*, which means Chinese language school. As Zhou (2009) states, this type of Chinese school aims to preserve the language and cultural heritage of Chinese immigrants. These schools formed an independent system and were often regarded as competing with the public school system. The pedagogy in the Chinese language schools follows a very traditional Chinese style of instruction and it reinforces the transmission of traditional Chinese culture and philosophy (Guthrie, 1985; Zhou, 2009; Wong & López, 2000). The first Chinese language school was established in San Francisco and it has been in existence for more than 100 years. Chinese schools are generally formed wherever there is a Chinese community (Zhou, 2009; Wong & López, 2000). The Chinese school not only functions as a space to pass on the Chinese culture, language, philosophy and values to the younger generations, but it also functions as a community that unifies the Chinese people.

As Zhou and Kim (2006) point out, “Chinese language schools have been an integral part of ethnic social structures of the Chinese immigrant community in the United States, and in the Chinese diaspora worldwide” (p. 9). They comment further that “where there is a visible Chinese enclave, there is at least one Chinese-language school” (Zhou, 2009, p. 152). Founded by Taiwanese immigrants in southern California in 1994, The National Council of Associations of Chinese Language Schools (NCACLS) continues to work toward their established goal of keeping their young generation educated in Chinese language, heritage, and culture even though they are being raised in the United States. According to NCACLS (2011), by the year 1997, 47 of the 50 states had some kind of private or church-supported
form of a Chinese language school, and approximately 100,000 students were enrolled. Another large Chinese language school organization is the Chinese School Association in the United States, CSAUS, which was founded by Chinese immigrants from the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1994. The most recent data shows that this group had 410 member schools, more than 100,000 students and 7,000 teachers across 43 states (CSAUS, 2011).

As for Chinese language schools in Colorado, the NCACLS stated in 1997 that there was only one school which consisted of three classes and approximately 100 students. Today, there are four Chinese language schools in Colorado: the Colorado Chinese Language School, Colorado Springs Chinese Language School, Great Wall Chinese Academy, and Bohua Chinese School. They offer 8 to 11 different levels of Chinese language classes as well as traditional dance, Chinese Tai-Qi, and Kung-Fu classes on Sunday afternoons.

**Chinese language schools at present.** In the past, it appears that the most important function of the Chinese language schools was teaching the Chinese language to children of immigrants from China. Currently, the function of the Chinese language schools seems to go beyond the heritage language teaching. As indicated by Zhou and Kim (2006), the Chinese language schools have also extended their programs in the summer to activities geared to strengthen students’ academic performance, such as summer programs to prepare students for the Scholastic Aptitude Test. This is called the Buxiban program and costs approximately $2,000 per class. Cited in Zhou and Kim’s (2006) study, Cordon et al. (2003) suggests that “public schools alone may not be sufficient to ensure immigrant children’s educational success, and that a wider range of afterschool services are badly needed, particularly in low-income urban communities” (p. 25). In their work examining Chinese language schools,
Zhou and Kim (2006) found that, “Many Chinese youth we interviewed agreed that going to a Chinese school or a Chinese-run buxiban or kumon program had been a common shared experience of being Chinese American, even though they generally disliked the fact that they were made to attend these ethnic institutions by their parents” (p. 12). Zhou (2009) addresses one of the major concerns about Chinese language schools: “It should also be noted that access to the ethnic system of supplementary education is more restricted for working-class families than for middle-class families in both Chinese and Korean immigrant communities” (p. 23). As is true for many of the opportunities immigrant families want to give their children, Chinese language schools are at times prohibitively expensive and do not serve all of the population who might benefit.

**Chinese immigrants’ public school education in Colorado (early immigration stage).** Unfortunately, there are no official studies to document the history of Chinese American students in Colorado during the early immigration stage and it is not clear if the students were allowed to attend public schools at the time. The little information revealed in the Denver Public Schools’ report about Chinese students in 1969 indicates “Since World War II, social economic, and political progress has enabled most Chinese immigrants to make a decent living and provide a good education for their children” (p. 3). Noel (2006) notes that William Chin, the son of Chinatown’s mayor, graduated from a public elementary school and high school. Furthermore, William’s children attended public elementary schools and high school and one of the daughters attended college. However, it contradicts an article in the *Denver Times*. The newspaper reported in 1902 that the son of Chinatown’s mayor, 14-year-old William Lin Sou had just returned from China and how William had forgotten his English after 7 years of education in China. Which information is true remains unclear.
Kuo (1998) indicates that the rules of segregation could not always be followed: “Outside San Francisco, where there were fewer Chinese American families, exceptions were made in the absence of established Chinese schools and in the absence of complaints from the White communities” (p. 10). Can Kuo’s statement be applied to Denver’s Chinese immigrant children? In an interview with Chin Lin Sou’s descendants, Wei (2002) notes that Linda Jew described her childhood:

In east Denver, during first and second grade, while walking home from school, white boys would chase us kicking, hitting, and calling us names. At the same school in third grade, there was an old white female teacher who favored the blond children and put them all at the front of the class. (p. 16)

Linda Jew clearly experienced violence and discrimination because of her race. It is likely that most Chinese children had similar experiences, whether they attended segregated or integrated schools.
CHAPTER VI
DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The focus of this chapter is the presentation of the data collected from the five participants and their parent. These participants were high school students from three different school districts in Denver, Colorado or its surrounding suburbs. Semi-structured interviews were used with these students and their parents. To provide a better understanding of each participant, below is a brief description of each individual. The second section of this chapter is to synthesize the data identifying both similarities and differences in the participants’ experiences and beliefs. To preserve authenticity and to prevent meaning being lost in translation, the language presented in this study is based on the students’ choice when conducting the interviews. If the participant spoke in Chinese, her words are given in Chinese and followed by an English translation. Due to the difficulty of subject recruiting, three of the five participants were new immigrants who had come to the US from Mainland China within the previous 18 months, while the other two came to Denver from Taiwan when they were six years old. All of the participants’ parents were new immigrants who came to the US to provide a better education for their children or a better life in general.

In this chapter, I present the participants in four segments: First, each individual is introduced to provide a whole picture of the individual. Second, the similarities between their stories are organized into different themes. Third, the participants are categorized into two groups; the three new immigrants in one group and the two who grew up in Colorado as the second group. This allows us to identify differences in their stories and experiences. Lastly, critical incidents are described and issues that need to be addressed are supplied. In addition data from this study is discussed in relation to the data collected in New York and California.
The data was examined in an attempt to understand the students’ school experiences and their interpretations of those experiences. After I thoroughly transcribed the interview data, I was able to immerse myself in the dialogues and determine their emotions and beliefs by carefully listening to their stories.

In order to maintain each participant’s voice, in every instance the transcription was completed in the language spoken. The three new immigrant students used Mandarin Chinese the whole time; interestingly, including the English proper names. The other two Chinese immigrant students from Taiwan usually opted to speak in English.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the layers of meaning embedded in the collected data, I read the transcripts carefully several times. I then performed data analysis using three methods: an early analysis using codes and coding, key-words-in-context, and a domain analysis for the results and findings. Each participant will be described at the time of the study:

**Lily**

Lily is an 18-year-old high school junior at the time of the study who has been in the US for a year. The school she attended included students of different races and ethnicities: Hispanics (14.5 %), Blacks(13.6 %), Whites (60.5), Asians (8.3 %), mixed students of two or more ethnicities (2.3 %), Native Americans (0.7 %) and Pacific Islanders (0.2 %). It is located in a suburban area that is relatively new. 12.9 % of the students qualified for free and reduced lunch, which is lower than the state average of 35 %.

Lily, a junior, was in her third semester in a U.S. high school during the data collection period. Lily was born and lived her early life in a large city located in the north of China. After several people told her that the US educational system is less demanding, she
decided to come to the US to avoid the stress of passing the national college entrance exam in China.

Lily was raised in China with her father and paternal grandparents. Her mother had lived in the US since Lily was two years old. At that time her parents were divorced.

Currently, Lily’s mother and stepfather own two Asian restaurants near where they live. Lily’s father had remarried and divorced in China before she came to the US. According to Lily, she has a rather complicated family; regardless she feels that she is very lucky and loved because all of her parents, whether biological or not, treat her very nicely and generously. The first time she saw her mother again was right before her high school entrance exam (equivalent to a ninth grader in the US) and her mother encouraged her to come to the US. Even though Lilly and her mother had been physically separated for 15 years they get along really well and her mother has been very supportive of whatever Lily needs.

Lily described herself as a very optimistic, outspoken, and energetic student back in China. She was engaged in all sorts of school activities, including hosting school events, being in charge of affairs for the class, and participating in choir and dance groups. Her father’s friends and those of her mother believed that the US would be a very suitable environment for her outgoing personality. However, Lily regrets her decision every single day. She stated:

哦…我是北方人, 天津人, 然後想到美國這發展一下, 但是然後而且是想說我這個性格呀, 還有我在中國比較全面嘛, 不像好多同學一樣一直死學嘛, 所以就想來美國應該比較適合我吧, 然後結果來了就後悔了. 真的後悔了, 每一天都後悔

oh...I am from north [China], then [I] want to come the US to create some opportunities, but then also think that because my personality is more creative, unlike many other [Chinese] classmates. So, I was thinking maybe the US fits me better. As
a result, right after I came to the US I regretted it. I really regretted it. Every day I regret it.

Because of the language barrier, Lily learned that everything is difficult. Because she was not familiar with the learning style in the US and the college application process, she found that the life in Colorado is hard one to adapt to. However, her academic performance seemed to hide her struggles really well. In terms of her academic performance, she has a 3.9 GPA, in spite of the challenges of completing all her coursework in English. With her studious attitude toward schoolwork, Lily never has missed assignments and her grades are mostly As. To her advantage she has already learned most of the content in China. With the help of this knowledge base, she found subjects like math and chemistry particularly easy; even though her math and science grades in China were not good. “What they taught here now was what I learned in middle school”, she said. Ironically, her previous favorite areas of studies such as history and language arts have now have become the subjects that cause her stress and most of the time, as she explained, “I can only guess what’s going on”.

Lily was preparing for and took her ACT exam during the time we conducted the interviews and this exam brought her a tremendous amount of stress. Unlike the impression she had of US high schools, as portrayed by Hollywood, of ease and little academic pressure, this was not what Lily experienced and she has had a hard time adjusting to her new life here in Colorado.

Jasmine

Lily introduced Jasmine to me. These two participants attended the same school and were in the same ESL classes. Jasmine was a sophomore who just came to the US about 4 months before we conducted the first interview. Jasmine’s father went to Germany seeking better wages and hopefully also to obtain legal immigrant status there; however, it’s not easy
to make a good living in Germany. After years of trying, Jasmine’s mother decided to come to the United States after her cousin opened a restaurant in Colorado. Jasmine’s mother arrived in the US in 2008 and obtained her legal immigrant status in 2012. She then filed the applications for Jasmine and her husband to come to the US. While Jasmine’s mother and father were in the US and Germany respectively, Jasmine stayed with her mother’s cousin, for about four years. According to her mother, it was hard for Jasmine to stay with this intact family and not feel lonely. Even after she obtained legal documents to come to the US, Jasmine’s father decided to go to New York for a job opportunity instead of reuniting the family in Colorado. Jasmine’s mom explained “反正怎麼距離那麼遠嘛，畢竟感情也沒那麼好了這樣子” (Anyway, it is such a long distance. After all, the relationship [between my husband and me] is not as good as in the past.) However, when I asked if they would like to live together in the future, Jasmine’s mother responded “那當然，反正就是努力賺錢。主要是這點，有了經濟才能做事情” (Of course! Anyway, [we] just need to try hard to make money. Mainly it’s because of this, once we have the financial ability then we can do stuff).

All of these sacrifices and separation are for one goal: a better life, in the future.

Jasmine currently lives with her mother but due to their different schedules Jasmine stays in the apartment alone while she is awake for most of the time. The only time they can hang out is Tuesdays when her mother has a day off from the restaurant. However, Jasmine seems fine with the situation. According to Jasmine’s mother “因為她從小就很懂事⋯⋯困難都不會跟我講。好像跟我也很陌生的那種感覺” (Because she was very mature since she was little. [She] never would tell me [any of the difficulties she faces]. It seems that she is not familiar with me).
Jasmine’s grades were all As when I helped her to access her grades online during the first interview. However, she is very frustrated at her inability to have conversations in English with others. Most of the time, she either has to guess what’s happening in the class or rely on her teachers or friends to help her in class. Jasmine is also very shy and doesn’t speak much. During the interviews I needed often to prompt Jasmine to add details and information to her brief responses.

Jasmine was still experiencing culture shock and cultural differences since she arrived in the US just before the interviews took place. When I asked how she felt sitting in the classroom she replied that she is less nervous now compared with when she had first arrived. However, she also stated “感覺那個老師都知道我聽不懂怎麼樣，所以可能就感覺坐在那邊聽就好” (I feel that the teacher understands that I don’t understand or something like that. So I feel that maybe it’s fine that I just sit there and listen). In terms of participating in the class, she is the quiet listener; and that was all she needed to do to maintain her good grades.

Jasmine is very studious and takes the interviews seriously. Not only she would double check our interview schedule but she was also the only one who sent me a greeting during the Chinese moon festival.

Daisy

Daisy is a junior in high school, and has been in the US for one and a half years. The school she attended was made up of Latinos (94%), Blacks (1%), Asians (2%), Whites (2%), mixed students of two or more ethnicities (2.3%), Indians (0.7%) and Pacific Islanders (0.2%). The school was located in a Denver area that had 93.8% of the students on
free and reduced lunch, and the school was considered to have a high level of poverty compared with the state average.

The data collection took place during her third semester in the US in this school. Daisy was born and raised in a big city in northern China before she came to the US. The school she attends is located in south Denver and the majority of the students are Latinos. According to Daisy, “去年一直有一種幻覺就是我移民到墨西哥。每天耳邊只有西班牙語 (Last year, I kept having the illusion that I had emigrated to Mexico. Every day all I heard was Spanish), “全校都是外國人” (The whole school is foreigners). The school’s October count data shows that there are thirty-seven Asian students in her school. However, according to Daisy, there are only about seven Chinese students in the school and the other Asian students are Vietnamese.

Daisy has a 4.02 GPA but she does not think that’s good enough. She expressed that the GPA does not reflect her English ability and English is the key to success on the specialized tests such as the ACT or SAT. Overall, Daisy is very confident and has high expectations for herself. She anticipates being accepted by a prestigious college in the near future, somewhere outside of Colorado.

Daisy lives with her father in a rental apartment near her school. In a similar situation with Jasmine, Daisy’s father works in a Chinese restaurant with a schedule that makes the time they can spend together very limited. Daisy is often alone in the apartment. However, she doesn’t seem to object to being alone; as she explains, “I am used to it”. One main difference between Daisy and the other newcomers is that her father once attended a short-term program in a college in the Denver area. He came to Denver years ago and found it difficult to find a job related to his major in computer science. He then worked in a Chinese
restaurant to acquire residency in Colorado. Ever since Daisy was a young child she knew that she would be moving the US eventually. As of the end of the interview period, Daisy and her father were still waiting for her mom’s legal status to be approved. In order to meet the educational goals she and her parents established Daisy needed to come to the US before her mother and be separated from her.

As mentioned earlier, Daisy was a very confident person and this is reflected in her responses to my questions. To avoid saying things incorrectly, she is more conservative with her answers and avoided revealing her true feeling if she thought the question was too personal. Therefore, to thoroughly examine her experience, I needed to carefully analyze the parts she was willing to share.

Daisy was the first student who indicated that she lacked friends from school. Most of the Chinese students in her school, according to Daisy, had been in the US for years. Daisy’s perception was they either struggled with English or they were not ambitiously pursuing the opportunities available to attend college. Therefore, she felt that they were different types of people than her. Sometimes Daisy ate lunch with these Chinese students. However, in the second interview, Daisy expressed that she was irritated that day because she couldn’t find these Chinese students to have lunch with. As a Chinese student with a high GPA, Daisy found herself even more isolated from other Chinese immigrant students. She did not fit in with the majority group or even her own group. Daisy needed to tell me, or herself, that “無論啦” (It doesn’t matter) to be able to justify the situation. And for some reason, this phrase appeared in our conversations multiple times.
Acacia

Acacia is a 15 year old Taiwanese girl who attends high school in north Denver. She came to the US when she was six years old. The school she attends now has the following demographic breakdown; Latinos (18.2 %), Blacks (0.9 %), Whites (74.3 %), Asians (5.9 %), mixed students of two or more ethnicities (0.8 %), Native Americans (0.5 %) and Pacific Islanders (0.2 %). It is located in a suburban area and the 5.9% of Asian population is considered high compared to other high schools in Colorado. The school had 18.7% of the students on free and reduced lunch, which is lower than the state average of 35 %.

Acacia was in the school choir and used to play sports while she was in middle school. She came to the US with her mother while her father worked in Taiwan to support the family in the US. Acacia has a brother who has already gone to college with a scholarship. A few years ago, Acacia’s father was able to join them in Colorado and now has his own business here. Acacia’s mother came to the US around nine years ago with two young children, one was eleven and Acacia was six. She gave up her job as a science teacher in a high school and an upper middle class life in Taiwan and came to the US for one reason: a better education for her children.

According to Acacia’s mother, Acacia’s brother was very unique and did not fit in the strict education environment in Taiwan. Because of this she chose to come to the US seeking a more open-minded setting that could meet the educational needs of her son.

The first months in the US were hard. Acacia’s mother volunteered thirty hours a week in the class to make sure that her children were doing fine. She also used this opportunity to learn English herself and build a rapport with the teachers. At home, she required her son to memorize English stories on tape and then recite them in order to improve
his English in a short time. Since they gave up a wealthy lifestyle in Taiwan and came here for her children’s education, this has become the main focus of their US life.

Acacia’s mother worried less about her and she always performed well in school, with a 4.0 GPA at the time of data collection. Acacia is the youngest child at home and is well protected, as she described:

I guess I was lucky because everyone is very nice to me. My mom, my aunt, my uncle, my brother were around me. I felt protected in a way.

However, she still remembers how she struggled in the beginning of her new life in the US, using a completely new language. Now, this family has overcome many immigration obstacles and the children are very successful in school. After immersion in the American culture, when Acacia returned to Taiwan for a visit, she experienced a reverse culture shock 2. In order to continue to develop their heritage language, Mandarin Chinese, Acacia’s mother asked Acacia and her brother to attend a Taiwanese elementary school in June when they went back to visit. Acacia described this experience:

So, my mom got me into a private Taiwanese school. I just feel that everyone expects you to be super good at studying. I got really scared of this one part. You have to go up to the chalkboard to write something. If you don’t do it right, they will write a mark under it. I just don’t like…. Oh my god, everyone can see me doing this…. if I fail…

Being an Asian, Acacia might struggle with her identity. Acacia would first need to identify herself to clarify where she is from but also would hope that her American side is recognized.

When I asked Acacia how would she identify herself, here was her response:

__________________________

2 “Reverse culture shock is the process of readjusting, reacculturating, and reassimilating into ones’ own culture after living in a different culture for a significant period of time” (Gaw, 2000. p. 83).
Nationality wise? I said I am from Taiwan but I think I have some American qualities in me. Because when I went back, I realized that I am not as studious as some Taiwanese kids are. But, I still care a lot about my grades. So I cannot be all free and party like some of the American kids. I still want straight A’s on my report card. But, again, I don’t dedicate every minute of what I do to school…

With her parents’, especially her mother’s involvement in education, Acacia’s performance fits the typical perception of an Asian child. She stated, “I think I have some teachers expect me to do more than other kids because I cannot stand average, especially schoolwork”. She is also the only participant who did not become emotional when describing her experiences since she had moved to the US.

Lilac

Lilac came to the US from Taiwan when she was six years old. Like the other participants, Lilac’s mother came alone with the children and her husband stayed in Taiwan. At the time Lilac was six years old and her brother was two. For the first couple of years, they lived with her mother’s sister’s family, and her sister’s mother in law took care of Lilac and her brother. Lilac’s mother had to work in a Chinese restaurant to support the family. After a while, for some reason, they had to move out and rented a room from the nanny who took care of Lilac and her brother while her mother was at work. According to Lilac’s mother, most of her income went to the rent and babysitting fees. In 2008, they finally had their own home. However, life is still a struggle as a single mom with two children, living on minimum wage.

When I asked if Lilac’s mother came to the US for her children, the answer was positive but she also expressed her uncertainty, “其實這一路…這一路走來我不知道，這樣到底…我說的為他們好，到底是真的有給他們比較好嗎，我不知道” (Actually, along with this journey…along with this journey, I don’t know if this is good for them. After all, is
it really better? I don’t know). Due to her mother’s work schedule, Lilac and her brother could rarely participate in school or sports activities. There were even times that Lilac or her brother got injured at school, their mother couldn’t leave work to go pick them up; let alone take care of them. Without their own transportation, Lilac and her brother always had to turn down invitations from friends and stay at home. There were almost no social engagements going on after school. Lilac’s mom was worried about her children’s mental health because of this: “恩⋯期望阿⋯我覺得他們可以比較健康的發展，就是身心比較健康一點，然後..因為我的孩子，我覺得都關在家裡，他們對外面的接觸很少，我覺得⋯還是⋯” (Umm… expectations…. I think that they can have a healthier development; another way to say, to have a bit healthier mental [development]. Then…because my kids, I think that they rarely get in touch with the outside world, I think…still….). Stumbling with the words, Lilac’s mother had a hard time revealing that this part made her feel guilty. The original intention was to open up the world for her children; in reality, it went the opposite direction, at least at this time. Regardless, the options for a single immigrant parent are very limited. One of the supports that Lilac’s mom can draw on is the Christian church, especially the people she met there who are from Taiwan or China. She is grateful for having the support from her faith and from the Chinese Christian church community. She appreciates that she can draw strength from them whenever life gets hard.

Lilac understood how her mother was trying her best to provide for her and her brother; however, it could be very stressful when she shouldered adults’ responsibilities whenever the ability to speak English was required. Lilac’s father didn’t come to the US until last summer and it was not a good visit according to her. Lilac had become American in so many ways while her father maintained the parenting style that is traditional in Taiwan, and
this resulted in conflict between them. Lilac expressed, “He is really traditional so he expects us to be traditional to him and treat him with absolute respect. [Respect him as] the boss of the house. I just can’t do that”. After all, she thought that life would be less complicated without her dad being here.

Lilac did not consider her GPA of 3.3 to be a good performance. “It’s average. Not good enough for the other Asians”, she stated. Regarding the myth of the model minority, Lilac actually is familiar with it and she thought that in school, it’s very segregated based on students’ races. However, she did not like to just hang out with other Asians. Growing up in a Latino neighborhood, Lilac is more comfortable with Latino students as friends. This also made other non-Asian students think that she was cool.

Results

In order to compare and contrast the differences and similarities among these participants, their stories are considered in the following categories: 1) Life history/experiences, 2) public school experiences and 3) gender.

1. Life History/Experiences. To easily compare and contrast the participants’ background and life experiences, Table 3 provides their basic information including how long the participant has already been in the US, if she has siblings, what is their living situation, the reason they came to the US, the reason they chose Colorado, self identification and their academic GPA at the time of data collection. Each item is compared and explained in detail in order to illustrate the differences and similarities among the participants.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Time in the U.S.</th>
<th>Siblings</th>
<th>Living situation</th>
<th>Reason for coming to the U.S/ Reason for choosing Colorado</th>
<th>Self – identification</th>
<th>GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Live with mom and step-father</td>
<td>To avoid the college entrance exam in China</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmine</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Lives with mom</td>
<td>Seeking a better life; go to a college here/ Work in family owned restaurant</td>
<td>Foreigner who came here to study</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daisy</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Lives with dad</td>
<td>Seeking a better life; go to a college here/ Cousin offered a job in a Chinese restaurant</td>
<td>Foreigner/ Chinese</td>
<td>4.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acacia</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>1 older brother</td>
<td>Lives with both parents</td>
<td>Came for a better education environment / Mom’s sister was here</td>
<td>Taiwanese with American qualities</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lilac</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>1 younger brother</td>
<td>Lives with mom</td>
<td>Came for a better education; a better life/ mother’s sister opened a Chinese restaurant</td>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The five participants had many experiences in common; at the same time, there were variations in their stories. In the following section elements of Table 3 are discussed in detail, considering the differences and similarities among them.
The key to adapting to life in the US is in providing them with the necessary resources; the length of time a student has lived in the US is also a consideration. The length of time participants have been in the US is not the only indicator that correlates to how well they can adapted to life in the US Access to important resources is critical in order for students to excel in school.

All of the newcomers from China came to the US recently. Daisy has been in Colorado the longest. She seemed to be the one who had adapted best to the school system in the US as well. Over time she has gained skills, strategies and knowledge. However, the pace and resources that the school or educators can provide is actually the key for most new immigrant students. Daisy, who seems cope with her new school the best among the three newcomers, had been in the US for the longest time, one and a half years. After completing the interviews and analyzing the data, the results showed that Daisy had less confusion about the US educational system. Analyzing the differences between Daisy and the other two newcomers revealed several differences. The fact that Daisy’s father had college experience might have played a role but the other advantage she had was the Chinese teacher at her high school here. I talked to this teacher and asked if Daisy came to her asking questions sometimes. The teacher indicated that Daisy did show up sometimes to seek help when she needed it, even though Daisy didn’t indicate that the Chinese teacher is her resource in her statement. When questioned if she asks for help when she runs into difficulties, Daisy responded that she would go to a teacher for help. The Chinese teacher at her school did express that Asian students tend to gather in her classroom during lunch break to either ask her questions or just hang out. Her classroom seemed to be a safe space for these Asian
immigrant students and that’s exactly what Lily and Jasmine felt they needed the most.

Below is the wish Lily expressed:

YW:那你覺得，即便是現在好了。你覺得你最需要的?
Lily: 需要學校裡有個中國老師，可以講中文，我可以有困難去找他。我可以一
有事情，如果現在沒參加這個調查，我不認識你的話，我連這(National Honor
Society)是甚麼東西都不知道。我問我媽，我媽就會去問美國孩子，那美國孩子
看這個也是看不懂，他也不知道具體是甚麼，可能他沒有這個東西。他也不知
道這什麼。他只能跟我媽講這甚麼意思，然後我媽還聽一半那種，然後他再回
來跟我講，對不對?然後我就是不知道這甚麼東西，就所有事情都一樣的，如果
我在學校裡有個中國老師⋯
YW: Then, what do you think, even just for now, that you need the most?
Lily: [I] need a Chinese teacher in my school. [A teacher who] can speak Chinese. I
can go to her/him whenever I have some difficulties. If [we] didn’t have this
interview, if I didn’t know you, I would not be able to know what this is (the form for
the National Honor Society). I asked my mom, my mom then went and asked an
American kid. [But] that American kid didn’t understand what this was. He didn’t
know what [the form] referred to. Probably he never received this. He didn’t know
what this was. He could only tell my mom what it said on the form. My mom only
could understand half of what he said, and then she came to tell me, right? Then I just
didn’t know what this was. Just like all the other stuff. If there was a Chinese teacher
in my school…

I am not sure if it is realistic to have a Chinese-speaking teacher in every school in
Colorado. However, the importance of providing resources in their native language to help
newcomers to better transition to a new environment still needs to be addressed.

Reasons to come to the US /Colorado. Three out of the five participants live with one
parent even though their parents are still married. All of them came to Colorado because their
relatives were here. From their parents’ descriptions, it’s hard for me to tell if the ‘brother’ or
‘sister’ is a sibling or if they are cousins. This could not be clarified, as it would have been
culturally unacceptable to do so. Since China has enforced the One child policy for decades,
the assumption is that they are not siblings. However, the Chinese saying of 人不親, 土親,
means even if two people are not blood related, as long as they are from the same country,
they are related in some way. From the stories told to me in this foreign land, I found that it is very true.

The parents of these participants realize that they are a part of a powerless minority group in Colorado. However, they would still choose to stay here even though they face great obstacles. The reasons for this choice are:

1) For the new immigrants, it’s a better place to learn English in Colorado as there are few Chinese people around. This situation forces them to use and listen to the new language.

As Jasmine’s mother states:

YW: 你哥覺得在這邊的高中比在紐約好是不是?
M: 應該是這樣子。
YW:在哪一方面覺得他比較好?
M:因為就是說語言。因為我們主要出來就是說語言要溝通嘛，那紐約上面都是講中文嘛，差不多就是講中文。因為大多都是華人嘛，我們都是講中文。但這邊呢，很少華人。你必須要強迫自己要學英語。
YW: Your brother thinks that the high schools here are better than New York’s, is that right?
M: Something like that.
YW: In what way they are better?
M: Because of language. Because we came here mainly for communicating in [their] language. In New York, they speak Chinese there, most of the time. Because most of them are Chinese, we speak Chinese [with them]. But here, they are not many Chinese people. You have to force yourself to learn the language.

Other participants, Acacia and Daisy also made similar statements:

Daisy: 中国人太多的话，其实就不是移民到美国了 (If there are too many Chinese people around, in fact it is not immigrating to the US)

Acacia: We moved to Colorado because my aunt was here. I asked this before. They didn’t want me to move to California because they actually wanted me to learn English and they knew that a lot of people, Taiwanese or Chinese in California, they can just get by speaking Chinese. A large portion of the Chinese population there are Chinese-speaking people.

The participants see coming to Colorado as a necessary sacrifice; they are giving up the comfort that would come with a large Chinese community in order to force themselves
and their children to learn English. However Jasmine indicated that she rarely communicates with native speakers of English in part because she is shy and partly because of her level of English language acquisition. Below is a conversation related to this topic:

YW: 所以你現在因為你有一方面希望可以增進自己語言的能力對不對?
Jasmine: 對
YW: 然後可是一方面就覺得說想要跟中國人接觸，因為比較熟悉?
Jasmine: 恩
YW: 那你覺得這兩個會不會有一點矛盾?
Jasmine: 會吧，因為跟中國人接觸的話可能就，就是語言上面英語可能就沒有那麼好學，所以跟外國人還是要多接觸，但是感覺接觸我也不會講什麼話。
YW: So now it’s because you hope that in this way (living in Colorado), you can improve your language ability, right?
Jasmine: Right.
YW: Then on the other side, you feel that you want to get in touch with Chinese people because [those are who] you are familiar with?
Jasmine: Yes.
YW: Then, do you think that there is a bit of a conflict?
Jasmine: Yeah, because if I get in touch with Chinese people, there is not much you can learn from them in terms of English. So [I] still need to be in touch with foreigners (Americans) but I think that even if I got in touch with them, I would not speak to them as well.

Many new immigrants share this belief: to be able to learn better English, one needs to go to a location that has fewer Chinese people. However, from their stories, they seem only to become more isolated instead of interacting with the people around them. It is like throwing a child into a pool and expecting them to swim naturally. Perhaps after a long time, these sacrifices bear the fruits they seek, the acquisition of strong English skills. Each participant will, at some point, decide if the price paid for his or her new life is worth the cost.

Parents’ involvement makes difference. All of the participants believe that their parent’s emphasis on and involvement in their education is important for their success. Four out of the five participants lived with one parent, mostly with their mother, when they first came to the US. Currently, three out of five participants still live with a single parent. The
main reason that contributed to this is that the other parent can provide stable financial support.

The educational involvement of the parents varies but all of the parents value education very much. There are differences between the participants in terms of their parent’s educational backgrounds and how they are able to be involved in their children’s education. Lilac and Acacia both had been in the US for about 9 years. However, they had very different experiences of living in Colorado. Lilac lived with her mother and her brother. Ever since they came to the US, her mother worked so they grew up with different babysitters who took care of them whenever her mother was working. It also meant that most of time, their parents were not around. A similar situation happened to Daisy and Jasmine with their parent working in the Chinese restaurant with a very different schedule than the schools’. The parent and child had little time to spend together, let alone time to provide them with academic support or even just mental support for life in general. However, the advantage that Daisy had was her father’s educational background, which gave her the confidence that she was on the right track. Jasmine’s mother also would like to be involved in Jasmine’s life, but it has been hard to keep the conversations going without knowing the educational system here. Therefore, according to Jasmine’s mother, “好像跟我也很陌生的那種感覺” ([She] seems very indifferent to me, that kind of feeling”).

In contrast to Lilac, Acacia’s mother was always around since they came to the US. According to her mother, she volunteered 30 hours a week to make sure that her children had enough support at school. She also knew that by doing that, the teachers would pay more attention to her children. On the other hand, Lilac’s mother didn’t have the financial support that Acacia’s family had, so she had to work all the time and leave Lilac and her brother at
the babysitter’s since Lilac was six years old and Lilac’s brother was two. Without the constant involvement in her children’s education, Lilac’s mother was and still is very frustrated and hopes she didn’t cause too much damage to her children’s childhood and education.

2. School Experiences in Colorado.

*Interaction with teachers.* None of the participants mentioned much about their interactions with their teachers. This may be because they were in high school and want to be independent, or due to their personalities or the school culture they learned in China. Further exploration is warranted. For Lily and Jasmine, they sense that teachers understand their difficulties related to their linguistic challenges. Therefore, teachers tend to adjust the educational requirements to take this into account. However, the language barrier limits their teachers’ abilities to provide supportive resources. A typical image of a new Chinese immigrant student might be similar to what Jasmine described: sitting in the class alone and having no idea what the teacher was trying to say. Most of the time, she was just sitting there quietly without causing any trouble or disruption.

Jasmine: 因為比較好溝通，然後可能就感覺起來比較沒有那麼陌生
YW: 恩，所以你到現在上學的時候會不會緊張?
Jasmine: 現在不會了
YW: 剛開始的時候會?
Jasmine: 對，因為不知道要做什麼
YW: 然後聽不太懂老師說什麼
Jasmine: 恩
YW: 那如果坐在教室裡面，就是有那陌生的感覺?
Jasmine: 應該適應了吧，感覺那個老師都知道我聽不懂怎麼樣，所以可能就感覺坐在那邊聽就好.
Jasmine: Because [it’s] easier to communicate [now], probably then feel like not that unfamiliar as before.
YW: Um...so do you feel nervous when you go to school now?
Jasmine: Now it’s fine.
YW: So you were nervous when you just started?
Jasmine: Yes, because I didn’t understand what to do.
YW: And, you didn’t understand what the teacher said?
Jasmine: Yes.
YW: So, while you were sitting in the classroom, you felt [everything] was unfamiliar.
Jasmine: Now I am used to it. I feel that the teachers all know that I don’t understand. So I feel that maybe I just sit there and listen.

When the participants needed to ask the teacher questions, an electric dictionary or Google Translate played the role of intermediary and provided translation. It was necessary to fully translate the meaning of the questions or at least translate the key points so the teacher could communicate. Below is Jasmine’s description that allows us to see a glimpse of her interaction with the teacher in class.

YW: 所以上數學課的時候是沒有壓力的時候?
Jasmine: 恩，對
YW: 反正就去算阿算，講不講話沒關係
Jasmine: 對
YW: OK。那其他課呢?
Jasmine 其他課，英語課好像是一個人一個座位，所以我還是一個人坐
YW: 還是一個人坐，旁邊的人會跟你說話嗎?
Jasmine: 不會
YW: 也不會，所以你有沒有特定的座位?
Jasmine: 有
YW: 有?
Jasmine: 大家都是固定在那邊
YW: 哦~老師會刻意跟你說話嗎?
Jasmine: 老師他刻意把我調到他旁邊，就他有的時候要放課件都在那個位置，然後我的座位就在那個位置旁邊
YW: OK。那你有問題會問他嗎?
Jasmine: 恩
YW: 那你怎麼問他呢?
Jasmine: 也是翻譯，就 GOOGLE
YW: So in math class is the time that you don’t feel stressed?
Jasmine: Um, yes.
YW: Just doing the calculation and it does not matter if you talk or not?
Jasmine: Yes
YW: Ok. How about other classes?
Jasmine: Other classes…English class seems everyone has their own seat, so I still sit with no one.
YW: Still sit with no one. Would anyone next to you talk to you?
Jasmine: No.
YW: No.. So do you have a particular assigned seat?
Jasmine: Yes.
YW: Yes..
Jasmine: Everyone has an assigned seat.
YW: Would the teacher talk to you?
Jasmine: The teacher asked me to sit next to her. She sometime leaves teaching materials at a seat then I sit next to that seat.
YW: Ok. Would you ask him/her questions if you have any?
Jasmine: Yes
YW: Then, how do you ask her?
Jasmine: Translation as well. Just Google.

In a similar vein, Lily expressed her gratitude of her teachers who do not push her too hard on her assignments. For example, if the assignment required language proficiency, the teachers would not expect her to complete the assignment with the understanding that she is not avoiding work. According to her, “all of the teachers take good care of me”.

Lily: 那倒沒有，有聽說其他的洲或哪的地區啊有什麼歧視呀，可是這邊我倒是沒有遇到過。都挺友好的，老師也是。
YW: 不是這麼狹義的歧視，
Lily: 就是對待的方式不一樣
Lily: 也沒有啊，就除了老師對我很照顧以外。因為老師知道我也挺困難的
YW: 是什麼樣的照顧法？
Lily: 比如有時我聽不懂呀，或真的不知道怎麼做，美國學習的東西比較活，我有時候沒辦法按時交出來，老師可以讓我下次再給他。特別有意思的事，有一節健康課，他們做 bubble map. 在中國從來不做這些東西的，直接有什麼東西就寫了。用筆記，看一些電影，在筆記上寫一些例子，如電影中是什麼例子？然後寫上去了，我實在是寫不出來，我就在上面寫一行字，I have no idea ..., sorry,畫了一個哭臉。然後老師批的時候上面寫了一個 ok. 不是考試啦，就是筆記。他就是知道我有困難。也不強迫我寫太深的東西。他們都這樣，挺照顧我的。
Lily: There was not such a thing. I heard that other states or some other regions have discrimination issues but here [in Colorado] I have not experienced that. [They are] all pretty friendly, including the teachers.
YW: It’s not necessary to have only a narrow definition to discrimination…
Lily: [People] treat us differently. Also no. Just the teachers are taking very good care of me. Because the teachers know that I have some difficulties [in school].
YW: In what way do they take care of you?
Lily: For example, if I don’t understand or if I really don’t know what to do. Because it’s more creative the way the US learn stuff, I sometimes cannot meet the deadline. The teacher would allow me to submit [the assignment] next time. It was very interesting that one time, in the health class, they were doing a bubble map. We never did things like this in China [and] we just write whatever we have [in mind]. [We] used notes, watched some movies, and wrote some samples on the notes. For example, the cases in the movies, then we wrote on the [note as an assignment]. I really couldn’t write anything. I then wrote a sentence, “I have no idea….sorry”, [And] I drew a crying face. Then, when teacher graded it, he wrote me an ‘ok’. It’s not a test, just a note. He knew that I had a hard time, so he wouldn’t force me to write something in depth. They are all like this. They all take good care of me.

However, there are still some frustrating cases where the language barrier is the root issue. Jasmine explained that she sometimes prefers that teachers ignores her instead. Due to cultural differences, the newcomers are accustomed to a more interactive method between teachers and students. It then causes discomfort when a teacher tries to help, especially when the approach was not effective. “I would feel bad if I go ask her /him again”, this is a cultural difference, that a student should not bother teachers too much, this also became a barrier as another cultural difference needed to be addressed. Evidence of the cultural difference is provided below:

YW:恩，你會希望老師做這樣的動作多嗎?就是過來關心你
Jasmine:希望也不希望吧
YW:怎麼說?
RR:不希望的話就是因為他過來我也聽不懂，所以如果她一直我，我又不講的
     話, 感覺就是不太好
YW:你會覺得不好意思嗎?
Jasmine:會吧
YW:為什麼?他是老師啊，那是他的工作呀。但是你還是會覺得說不好意思麻煩老師了是這樣嗎?
Jasmine:可能吧
YW:可能。對阿或者是因為那個是什麼樣的原因會讓你覺得很遲疑，就是覺得
     不希望他這麼做?
Jasmine::好像沒有
YW:就如果她一直解釋，然後你聽不懂
Interaction with ELA teachers. All students are currently or were in ESL/ELA programs, which are English as a Second Language or English Language Acquisition classes. The newcomers all had powerful descriptions about these classes and teachers. However, their experiences varied greatly. The ELA program provided in Lily’s and Jasmine’s school functioned as a shelter for them to survive. Lily expressed this multiple times “如果沒有這
Jasmine also mentioned that a particular ELA teacher would sit next to her during the entire biology class to help her:

Jasmine: 例如生物老師叫你翻到哪一頁，就是下面有題目你去書裡找答案嘛，然後他就會跟我一起翻到那一頁告訴我做那些題，然後因為我全英文根本看不懂嘛，然後他就會找出來然後念了他找到的那個答案，一邊念一邊畫紅線，然後告訴我把這個寫下來就是這個答案，然後就寫下來。然後有的時候他會告訴我那些是重點的詞，然後他會去解釋，但是我還是聽不懂。

Jasmine: For example, the biology teacher asked you to turn to which page, then you look for the answers from the text. Then, he [the ELA teacher] would turn to that page and tell me which questions I needed to work on. Then, because I totally didn’t understand the English [in the text]; then he would find the answers and read it out loud. He would draw a red line while he was reading then tell me to write down the answer. Then [I] would write it down. Then, sometimes he would tell me those are important phrases then he would explain, but I still didn’t understand.

In general, ELA teachers play the roles of bridging and communicating between the new students and their teachers, translating during school events, and providing English skill supports and development. I am not sure if the method this ELA teacher used helped during Jasmine’s biology class could also help her English development. However, both Jasmine and Lily really appreciate having ELA supports. Lily experienced two different ELA teachers and she had very different perspectives toward this class because of the different teachers.

Lily thought that ELA classes should be run as a tutoring center to help her with other assignments from different classes instead of teaching English grammar or developing their language skills; otherwise, according to Lily “it is a waste of time”.

Lily: 還有那個時候我有兩節那個 ELA，其實現在覺得 ELA 真好，在那幹甚麼都行。但以前覺得 ELA 太誤時間了。而且那個 ELA 老師也沒講什麼，而且他不讓你做別的事情。就那個女的。所以就很討厭那個 ELA，想把他直接挪成別的，上別的課吧。但是沒辦法，人家已經快完了，怎麼會給你換，就算沒完，他也不會給你換這種課。

Lily: And, at that time [when Lily first arrived], I had 2 ELA classes. Now I actually think that having ELA classes is so nice. You can do whatever you need to do. However, in the past, I think that was a waste of my time. Plus, that ELA teacher
didn’t teach much and she would not allow you to do anything else. It was that female teacher. So, [I] was really annoyed by that ELA class. I wished that I could change it to something else, some other class. But there was no way to do so. [At the time] it was almost the end of the semester, [so] how would they let you change it? Even if it was not at the end of the semester, they would not allow you to change this class out.

Daisy, in another school, has similar feelings about the ELA class. During the first interview, she strongly expressed how much she disliked this class and claimed it as “time wasting, energy consuming and hurt [my] feelings class”. She continued to further explain that having this class on her transcripts had already lower her perceived academic ability. Most of the time, she learned English in ELA class through computer software instead of the teacher. She also described how the situations in ELA class made her very frustrated:

Daisy: 主要太鬱悶是因為我有一個非常簡單的課, 而且兩節並排的ELA的課,所以說我的同學整節課基本就是甚麼都不學, 然後大家都是Spanish的交談,然後老師也給大家特別特別簡單的題, 因為是英語課嘛, 他教的那些語法在中國我都會阿, 而且事特別特別簡單的, 因為他們那些人從來都不說英語嘛, 所以說這是讓我非常困擾的事情, 就是一般同學基本都不學。

Daisy: I am not happy mainly because I have a very easy class; not only that [I have] 2 ELA classes in a row. I have to say that my classmates, the whole class, do not [want to] learn in general. Everyone communicates in Spanish. Then, the teacher gives us very easy questions. Because it’s an English class, I have learned the grammar in China that he teaches. They are also very, very easy. [Because] they (the class) never speak English, so it bothers me very much. The students don’t learn in general.

The newcomers are at different stages of language acquisition and this might explain the varying reactions to the ESL/ELA classes. By high school, these newcomers are pushed for time. They need the credits and high grades on their transcripts to be able to apply to a good college. On the other hand, students who were in ESL/ELA classes as elementary school students had a positive memory of how ESL/ELA help them to build their English skills when they first came to the US as 6-year-old children.

Interaction with others (including classmates). Because the students were easily identified as newcomers, one would expect that the other students might be willing to
provide them assistance. However, again, due to linguistic and cultural barriers, the other students didn’t seem to know what these new immigrants needed. In answering about whether classmates would provide help, Jasmine’s expressed her thoughts:

YW: 會主動幫你嗎?
Jasmine: 別人……外國人的話可能也不知道我需要什麼吧，但是那個老師會幫，就是她會跟我說，比如想要幹嘛不懂可以叫她們幫我
YW: Would others [classmates] try to help you without the teachers asking them to?
Jasmine: Others…. [if they are] foreigners they might not know what I need, but the teacher would help. Like, she would tell me, if I want to do something but I don’t know how, I can ask them [the classmates] to help me.

Jasmine admitted she was too shy to initiate a conversation. She rarely would try to speak when she was in class. Here are the direct quotes about this topic and there were multiple examples throughout the interviews in terms of her quietness.

**Example 1**
YW: 那班上就只有你一個亞洲學生嗎?
Jasmine: 好像有一個長的也很像亞洲人，但是我不知道他是什麼人耶
YW: 哈哈，你都沒有問過他嗎?
Jasmine: 沒有
YW: So, you are the only Asian in your class?
Jasmine: There is a student who looks like an Asian as well but I don’t know where she/he is from.
YW: Haha, you never ask him/her?
Jasmine: No.

**Example 2**
[Was talking about math class]
YW: 偶爾會跟旁邊的人講話嗎?
Jasmine: 不會
YW: 所以從頭到尾一個字都不說?
Jasmine 對
YW: OK。那其他課呢?
Jasmine: 其他課，英語課好像是一個人一個座位，所以我還是一個人坐
YW: 還是一個人坐，旁邊的人會跟你說話嗎?
Jasmine: 不會
[Was talking about math class]
YW: Would you talk to the person who sits next to you sometimes?
Jasmine: No.
YW: So, from [the time the class] starts to the end, no talking at all?
Jasmine: Right.
YW: OK. How about other classes?
Jasmine: Other classes... English class seems everyone has an individual seat so I still sit alone.
YW: Still sit alone... would the person next to you talk to you?
Jasmine: No.

In Lily’s case:
Lily: 而且我朋友比較少在這邊, 剛來嘛, 朋友少, 能說中文的又少, 就算有美國的一些朋友比如邀我去哪玩啊, 我也不想去, 因為語言我不能跟他們到哪兒都去, 因為我連地方都找不到
Lily: I just came here. I didn’t have many friends. Not many people could speak Mandarin. Even if some American friends, for example asking me to go hang out, I didn’t want to go. Because of the language [barrier] I cannot go anywhere they want. Because I cannot even find the place.

Even in school, if people tried to approach her, her response was “Stop! Stop!” because she was not used to the typical American greeting, which included physical contact. Lily chose to not socialize and would not even reach out to the other Asian students. One interesting case she brought up was she assumed another Asian student was a Korean. She did not realize that she was also from China until half the semester had gone by. This indicates the small bubble these students tried to wrap themselves up in and it extends to their social life as well.

When I asked if they would hang out after they finally recognized each other as Chinese, the answer was negative. Her explanation was “現在根本避免了，我不是避免我就是不想出去，唉悶啊” (Now I basically try to avoid things [social activities] like this. Either it’s that I avoid it or I just don’t want to go out. [I am] annoyed.).

The feeling of being an outsider might be one of reasons that Lily has decided to isolate herself. After she revealed that she doesn’t have close friends here, I asked her how she felt at school. She feels lonely but would rather be this way as a means to be safe; for her
it more like a compromise. She still wishes that she could fit into the class, and could participant in the fun. Below was the dialogue as the evidence.

YW: 在教室坐著的感覺怎麼樣？除了認真聽課，會不會有點孤單的感覺。
Lily: 有一點阿，一點點。
YW: 就會不會覺得說沒有伴。
Lily: 對，就是沒有伴。我會這麼想，最開始的時候，我那個時候沒想那麼多，我就想我能不能聽懂課。現在呢倒是要，有時候看他們打打鬧鬧的，有時候真挺開心的，就是本來是好好聽課，他們打打鬧鬧，有時候就想如果這些都是我中國同學多好。
YW: How do you feel when you sit in the class just paying attention to the teachers? Do you feel a bit lonely?
Lily: A little bit, a little bit.
YW: Would you feel that there is no company?
Lily: Correct, I do feel that there is no company. Sometimes I would think, at the very beginning, I didn’t think that much about this but only focus on if I can comprehend the classes. Now, sometimes I look at them messing around, sometimes I really feel annoyed because I was trying to focus. However, when they mess around, sometimes I would think what if they were my Chinese classmates back in China, how nice that could be.

The two immigrants with more time in the US have different groups of people with whom they socialize. Some of the children they grew up with are still their friends. Acacia chose to belong to a group with other Asian immigrants because they have known each other since they were children. When she indicated that there were many Latino kids in her school, she also explained that she is not close to any of them. Lilac chose the opposite; she mostly stayed close with the Latino kids because they had been her classmates since she was young. She also avoided joining the group of Asian students because she did not feel that she belonged to them due to her inferior academic performance.

Gender. All of the participants are female in this study due to the difficulties in recruitment. Therefore, it is also important to consider the effect on their educational and life experiences. Three out of the five participants, the newcomers, were from Mainland China and their parents needed to follow the one-child only policy. In the traditional Chinese
culture, a family hopes that they have a son to carry on their family name. From these girls’ stories, it can be assumed that their parents were happy to accept that they had a girl; furthermore, they tried very hard to fight for a better educational environment for their daughters. All of the participants’ parents came to the US for their children’s education and for a better future. All of the participants indicated that their parents expected them to enroll in a good college, regardless of their gender. Jasmine’s mother expressed her expectations for Jasmine. She pointed out that even though Jasmine is a female, she still needs to be able to be financially independent in this modern society. The traditional Chinese culture is changing. She discusses this topic below:

**Jasmine’s mother:**

所以說我說，現在的社會很現實，我就是跟他講就是妳女孩子沒錯，我女孩就當家庭主婦，我說現在不是以前的社會，現在當家庭主婦也要你自己有能力，有本事。妳老公才會看得起你，如果你沒本事，沒能力，那你在家裡也是跟保母一樣，沒地位。我說你甚麼事反正都要自己努力，爭取自己。因為要想有本事，主要就是讀書。

So I say, nowadays society is very practical. I would tell her that yes, [in the past] a girl is supposed to just be a housewife. But now is not like before, now even a housewife needs to have their own [survival] skills and to be competent. That way, your husband would respect you. If you don’t have any skills, then you would be just like a nanny in the house, not in a valuable position. I said to her: whatever you do, you need to work hard and fight for the opportunity for yourself. If you want to have a skill, education is the main route to go.

The two participants from Taiwan that had been in the US for longer both have a brother. The gender issue, ironically, then becomes more complicated. The birth order plays a role in how their parents treat them in addition to the gender factor. Lilac’s mother relies heavily on Lilac’s English ability and expects her to be a model in all respects to her little brother. As a young girl bearing these adult responsibilities, including all legal matters, causes her stress. Acacia, who is the youngest daughter seems have more freedom compared with her older brother. Acacia’s mother spends lots of energy on her children’s education but
focuses more on her son. This is because of Acacia’s performance, “妹妹到哪裡都可以” (Little sister is fine wherever she goes), Acacia’s mother stated. Acacia was even able to choose to be a historian as a career goal while her brother was guided to be an aeronautical-engineer with its guarantee of a stable financial future. However, Acacia still becomes stressed when her performance is less than excellent, consciously or not, just to fit the image of the model minority. As she stated, “I cannot do my homework and do it halfway. Same thing with project. If I do project, I have to go all the way. I just make it the best I can. I think they know this about me”.
CHAPTER VII
FINDINGS

This chapter will present the findings after analysis of the data using the conceptual framework lenses of the model minority myth and thirdspace. After reading the transcripts of each participant carefully, I found that these students have some similar experiences that are unexpected and valuable for educators. While carrying high GPAs, these new immigrants are actually vulnerable and require a greater understanding of how they try to survive each day of high school.

To make it clear, I will restate the purposes and foci of this study here:

1) Does the myth of the model minority impact in the school experience of Chinese immigrant students?

2) How do Chinese immigrant students access resources and support in the absence of a large Chinese community in Colorado?

Using the theoretical framework lenses, the myth of model minority and thirdspace allowed me to narrow down the broad clusters of multiple findings and helped me focus on the four key findings that require urgent attention for this group of students.

1. Lack of guidance and first language support for new immigrants. Participants either showed that they didn’t understand how the educational system works in the US or they expressed their frustration at not knowing about the information available to them.

2. Participants have very limited space in their Colorado lives. Participants expressed that they are not familiar with the space around them and have limited a) physical space and b) social space. The participants’ daily routines routes are mainly between school and home.
Their social space is limited because the Denver area has few Chinese immigrant students and provides no space for establishing solid friendships.

3. Participants feel that people in Colorado don’t have a strong sense of the myth of the model minority with regard to Chinese immigrant students. However, in some cases, Asians are categorized as an enemy when Whites’ positions of power and prestige are threatened.

4. Without the support and resources from a Chinese community (such as Chinatown, or a Chinese immigrant student group), participants still rely on their teachers’ help. However, due to the language barrier or culture differences, they often seek resources from the Internet instead.

**Finding 1. Lack of Guidance and First language Support for New Immigrants**

1-1. **Lack of guidance in terms of providing information to which all students need access.** Participants either showed that they don’t understand how the educational system works in the US or expressed their frustration at their inability to access the information around them. Their stories spoke to the need of the system of public education in Colorado to improve the access to information for this group of minority students. The participants, especially the newcomers, experienced a lack of guidance due to the educators’ assumption that students do not need support in order to access the information. One factor is the quietness of these students; the myth of the model minority or the language barrier became the barrier that stops either side, the students or the adults, from communicating. As a result, the students made guesses regarding what is trying to be communicated, figured things out by themselves or were constantly confused but pretended that everything was fine.
For example (see Table 4), information regarding school days off or study guides available for classes is available, and teachers might assume that students should or do have ways to figure these out by themselves. As another example, teachers may have assumed that the grading system in China is similar to that in the US, without asking the students who are then left confused.

Table 4 Interview Excerpts of Finding 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Interview Excerpts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jasmine</td>
<td>[What is] a GPA?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmine</td>
<td>I don’t know [what a study guide is].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daisy</td>
<td>When I asked my dad, he would not tell me any experiences he had. All the stuff like this [about school] is all done by myself. What class you want to take, whatever you do, [I would ] go online and figure out what to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lilac</td>
<td>Yeah. ’Cause I taught myself how to do math. I taught myself how to do everything else because there was no one there to help me.</td>
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Below is the conversation I had with Lily when she expressed her concern that after she graduates, no one will translate for Jasmine:

因為有的時候 ELA 比如說像放假的通知甚麼的，ELA 老師會告訴我們，他根本不聽不懂。聽不懂我就得幫她翻譯一下阿，雖然我也不太到底明白這個為什麼放假，但我知道不用來阿，這個你明天不用來，你來了沒人上課!我可以告訴她，如果我不在的話……。

Because sometimes, ELA for example, if there was a school day off or things like that, ELA teachers would tell us, but she [Jasmine] couldn’t even understand that. I then had to translate for her. Although I don’t understand why it’s a day off but at least I know that I don’t have to come to school. “Well, you don’t have to come to school tomorrow, no one will be here for classes.” I can tell her things like this, what if I am not here….”
In analyzing the excerpt above, Lily worries that no one will take care of Jasmine after Lily graduates. It indicates that Lily experienced all sorts of unknown situations in the past and does not believe there will be an improvement in the future. Lily’s experiences triggered her to take care of Jasmine and she worries that Jasmine is going to be left behind. Similar cases, such as how the GPA affects college applications and enrollment, are left unexplained. The participants’ schools do not seem aware of the vast expanse of information that new immigrant students need to access and need support in order to access. According to Lily:

The first semester when I just got here, I was very panicky. I told my mom after I went home from school “Mom, what can I do? I know [now] that the college will want to see my grades [in high school] but I am failing. My mom responded to me that there is nothing we can do about it. But I still expressed this [feeling] to her every day. Deep down, I actually know that my parents cannot help me. No one can help me.

For these Chinese immigrant students, going to college is their only and ultimate goal. I am surprised to learn that the school does not insure that all students know what they need for college applications and how they can better achieve their goal. It results in more stress for the student in addition to the stress they are already experiencing on top of the adjustments they are coping with as new immigrants. Unfortunately, a similar statement, “I taught myself how to do everything else because there was no one there to help me”, came from Lilac, who has been here since she was six. “No one can help me” is a strong statement, indicating that there is room for improvement in the ways that the needs of Chinese immigrant students are or are not being addressed by members of the school community.
Right after the ACT test, Lily expressed frustration that she didn’t know she could register for an ACT practice exam to be better prepared. As a result, she was confused about how to study for the exam and unfamiliar with the writing style required by the test.

YW: 真的? 没有任何练习的那种? 因为那时候考过就知道怎么样准备?
Lily: 学校有练习的，但是我不知道怎么报名。就嫌糊塗的，这样事情。
YW: 好，没有问人吗?
Lily: 就除非非常重视的那种事情，就特别清楚的，就知道了。比如说，今天放假，明天要正式考试了。因为所有同学都一直在说这件事情，所以你很清楚的知道了。然后有的时候呢，这种练习的考试也不重要甚至的，不去也行去也行，然后就没人说这个事，所以您也不知道，就根本不知道有这件事! 反正就糊里糊涂的就这样子。就参加过一次这个考试，就把我打了一次，完了!
Lily: 但是我现在还搞不清楚，ACT 他不是考了四科吗? 四样嘛，然后他还有一个写作考试，我不知道写作考试也是算在那个时间一起考吗? 还是只有练习的时候我没写。因为好像没有时间写那东西，但后面有一个写作的纸，但是我不知道那个甚至时候写，还是练习考试的时候不用写。
YW: Really? There was not any practice [for the ACT]? Just because you took it back then (by accident) then you knew how to prepare for it?
Lily: There were practices in school, but I didn't know how to register for them. [I] was very confused with things like this.
YW: Ok. There was no one you could ask?
Lily: Unless it's something that's very important for me to know. For example, today we have a day off. Tomorrow we have an exam. Because everybody is talking about it, I would know. If it's something like this practice test, you can choose to attend or not. No one would talk about this so I wouldn't know. I totally didn't know about this! Anyway [I was] very confused. But this time, after I attended this one, it struck me very badly. I am done!

***

Lily: But, until now I didn’t understand. The ACT has four subjects, four. Then it has a writing test. I didn’t know if the writing is included during the same time period. Or, since it’s only for practice I didn’t write it. Because there seemed no time for writing. However, there was a writing sheet in a later section. But I didn’t know when to write. Or, if it was just for practice and didn’t have to write it.

After the official ACT exam, Lily was still unsure if the writing part was included in the English test and if there was additional time to complete the writing section. For a student who has great anxiety about her performance on exams, the lack of guidance from the school personnel seems to greatly impact her ability to perform her best on the exam. The
communication gap between the student and the school personnel might be attributed to an
assumptions by school personnel that 1) the directions for the exam are clear enough for
those taking the exam, overlooking the fact that English learners didn’t understand and 2)
students expecting that someone would explain how something as important as the ACT will
greatly affect their college choices. Lily would have been more prepared if only she had
known of the test’s importance.

Lily: 如果我知道有 ACT 的話，如果那個時候知道 ACT 很重要，而且很難的話。
我估計那個時候就天天開始練習題了。
YW: 那個時候都沒有人告訴你?
Lily: 我都不知道，我媽媽也沒在這上過學。誰都不知道。在學校我也聽不太懂，
天天通知甚麼的，然後也沒有人告訴我。我就覺得瞎矇阿，自己在學校裡闖。
其實挺鬱悶的。

[When I asked what she wished could be changed]
Lily: If I had known there was an ACT, if back then I had known that the ACT is very
important and also difficult, I would have started to prepare for it every day back then.
YW: No one told you about it back then?
Lily: I had no idea. My mom never went to school here either. No one knew. At
school, I cannot understand [things around me], they seem to notify you of something
every day, but no one tells me what it is. I feel that I am guessing [all the time]. I try
to figure things out by myself. It’s actually very depressing.

Lily wishes someone had given her better guidance regarding the ACT, but she didn’t
place direct blame on the school. The cultural differences and her identity as a volunteer
immigrant (Ogbu, 1991) may have contributed to how she overlooked her rights as a student.
She is a minority student that has a right to linguistic support through the school but she does
not know the support is her right or what to do when that need is not met. I then had to ask
her what her counselor had done for her. Lily didn’t know that she had a counselor until very
recently. Below is her response:

YW: 那時候沒有 counselor 跟你講?
Lily: 我那時候連 counselor 是甚麼我不知道。我從來沒去過 counselor。
…現在去過，去過一次。不是第二個學期就是第三個學期。
[when I asked about the ACT]
YW: The counselor didn’t tell you about this back then?
Lily: Back then I don’t know what a counselor is. I had never been to a counselor. …Now I have been there. [The first time I went ] was in my second or third semester here.

Daisy describes a similar experience.

Daisy:當然我問我爸的話我爸也不會告訴我任何經驗。這種事所有都是自己來，妳想上甚麼東西你做甚麼事上網查，看怎麼做。
When I asked my dad, he would not tell me any experiences he had. All the stuff like this [about school] was all done by myself. What class you wanted to take, whatever you did, [I would] go online and figure out what to do.

According to Wing (2007), “… self identified Asian students of various ethnicities were more likely than any other racial/ethnic group to turn to friends for help with school work” (p. 476). With the small population of Chinese immigrant students, this layer of support seems invisible to these participants. Jasmine expressed that she asked Lily questions whenever she needed help. However, being in a different grade and having had different experiences, Lily does not have the answers. This resulted in another frustrating, helpless situation. Without support from their peers, the new immigrant students in Colorado can count on only themselves.

Jasmine:可能就是有些問題要問她吧，可是她好像一來就是讀 11 年級，我覺得她好像也沒有怎麼學過，所以有時候她也不怎麼知道！
YW: 所以就是兩個都不是很清楚
Jasmine：她只懂他學過的，我只懂我學過的
YW：所以也沒有辦法提供太多的幫助，是這樣嗎？
Jasmine：嗯
Jasmine: Maybe there was something I would ask her (Lily). But she started in the eleventh grade when she came here. I felt that she seemed to never have learned it before either. So, sometimes she was not sure as well.
YW: So, both of you were unclear [about the problems they ran into]?
Jasmine: She only knew the things she has learned and I only know what I have learned.
YW: So you are saying that you cannot provide much help for each other?
Jasmine: Yes.

As mentioned previously, these students did not blame teachers, school personnel or others
for the challenges they faced. This might be the result of their background as volunteer immigrants or of the Chinese philosophical and cultural influences. As Zinzius (2005) address, “Confucianism teaches one to offer the teacher the same respect as the parent. The teacher cannot be countered” (p. 157). Keeping silent about unfairness, struggles, everyday challenges; everything is seen as a necessary sacrifice. These issues in their lives were treated as a way to make them stronger and more successful.

YW: 有沒有抱怨？有沒有覺得如果你可以怎樣的話會比較好？
Jasmine：嗯，沒想過
YW：沒想過喔，就覺得是自己適應上的問題？
Jasmine：嗯
YW: Do you have complaints? Have you ever thought about the ‘what if’ situation to make things better [here]?
Jasmine: Um… no. I have never thought about that.
YW: You never thought about that. So you just think that it’s your problem and that you need to adapt?
Jasmine: Yes.

The closest Lily got to placing blame was when Lily wished someone had explained things to her instead of letting her figure it out by herself:

Lily: 沒有人跟我解釋，從開始到現在，為什麼才知道GPA是甚麼東西，為什麼我現在才知道大學該怎麼上，都是因為沒有人跟我說，沒有人知道這些事情，所以我到現在才知道！
Lily: No one explained to me, from the beginning until now. Why didn’t I know what a GPA is until now? Why didn’t I know how to get into a college [here] until now? It’s all because no one told me. No one knew about these, so I didn’t know [about them] until now!

Lily didn’t specify whom the ‘no one’ refers to. I cannot really tell either. However, from an educator’s perspective, the ‘no one’ seems to be the school. I am curious whether the school would have the same response: “No one knew about these [that the Asian students need urgent help], so I didn’t know until now”? Who to hold responsible seems less important here;
as an educator or scholar, what we should pay attention to is that critical issues need to be addressed.

1-2. Lack of first language support. Not only are the new immigrant students trying to adjust to a new culture and different educational system, but becoming proficient in English is also a challenge. Due to the small number of students involved, the limited resources within the schools, or the assumption that these students are successful, first language support is not made available to these students. The situations stated from the participants are as follows:

Jasmine: [in ELA class] 有的時候人多的那天會讓你看電影，然後給你一張紙，上面可能是關於那個電影的問題吧，因為我也看不太懂所以我目前真的還是不知道那些是什麼東西
Jasmine: [in ELA class] When there were more students [the teacher] would let us watch movies. Then, [the teacher] would give you a sheet of paper. It’s probably questions about the movie. Because I didn’t really understand [the movie] so I really don’t know what those [questions] were.

When I asked how the participant feels when similar situations like the above occur, Jasmine responded “就是很難過自己聽不懂” (I feel bad that I don’t understand). Not being able to communicate with people is definitely one of the key issues in their school lives. There was not a method of ensuring that information was communicated from the school to the students. Lily told a story showing how the responsibility to communicate fell on the students, who were not really qualified to translate information from English into Chinese (or other Asian languages).

Lily: 上學期呢，有個越南小女孩，她會說中文，她學中文的。但是不好，有的時候她說中文我聽不明白。我說話她也聽不懂，但是沒辦法，也只能我給她翻譯。因為我們那個班上沒有越南人，然後其他的越南人好像也難找，雖然我們學校越南人挺多的。然後我也沒辦法，我只能用中文給她翻譯。你看，英文老師跟我說話，我漏了一半因為我聽不懂，我再跟她說話，她再漏了一半。其實就很困難跟她翻譯。但是沒辦法，也只能我幫她。
Lily: Last semester, there was a Vietnamese girl. She could understand Chinese. She learned some Chinese but not very well [because] sometimes when she spoke Chinese, I couldn’t understand. She couldn’t understand what I said, either. But only I could translate for her because we didn’t have other Vietnamese students in my class. Other Vietnamese students were hard to find, even though there are many Vietnamese in my school. There was no other way, but for me to translate information for her into Chinese. See! The English teacher speaks to me, I can only understand 50%, after I translate into Chinese for her, she can only understand 50% of that, too. Honestly, it was really hard to do this job but there was no other way. Only I could help her.

‘Only I could help her’ is the responsibility that Lily shoulder. However, the ending of this story is that the Vietnamese girl ended performing poorly academically and transferred to another school. Quietly, the students try their best to help each other, not be problems, and never let their problems trouble others.

Without understanding that the new immigrant students are facing a great challenge in the language barrier, teachers might be adding more stress to this group of students. Lily shared with me an incident that happened in her American history class.

Lily: The Japanese girl had a history class like I did. It’s a history class. We looked very similar except that she had slightly better English than I did. She also totally didn’t understand what the teacher was trying to say. We both totally didn’t understand. I remember.
YW: Were you not in the same ELA class?
Lily: We were. Then I remember the first class for the history class. It’s the very first time for the semester. Then we disliked that history teacher in particular. Then because we just came to the class [as new students], we had never learned a thing [from her] so she wanted to do a bit of testing on how much we understood about history. So she had us write the names of ten famous generals in United States. Of course I knew people like Washington, Clinton, generals or presidents. I knew them all. But, I didn’t know how to write them in English, let alone people’s names. But, we learned about history in China. I knew. But I totally didn’t know how to write them. Then I was very worried. Then so was the girl. [We] totally didn’t know how to write them. Then we went to talk to the teacher [and said] “Teacher, we don’t know how to write them”. Then the teacher wondered how we could say something like that. [She] said “If I can write out ten famous people of Japan and China, you can write about the United States’”.

Lily: You can use English to write about this. How about you write them in Chinese? How about you write them in Japanese? We both were very upset.

The teacher might assume that students have basic American history knowledge due to the concept of the myth of the model minority, the perspective of volunteer immigrants, or the hegemony of English. As Shannon (1999) indicated, the hegemony of English exercised in the classroom resulted in the two languages being given higher (English) and lower (immigrants’ mother tongue) status. She continues to point out that language rights should be recognized as every human’s basic right that cannot be violated, and the school system should support the maintenance of one’s mother tongue to protect one’s basic right based on being treated equally without bias.

As a result of the interviews with the participants, it became clear that checking for understanding is critical. Important information, such as the structure of the ACT test, needs to be communicated to students in order to avoid issues such as Lily’s difficulty with the test. In Lily’s case, even after taking the test, she still did not completely understand how to take the exam and was stressed and frustrated by this.
不考了，等正式考試的時候再有。我都不知道，我現在也不知道。所以好麻煩，有時候老師在說正事也聽不懂。
Lily: He (the teacher) told us there were several tests, then there was also a writing test. At the time I didn’t understand when we did the writing test, or if we don’t do the writing on the practice test but when we have it on the actual exam we do the writing section. I didn’t understand then and I still don’t know now. It’s really troublesome. Sometimes when the teacher talked about things that were important I didn’t get it.

The interviews with Lily fell during the time she was working intensely on her ACT preparation. Lily showed me how much stress she was under and mentioned this exam frequently in the interview.

Lily offered many examples of different situations where she was faced with a language barrier. When asked what she does when she can’t understand the language (English) at school, she explained that she would just ignore it and hope the information was not too important. She stated:

Lily: 听不懂就略過了，基本上。除非有的時候，因為學校一般特別重大的事情的話，他們都給家長發 e-mail。所以我媽也會問個餐館裡的孩子。然後比如說一般的這種呢，不發 e-mail 的也就基本知道就行了。所以自己知道也不是特別重要，也就不管了。
Lily: If I don’t understand I will just forget about it, in general. Unless, sometimes, if it is very important, they would email the parents. Then my mom would ask those kids [who work] in the restaurant. For example, when it is some general stuff, I would kind of know it without an email. If I know that is not particularly important, I will just put it aside.

The communication barrier not only affects Lily’s academic performance, but it also limits her participation in the social life of high school. In Lily’s case, she would prefer that people don’t talk to her so that she can live safely in her little bubble. Additionally, not understanding what was being said impeded Lily’s participation in social activities. She stated:
I don’t understand. I won’t attend. Perhaps it’s 1) some psychological reason, 2) sometimes you don’t know what kind of activities fit you. Because you don’t understand, you don’t understand what they say. For example, on the intercom this morning, it was to remind you what activities the school has for the week. I didn’t quite get it. Or, I don’t know how to go ask a teacher questions because I don’t quite know the teacher. Every semester when I meet new teachers or new classmates, I will need to readjust, then I would not want to go to school. Sometimes I have to tell the teacher that I have a language issue or things like that. I would tell the teacher about my difficulties, and I would tell my classmates at the same table. For example, this is my introduction to them “I just came from China, my English is not good”, meaning, please do not ask me to do stuff, please don’t talk to me because I don’t understand. This is what I actually wanted to say in my mind. I am really tired so I don’t want to think hard to see how I can talk to you. Even more, I don’t want to attend school activities. Plus I don’t know where to go, and I don’t know what kind of activities to do, or whom to go with. Sometimes I will have to explain to people about my English, one by one and say “Sorry, I cannot understand”. I have strong sense of pride so I don’t want to explain this problem. I think that it’s so hard to adapt here. I don’t want to explain this problem.

To these new Chinese immigrants students, the “I am sorry that I cannot understand” explained a lot about how they perceived this new environment. As mentioned earlier, Jasmine also explained that she felt badly that she couldn’t understand the communication between herself and others. The participants’ identity as volunteer immigrants might be a factor, causing them to believe that the language issue is their own fault and preventing them from reaching out for help and from trying to fit into the school culture.
Finding 2. Participants Have Very Limited Space in Their Colorado Lives

Participants either explained that they are not familiar with the space around them or that they have limited physical space and social space. The participants’ daily routine is mainly between school and home. Additionally, the limited social spaces for Chinese people in the Denver area results in a lack of space for high school students to establish solid friendships.

2-1. In terms of their physical space. Most of the participants, including the long-time immigrant Lilac, have very limited physical space. For instance, after six months in the US, Jasmine indicated that the only places she had ever been, in addition to her school, are the supermarkets. When I asked the reason behind that, she responded “不太會走那個指標” ([My mom] doesn’t really know how to follow the street signs). Even though I then showed them how to use google maps using the Chinese version, reading and understanding the street signs remained a difficult challenge. The regular daily routine route, therefore, is between school and home. Moreover, due to her mother’s work schedule, when Jasmine is home, she is usually alone; in a situation similar to that of Daisy, Lily and Lilac (except that Lilac has a brother). In Table 5 excerpts from these conversations can be found.
**Table 5 Interview excerpts of finding 2**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Interview Excerpts</th>
</tr>
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| Jasmine      | YW: Where have you been to since you came to Colorado?  
              Jasmine: The supermarket.  
              YW: Where else?  
              Jasmine: Walmart and Sam’s. |
| Lily         | Lily 剛來嘛，朋友少，能說中文的又少，就算有美國的一些朋友比如邀我去哪玩啊，我也不想去，因為語言我不能跟他們到哪兒都去，因為我連地方都找不到  
              YW: 媽媽不可以送你嗎？  
              Lily: 他們要上班啊  
              Lily: I just came here. I don’t have many friends. Not many people can speak Mandarin. Even if some American friends, for example ask me to go hang out, I don’t want to go. Because of the language [barrier], I can not go anywhere they want. Because I cannot even find the place.  
              YW: Can you ask your mom to drive you?  
              Lily: She has to work! |
| Daisy        | YW: So, most of time you are in this neighborhood?  
              Daisy: Yeah! From here to home.  
              YW: Okay. Is it always this way over this one and half years?  
              Daisy: Yeah. From here to home. |
| Lilac        | She [Lilac’s mom] cares, and she asks us about it. But, she just doesn’t have time. That is why I don’t do sports. Either, because I don’t have a ride anywhere. I never go to parties, birthday parties. I get invited, I just never get to go. Because I don’t have rides. |

For these participants, having very busy parents makes it hard to expand their physical or social spaces. Lilac explained that her mother’s schedule made it more difficult to be involved in Lilac’s life and, consequently, Lilac’s world was a much smaller place.

However, her mother did care and felt badly about this, “She cares, and she asks us about it. But, she just doesn’t have time. That’s why I don’t do sports either, because I don’t have a
ride anywhere. I never go to parties, birthday parties. I get invited; I just never get to go. Because I don’t have rides”.

Another reason for them to limit their physical spaces is that the routine provides them with a sense of safety because they are in familiar spaces. According to Lily, going to an unfamiliar area gives her a sense of fear. The degree of the fear is indicated by her great desire to be able to enroll in a college that is close to home. The University of Colorado’s Boulder campus has a good reputation for its academics, but for Lily it is too far geographically from her Denver-area home.

Lily: If the only school I can go to is Boulder and I have to live there, there is nothing I can do about it. That would be the way it is...
YW: But, you don’t wish that you can go there to take a look?
Lily: But, I don’t feel safe now.

“Don’t feel safe” describes their situation fairly clearly. Not being able to explore this ‘dream land’ is a problem that may seem minor to them, compared to the stress of preparing for, being accepted to, and being successful in college; however, one questions the impact of this very limited physical space (about which Lily and her mother feel they have no control) on their overall well-being.

2-2. In terms of their social space with friends. Most of the participants, except the long-time immigrant Acacia, have a hard time developing solid friendships with their peers. Most of them indicate that they don’t have close friends, or even friends. According to Daisy, she had many friends back in China and was very happy.

YW: 太容易的課不適合你，你在國內的時候成績怎麼樣？
Daisy: 不錯阿，雖然說我在國內的時候一直都是非常開心，因為我的朋友非常多。
YW: [You said] that those classes that are too easy don’t fit you. How were your grades in China?
Daisy: My grades were not bad. I was always very happy in China, though. Because I had lots of friends.
In comparison, when I asked if she has good friends here, this was her response, “如果定義朋友是非常非常好的人的話。我不敢說我在這有朋友” (If you define friends as someone you are very close with, I wouldn’t say that I have friends here).

Jasmine expressed the same thought:

Jasmine: 還好欸，因為目前呀很想要回國啦
YW:阿⋯真的啊?
Jasmine:對啊，因為這邊沒有朋友嘛
Jasmine: I am okay, because now I want to go back to China
YW: Ah... really?
Jasmine: Yeah, because I have no friends here.

I then asked what she thought about Lily and others she had mentioned. Jasmine recognized the truth: she would not be friends with them if she returned to China.

YW: 對，如果在中國，你有很多朋友，像他們這樣個性的人你會跟他們變成好朋友嗎？
Jasmine：應該不會
YW: Say you are in China now, do you think that you will become good friends with students whose personalities are like them [Lily and a few others]?
Jasmine: I don’t think so.

Lily had the same experience; she has no good friends here in Colorado. In the excerpt below, she indicates the reasons why. The root reason is that there are not many Asian or Chinese immigrant students around her. According to her, there are “very few people I can talk to. It’s not necessary [to develop friendships]”.

Lily: 我沒想發展什麼特別好的朋友阿、知己阿，我覺得在這不存在
Lily: I am not thinking about developing particularly good friendships, [because] I think they do not exist here.
Lily: 就是因為這邊跟我同類人少，說說話的人少，沒有必要
Because there are very few people here are of my own kind [Chinese], very few people I can talk to. It’s not necessary [to develop friendships].
The stories from the newcomers about this issue are all very similar. In a state such as Colorado that does not have a large population of Chinese immigrants, the social world is very difficult, especially for those in this age group. Typically, high school students are becoming more independent and can be out on their own. This is something the participants are not able to experience. Daisy has a very strong statement to conclude this section. She felt that all of the Asian students were forced into one category and group, although they may have very little in common.

Daisy: 有的難說是朋友，因為就像是我們一群小動物被迫處在一个環境，然後找自己的同類一樣。所以找到甚麼樣就是甚麼樣，難說有同樣的興趣同樣的愛好。只是說被強迫分在一起而已。
“Some are hard to say that they are friends. It’s like a group of animals forced to be in an environment and then they are trying to find their own kind. You get whatever you can get. It’s hard to say that you and the ones you found have anything in common or share the same interests. You are just forced to group together”.

On the other hand, the long-time immigrants Acacia and Lilac, who came to the US at the age of six, have different stories regarding friendship. Growing up in a neighborhood that was full of minorities, Lilac feels comfortable mixing herself into diverse crowds. However, her identity as an Asian makes others criticize this action. Lilac faced the question like this:

Lilac: [Other people would tell me] “You shouldn’t hang out with Black kids because you are Asian, you should not hang out with Mexicans”.
YW: Do you hang out with them?
Lilac: Yeah, that’s all I hang out with. From elementary to middle school most of my friends are Hispanics. That’s what I am used to being with. So, in [school name], it makes me feel really insecure, ’cause I am in the pre-IB program and like no Hispanics are. Even if there are, they are very whitewashed so they are basically not Hispanics. They just don’t have any culture. They don’t interact with other Hispanics. So, I have to go out of my way to hang out with them. ’Cause I have a friend who recently transferred from [school name]. So I hang out with her. She is Hispanic so she hangs out with other Hispanics. I don’t know. It makes me feel safer. I just don’t like it. I have been pulling away from my friends recently. They are really egotistical. Since everyone knows that [school name] is filled with a lot of rich kids so they are really elegant. And they think that are better than anyone else because they have money. Or, they are better just because they smarter, …something like that. I don’t like that. I hang out with Mexicans. You would think that we all get along but it’s
actually pretty segregated. Mexicans hang out with Mexicans. White kids hang out with White kids but there are different cliques to that, too. And we only have 9 Black kids out of few thousand.
YW: How about the Asians?
Lilac: They hang out with the White people. I don’t really see Asian kids with the Hispanics. I am probably the only one.
YW: You don’t hang out with the Asian kids?
Lilac: I do. My locker partner is Asian. I just don’t spend most of my time with them. I do talk to them and hang out with them. I just try not to. ’Cause, I don’t know. I just feel that diversity is better. Mix up your crowd…

However, after Lilac became more comfortable with me, she described her true feelings about having good friends. Her experience is similar to the stories described above. The participants want a safe life, one in which they do not get hurt. And, ‘not to feel things or get connected to something’ is the safer way to go.

Lilac: I don’t know …(paused).I always tell myself “friends are good for the week”. Because I don’t like people leaving but over time, people have left and I would be really affected by that. So, I like try to tell myself not to feel things or get connected to something. Don’t let your happiness depend on someone else because that thing can always leave you and change and you will be the one who is getting hurt. So I don’t try to connect with people that much. I guess. I mean I have some close friends that tell me to. But, there is not much to tell (from me) so they don’t know much about me. But, they tell me. They trust me so they tell me a lot about them. I guess they consider me their best friend but best friend isn’t in my vocabulary.

Acacia told me “I never really hang out. Most of my friends are very American now. They are not typical Asians”. Acacia seemed to have the right conditions to be able to maintain friendships. In contrast, Lilac’s situation needs urgent attention, even though she appears to be fine. This conversation also reveals that even immigrants who have been in the US for a long time and speak the English language well might benefit from social support.

2-3. Creating their own thir DSPACE through Internet. Reading these stories, one can sense that these participants are marginalized in terms of their social space with people in the US; especially the newcomers who are still dealing with the language barrier. hooks (1990) discusses the need for space among marginalized groups, stating “for me this space of
radical openness is a margin - a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary. It is not a safe place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance” (p. 149). Since the community of resistance does not physically exist in Colorado for this group of students, they try to create their own virtual thirdspace, through the Internet.

The excerpts (Table 4) below list the conversations that took place when we discussed their leisure time activities. All of the newcomers use the Internet to expand their world by watching Chinese soap operas and animated films, ordering Chinese books online, and chatting with their friends in China. By doing so, they created a thirdspace in which they can temporarily disconnect from the reality they face in the US and they can also enjoy talking and thinking in their own language.

Table 6 Interview excerpts of finding 2-3

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Interview Excerpts</th>
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| Jasmine      | YW: 對，然後週天通常都自己一個人待在家
Jasmine: OK，好。一個人在家的時候都做什麼?
RR: 看電視
YW: 看那個剛剛那個叫什麼?
Jasmine: 我們都愛笑
YW: 我們都愛笑。特別喜歡那一齣
Jasmine: 也沒有，那個是最近剛開始才第幾期，就看電視劇
YW: 電視劇，國內的電視劇?
Jasmine: 對
YW: 像吳奇隆那個
Jasmine: 想看國語，但是之前看過都搜不到，像郭采潔那個搜不到
YW: Okay. What do you usually do when you are home alone?
Jasmine: Watch TV (Chinese soap operas on the internet).
YW: What was that you were just watching (when I walked in their apartment)?
Jasmine: “We All Love to Laugh” |
Table 6 (Cont.)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Interview Excerpts</th>
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<td>YW: “We All Love to Laugh”… Do you particularly like this one?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jasmine: Not really, that one just started a few episodes ago. I am just watching TV shows.</td>
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<tr>
<td>YW: TV shows, TV shows from China?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jasmine: Right.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>YW: Someone like Wu-Qi-Long (a famous TV actor)?</td>
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<td>Jasmine: I want to watch Mandarin ones, but when I searched them on the internet, I failed to find them. For example, [I tried] to search for Guo-Cai-Jie (a famous Taiwanese actress) but I couldn’t find it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>YW: 那會想念以前在中國的朋友嗎?</td>
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<td>Jasmine: 恩</td>
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<tr>
<td>YW: 那你想念的時候你怎麼辦?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jasmine: 就聊 QQ 嘛</td>
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<tr>
<td>YW: Do you miss your friends in China?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jasmine: Yes.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>YW: Then what do you do when you miss them?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jasmine: I chat on “QQ” (a chat-room website that is popular in China).</td>
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| Lily | At nights, I usually stay at home and read (the Chinese books that she bought on the internet). |
| Daisy | YW: Ok. But I still don’t know what do you usually do after school. |
|      | Daisy: Go home, eat, rest, accidentally fall asleep, accidentally click on the animated film (online)…. |

The newcomers were not only unable to reach out and participate in actual social spaces, but they were also often home alone. All of the participants’ adult family members, including the long-time immigrant students, worked in restaurants. Because of the nature of this type of work, the parents were not with their children during the afternoons and evenings. As Daisy said when I mentioned about the difficulties in adapting to the new environment, “If every night you go home and your parents are not around, you won’t feel that it’s hard to
adjust to [the new environment]”. I am not sure if Daisy was just like me in the past, when alone at home, one can pretend that the space you’re in is no different than your homeland. Perhaps always being alone makes her feel more independent and stronger in adapting to her new environment. Skype is another video chat website she and her father used to communicate with her mother every day, once in the morning and once in the evening. The Internet helped these students create this thirddspace that allowed them to escape from reality and also be able to connect with their friends and loved ones. Is it virtual? Or is it real?

**Finding 3. Participants Feel that People in Colorado Don’t Have a Strong Sense of the Myth of the Model Minority, with Its Exaggerated View of Their Academic Abilities. However, in Some Cases, They Perceived that They are Viewed as an Enemy When Whites’ Positions of Power and Prestige are Threatened by Some Myth or Stereotypical View of Gifted Students**

The myth of the model minority is another lens utilized for analysis in this study. As mentioned earlier, Asian intellectuals and researchers have resisted the use of the term ‘model minority’ due to its potentially negative impact on Asian groups. However, do educators, students and others actually apply this concept in educational settings or when they interact with Asian students?

All of the participants, especially the newcomers, denied having this stereotype applied to them. However, they also indicated that those events might have occurred but that the language barrier prevented the students from understanding the situation clearly. As Jasmine stated, “Even though if they said something like that, I would not understand”. Lily had a similar response to this question.
YW: 我所謂的，我講得這些倒不是說什麼種族歧視的那麼嚴重的地步，而是說
會不會有人跟你講說「你是亞洲人為什麼你這個都不會?」有沒有曾經這類似這
樣的狀況?
Jasmine: 可能他們講了我也聽不懂.
YW: What I meant about this, it's not something serious like a racist kind of issue.
But has someone ever said this to you “How come you as an Asian don’t know about
this?” Were there any situations like that?
Jasmine: Even if they said that I would not understand.

Daisy had a very different response, indicating that she has neither the time nor the
energy to worry about racism. Also, she believes that if a person holds a racist attitude that is
his or her problem, rather than Daisy’s. Below was the conversation about this issue, and her
answers were very consistent throughout the interviews.

Daisy: 我還沒有充分的時間和精力去考慮這些我會不會受到歧視。
YW: 喔我倒不是覺得是歧視。
Daisy: 我也沒有時間去想，我是不是被不同待遇然後因為是我的身分而感到甚
麼事情。這種事情太麻煩了。就我而言，不會的。
YW: 那如果今天有人說: 喔，對妳就是亞洲人，妳就是這個地方特別行。妳會有
甚麼感覺嗎?
Daisy: 天生的自卑，自愧不如。
YW: Then what if someone says to you, “Oh, you are Asian so you are particularly
good at this”, how would you feel?
Daisy: [They are] born with low self-esteem and like to envy others.

In the last interview with Jasmine, while discussing her preparation for her final exams in the
US, Jasmine remembered an incident that helps understand why she hesitates to ask
questions about the content of the exam. The math teacher did not want to answer her
questions and assumed that she had already learned the concepts in China. In addition, the
math teacher was afraid that Jasmine would not be paying attention in class so he reminded
Jasmine that she still needed to focus in class. This is a very typical case of the myth of the
model minority impacting a teacher’s response to a student, whether or not Jasmine recognized it as such.

Jasmine: 我上次考试的時候有去問那個數學老師考什麼？但是他沒有跟我講！
YW：他不跟你講？
Jasmine：因為我也不知道他講什麼？就說我最好的就好了。
YW：就 do your best!
Jasmine：他就跟我講你學過的。
YW：他覺得你以前就學過了？
Jasmine：就覺得中國的應該以前就教過了，然後對你比較難的就是英語。我也不知道是翻譯沒翻譯對還是什麼的。他就跟我講說，你學過的，就做最好就行了。
YW：所以那次你是去問範圍？
Jasmine：對
YW：所以他覺得你沒問題
Jasmine：應該吧？
YW：所以你又抱著滿腹的疑問回座位這樣？
Jasmine：對
YW：他以前就跟你講過這句話嗎？“You have learned that before”, 他是這樣講嗎？
Jasmine：第一次上數學課時好像是說，這些對中國人來說可能都學過，可能會覺得簡單，但是叫我還是要認真聽課。……就很無奈
Jasmine：Last time, I went to ask the math teacher what is going to be on the test but he didn’t tell me.
YW： He didn’t tell you?
Jasmine：Because I didn’t understand what he said. Something like just do my best.
YW： Just “do your best”?
Jasmine：He told me that I had learned [the content] before. He thinks that they should have taught me [the content] in China. And then he said the difficult part for you would be the English. In my first class, there was a translator, it seemed like she [the teacher] said I have learned the content in China and told me I still need to focus and listen in class.
YW： So you went to her to ask about the content of the test?
Jasmine：Right.
YW： But she thought that you would be able to handle it.
Jasmine：Something like that.
YW：So, you [just] went back your seat, confused?
Jasmine：Right.
YW：Had she ever said that before, that “You have learned that before”.
She made a statement like that?
Jasmine：It seemed was the first math class. She seemed to say that “All of this content, the Chinese [students] might have learned it already. She thought I might feel
that it’s easy so she reminded me that I still needed to pay attention to the class…. I felt frustrated.

In some cases, from their stories, Asians are categorized as an enemy when Whites’ positions of power and prestige are threatened. Below is an example that could put an Asian in that difficult position. As quiet as Lily is in class, she prefers people do not talk to her, she could still face the situation when the teacher was trying to say something positive about her.

The treatment she received varied; at times she was a foreigner who didn’t speak English, and at times she was the enemy who didn’t deserve to be treated fairly.

Lily: 哦，對了我想起來了，可能是化學課還是數學課，因為我做題比較快啊或者對的多嘛，然後那些孩子們因為數學課，其他孩子天天上課說話，反正不該幹嘛幹嘛，然後等做題的時候又挨著問老師，然後我們那個數學老師很容忍，就每次上課都會花很多時間，說就是批評那些孩子怎麼樣的，就會說一些好多的事情，然後有一次她實在忍無可忍了，她又不講課了，她就開始說了「阿你們天天說話呀怎麼樣的」，然後就拿我做例子「你們看咱們班上還有一個外國學生，還不太會說英語的人，然後你看她做的東西，妳看她做多少題，然後怎麼樣妳看看你們」，意思就是怎麼跟她比，就這意思嘛，拿我來跟他們比，然後我就…⋯，怎麼拉上我啊這個

YW: 點發感慨怎麼樣?

Lily: 在當時感覺挺不好意思的

YW: 就是可以描述一下妳心裡面

Lily: 我不太喜歡老師這樣子，好像是有一個學生說老師「他們是亞州人」，有一個學生這樣做了，我沒太聽清，應該是這樣的，「他們是亞州人嘛」、「亞州人聰明嘛」就這個意思，妳也會有這些怎麼不服氣，所以我不太喜歡老師這樣子

Lily: Oh. Right. I just thought about that. Maybe it’s in chemistry or in math class. Because I always can finish the work or get the questions right faster, then those kids always are chatting in the class or don’t listen….. the teacher couldn’t hold it anymore, so she stopped teaching and said “You guys always talk [in class]”. Then, she used me as an example, “See, we have a foreign student in the class who cannot even speak English well. But look, how many questions she has done, [compared to] how many you have done”. She meant to compare me with them. That’s what she meant. Then I was wondering why she dragged me into this.

YW: How did you feel at the moment?

Lily: I felt embarrassed.

YW: Can you explain it?
Lily: I don’t like the teacher being this way. I think a student told the teacher, “They are Asians.” There was a student who said that. I am not quite sure. It seemed the student said something like, “They are Asians. Asians are smart.” That’s what they meant. You would feel that’s not fair, so I don’t like the teacher being this way.

Daisy used a different angle and rationale to look at this issue. According to her, she is a foreigner and the whole school consists of foreigners [as Latinos in her mind are foreigners]; therefore, people in the school would not treat her as an intruder. In addition, this type of issue does not matter to Daisy. She is focused on being prepared for college and ignores matters that might get in the way of reaching her goal. Here are her strong statements.

[While talking about the myth of the model minority]
Daisy: 因為美國人總是喜歡用文謅謅的詞，
YW: 有，他們一種種族歧視的詞叫做 racist，stereotypes 又是不一樣的
Daisy: 對呀! stereotype
YW: 有可能講說⋯ (被打斷)
Daisy: 這些詞就像討厭一個人或是不喜歡和一個人在一起的這種說法差不多，沒事，美國人口語也都說 “you are racist”，都一樣，他們不會很認真的，也沒有很重要的事情出現，沒有很嚴重的深仇大恨，這個無所謂，就是沒有！！
YW : 真的沒有?
Daisy: 沒有
YW : 你自己怎麼定位你自己像是一個外國人
Daisy: 不是呀，全校老墨全是外國人，
YW : 對你來講，他們才是外國人
Daisy: 全部都是外國人這個學校，白人的話基本沒有，有白人的話也不知道從哪個地方過來的，全部的人都是外國人。
YW: How do you identify yourself as a foreigner then?
Daisy: It’s not [just me]. The whole school of Mexicans are foreigners.
YW: To you, they are the foreigners?
Daisy: The whole school are foreigners, in this school. Basically, [we] don’t have Whites. If there are Whites, [we] don’t know where they came from. The whole school are foreigners.
[While talking about the myth of the model minority]
Daisy: Because American people always like to use those big words.
YW: Yeah, for example, ‘racist’. But, ‘stereotype’ is a bit different.
Daisy: Right! ‘Stereotype’!
YW: Perhaps, say…. (then I was interrupted).
Daisy: Those big words is just like you like to hang out with someone or you don’t. Nothing serious. American people say this occasionally sometimes like, “You are racist”. They are the same thing. They are not serious. It didn’t come with something
important after that. It’s not seriously hating each other. It doesn’t matter. Nothing like this [in my experience].
YW: Really, nothing?
Daisy : No.

The long-time immigrant students do not believed they have felt the stereotyping that goes with the myth of the model minority, either. Acacia and Lilac had similar but slightly different answers regarding the experience of the myth of the model minority. Lilac denied the idea that people treated her differently due to her identity but she did experience the stereotypes applied to her. She considered this mild teasing from her friends and didn’t care much about it.

YW: So, do you ever feel that being an Asian, because of your identity, people treated you differently?
Lilac: No! Not really. I get stereotypes a lot. But I don’t feel like offended by it. Like, sometimes, the media offends me. But, like since the people around me I am used to being with. I feel like I don’t really care what they say. ’Cause they are friends. I am used to this stuff.
YW: Like what kind of stereotypes?
Lilac: Like Asians are good at math, why you are in Geometry. Or like, you are such a bad driver.
YW: You don’t even drive!
Lilac: Yeah. I don’t even drive. Then, why you don’t have a phone, you are Asian. What does that mean? What is that supposed to mean? Asians are supposed to be good at technology or something?
YW: I see. Okay. That’s what I want to find out, is if they have certain stereotypes of Asians.
Lilac: Yeah. Asians are good at math. Or, just you are smart in general. You shouldn’t be in the class that you are in. Like you shouldn’t hang out with the people that you do because you are Asian.

Acacia also denied being mistreated due to her identity. She mentioned a minor event, which she also interprets as harmless teasing, rather than a response from a person who believes in the myth of the model minority.

YW: Have they ever given you a hard time in terms of your identity; teasing…
Acacia: Oh, … the Asian eyes. The first time I walked with my friend. She said “Hey you don’t have Asian eyes”. That’s it. Not like the I hate you kind. Maybe because I don’t have an accent so I don’t have that feeling before. I have seen some people’s
facial expressions when they hear some Asian’s accent or when they had the grammar wrong. You would start seeing the discrimination.

However, when it came to the comparisons among Asian groups, Lilac was irritated and refused to hang out with other Asians in the church. To her, she is not the typical Asian people expect her to be.

YW: You mentioned that all the Chinese students do. In your mind, what do they do?

Lilac: Everything that I don’t do. They play instruments. I definitely do not have musical talent. They go to Chinese school. I don’t do that. I learn Chinese by myself, watching dramas and talking to adult Asians. I just feel like they do so many things. Sports, volunteer experiences, I don’t have much of that.

A very interesting statement from Lilac is below. It appears that not behaving like an Asian and not hanging out with other Asians became a shield for her to hide behind to protect her from being seen as not living up to people’s expectations. This was worthy of further discussion.

Lilac: Because I speak English just fine so I don’t have accent. And they usually say, “Oh she is really cool. She is not like what you would think”.
YW: What do you mean, “What they would think”?
Lilac: ’Cause, usually they would be like, “Oh, God she is probably really smart” we are not in the same group. Then they stared to talking to me. They were like, “Oh she is actually not that bad”.
YW: So you feel that they are so smart so you don’t want to be one of them?
Lilac: Well ’cause you don’t want to hang out with people who are smarter then you. ’Cause it makes you feel bad about yourself.

Even though neither Acacia nor Lilac feels that people had the myth of the model minority concept toward them, unconsciously, it had an impact on their lives. Lilac prefers avoiding other Asians to avoid the stress from being unable to meet the standards people hold toward Asians. Acacia, as a ‘model’ people might perceive, has difficulties when she doesn’t perform well as well, as she stated, “I cannot put myself out there and forget about every problem I have. It has to be perfect!” To some degree, people in the space of Colorado might
not act as aggressively or strongly as expected; however, this phenomenon is widespread and deeply rooted in people’s minds, including in the Denver area, a place that does not have a large Chinese population.

Finding 4. Without the Support and Resources From a Chinese Community (Such As Chinatown, or a Chinese Immigrant Student Group), Participants Still Rely on the Teachers’ Help. However, Due to the Language Barrier or Culture Differences, They Often Seek Resources From the Internet Instead

The beginning stage for newcomer students is always a challenge. As mentioned earlier, due to the difficulty of communication and culture differences, newcomer students feel that it is inappropriate to seek help from their teachers. The Internet then provides the best resources for their school assignments. Lily tried to obtain Chinese versions of her texts online or used google translate to try to overcome the language barrier. However, the online resources are not always accurate, so the problem is not really solved. A detailed narrative from Lily of how she used Internet as a resource is below:

Lily: 嗯，比如每一學期阿，或半學期，那個英文課就是讀一本書嘛。你要在規 定時間裡看完幾章。我根本看不懂，剛來的時候英文課的時候，書看不懂。我 就想盡各種辦法，上網找中文版。上網找不著，我就去那個網上書城看一下有 沒有中文版 ，那個書，然後從中國郵過來，沒辦法我必須這樣。...
YW: 然後再根據看中文書，然後?
Lily: 邊看中文書邊看英文書，在那邊翻，然後這邊英文書有的時候還得寫他的 意思。因為有的時候還得考試嘛，因為這個書，所以你就要翻嘅，那個書。你 就算看那個書也對不上號嘛，所以還得寫。就很耗心。然後第二學期那個書， 是關於越南戰爭的，然後結果他沒印中文的書，他沒有中文版的。然後我就犯 愁了。後來實在沒辦法呢，我在那個 google 上看見，就是你搜 google 上都會 有那個類似 summary 阿，一章一章 summary 阿，背景介紹阿，他都用英語寫 的。我就把他們複製下來，然後貼到 google translate 上，翻譯的一行一行看。 但是他翻譯得牛頭不對馬嘴的，你還得廢腦袋去猜他到底甚麼意思。我沒餘其 選擇了!
Lily: For example, every semester, or every half semester, the Language Arts class would require you to read a book. You have to finish certain chapters before the due
date. I totally couldn’t understand the book. I just came [to the U.S.] so I didn’t understand the text. I would try my very best to look for its Chinese version online. If I couldn’t find it online, I would go on the online bookstore to see if it has a Chinese version, in a hard copy. Then, I would have it mailed to me. I had to do it this way.

... 

YW: So you read the Chinese version, and then?
Lily: I read the Chinese version and English version simultaneously, and I translate. Sometimes you have to write an English summary about it, because sometimes it would be on the test. So you [need to] translate the book. Because even if you read the book [in its Chinese version], you still cannot correlate it to the English book, so you have to write it. It’s very energy consuming. Later in the second semester, the book was about the Vietnam War, and it did not have a Chinese version in a hard copy. It did not have a Chinese version so I was worried. Later I really didn’t know what to do. I went on google. If you search on google, it has a similar summary, [they were] chapter by chapter summaries. Including the background and introduction, which it had in English. I then copied and pasted them into google translate. [I] translated them one line by one line and read them. But sometimes [google translate] did such a poor job, you then needed to really guess what it meant. I had no other choice!

Jasmine, on the other hand, seemed to have better support around her. She had her cousin who grew up in Colorado to show her around after she first arrived. However, the cousin’s Mandarin Chinese was limited. Additionally, Jasmine had a teacher who would ask other students to help her when she needed support. However, when rereading all of the data from Jasmine, it is doubtful that she would ask for help independently.

YW: 大部分是表哥幫你說話,有需要的話
Jasmine: 恩, 對
YW: 表哥會說中文嗎?
Jasmine: 表哥他, 聽阿姨說好像是他五歲的時候來的, 所以他就中文不太好, 可能會講一點點, 但是只是一點點
*(in another conversation)*
YW: 別人會主動幫你嗎?
Jasmine: 別人……外國人的話可能應該也不知道我需要什麼吧, 但是那個老師會幫, 就是她會跟我說, 比如想要幹嘛不懂可以叫她們幫我
YW: Mainly your cousin helps you communicate as needed?
Jasmine: Yes.
YW: Does your cousin speak Chinese?
Jasmine: My cousin…I heard from my aunt that he came here when he was five, so his Chinese is not good. He can probably speak a little bit [of Chinese], just a little bit. *(in another conversation)*
YW: Would other people provide help without you asking them?
Jasmine: Other people … if they are foreigners, they probably do not know what I need. But the teacher would help. She would tell me to ask them for help if I don’t understand something.

While facing the language challenge, Jasmine was allowed to use Internet support: google translate. The teacher thought this would solve the communication problem. However, google translate is not an ideal tool in terms of accuracy. When the translation was wrong, Jasmine can only guess.

Jasmine: 然後他還有讓我下載那種就是可以對著手機講，然後直接翻譯成中文的那種軟件，然後他說這樣可能會讓我比較方便溝通這樣 … 翻譯有的時候又是錯的，就有的東西就算翻譯了也不能理解到底是什麼東西。
YW: Google 翻譯的真的很差，那怎麼辦你當時?
Jasmine: 我當時就猜了
Jasmine: Then he [the teacher] let me download some app that I can speak to my cellphone, and it would translate it into Chinese (She later told me the app was ‘google translate’). And then he told me it would be more convenient for me to communicate.
…[but] sometimes the translation was wrong. Sometimes even with translation [I] still would not understand what [was said].
YW: When the translation was bad, what did you do?
Jasmine: I could only guess then.

I asked Daisy how she sought help since she was rarely in touch with other Chinese students. She first showed her confidence; indicating that she was doing well in the academic areas. She later told me that she would go to a teacher or look it up on the Internet.

YW: 好，那像你如果很少跟中國的同學接觸，你平常功課有問題的話怎麼辦?
Daisy: 沒問題
YW: 你平常功課都沒問題?
Daisy: 有問題的話問老師
YW: 就直接問老師
Daisy: 或上網查
YW: Ok. If you seldom have any contact with Chinese students, what do you do when you have questions about schoolwork?
Daisy: I don’t have questions [very confidently].
YW: You never have any questions?
Daisy: If I do, I go ask a teacher.
YW: So you just ask teacher.
Daisy: Or I would look it up online.

Lilac has a very similar answer about using the Internet as a resource. However, when I expressed my curiosity about the reasons she didn’t ask for help from her friends, she told me that her friends weren’t enrolled in the same classes. Lilac would not ask Asians because she assumes that they would hold her to a high standard; she believes Asian students accept the myth of the model minority. As a result, she relied on a teacher’s help if her schedule allowed her to do so (scheduling was a confounding issue; Lilac needed to rush after school to catch the bus, and lunch time was too short to allow her to go ask a teacher for help).

YW: Usually you don’t have anyone to go to ask?
Lilac: Sometimes I use the Internet but it’s not always helpful.
YW: How about classmates?
Lilac: Oh. No, they are in different classes. Or, the ones I trust are in different classes. Then, like the Asians. I don’t ask them ‘cause I feel that they are going to judge me.
...
YW: If you have time, you are willing to ask teachers.
Lilac: Yeah. If I really feel that I am not going to figure this out myself, I will go talk to a teacher.

Acacia was the only participant who has close family members who can help her, without the language barrier. She would either ask her dad or her brother but not her Chinese friends because they were not good at math. Surprisingly, I also found that she would not ask her teachers questions because she is afraid of her teachers, just like a Chinese student in China or Taiwan would be.

YW: When you get into difficulties about homework, what do you do?
Acacia: I usually would just ask my dad if it’s a math problem, because he was a math teacher. If he gets too busy, I will just call my brother to ask him.
YW: You don’t talk about it with your Chinese friends?
Acacia: Not really. Most of my Chinese friends don’t like math.
(*from another conversation)
YW: You would stay quiet when you don’t understand? Or, you would ask your teachers.
Acacia: It depended. Because I wouldn’t ask my teacher in front of my whole entire class but I would raise my hand or go up to ask questions.
YW: Was that scary to you?
Acacia: Yeah. Because I am really scared of teachers.

To summarize, Lily expressed her ideal scenario regarding the need for help from others. She wished Colorado could have more Chinese speakers, like in California. This would provide not only academic support, but the emotional support from peers as well.

Lily: 我在想，如果在加州，也不錯(笑)，應該有比這多華人吧，肯定也碰個一兩個跟我差不多的。就是這麼想，而且好像加州，能玩的地方多。我也不用像現在這樣這麼憋屈，而且我也想像現在沒法做義工是因為英語，如果有個人幫我跟我一起的話，我會去做。如果在加州，可能跟我特別好的，會講國語的，然後我們倆可以一起去做義工，我聽不懂可以去找他問一下。我在想，可能容易一點。而且學校的東西也有人問。像現在學校裡懂國語的都比我小，我不懂得他們也不知道，就沒有人問。

Summations

According to the feminist Massey (1994), the definition of place, is “formed out of a particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location” (p. 168). These Asian high school students’ stories help to write the Colorado Chinese immigrant experience, as a chapter of how they are marginalized but yet do not form communities of resistance. The locality, it appears that in Colorado, Asian students take on the identity of members of a small minority group. This results in isolation, loneliness, and a feeling of powerlessness.
These students came to Colorado because their relatives were here or because it has a better learning environment for their children to learn English (than in China). However, for the newcomers, acquiring English and adapting to a new culture are very difficult processes to go through without the support of a close friend. This space might provide an English immersion environment but it also pushes them into an isolated bubble where they feel safe.

Using the lens of thirdspace to examine their experiences, I found that their high school background in China (history) had not prepared them for what they hoped to accomplish and that the society was not as diverse as they had expected. Their funds of knowledge actually make them appear more like forever foreigners. Being perceived as a forever foreigner can shield them from some issues but it also can be a veil, which hides them and keeps them from being recognized as students with unique needs. If we think of the second space as mental or cognitive forms, the widespread concept of the myth of the model minority is clearly a mental concept that is easily applied to this group of ‘foreigners’. Stereotypes are the images and concepts so deeply rooted in our minds that we see the stereotype we expect rather than the person in front of us. The social space in Colorado might not appear to strongly or aggressively exercise this myth on these participants. None of these students feel that they were treated differently based on their identity, even though they had experiences to the contrary. Additionally, there were incidents when the majority felt threatened and the myth became a way to protect themselves and leave the Asian students in a difficult position.

Another phenomenon that needs to be addressed is the lack of support and guidance for newcomers. The long-time immigrants and their parents also expressed the frustration and confusion they had experienced when they first arrived in Colorado. The state of
Colorado needs to work on providing more support to Asian immigrants in schools, and existing resources need to be proactively promoted.
CHAPTER VIII

DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This chapter will discuss the stories, thoughts and experiences collected from the five participants and include implications for future research. In the state of Colorado, where the Chinese immigrant population is very small, the students’ true feelings remain untold. According to the U.S. Census (2010), the Asian population in the state of Colorado in 2010 was 2.8% and of that, the percentage of the Chinese population was .5% (http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF). The percentage of Asian students among these 3 schools, where the participants were enrolled, is between 2%~ 8.3%. The problem with these numbers is that they do not reveal the exact number of Chinese immigrants in each school. However, we still can conclude that Chinese students are one of the minorities of the minorities. With this information in mind, this study intended to discover the school experiences from these students. The discussions of each finding are listed in the following sections:

Discussion

1. Participants, especially the newcomers, either showed that they didn’t understand the educational system in the U.S. or they expressed their frustration at their inability to access available information. As mentioned earlier, all participants have high GPAs in school. This indicates that the participants’ educational needs might be hidden by their academic performance. Four of the five participants have a G.P.A. of 4.0. The remaining participant’s GPA is 3.3 and she considered her level of achievement below that of “normal” Asian students. However, when students are quiet in class and appear to have no problems with their academic work, their needs can become invisible, due to their Asian
identity and their presumption of competence that thus often entails. This may also result in a false impression by the teachers that the students are doing well and no further support or checks for understanding are necessary.

The cultural differences might be another way to explain this finding. In the American classroom setting, students are expected to express themselves whenever they are confused and teachers are responsible to responding to those questions. In contrast, in a Chinese classroom, students are not accustomed to asking questions or to conducting public communication in the classroom. As Jasmine said “我在中國也從來不問老師”(I didn’t ask teachers questions when I was in China). In reality, when the confusion arose, Lily’s reaction was “聽不懂就略過了”([I] would just forget about it when I didn’t understand). This cultural difference created a communication gap between the teachers and the students. As a result, the teachers didn’t sense the need for help and students tried to survive each day with the confusions unresolved.

To avoid the accumulation of frustration on the part of recently immigrated students, teachers need to be aware of the cultural differences mentioned above and to double check students’ understanding. Also, teachers need to be sensitive by checking students after class instead of in front of other students. Any gesture that might cause the students to lose face in front of others is another cultural awareness that teachers should have in mind. Additionally, creating a mutual trust and encouraging students from Asia to speak their minds is another task that both groups need to develop. After all, the goal is to help students build their skills to not only adapt to the new environment, but to really start to live fully in their dream land.

Following this finding, I couldn’t help wondering if school counselors should be responsible for this issue. Newcomers from Asia have a very distinct and different
educational system in terms of evaluations, exams, and college applications. The differences between Asian educational systems and those in the U.S. are very important and need to be explained to the newcomers. The fact that Lily did not know that counselors existed until the second or third semester is an indication that the needs of these students are being neglected and some improvement in this area is required. In another words, schools failed to ensure that these students have equal access to the educational system.

The results show that the participants do not think the school or the teachers are responsible for providing important information. From the data, none of the students blame their schools or teachers; rather, they take the responsibility upon themselves. They wish that their English skills could be better to acquire information on their own instead of seeking better support from others, especially not from higher authorities, such as teachers, counselors or other school personnel. A parent did express her wish that the school district provide support to students and families from Asia instead of, according to her, the minority groups with large student populations.

Acacia’s mother: 我覺得 Spanish 在科州得到的幫助比我們亞洲人多很多. 亞洲人來有兩種, 一種是像你這種讀書人, 英文沒有問題, 另一種是來餐廳工作, 他們沒有聲音人家不知道他們需要幫助.

Acacia’s mother: I think that in Colorado, Spanish get a lot more help compared to Asian. There are 2 kinds of Asian people; one is the educated people like you with no problem with English. The other came here to work in the restaurant. They have no voice so people don’t know that they need help.

Another parent wished that the school offered after school tutoring since she was not capable of helping her children with schoolwork. This affirms the idea that educators, especially in areas with small populations of immigrant students from China, need to be more proactive to ensure that Asian students and their families understand how the American
educational system works. More support and interpretation needs to be readily available to both students and their parents.

Ogbu (1990) identified Chinese immigrants as a group with the status of voluntary minorities, “Immigrant or voluntary minorities are those who have more or less chosen to move to the United States or to some other society, in the belief that this change will lead to an improvement in their economic well-being or to greater political freedom” (p. 145). The Chinese immigrant families in this study matched this description of voluntary status. From the experiences the participants revealed, their silence around the inadequate resources provided by schools overseen by the Colorado Department of Education fits into the statement that Ogbu (1991) continued in the description of voluntary immigrants, “These expectations [improvement in their economic well-being or for greater political freedom] influence the way they perceive and respond to white Americans and to institutions controlled by whites” (p. 145). Just as Acacia’s mother pointed out, 中國人比較會就是“來了就默默認了”不管是台灣來的還是中國來的 (Chinese people tend to just take whatever [we get ] and be silent, since we are here already ”. It doesn’t matter [whether you are] from Taiwan or China. This indicates that Ogbu’s description holds true, immigrants from China will be quiet and accept what is offered, not understanding their rights within the U.S. educational system. The U.S. educational system promises, and is obligated to offer, equal access to all students, immigrants or non-immigrants, majority or minorities, low achievers or high achievers. We cannot justify ignoring, or negating the needs of this particular group of students, because they remain silent.

2. Participants expressed a lack of familiarity with the spaces in their environment as well as experiencing the limited a) physical space and b) social space.
The participants' daily routines take them mainly only between school and home. Their social space is also limited as Denver has few Chinese immigrant students and provides no space for establishing solid friendships. The notion of Chinatown disappeared in the last century and was never revived. When interpreting Lefebvre’s concepts in *The Production of Space*, Soja (1996) uses inter-relationships in a linked triad: perceived space, conceived space and lived space to explain the space. As mentioned earlier, using Lefebvre’s trialetics and Soja’s concepts, I interpret the thirdspace as a space that exercises one’s experiences (historical), in a location (spatiality), through the social interactions (sociality) and social constructions-imposition (stereotyping), acceptance, adaptation, and resistance with others. After examining the participants’ experiences, I was surprised that their perceived space (first space) is very limited, and this affected their lived space (thirdspace); and that the opposite was also true. Four of the five participants’ daily physical space was simply between school and home. The data revealed the reasons as a) no friends to go out with, b) unfamiliarity with the environment, and c) their minds are occupied with school related stress or frustration.

‘No friends to go out with’ relates not only to a very limited social life, but it also indicates that the participants lack the resources or support to create a safe thirdspace, or a space in which they can cope with the difficulties in life. Moje et al. (2004) cited Homi Bhabha’s definition of thirdspace as something that is “produced in and through language as people come together, and particularly as people resist cultural authority, bringing different experiences to bear on the same linguistic signs or cultural symbols to bear on the same experience” (p. 43). Even though the linguistic signs are the same, or they are experiencing the same activities, the small population of students from China in these schools makes it
difficult to naturally develop the safe thirdspace and become familiar with the new environment around them. This leads us to concern for the well-being of the students and to wonder if the lack of social space puts them at risk.

According to Yeh et. al (2008), social network are particularly important for immigrant adolescents when they copy with difficulty in life. As Way, N., and Pahl’s study (2006) points out, Asian American adolescents perceived significantly higher levels of discrimination by peers over other minority students. Without solid friendships and socializing after school, the lack of a structured leisure time also has a strong correlation with adolescents’ antisocial behaviors (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000).

There were four participants who indicate that they lack both close friends as peer support in the U.S., as well as structured leisure time with friends. As mentioned in Chapter 6, one of the long-term immigrant participants, Lilac, indicated that her mother is always busy so she does not have transportation to any leisure activities including sports or birthday parties. The other three, who are newcomers, believed that the cultural mismatch between the US and China prevents them from participating in such activities. This reminded me of a conversation I had with my Chinese language class students. These American students had studied Chinese for four years and they expressed an interest in having real conversations with native speakers. When I suggested they to get in touch with the exchange student from China who attended our school, they told me that it is difficult to hang out with Chinese students because their cultures are so different. However, they think that it is fine to hang out with students from Germany because culturally, they it is more similar to the US. This incident helps explain how and why newcomers from China have a hard time establishing friendships and expanding their social and physical spaces. Even though they might try to
rationalize this situation and put their energy into their educational goals, being isolated and not participating in all aspects of high school life in the present space might cause more anxiety and depression on top of the challenges they are already facing. In this scenario, the Chinese students are considered marginalized. The dominant group is oppressing the minority groups, who resist by secretly creating their own linguistic and culturally safe thirdspace. We are also reminded to ask this question: Should the dominant group be required or expected to respectfully share both the physical and social spaces?

3. Participants feel that people in Colorado don’t have a strong sense of the Myth of the Model Minority, with its exaggerated view of their academic abilities. However, in some cases, they perceived that they are viewed as an enemy when Whites’ positions of power and prestige are threatened by some myth or stereotypical view of gifted Chinese students. None of the participants felt that their teacher or classmates have a strong sense of the myth of model minority or hold that against them. The newcomers explained that they may have been unaware of such pressures due to the language barriers. The long-time immigrant participants found this type of teasing by their friends to be acceptable. However, there are cases presented in Chapter 6 demonstrating that in the school setting, when in competition, the model minority myth was still used to either rationalize the situation or to alienate the Chinese immigrant students. Those incidents echoed the concepts of 1) forever foreigners, 2) model minority myth and 3) yellow perils (explained earlier in Chapter 2). As R. Lee (1999) states, “the model minority can operate as the paragon of conservative virtues that all Americans should emulate only if Asian Americans remain like ‘us’ but utterly are not ‘us’” (p. 183). The physical appearance identifies the students as Asian, regardless of their length of time in the US. Once the Chinese immigrant students are
in a position of competing or fall into the stereotypes that a western person might perceive, the model minority myth is used to explain the situation. Furthermore, in such situations, the student may begin to be stereotyped as a forever foreigner or worse, a yellow peril. That is also why S. S. Lee (2006) compares the terms yellow peril, forever foreigners, and model minority; she points out that these concepts seem contradictory but in fact are inter-connected. Using the lens of thirdspace to examine this issue, people in Colorado, without much experience in the social space (thirdspace) through interactions with Chinese people, tend to use the stereotypes they learned in their conceived space (second space) to explain the circumstances. Chinese immigrants, then, whether acting “Chinese” or not, were examined through their second space concept instead of a real social space. This is evidenced by Lilac’s recollection of her peers describing her “you are not like those Asians, you are cool”.

However, I interpret this through Lee’s definition; Lilac might ‘remain like ‘us’ (American), but is utterly ‘not us’ (Lee, 1999). She still suffered from not acting or performing as well as an ‘Asian’ should. In her mind, to catch up to the image in people’s second space, she cannot really be herself in interactions with others; as it turns out, she needed to create a thirdspace to justify and escape the reality as well.

In conclusion, people in Colorado might not behave as aggressively as those in other areas, due to the small number of students from Asia compared to New York or California; however, the model minority myth is widespread and deeply rooted in people’s minds, including Colorado, a state that does not have a large group of Chinese population.

4. Without the support and resources from a Chinese community (such as Chinatown or other Chinese immigrant student group), participants still rely on the teachers’ help. However, due to the language barrier, they seek resources from the
**Internet (Chinese version) instead.** As mentioned in the historiography of Chinese immigrants in Colorado, Denver no longer has a physical Chinatown. However, every Sunday afternoon in the high school they rent, Chinese Sunday schools temporarily function as a space in which Chinese immigrants gather for their children’s heritage language education. However, the newcomers (with the exception Daisy, who was guided by a Chinese teacher) don’t know there is such a community; the other 2 long-term immigrant students chose not to participant in the Chinese language school in order to avoid the stress created by gossip within the community. Studies show that Asian immigrants and Asian Americans seek help from close peers for their concerns (Yeh et al., 2008; Yeh & Inose, 2003). However, due to the small number of Chinese immigrant students, it is not easy for them to have this layer of support. Going to teachers, especially to ELA teachers, who are helping them to go through the transition into the English language and American culture, seems to be the best option. The teachers’ responsibilities (in terms of assisting newly arrived students) are greater than those of teachers in schools, which have a larger Chinese population. When the language barrier stopped these new immigrant students from approaching others for help, the Internet became a great resource for them, in the Chinese language version.

The Internet resource phenomenon is a demonstration of global learning. However, according to the participants, it does not always have the Chinese version of resources they need and the online translation sites (such as google translate) sometimes cause misunderstanding. I would suggest that teachers both encourage and allow the use of smart phones, tablets, or other technology in the classroom. This may help solve the problems at the moment when students are lost or confused, it also prevents students from the frustration
of “聽不懂就略過了” ([I] would forget about it when I don’t understand [the language]), as Lily stated.

**Summation of Discussion**

Chinese immigrant students’ educational rights have been neglected in Colorado. The findings show that schools are not providing the support these students need, including providing sufficient information and first language support. This was evidenced by how these students relied heavily on the Internet as a main resource to help them with schoolwork. Due to the language barrier and cultural differences, public school teachers do not have enough knowledge and awareness to help the Chinese immigrant students to better transition and adjust in their new environment. The findings also reveal that students are very isolated in terms of their physical and social space. This phenomenon is compounded by the fact that Colorado lacks a large group of Chinese immigrants and it impacts all areas of the students’ lives. On the other hand, it can be assumed that similar situations might occur in any state that has similar or an even smaller population of Chinese immigrants. As mentioned earlier, due to this small number of Chinese immigrants, Colorado Chinese immigrants do not constitute an obvious threat; therefore, people in Colorado might not act as aggressively or strongly as expected. However, as the critical incidents indicate, when in a competitive situation, the myth of the model minority is still widespread and deeply rooted in people’s minds, including in the Denver area, a place that does not have a large Chinese population.

**Suggestions from the Participants**

In the final interview of participants, I asked what advice they would give a future Chinese immigrant student. The suggestions came from two different perspectives; newcomers and long-term immigrant students. The newcomers suggested a) figure out the
school schedule as soon as possible to avoid wasting time; b) be outspoken; c) don’t come to the US unless you are prepared to struggle. In the second group’s opinions, immigrant students from China should d) avoid judging people based on their school performance; and e) people should help out new immigrant students more.

a). Suggestion from Daisy. Daisy was very confident that one should be able to adapt to the new environment in six months. She was very frustrated with the schedule the counselor suggested her and that wasted her time and lowered her grades. Therefore, she would like the newcomers avoid the mistake she made. She stated:

Find a good school. If [you] don’t like it just transfer. Then, about your class schedule, if you are a ninth grader you will have to be careful. Don’t just schedule whatever without knowing what it is. Go online to check what these classes are, otherwise you will have poor grades for your first semester.

b). Suggestion from Jasmine. Learning from the experience that her shyness made life even harder, Jasmine suggested newcomers should be more outspoken. She expressed that her quietness and shyness keep people away from having social interactions with her.

“最好性格不要像我這樣!” (Better not have a personality like I do!), “因為不認識的人我不講話的話，別人就會覺得我不好接近” (Because [if] I don’t talk and if people don’t understand me, they would think that I am not easy to get along with)”. As Chuang and Moreno (2011) address, shy immigrant students experienced difficulties in peer interactions and in social relationships. They also point out that shyness is regarded as social incompetence from a western view. It is then associated with rejection and victimizations by peers and is particular evidenced in Chinese immigrant children in their study. The problem
that happened to Jasmine needs immediate attention and the school needs to take action on taking care of a quiet and shy student who is still trying to learn the new language like her.

c) Suggestions from Lily. Not surprisingly, Lily would not recommend this experience to others. She explained the difficulties and the reasons, “Going to school and the exams are hard. Don’t think that schools are easy. I cannot even understand the questions and it’s been a year! Let alone that their [her friends’] English is not even as good as mine”. She further stated a strong comment, “[If it is a suggestion] to my friends, I will tell them don’t come”; “I will tell them the truth. Here it is not as good as you thought, [or] as interesting as you imagined”. This comment summarized how she feel about her high school experience in Colorado. It also echoed the first expression she had with me “I regret it [coming to the US], every single day”.

d) Suggestions from Acacia who is a long-term immigrant. As mentioned earlier, different immigration status, language and backgrounds affect immigrant students’ social interactions with others (Chuang & Moreno, 2011; Qin et al., 2008), and they redefine their ethnic identity based on how close they are to the mainstream culture (Tong, 2014). As a long-time immigrant, Acacia suggested, asking newcomers to not judge people according to their grades, a reverse position of the model minority phenomenon. It pointed out the bad experience she had in Taiwan and how it frustrated her. She also encouraged Chinese newcomer students to be more proactive in their approach to American students, “Just because you don’t know the language doesn’t mean that you cannot communicate another way. So, I expect them to reach out to American kids and try to make a friendship there” as she stated.
e) **Suggestions from Lilac.** As the other long-time immigrant, Lilac expressed her positive view toward Colorado people but also pointed out how people would talk loudly to her based on her Asian appearance. Knowing how difficult it could be, Lilac expressed her thought of offering some support for the newcomers, “I would probably help them like ask them whenever if they need help or anything. Put out my time to help them like follow them around, to help them to know the place better”.

With different identities, personalities and mentalities, each participant has a different perspective when they made these suggestions. However, they all imply one thing: The public school system in Colorado has space to improve for these Chinese immigrant students. These suggestions, on the other hand, also addressed what frustrated them the most. At this point, I am not sure if their American dream is still a dream. While physically living in their dreamland, they don’t seem to feel that way emotionally. This created another space for them to handle. It is not the reality they expected, nor the dream they had when they were in China. They exist in a space where they try to cope with the conflicts between their dream and their reality.

**Limitations**

As described in Chapter 3, in Colorado it was not easy to recruit Chinese immigrant students as the participants for this study. After months of searching, I started the interview process. The result was a blessing. I appreciate this opportunity; I was able to meet, know and listen to these students. They answered the questions I asked and went beyond a simple response. Another limitation lies in the fact all of the participations are females. Male participants may have a very different experience and their voice must be heard as well. In the Chinese culture, males tend to keep their suffering silent because the Chinese society
expects them to practice what is culturally appropriate, “男兒有淚不輕彈” (Men do not shed tears unless they are deeply grieved). I am concerned about male Chinese immigrant students and how they cope with the isolation and frustration in Colorado, or if they experience these. I’m also reminded of the conversation with Lilac’s mother when she mentioned her son. She talked about his inability to connect to the outside world (except at school), and that her son becomes extremely shy or anxious whenever he interacts with people he doesn’t know. Here is the conversation:

YW: 未來, 你希望他們, 你對他們的期望是甚麼
Lilac’s mother:恩…期望阿…我覺得他們可以比較健康的發展, 就是身心比較健康一點, 然後..因為我的孩子，..我覺得都關在家裡，他們對外面的接觸很少，我覺得…還是…
YW: 你會擔心他們…影響到..
Lilac’s mother:對對, 人際的關係, 還有他們處理事情, 那種很多處理的方法, 因為家裡 always.. 像家裡有家長帶著, 碰到甚麼問題我們隨時可以跟他講, 然後分析給他聽, 喔, 譬如有..家裡有事, 或是有人來, 像我兒子, 我發現有人來按電鈴的時候, 他特別緊張, 然後, 對, 然後有人按電鈴, 我們 always 是去看看是誰, 譬如說你剛剛按電鈴, 你有打電話來, 那我知道, 那他會, 他不是 往外去開門, 他是往裡面跑.
YW: About the future, what do you hope? What’s your expectation of them?
Lilac’s mom: Um…. expectations…I think that they can have a better, healthier development, [a] healthier well-being. Then…because my kids,. I think that they always stay at home. They seldom got in touch with the outside world. I think…still (Stumbled with words).
YW: You worry about them…. that it would affect…
Lilac’s mom: Right, their social relationships. Also, the way they handle things. Those many ways of handling things. Because at home, always…like when there are parents [at home] to take care of them. If we run into problems I can tell him [how to handle situations] then analyze things with him. Or, for example, if there is something going on at home, or if people come to visit, like my son, I found that if someone rings the doorbell, he would be particularly nervous. You called so I know. [Otherwise,] he would... He would not go open the door, but run inside instead.

Another limitation due to the difficulty of recruiting participants was that I was not able to include any low-achieving students. All of the participants in this study have GPAs from 3.25 to 4.0 (As mentioned earlier about the difficulties I ran into while trying to recruit
some of the students who, according to their parents, did not perform well in school). Going to a good college is not the only or ultimate goal in their life. I cannot help and still wonder, what does their life look like? How do they cope with school, family, friends, and life in Colorado? What kind of help do they need? I hope that someday their stories will be told through future research.

**Implications, Final Thoughts, and Suggestions**

In the US educational setting, Chinese students are stereotyped as obedient, model minorities, over achievers, motivated, and mathematically inclined (Kibria, 2002; Zinzius, 2005). This is what the media, press, and politicians want American people to see. In addition, it creates the myth that, in general, this group of students never needs help. It is very easy and convenient for people to use these stereotypes to apply to Asians they encounter, but with whom they are not necessary willing to really socialize with. These stereotypes, while seemingly laudatory, are indeed harmful. In a way in they mean that people are not really ‘seeing’ the Asian they interact with as an organic individual but as the stereotypical concepts they prefer to see. It is unfair to Asian students because they feel pressured to always act and perform well enough to match these stereotypes. It is also dangerous to teachers because they cannot see these students’ educational needs that are hidden beyond these terms and concepts, if the teachers are not aware of these lenses they are wearing.

The findings showed that these students’ educational needs are over looked and their isolated social space is worthy of our concern. Gross, Juvonen, and Gable (2002) cited Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, and Ryan’s research and state, “Research on young adults has found that feeling close and connected to others on a daily basis is associated with higher daily
wellbeing, and in particular, feeling understood and appreciated and sharing pleasant interactions are especially strong predictors of well-being” (p. 75). Gross et al. also conclude that the frequency with which adolescents use the Internet is associated with their daily social anxiety and loneliness in school (2002). One of the findings indicates that immigrant students, especially the newcomers, rely on the Internet to create a thirdspace in which they escape from the reality. This reflects their isolation in school and their psychological well-being is at risk. As hooks (1990) pointed out, “One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance” (p. 149). In Colorado, the lack of community support pushes these students into a more marginalized, dangerous position. This study not only hopes to reveal their stories but also hopes that schools, educators, and scholars can work with the community to create a space where these individuals can join together to find the strength they need.

As Ogbu (1990) stated, “…[and] culture difference and cultural conflicts cause real difficulties for non-Western children in Western-type schools and for minority children in the U.S. public schools” (p. 144). From the findings of this study, I learned that especially for the newcomers, not only is the new language a challenge, but the cultural difference is also an issue that creates more obstacles when they interact with teachers, classmates, and others. Chinese culture has been and still is a mystery to most educators in the US, especially in Colorado, where the numbers of Chinese immigrant students and their related issues have never been great enough to attract attention. The culture differences (for example, why the students remain silent instead of fighting for their rights from the school) have an explanation. Bell (2008) explains that under the thousands of years of Confucianism’s influence, the Chinese culture’s radically social view is based on the relationship between human beings in an authoritarianistic way. The teacher is in a superior position and students
need to look, listen, speak and move following the rites. Under these concepts, Chinese students do not have the right to require teachers or the school to provide extra help. Because they believe it’s outside of one’s position to speak, they would follow the expectation of “do not speak in opposition to the rites” (a doctrine from Liji), in combination with their self-identity as a foreigner. The Chinese immigrant students might therefore, always remain silent when they face any unjust or problematic situation. This gap may cause misunderstanding or even conflict between students and educators; meanwhile, both groups lose the opportunity to establish a relationship and to learn from each other. I would hope for a further study regarding the role of Chinese culture and Confucianism in the lives and choices of Chinese immigrant students.

The purpose of this study is to listen to this usually quiet group of students’ stories and their experiences in Colorado, and hope they find their voices. If these stories happened in Colorado, it might happen in any other state that have similar or even smaller numbers of Chinese immigrants. I hope this study can give a peek into the true experiences of minority students. If the educational system’s aim is to provide equal access to all students, this study is a reminder that we still have work to do.
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Appendix A Flyer for participant recruiting

A research study for CHINESE IMMIGRANTS!

Dear parents/students,

My name is Ya-Wen Chang and I am a student in the Educational Leadership and Innovation program at the University of Colorado Denver. I am currently at the stage of collecting data for my dissertation. I realized that there are only a small number of Chinese immigrant students in the Denver area and that inspired me to work on this study. I would like to interview Chinese immigrant students whose parents are both Chinese and who are currently enrolled in high school in order to talk about their experiences in school. Their involvement in this study will include approximately 5 interviews of the student and the interviews will not take too much time. A $25 dollars gift card will be given to each participant in appreciation for your time.

You might be interested to know that most of the studies of Chinese immigrants are done either in New York or California. Your story from Colorado is important to tell. With your help, I am hoping it allows teachers and educators know more about Asian students and to create a better education environment. If you are interested and agree to allow your child to take part in this study, please give me a call or email me through: ya-wen.chang@ucdenver.edu or my cell phone: 720.

Thank you very much for your time and I look forward to hear from you!

Ya-Wen Chang
Ph.D. candidate at University of Colorado Denver, School of Education EDLI program
Appendix B  Coding Sample

Interview Transcription

404  YW:那你會什麼時候希望他來關切你一下?
405  > 好像沒有
406  YW:好像沒有?你不會希望他來問你，就算你真的不懂?
407  > 恩
408  YW:你不懂的話怎麼辦?
409  > 我也不好意思去問他
410  YW:那就是跟剛剛一樣啊，如果老師解釋如果你聽不懂的話怎麼辦?
411  > 不知道，因為我在中國也從來不問老師
412  YW:從來不問?所以就是這種經驗對你來說是還蠻新的
413  > 我以前小學就是很少人，就一般只有十分之一的人好像會舉手，然後慢慢大了大了就
414  一般從來沒人舉手了
415  YW:高中也是這樣耶，這邊高中還好一點，對但是跟國內相較確實啦，這邊也是
416  > 這邊的話他們就是不用舉手直接講
417  YW:恩
418  > 但是有時候不舉手，老師又會說你講話都不舉手的，而且大家就算知道了一般也很少
419  人會去舉手
420  YW:OK,所以就覺得這對你來說是一個文化上的差異?
421  > 恩，不太習慣課堂上太放鬆吧
422  YW:怎麼說?
423  > 就一般他們跟老師講話，我本來不會講的也都是聽的，然後感覺他們跟老師聊了好久
424  我就覺得怎麼還不上課啊，老師怎麼還在跟學生一直聊天都不上課
425  YW:一節課多久?
426  > 就差不多有時候會聊五到十分鐘這樣子
427  YW:你覺得五到十分鐘真的是太久了，OK，就正課也不上?
428  > 對
429  YW:那一節課大概五十分鐘嗎?
430  > 一節課九十九分鐘
431  YW:九十九分鐘你覺得花五分鐘聊天太久了?（笑）
432  > 因為課上課的話我覺得應該全部上課
433  YW:就是應該開始馬上就上，在國內的話是比較像那樣的對不對?
434  > 對
435  YW:那班上同學呢?
436  > 班上同學也跟老師聊啊，就有的人就兩個人一起在那聊，之後就兩個人一起在那笑
437  YW:哦—那這個對你來講也是不一樣的地方?
438  > 對
439  YW:OK，你會曾經跟老師分享過什麼嗎?
440  > 沒有
441  YW:沒有?希望老師不要叫到你?好，所以你笑就是覺得是，那你有沒有說希望事情的進展
442  是怎麼樣，除了語言上面?
443  > 沒有規定
444  YW:那除了 和這個日本朋友，有沒有人曾經找你出去玩過?