

**Just For Whom? Including Immigrant and Migrant Workers of Asian Descent in the
Energy Transition Dialogue in Alberta, Canada**

by

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Abstract

There is agreement amongst activists, politicians, the majority of the public and even industry stakeholders that shifting away from carbon-intensive industries is necessary to get on a path towards mitigating climate change. There is also widespread support for a transition that prioritizes the rights of those who will be vulnerable to these shifts, including resource-dependent and Indigenous communities, workers, and other marginalized groups. However, there is still much debate over what this transition will look like. This research imagines an energy transition that reflects the concerns, values and priorities of Asian immigrant and migrant oil and gas workers. In the introduction, I put forward a brief summary of the concepts of energy justice and energy democracy and how they guided this research project, as well as contextualize the experiences of Asian immigrants as diasporic subjects in Canada in relation to their unique histories of outmigration and discrimination. Based on fifteen semi-structured interviews with immigrant and migrant workers of Asian descent with experience working in both white-collar and blue-collar professions in the oil and gas industry in Alberta, I take two approaches to analyzing the interview data that bring about important insights for the energy transition literature. Firstly, I propose that an intersectional lens applied to dimensions of the matrix of domination such as race, class, gender and age can illustrate the unique, yet interrelated values, priorities and concerns of Asian immigrants and migrants. Secondly, I suggest that looking at underlying systems of oppression, namely white hegemony that uses race-based justifications for valuing some bodies over others, can shed light on worker complicity and point towards opportunities for building solidarity amongst racialized workers and groups in so-called Canada.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Ella Kim Marriott. The research project of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project name “Just for whom?: Including immigrant and migrant workers of Asian descent in the energy transition dialogue in Alberta, Canada”, Pro00123321, September 12, 2022.

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I grew up on the unceded and traditional territory of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), S^kw^xwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) nations. Over the past two years I have learned, played, and worked on this thesis while living on Treaty 6 territory, the traditional land of the Cree, Dene, Saulteaux, Nakota Sioux, Metis and other nations. I grew up doing land acknowledgements in school, without knowing the actual meaning behind the words. As I have grown up, I have been learning about my responsibilities as an Asian settler on Indigenous land. While it is hard to put into words how much I appreciate those who have taken the time to teach me about the importance of connecting with my own culture, I want to thank Mosom Rick Lightning, Inez Lightning and their family. *Kamsahamnida*.

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Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Chapter 1: Introduction

Positionality

My Halmoni's family spent a month docked on a boat coming back to Korea from Japan because her family was seen as traitors for leaving. My Haraboji whose family was torn apart during the Korean War, got to come to the Americas to study and saved his money everyday to be able to bring my Halmoni, my Appa, and my gomos over. We were taught to be thankful for our life in Canada. We were taught to be proud to be Korean-Canadian. I grew up knowing family is important, above all else, but also that who counts as family is not limited by blood relations. I learned values of working hard, honouring my elders and ancestors. I was told that I came from warriors. I was a fighter. My ancestors overcame colonialism and war. While I am thankful for what I have been taught, these lessons are double-edged. We work hard because that is what is expected of us. We are taught to not disturb the peace or risk our opportunity. We do our best to fit into White culture, as if we are trying to secure our position as the white man's second hand man. This thinking evokes a sort of colonial amnesia – exchanging the woes of being a colonized and poor people on one land for becoming settlers with a “better life” on the stolen land of another colonized people. Being half white (Celtic), I find myself questioning whether I will ever be truly Korean enough or white enough to find my community. Throughout my adolescence I moved from a point of wanting to be “whiter” just to fit in, to a point of coming to embrace my Korean heritage. I am at a place now where I am thankful for what my family has and what they have taught me, while also knowing I am a settler on Indigenous land, now looking for ways to come into cultural consciousness and solidarity. Writing this thesis is just one step in unraveling the contradictions that exist within my own experience of being Asian in Canada.

Over the course of writing this thesis, I found myself doing things to feel closer to my Korean culture and other members of the Asian diaspora. Some of the actions I took were subconscious; I bought from more Asian owned businesses this year than ever before; the media content I consumed was full of Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese and Chinese culture; I watched *Everything, Everywhere, All at Once* twice and bawled my eyes out both times; I cooked dishes from my childhood and cut my food with scissors. These little actions seem inconsequential, but they added up. I questioned, why was I doing them? Only as time went on, did I realize that I was yearning to learn about and connect with my culture and other members of the Asian diaspora. I was seeking connection and understanding. Why had I not done this before? Because for the first time, my work life and my personal life were aligning. Because I had the time, privilege, space to do so.

Consciously, when I started this project, I vowed to prioritize my family anytime they needed me this year. I returned home for multiple funerals, birthdays, holidays, and special occasions like the screening for a music video my brother's hip-hop group *Off Topic* got funding to produce. I called my family more. I savoured moments with my last remaining grandparent, my Chinese step-grandpa. When I was with my family, I asked questions about our immigration stories, and listened more intently. I was told and retold stories and learned something new every time. Like many academics, I have always struggled with prioritizing work over family. I had become used to work

taking up the majority of my time over the five plus years of my academic career, even since I started working at the age of 12. I had become used to doing all that I could to, in my mind, get myself and my family out of a cycle of poverty, to prove myself and live up to the expectations that people had set out for me my whole life. However, I recognized early on in this project, that if I wanted to open up my mind and my heart to listening, understanding and connecting with other members of the Asian diaspora in conversation, who graciously took the time to open up to me about their immigration stories, their families, and their lives, then it was of utmost importance to me to uphold my own cultural values tied to family and relationships. Prioritizing family over work also felt like a way for me to challenge the ways in which I have been conditioned to act as a model minority myself. Completing my thesis while living up to my promise to myself that I would prioritize my family feels like the greatest accomplishment of my career thus far. It is not lost on me what an immense privilege it is to have the means and ability to spend time with family while working. Many other immigrants and migrants remain estranged from their families in pursuit of a better life for future generations. I have said multiple times this year that this was the most fortunate year of my life.

My interest in this research topic evidently comes in part from my personal interest in it. Up until now in my academic career, I intentionally ventured away from studying as an “insider”. I felt as though in the pursuit of objectivity, falling back on studying people with similar experiences to me and my family would in some way discredit the value of my work. It took a number of conversations with my partner Adam, and Mosom Rick Lightning, for me to realize that having knowledge about my own community is actually a strength, despite my years of studying in western academic institutions that made me feel as though it was a weakness. I was guided toward the realization that not only am I most equipped to do research involving my own community, but if I do not do this research, then who will? By no means do I claim to fully understand participants’ and their families’ experiences as generations of Asians living in Canada. You can only learn so much about a person and their ancestors in a one-to-two hour conversation. However, everyone that I interviewed reminded me of, if not myself, my brother, dad, step-brothers, step-sister, step-dad, step-grandpa, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, my partner, his lolo and lola, his sisters, his father, his aunts, uncles, his cousins, or my best friends, in terms of how their families arrived in Canada and how that led to who they are today. We are all unique individuals, but we are tied together through the common experience of being members of the Asian diaspora. My experiences, and the experiences of the participants in this research, do not account for the countless stories that have been shared over a warm meal of rice and soup between generations of Asian immigrants in Canada. That being said, it feels necessary to use my opportunity, given to me through the sacrifice and hard

work of my ancestors, generations of Celtic, Korean and Chinese immigrants who did all they could to give a better life to their (great-)(great-)(great-)(great) granddaughter, to bring the stories and experiences of families like mine into the dialogue surrounding a pivotal moment in Canadian history, being the energy transition and the fight to mitigate climate change. What is even greater than completing a thesis, is acquiring knowledge of my own community's experiences that have allowed me to grow as a person and that have empowered me to advocate alongside my community moving forward, inside and outside of academic institutions.

Introduction

IPCC reports have made it clear that humankind, and in particular western nations, must act quickly to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the most catastrophic climate change scenarios (IPCC, 2022). Global consensus of activists, governments and academics have moved far past questioning if emissions reductions are necessary, and even fossil fuel executives are recognizing that a shift towards lower-carbon industry is on the horizon (Domonoske, 2021). There is still debate surrounding how and when shifts will occur, with industry pushing for solutions ranging from carbon capture and storage technologies that would allow for business-as-usual to continue, while activists push for a de-growth model that makes a large leap from current systems (Dunlap and Laratte, 2022; Pathways Alliance, 2022). Arguably, the Canadian government is playing for both sides, though leaning towards the side of industry, exhibited by the 2023 budget announcement on March 28th, 2023 that promised over \$55 billion for clean technologies and pro-business measures, using language that presents the plan as person-centered with little mention of measures that help everyday people other than jobs and tax supports (Department of Finance, 2023). While climate change is becoming a reality, conversations about what the transition away from fossil fuels will look like are just beginning.

Canada has set a target to reduce GHG emissions by up to 40-45% below 2005 levels by 2030. Despite contradicting visions for what the energy transition may look like, the term “just transition” has gained popularity in academic, political and public spheres. A *just transition* for workers and those who will be directly impacted by economic and social changes associated with shifts away from fossil fuel intensive industries emphasizes the need to consider social equity and the uneven distribution of costs and benefits as we attempt to transition towards a low-carbon economy (Mertins-Kirkwood and Deshpande, 2019). Transitioning from carbon-intensive

to low-carbon energy has positive immediate environmental impacts and is therefore necessary for climate change mitigation. However, compared to the general population, certain groups, such as fossil fuel workers, will be disproportionately affected by these necessary shifts.

Fossil fuel workers will be disproportionately impacted by industry shifts, subject to a possible rise in unemployment and a likely increase of job displacement and other workplace and lifestyle changes. Nearly 600,000 jobs come directly from participation in petroleum based industries in Canada (Natural Resources Canada, 2022). According to estimates from the financial institution *TD Canada Trust* (2021), divestment from fossil fuels could displace 312,000-450,000 (50-75%) workers over the next three decades throughout Canada. Alberta is home to 199 of approximately 300 Canadian communities reliant on the energy sector for their economies, making Albertan workers particularly vulnerable to energy industry shifts (Natural Resources Canada, 2022). Alberta also has the largest portion of supply chain workers in Canada who indirectly depend on the energy sector. Even when workers are able to transition from petroleum based sectors to clean energy sectors, job displacement could lead to workers moving from unionized positions to non-unionized work, potentially taking pay cuts and being expected to make other lifestyle changes such as relocation (Alberta Federation of Labour, n.d.).

The just transition framework suggests that groups that are vulnerable to harm should be taken into consideration throughout the decision-making process and should have a say in the choices surrounding energy futures. Although strides have been made when it comes to organizations recognizing Indigenous communities as important stakeholders in determining energy futures (Indigenous Clean Energy, n.d), there has been little inclusion of other racialized workers and immigrant and migrant workers within academia and the public sphere. The Government of Canada released the *Sustainable Jobs Plan* on February 17th, 2023 (Sustainable Jobs Plan, 2023). Many environmental and workers' organizations considered it a victory to have the federal government release its first plan that details ambitions of how to support and transition workers currently involved in carbon-intensive industries. The plan was informed by the *Discussion Paper on a People-Centered Transition*. This document summarizes 17 3-hour long consultation sessions with stakeholders as well as the major findings from 30,000 email submissions. However, upon reading the report it becomes clear that certain stakeholders were valued more than others. The major stakeholders that are cited are: labour unions; provinces,

territories and municipalities; Indigenous organizations; industry, business groups and utilities; education and skills and training organizations; think tanks and research organizations; environmental organizations; Western Canada coal communities; and the general public. The only racialized group included directly in these consultations appears to be Indigenous organizations. While it can be assumed that some environmental organizations, workers' unions, and the general public groups provided input that would be relevant to racialized and immigrant and migrant workers, it speaks volumes that these workers do not have direct representation in the consultation process, especially considering the large number of migrant worker organizations and Asian associations that exist in Canada. The three major outcomes from the Discussion Paper that guide the Sustainable Jobs Plan are: 1) economic growth, competitiveness and prosperity; 2) climate action and a healthier natural environment; and 3) Indigenous reconciliation, gender equality, and a more diverse and inclusive Canada. Out of these three core outcomes, the only one that modestly attempts to include racialized or immigrant and migrant workers is the third outcome. The Sustainable Jobs Plan suggests that their "proactively inclusive approach to accessing economic opportunities will allow rural and remote and historically marginalized communities to share in the economic benefits of upcoming opportunities". While it could be said that marginalized communities include racialized and immigrant and migrant workers, the language used suggests that this goal is focused more directly on rural and remote communities. Asian immigrants and migrants working in the oil and gas industry are racially marginalized workers who still lack sufficient representation in consultation processes across the board. Acknowledging this gap, I posit two research questions: 1) what would an energy transition that uplifts the voices of Asian immigrant and migrant workers actually look like?; and 2) what would an energy transition that addresses underlying racial injustices look like? By asking this question, I intend to open up dialogue about how the energy transition can be truly transformative, in order to avoid replicating the same social and environmental injustices that exist within the fossil fuel industry and Canadian society.

Since its founding, the Canadian nation state has depended on Asian immigrants to establish itself while simultaneously valuing a white national identity (Coloma and Pon, 2017). This trend has not only continued, but has been exacerbated by economic class migration trends. According to 2011 data from Statistics Canada, "the top three source countries for migration to Canada within the past decade" are all Asian countries; China, India, and the Philippines

(Coloma and Pon, 2017). It is likely that the trend of Asian immigration to Canada will continue as the need for renewable energy workers grows, not to mention that there will be implications for Asian immigrant and migrant workers currently employed by the oil and gas industry. Therefore, a just transition must consider the experiences, concerns and needs of immigrant/migrant workers, particularly those of Asian descent who have been the backbone of Canada's labour force throughout history.

In my study I have five main objectives: (1) To shed light on the real, lived experiences of marginalized fossil fuel workers; (2) To identify relations of power that disadvantage marginalized workers, to avoid replicating these unjust systems of power as we move towards renewable energy; (3) To learn what Asian immigrant/migrant fossil fuel workers want energy futures in Canada to look like; (4) To provide nuanced, culturally specific understandings of the Asian experience in Canada, to move past the model minority myth that divides Asian groups and perpetuates white supremacy; and (5) To address how identity politics and intersecting identities influence the experiences of Asian immigrants and migrants working in Canada.

In this introductory chapter, I provide an overview of the literature related to energy justice and energy democracy, both core concepts in discussions of energy transitions. Reviewing these terms allows for a better understanding of why interviewing oil and gas workers is essential for achieving justice for marginalized workers. I move on to provide a summary of Asian immigration to Canada, with a focus on highlighting the history of immigration for the countries of origin represented in my research sample. I discuss the relevancy of looking at the experiences of Asians living in postcolonial Canada through the lens of Asians as diasporic subjects, highlighting the ways in which Canada continues to contribute to the outmigration of Asian immigrants in order to maintain economic prosperity for the dominant class in Canadian society. I elaborate on how the corresponding immigration policy in Canada that deals with Asian immigrants and migrants has evolved from race-based to a neoliberal economic policy. Finally, I summarize additional key concepts in the fields of sociology, energy transition, migration studies and Asian Canadian studies that informed my research.

Literature Review

Energy Justice and Energy Democracy

Energy Justice

The term energy justice brings attention to questions surrounding who has access to affordable, clean energy and who is harmed in the process of energy production (McCauley et al., 2013). Energy justice places emphasis on the notion that those who are impacted by energy decisions should have “the opportunity to participate in and lead energy decision-making processes with the authority to make change” (Carley and Konisky, 2020, p. 570). Climate, energy and environmental (CEE) justice overlap in three important ways, articulated by Heffron and McCauley (2018). First, CEE justice employs a distributional frame, highlighting that some communities are more likely to experience environmental harms than others. This frame also highlights the unequal distribution of environmental harm in relation to ethnicity and race, and exemplifies how communities that are burdened are actually highly resistant and resilient. Distributional frameworks have broadened to include not just physical proximity but also aspects such as wellbeing, risk, responsibility, vulnerability and recognition. Secondly, CEE justice is procedural, meaning that vulnerable communities should have opportunities for engagement, especially when communities may be impacted by climate change or when new infrastructure is being built that could bring about market shifts or environmental harms. Procedural justice accounts have come to recognize the importance of local identity, as well as actors at different levels including the household level. It can be understood in “four major ways through the development of (a) resilience and adaptation (b) from protest to acceptability (c) supply chain and whole systems [and] (d) practices and behaviours” (Heffron and McCauley, 2018, p. 4). Thirdly, while restorative justice, a third pillar of a justice framework, has been central to the development of energy justice, it could be applied more widely in CEE justice scholarship across the disciplines. This form of justice “aims to repair the harm done to people (and/or society/nature)”, and to pinpoint “where prevention needs to occur” to prevent the injustice from continuing (p. 660). Restoration in the energy justice context is applied to restoring jobs that are lost when there is an industry transition, however in all CEE cases it can be applied to address crimes against individuals, the environment, and the climate, any externalities and unpredicted

harms that may be caused by the energy transition, and to hold perpetrators accountable retroactively for damages that have already occurred.

In addition to distributional, procedural and restorative justice, recognition justice is considered a core concept for energy justice (Heffron and McCauley, 2017). Recognition justice “requires an understanding of historic and ongoing inequalities, and prescribes efforts that seek to reconcile these inequalities” (Carley and Konisky, 2020). In the energy transition, recognition justice is valuable for addressing the way the energy industry has produced and maintained social inequalities. Energy justice is distinct from climate and environmental justice, as it is interlinked with the outcome of a just transition for communities and workers and the prospect of green industries to replace carbon-intensive industries. That being said, Heffron and McCauley (2018) suggest that CEE justice both in scholarship and practice could promote a more all-encompassing equity approach to the transition away from fossil fuels. While I focus on energy justice in this study, I recognize the value in interlinking these justice frameworks. With this in mind, the energy justice rooted goals of my research are: (1) To better understand the experiences of marginalized fossil fuel workers; and (2) To unpack what underlying systems of power must be addressed as we move towards renewable energy to make the transition just.

Energy Democracy

Historically, there has been a tendency for energy developments to be centrally and privately owned and for decisions regarding energy development to be formed through a top-down process (Castleden et al., 2020). Energy democracy’s goal is to interject the voice of the public into the discourse surrounding energy futures. Democracy in this sense indicates a “demand for increased accountability and democratization of a [highly politicized] sector that was previously not seen as requiring public involvement” (Szulecki, 2018, p. 27). In comparison to energy justice, energy democracy is focused on the political implications of energy decisions, although the two concepts are intricately related. The justification for the democratization of energy decisions is that of *political equality*, meaning that humans are equal political subjects whose collective interests and judgments should be reflected in the decisions that impact them. Energy democracy can be achieved by including actors like citizens and historically marginalized groups throughout the energy decision-making process (Castleden et al., 2020). Importantly, energy democracy suggests that political equality “extends from decision-making to agenda setting as well as

preference formation” (Szulecki, 2018, p. 28). All political subjects should be empowered to express their agency in determining what energy futures look like, rather than just being consulted after the parameters and priorities have been decided on by experts with little to no concern for the needs and desires of the public. Droubi, Heffron and McCauley (2022) criticize energy democracy for being similar to energy justice without the same commitment to justice and with less invitation for interdisciplinary inquiry. Recognizing the limitations of energy democracy as a concept, I see both terms as useful, using energy justice as a guiding principle and *energy democratization* as one of many political tools to bring about energy justice.

Energy democracy is closely linked to conversations surrounding energy transitions. Energy democracy draws attention to questions about “power and politics in transitions processes” (Palm and Wahlund, 2022). Energy democracy takes place at different scales, including within political, academic and activist spheres, dismantling perceptions that energy is a technocratic field that should be centralized and controlled by experts (Lennon, 2017; Szulecki, 2018). Across spheres, what remains consistent is that members of the public who will be impacted by social and environmental transformation that comes from energy shifts, and those who have concerns regarding energy systems, development, and implications, see themselves and are treated as equal stakeholders in determining energy futures. Based on this definition, this thesis project is an exercise of energy democracy. Along with the energy justice goals of my project, there is an energy democracy goal; that being: to include the voices of Asian immigrant/migrant fossil fuel workers in determining what energy futures in Canada may look like.

History of Asian Immigration to Canada

Canada was built off of the backs of Asian labourers, on the land and with the resources of First Nations, and has continued to benefit from these communities, while gaining a positive public image from prospective immigrants in modern times in search of a ‘better life’. Canada has become known globally as a ‘nation of immigrants’, a title that ignores settler colonialism on Indigenous land and the realities of a culture that prefers assimilation. The Canadian nation state “has historically relied on immigrants to fuel economic and population growth, while adjusting immigration controls to preserve the ‘Whiteness’ of the nation” (Bhuyan et al., 2017). In other words, Canada has a long history of discriminating against non-white communities and

manipulating immigration policy to work in favour of Euro-Canadians, while doing the bare minimum to address concerns of a significant portion of the population over the intergenerational impacts of discrimination, racism and colonialism. Even in a supposed postcolonial Canada, discrimination continues to rear its head and divide communities that could be working together to dismantle systems that were never built for them to thrive. In the case of Asian immigration in Canada, the typical response has been to address Asian racism monolithically, symbolically, and often passively only after there is a spike in Asian targeted violence. One reason why the Canadian nation state has a difficult time addressing Asian racism in Canada is because it would unravel the fabric of the image of inclusion and diversity that it likes to present on the global stage, because the Canadian state has been sowing anti-Asian rhetoric since the first Asian immigrants arrived to Canada (Bhuyan et al., 2017). In order to discuss the implications of current immigration policy, Asian discrimination and the white Canadian identity, I must provide culturally specific context of what Asian immigration to Canada has looked like over the past 150 years. Below is a brief history of the immigration trends, discrimination and changing perceptions of the early Asian migrant groups in Canada, including those who have the largest presence in Alberta and in this study.

Chinese Immigration to Canada

Chinese labourers were on some of the first settler ships arriving on Turtle Island at the onset of settler-Indigenous contact in Canada (Yu, 2009). Chinese immigration to Canada has always coincided with European immigration to Canada, although much of the history of the Chinese in Canada was kept out of public discourse until the Redress movement in the late 20th and early 21st century. During the mid 19th century, many Chinese immigrants, both from China and from California, came to Canada and specifically British Columbia to participate in Canada's Gold Rush. Many of these Chinese men were recruited by agents who would round up large numbers of Asian labourers and pay for their ships over to Canada to work. This is how Chinese immigrants in the Americas came to be known as "Gold Mountain men" and "Gold Mountain guests", and their wives back home became "Gold Mountain widows" (Dere, 2019). Early Chinese immigration to Canada was largely made up of males, as early immigration was predominantly composed of young and middle-aged men coming to work. Most of these men would send remittance back home.

In addition to the Chinese who came for gold, in the late 19th century, the Canada Pacific Railway (CPR) was built to link trade networks between Asia and Western Canada to ship many resources, and people, across the Pacific Ocean (Yu, 2009). These networks were part of the foundational infrastructure that allowed Canada to flourish as a nation state, by allowing for transportation from west to east and east to west. This infrastructure was ultimately what allowed for more European immigrants to cross the Atlantic Ocean to immigrate to populate the Canadian prairies and West coast. Chinese immigrants were essential labourers contributing to building the railroad that allowed European immigrants to settle across Canada (Ungerleider, 1992). While white Euro-Canadian politicians like Prime Minister John A. MacDonald said they were reluctant to hire Chinese labourers, because of difficulty recruiting white workers for the labour-intensive work, over 15,000 Chinese workers were hired to build the CPR. The Chinese already had a reputation for their work on the Western portion of the American Transcontinental Railway. Supposedly their “industriousness and willingness to work half the wages of white workers made them the model minority for recruiters looking to build the western section of the Canadian Pacific Railway” (Dere, 2019, p. 19). At the time of construction of the CPR, Chinese made up the largest number of non-European immigrants in Canada, and together, Indigenous peoples and the Chinese outnumbered whites (Roy, 1984).

Early Chinese immigration was a product of extreme poverty and a turbulent government. Poverty in China that induced outmigration came about due to a number of different factors related to the “feudal oppression by the decadent and moribund Qing Dynasty and the imperialist exploitation of foreign powers” (Dere, 2019, p. 18). The Opium War and unequal treaties between China and imperial powers that ensued led to Hong Kong being ceded to Britain and subsequently forced to open markets up for trade. Furthermore, during the Boxer Rebellion and the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist efforts that the Rebellion ignited, China became indebted to 11 foreign countries, in the equivalent of US \$333 million, further impoverishing the country and allowing for foreign troops to occupy the country.

There was instantly resentment among white settlers over Chinese migrant labourers coming to Canada, who presumed that the Chinese “could overwhelm [the number of white immigrants], spend little, exploit local resources, send most of their earnings to China... [accept] low wages, take jobs from Caucasians and discourage white immigration” (Roy, 2013, p. 118).

The general impression of the Chinese was that they were “incapable of assimilation and immoral through such practices as smoking opium” (p. 118). Not long after the Chinese came to Canada, they began to face institutional racism, in the form of the Head Tax and eventually the Chinese Immigration Act (more aptly known as the Chinese Exclusion Act). The Head Tax came into effect in 1885, directly following the completion of the CPR (Dere, 2019). The Head Tax started at a rate of \$50 (equivalent to around \$1750 in today’s currency), crept up to \$100 in 1901 and then quickly rose to \$500 in 1903 (Dere, 2019). Essentially, these policies tore Gold Mountain families apart, with many men and some sons working for the Canadian nation state in Canada, while their wives, mothers, daughters, and other family members remained overseas. Instead of being with their families, Gold Mountain men sent remittance back home for their elders and wives to take care of their estranged children. They visited China for no longer than three years at a time as per immigration policy, sometimes married or had children when they returned to China, and then came back to work in Canada once again separated from their new wives and unborn or young children (Dere, 2019). The Head Tax slowed down Chinese immigration to Canada, while also profiting the Canadian government. The lasting impact of the Head Tax was that it established a class of Chinese Canadians who were unfairly financially burdened in comparison to white immigrants. Furthermore, workplace discrimination burdened Chinese owned businesses with additional taxes, and prevented many places from hiring Chinese workers, leading to decades of the Chinese in Canada working worse jobs (such as laundry), for lower pay, paying higher taxes, while sending remittance to their families whom they could not see for years at a time, if ever (Dere, 2019).

At a certain point, the head tax was not doing a good enough job of keeping the Chinese away in the eyes of the Canadian public. 20 years after the Chinese had been paying \$500 to the government for each family member or worker who came over to Canada, the government implemented the Chinese Immigration Act in 1923, commonly referred to as the Chinese Exclusion Act (Dere, 2019). Not only did the Canadian government ban new Chinese immigrants from coming to Canada, but they also hoped that many Chinese would leave Canada given the increased restrictions, despite these members of society at this point having made significant monetary and physical contributions to helping Canada grow as a nation. Whether intentional or not, perhaps the cruelest part of immigration policies designed to systemically

discriminate against the Chinese in Canada was the impact it had on family relationships, which in Chinese culture was equivalent to breaking people's spirits and reason to live.

Throughout the next couple decades, associations and protestors would push back on the Canadian government to revoke the Exclusion Act, even getting the Chinese government involved (Dere, 2019). However, it took a mutual disdain for Japan brought about by the Japanese invasion of China, rising tensions between Japan and the Allied Nations, the Canadian government scrambling to get enough troops together, and Chinese soldiers ultimately giving their lives for the Canadian war efforts in World War II for the Canadian government to begin to recognize the rights of Chinese Canadians. The Exclusion Act was repealed in 1947; not to say that discrimination of Chinese Canadians was over. During the years following the Exclusion Act's end, there was a big shift in the types of Chinese immigrants entering Canada. Many Chinese used this as an opportunity to reunite their families, often bringing over their wives and younger children, and eventually their elders and other family members when they could afford it. At this point, many families had been torn apart for over fifty years.

Japanese immigration to Canada

In the early 17th century, the central government of the Tokugawa regime, the *Bakufu*, had a strict seclusionist policy that restricted Japan's contact with the Western world (Ayukawa, 2008). However, in 1854, following the intrusion of four warships in Edo Bay in 1853, an American commodore forced the Bakufu to sign the Treaty of Kanagawa. This set a precedent, and more treaties with European powers were secured in the years that followed. These treaties were unequal, in favour of Western imperial powers. What followed were major political, economic and social changes, including the migration of many young men to the Western world under the Meiji government. At this time, still around 80 percent of the Japanese population were peasants. With fluctuations in the market for cash crops, as well as disasters from floods, rains, and plagues destroying crops, many peasants found it difficult to maintain their livelihoods. In the 1880s, migration out of Japan began to rise, with many villagers moving to larger cities within Japan, and many others immigrating to Hawaii. This immigration was coordinated through the Japanese Foreign Office and intended to be a temporary immigration to ensure employment for Japanese as well as remittance going back to families and ultimately the Meiji government. In the 1890s, there was increasing interest from Japanese to work overseas, and over time private

companies took over the sponsorship of Japanese immigrants from the government. While Canada received relatively few Japanese immigrants in comparison to other parts of North and South America, Japanese labourers were essential to Vancouver's foundational work force as these Japanese workers, nicknamed the derogatory term "Green Japs", were hired to fill unskilled jobs and paid the lowest wages. In the early 1900s, some of those working in BC migrated to Alberta to farm, while others worked in mines, lumber camps, sawmills, or at the storefronts and businesses of the earliest Japanese migrants who had settled in the years prior.

Japanese in Canada faced institutional discrimination in similar ways to the Chinese in Canada. For example, the Department of Marine and Fisheries restricted the number of licenses they issued to the Japanese in order to limit their competitiveness with white Canadians in the fishing industry (Day, 2010). However, wages in North America were still higher than what many Japanese could earn in Japan or Hawaii and migration to Canada remained favourable. Despite protest from groups like the Asiatic Exclusion League, a White Canadian labour group concerned over the increasing number of Japanese and Chinese labourers, Japanese immigration to Canada remained relatively steady with minor peaks and dips, up until World War II. With the attack in 1942 on Hong Kong, a British Colony, Canada was brought into the Pacific Theatre. The Canadian government immediately "detained suspected Japanese terrorists, [closed] Japanese-language schools and presses, and [impounded] 1,200 fishing boats" (Day, 2010, p. 108). Following the lead of the US, Prime Minister Mackenzie King then issued an order to expel the "Japanese race". Canada made quick moves to liquidize Japanese-owned property, used these liquidation sales and wages of Japanese men now forced to work on road projects and farms to subsidize Japanese internment, and in the postwar period exiled 4,000 internees to Japan regardless of whether they were Japan-born or Canadian-born. Many of those who were able to stay continued the work that they were assigned in internment, settling on the land they worked.

Indian immigration to Canada

In the mid-nineteenth century, along with white settlers, a large number of Indians began to immigrate to South Africa, Australia, and Canada (Munshi, 2016). Notably, in 1906, a few thousand Indian labourers arrived in Vancouver, looking to participate in resource industries. The British government had assured that its white-settler dominions would gain the rights to self-rule, with Canada becoming a self-governing dominion in 1867. In the eyes of white settlers,

Indian migration threatened white-settler entitlement to domination. Under Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, Indian nationals were excluded from entering Canada, marked by the 1908 continuous passage Order-in-Council (Walton-Roberts, 2003). In 1914, the immigration officers at the landing port in Vancouver infamously refused hundreds of Hindu migrants aboard the Komagata Maru ship from docking (Munshi, 2016). This empowered other white-settler dominions, such as the US, to similarly exclude Indian migration, although the relationship between British imperial powers and India constrained the efforts to exclude Indians in the ways that Chinese and Japanese immigrants had been institutionally excluded. This incident ended up being pivotal in the transnational movement to advance the independence of India from colonial rule, and had a large influence on the politics between the Pacific Northwest and India. The early immigrants that did enter Canada from India were mostly from Punjab, from the specific region of Doaba, an area dependent on agriculture that had been transformed under British colonization, with many men now looking to migrate overseas to be able to financially support their families, the resources they needed to tend the land, and to maintain their families' land holdings (Walton-Roberts, 2003). Most Indian settlers landed in metropolitan areas of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. In the 1960s, there was still only one immigration office in Canada for India, which limited the potential rise of Indian immigration to Canada with the removal of explicitly race-based policies (Walton-Roberts, 2003).

Korean immigration to Canada

Prior to Japanese colonization of Korea, migration of Koreans to China, Russia and Hawaii was mostly motivated by famine, poverty, and the struggle of *Chosôn* farmers and labourers under the ruling class (Yoon, 2012). In 1906, the Japanese government banned Korean emigration to Hawaii to ensure job availability for Japanese labourers. Between 1910 to 1945, during Japan's colonial rule of Korea, most migration of Koreans was only to Manchuria and Japan, other than some political activists and refugees who made their way to China, Russia and the US and who played key roles in resistance to Japan's colonial power. Korean labour was used by Japan to develop Manchuria, to increase economic activity in Japan after World War I, and to prepare for the subsequent Sino-Japanese War and Pacific War. After Japan was defeated, many Koreans returned back to Korea, although they continued to face hardships and had difficulty adjusting back in Korea. The Korean War took place between 1950 and 1953, during which the US

government became involved by providing military and economic aid to South Korea in an attempt to prevent the spread of communism in Asia (Yoon, 2012). Following the Korean War, the US continued to strengthen relations with South Korea, becoming the “primary supplier of capital and technology, as well as [Korea’s] largest overseas market” (p. 425). Choi and Glassman (2014) argue that Korea’s postwar industrial development and the boom of South Korean industrial conglomerates (*chaebol*) is intrinsically linked to offshore procurement contracting for the US military, looping South Korea into the US military-industrial complex.

From 1945 to 1962, most South Koreans that travelled abroad were either students, war orphans adopted by American families, or the wives and children of US military officers (Yoon, 2012). These groups together made up a large wave of Korean immigrants coming to the US and Canada. With the rising population, and in the postwar period in Korea, there were poor economic conditions, a lack of political stability, and military dictatorship, working together to encourage the outmigration of South Koreans (Kim, Noh and Noh, 2012). From 1962 onward, the South Korean government began to contract and sponsor migration to South America, Western Europe and the Middle East as a way to secure jobs for a growing population and to claim remittance (Yoon, 2012). In 1994, the South Korean government put forward a globalization policy (*seggyewha*), essentially placing emphasis on making South Koreans marketable in the Western, English-speaking world (Kim, Noh and Noh, 2012). By this point, as the US and Canada opened up immigration to skilled workers, a higher number of educated, white-collar, middle class Koreans moved to North America, as well as Australia and New Zealand. Once the Canadian embassy opened in South Korea in 1973, Canada came to be a more popular destination for Korean immigrants. Toronto, Vancouver, and Winnipeg became the three most popular provinces for Korean immigrants, although all provinces gained Korean communities. The typical family structure for many transnational Korean families continues to take the form of either “parachute” children who migrate without their parents, or “wild goose families” with one parent staying in Korea to work, while mothers accompany their children who hold student visas. Despite their highly skilled and highly educated status, many Korean immigrants still faced disadvantages in the labour market that lead some to take up semi-skilled technical jobs and pursue self-employment through business ownership (Yoon, 2012).

Filipino Immigration to Canada

The Filipino people fought for national independence in 1898 after having endured 300 years of Spanish colonialism (San Juan Jr., 2011). However, as a result of the Filipino-American War, the US overruled the autonomy of the Filipino people through territorial possession. For a brief period between 1942 to 1945, during World War II, the Philippines was occupied by Japanese military forces, during which food procurement policies, control over commodities and goods, violence, political insecurity and instability continued to make life difficult for locals (Ara, 2022). Americans recaptured the Philippines and the Philippines gained nominal independence in 1946, however, the period that followed involved the exploitation of Filipino land, natural and human resources, as the Philippines was used as a primary military base for the US in Asia. The relationship between the US and the Philippines is neocolonial, as the Philippines is still under a “cycle of crisis and systemic underdevelopment, rooted in the iniquitous class structure and the historical legacy of political, economic and military dependence on the United States” (p. 11) that the US created. Filipino migrant labour has been an essential part of both the income of the government in the Philippines and the immigrant workforce in Western nations. Filipinos share the experience of other Asian immigrants of sending remittance back home, but perhaps more than any other nation, these remittances have become a part of the Philippine’s total income, creating a dependency on *labour brokerage* (Rodriguez, 2010).

Labour brokerage is a “peculiar kind of “trickle up” development as individual migrants’ earnings abroad become a source of foreign capital for the Philippines” (Rodriguez, 2010, p. xxi). This capital is used for public infrastructure and necessary aspects of life in the Philippines, however it also has negative impacts on the labour market in the Philippines, with many seeing moving away from the Philippines as their best and oftentimes only option to make enough money to survive. The government addresses concerns over unemployment and keeps social unrest at bay by making deals with governments abroad to intake Filipino migrants overseas to work. This in turn benefits the Filipino government substantially, because of the remittances migrants and immigrants send back to the Philippines. The government receives billions of dollars through remittance of Filipinos working abroad, and a significant portion of that comes from Filipinos in Canada. As a symptom of further corruption and outmigration, the Philippines is “plagued by accelerated impoverishment as a result of the decline in wages, severe

chronic unemployment, rising cost of living, inflation, and huge cutbacks in social services” (San Juan Jr., 2011).

Vietnamese immigration to Canada

Prior to 1975, a small number of Vietnamese had migrated abroad (Dorais, 2001). In the late 1970s, as a response to the mass exodus of Vietnamese citizens from Vietnam following the Vietnam War and then the Communist regime coming into power, many Vietnamese arrived in Canada as Humanitarian and Special Movement class immigrants (Montgomery, 1991). These refugees were admitted through subsection 6(2) of the Immigration Act, which permitted them to enter under relaxed admission criteria. Vietnamese families were sponsored by the federal government or Canadian religious groups, ethnic associations, and families. In Canada, this wave of immigrants, colloquially called ‘Boat People’, predominantly entered BC and Alberta. During the period of 1979-1980, 60,000 Southeast Asian refugees came to Canada, which to this day is “the largest single influx of refugees admitted to the country in a short period” (Hou, 2020, p. 4817). Despite the US’s role in the Vietnam War and creating political unrest in Vietnam, Western nations that took Vietnamese refugees in framed their acceptance of these refugees as proof of their caring, sympathetic attitudes towards the Vietnamese (Espiritu, 2006). As a result, the Vietnamese in North America have often been framed by western scholars and political figures as a perfect example of “desperate-to-successful” immigrants, who successfully assimilated into western society after being “rescued” by the nations that took them in.

Asian Immigrants as Diasporic Subjects

“Indeed we are a people of the diaspora, dislocated by choice, chance, or need. We occasionally struggle with our identity politics, our restless rootlessness, and our sense of exile.” – Bundang, 1996, p.66.

Looking at Asian communities in Canada through the interwoven lens of diaspora allows for the connections and shared trauma between different Asian communities to be recognized without ignoring their distinct histories and differences. Clifford (1995) proposes that diasporic communities can be defined based on comparison to 1) the norms of nation-states and 2) the Indigenous peoples and their claim to the land. This definition is the popular understanding of what it means to be a diaspora. However, Cho (2007) moves beyond a definition of diaspora tied to demographics, and towards an understanding of diaspora as a “condition of subjectivity” (p.

14) that is different from and yet related to “globalization, transnationalism and postcolonialism” (p. 14), what she calls *diasporic subjectivity*. Cho argues that diasporic subjectivity is tied to relations of power that lead to displacement, that is both externally enforced and internalized by diasporic subjects. It is markedly different from transnationalism because being a subject of diaspora means feeling a sense of *unhomely*-ness, a feeling of loss and mourning for those before us who were displaced knowing they likely would never return home. Becoming a subject of diaspora is not just something that happens in the past-tense, but “the legacies of displacement and dislocation as crucially mutable features of the present” (p. 20). Cho also acknowledges that one diasporic community cannot be understood without placing it in relation to other diasporic communities, and that it is actually useful to do so to identify opportunities for solidarity between different diasporic subjects.

There are obvious distinctions between different Asian groups, given their unique histories and cultures, which is something that I draw attention to throughout this paper. Although all Asian immigrants, and all Asian cultures, have different reasons for coming to Canada, the common thread among the histories of Asian groups in Canadian society are stories of poverty, unemployment, conflict, and environmental issues. Canada has depended on Asian labour throughout history and has an interest in forcing Asian people to leave their homelands. In the case of Asian diaspora living in postcolonial Canada, the legacy of displacement is reflected in the present through the way that Canada continues to perpetuate Asian outmigration in order to further the objectives of the postcolonial nation state.

Migration has become a global business, and Canada is one of the main beneficiaries of the system. There are countries, typically developed countries, who accept large influxes of immigrants and migrants, and there are countries, typically less developed countries, who export large numbers of emigrants and migrants. It is no coincidence that the world’s top remittance recipients in Asia are India, China and the Philippines, and that those are the biggest source countries for immigration to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017). It is a global exchange, through which nations like Canada gain a large workforce, tax payers, and consumers, and the source country for migration receives remittance and a short-term solution for filling the employment gaps in their country. In the 2023 Budget’s Made-in-Canada plan for moving towards a clean economy, the Canadian government explicitly mentions “ambitious immigration targets” as a

way to address labour shortages, showing how immigrant labour is still seen as an economic tool (Department of Finance, 2023).

It is not simply a matter of Canada welcoming immigrants to a land of opportunity. Canada continues to contribute to the forced outmigration of Asian immigrants and migrants in three distinct ways. Firstly, Canada contributes far more to climate change than the majority of Asian countries. In terms of per capita emissions, Canada is one of the highest emitters in the world (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2022). Furthermore, Canada is the fourth biggest producer of oil and gas in the world (Fleck, 2022). The number of climate refugees or migrants is expected to rise substantially by 2050, meaning that entire communities will be displaced from their homeland (Brown, 2008). Secondly, Canada contributes to the impoverishment of Asian countries due to decades of unequal trade deals and indebting, incentivizing further outmigration because of governments using remittance of foreign workers to pay off their debt (IBON Foundation, 2009). Thirdly, Canada contributes to the displacement of Asian immigrants by funding and supplying weapons for war through the global arms trade, most notably because of its close relationship to the US, a colonial power and instigator of two major wars in Asia (Vucetic, 2017). As outlined above, many Asian immigrants arrived to Canada as a result of war in their home countries. Canada has more often than not contributed to these wars. If not contributing through their military presence, Canada contributes by being allied with the US or the Commonwealth, or by participating in the war economy through the vending of weaponry. All of these contributions are taking place in the context of a postcolonial Canada, meaning a time characterized by the legacies of colonialism and colonial domination that in turn subject “people displaced culturally, socially, linguistically, or geographically, by domination and oppression” (Zhang, 2004, p. 97). Development of the Canadian nation state has only been made possible through the destabilizing, underdevelopment, and polluting of other nations, making way for exploiting the resources and labour of racialized subjects abroad and within Canada. Even when members of the Asian diaspora say they “chose” to leave, looking at the root causes of outmigration in Asia throughout history reveals that there can be external forces at play, and these external forces still have an impact on the modern waves of immigrants.

Placing Asian immigration to Canada within its historical context brings about three important discoveries: (1) Asian labour has been essential to Canada establishing itself as a

nation state and establishing its major industries; (2) Canada has a history of contributing to the outmigration of Asian countries and then exploiting the labour of Asians living in Canada; and (3) Asians in Canada are extremely resilient. While these takeaways are apparent, the white national identity of Canada lives on simultaneously while more Asian immigrants than ever come to Canada in search of a better life, many of whom work in an industry that is destructive of their homeland and exploitative in nature. In addition to the energy justice and energy democracy goals of my research, I have two goals more specifically related to understanding the experience of being an Asian oil and gas worker in Canada: (1) To deepen our understanding of how and why social outcomes vary for different Asian people living in Canada, to move past the model minority myth that perpetuates white supremacy; and (2) To understand how identity politics influence the experiences of Asian immigrants and workers in Canada. Many Asian immigrants faced discrimination upon their arrival, and Asians in Canada continue to face discrimination related to their multiple intersecting identities, and struggle for class consciousness while trying to make the most of the opportunities they came to Canada for. These are the themes that will be addressed throughout the chapters that follow. Before moving on to these themes, below I provide an overview of how immigration and migration policy in Canada has evolved.

Institutionalizing Immigration and Migration Policy in Canada

Asian immigration in Canada tended to come in waves. As outlined above, race-based policies as well as conflict between Canada's allies and Asian countries heavily influenced the experiences of Asian immigrants in Canada. In 1952, a few years after the end of World War II, Canada brought in a new Immigration Act for the first time since 1910 (Black, 1978). However, it was quite exclusive and unclear in terms of outlining the process for selecting immigrants, and for two decades only small amendments and case-by-case exceptions were made that differed from the legislation. Around this time, most immigration to Canada fell under family class immigration. In the 1960s, the Canadian government adopted the 'universal point system', replacing race-based policies with ones that favoured skilled workers under the *Federal Skilled Worker Program* (Bhuyan et al., 2017; FSWP, n.d.). The new Immigration Act came into effect in 1978, which included a number of main objectives, and outlined the process of immigrant selection for those who did not belong to the family class nor Convention refugee class of

immigrant (Black, 1978). In the 1990s, due to concerns surrounding over-population, the government “began shifting responsibility for settlement to the private sphere and increased surveillance of migrants’ use of social security programs” (Bhuyan et al., 2017, p. 50). In 2008, only two years after the Canadian government under Prime Minister Stephen Harper made the first official apology to the Chinese in Canada for the institutional discrimination that they endured, the Canadian government began to make significant and quick changes to immigration policy in Canada due to a recent decline in the labour market of recent and relevantly skilled immigrants. The government “introduced the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) as a new immigration stream for skilled temporary foreign workers and/or international students who have a record of employment in Canada” (p. 48). Changes were also made to the points system, reducing the value of international education and work experience, and placing increased value on Canadian experience, such as having worked or studied in Canada and being proficient in one of Canada’s official languages. The Express Entry program was added in 2015, now requiring all applicants to the CEC and FSWP to submit their applications to be ranked “relative to their skills and employer interest” (p. 51).

The Canadian government also created distinct policies pertaining to migration and temporary work. The government made changes in 1973 to bring in more temporary foreign workers to Canada through the creation of the Non-immigrant Employment Authorization Program (NIEAP) (Akbar, 2022). Prior to the creation of the NIEAP, two streams existed for temporary migrants to enter Canada, as caregivers or as agricultural workers through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP). The NIEAP introduced two new streams: the Labour Market Authorization (LMO) stream, designed to hire ‘low-skilled’ workers including caregivers, agricultural workers and other low-skilled workers, and the non-LMO stream, comprised of high-skilled professionals who typically had backgrounds in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and who were international graduates. The LMO stream workers were subject to labour market assessment and employer-specific employment authorization, were expected to return to their home countries when their contracts expired, and typically came to Canada alone without their families, making these workers particularly vulnerable. High-skilled workers were exempt from these conditions, had the opportunity to gain Permanent Resident (PR) status after one year of work experience, and many were permitted to bring their families to Canada. The current labour migration policy in Canada separates workers

into two programs. The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) allows caregivers, agricultural workers, and groups of low-wage and high-wage workers to enter Canada with a closed work permit attached to “a specific employer, employment position and work location” (Akbar, 2022, p. 51). The other program, the International Mobility Program (IMP), allows high-skilled/high-wage workers to enter Canada with an open work permit. There has been an increase in IMP workers entering Canada since 2014, while there has been a decline in TFWP workers, excluding agricultural workers, due to “more rigorous labour market tests and/or economic downturn” (Akbar, 2022, p. 51). It is worth noting that the TFWP stream is comprised of mainly South-East Asian migrants, as well as Latin American and Caribbean migrants. In comparison, the IMP stream is made up of mostly Chinese and Indian migrants, as well as migrants from the USA, France, the UK and Australia. The program has been criticized for undervaluing the work of low-wage TFWP migrant workers, who lack occupational mobility, and perpetuating inequality between these workers and their high-wage and high-skilled counterparts.

This study focuses on Asian immigrants, typically with PR status or citizenship. However it is important to note that as of 2007, there have been more temporary foreign workers than landed economic class immigrants entering Canada (Akbar, 2022). Later on I discuss the limitation of focusing on immigrants and the potential for future studies to focus on Asian migrants who classify as temporary workers. Nevertheless, it is important to mention migration policies because the Canadian nation state never intended for Asians to become immigrants. As Man (2020) puts it, “in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinx and South Asians arrived in North America as a result of capitalist and imperial expansion that radically altered relationships within households and villages, destroyed working and rural people’s homes and lives, and generally made those lives unlivable. A more accurate term is ‘migrant labour’, which denotes Asians’ sole function within capitalist economy as labour, whose value was derived from their ability to extract profit” (p. 26). The Canadian government, along with other Western nations, had to change their policies to improve the rights of Asians living in Canada following their involvement in fighting on behalf of Canada in World War II as well as the way that the war changed the global landscape when it came to recognizing human rights (Dere, 2013). While Canada had to recognize some privileges for Asians already living in Canada, they have continued to exploit Asian migrant labour through foreign worker

policies. Prior to the 1950s these classifications between migrant and immigrant did not exist, and despite the continued efforts of the Canadian government from preventing it, some migrants continue to become immigrants over time. In particular, this study has examples of both TFWP families and IMP individuals gaining PR status or citizenship. In addition, the creation of the NIEAP system further 'others' non-white workers by labeling temporary workers as foreign, which has implications for both anti-immigration sentiment and racism to be on the rise felt by all racialized workers.

The institutionalizing of immigration and migration policy in Canada exhibits the neoliberal nature of the Canadian rationale to immigration. In Canada, immigrants and migrants are treated as a commodity, and their valuation is linked to how much they can contribute to economic growth and whether they "either cost less, or pay for their own settlement" (Bhuyar, 2017, p. 51). This system benefits private companies who want to hire temporary workers as cheaper labour. The trend of temporary migrants filling gaps in the labour force has been described as a process of "neoliberal migration" and an increase in "unfree labour" (Choudry and Smith, 2016). Changing the point system to value Canadian experience further favours immigrants who have attended higher education in Canada or who already have work experience in Canada, and in this way "employers and institutions of higher education [play] a more direct role in immigrant selection... privatizing the first round of immigrant selection" (p. 51), not to mention that this favours immigration of Asians who are already of higher class, being those who can afford higher education and work exchanges, over those of lower classes that Canada prefers to keep as a foreign migrant labour force. These changes could also indicate the Canadian government favouring immigrants who have an easier time and are perhaps less resistant to assimilating. Obviously, it could also be said that the program preferences those who can perpetuate the White Canadian identity, as immigrants from western nations are more likely to have had opportunities to study or work in Canada and to speak English or French. Key to the Canadian state making neoliberal policy acceptable is building a "brand" of national unity, "compelling subjects who may not benefit from the global economy to nonetheless be invested, emotionally and politically, in nationhood" (p. 51). The policy is purposefully 'deracialized' in terms of what language is used, to allow Canada to position itself as a "welcoming nation for immigrants" (p. 51), giving Canada a competitive edge by appearing attractive to potential labourers abroad.

It is also important to mention the Multiculturalism policy that was first introduced in 1971 and came into effect in 1988 (Coloma, 2013). The policy officially “recognized minority groups’ cultural heritages, religions and languages” and has been “regarded as a significant milestone in Canadian history of race and race relations and a global model for intercultural pluralism and governance” (p. 580). The Multiculturalism policy was brought about by a combination of demand for Quebecois nationalism, Indigenous activism and a large influx of immigrants after World War II (Bambrah, 2005). However, the Multiculturalism policy has been heavily criticized for being surface level and for conflating the experiences of all racialized groups, including Indigenous peoples, without recognizing underlying logics of colonialism. Furthermore, it has been noted that under the umbrella of multiculturalism, some are regarded as “others” who can contribute to Canadian society by adopting an ethno-national identity while being saved or shown benevolence, while there are “other-others” who are differentiated from those who can assimilate and who threaten national identity (Bhuyan et al., 2015). While the immigration policies in Canada are no longer explicitly race-based as in the past, racial hierarchies are still reproduced through the legacy of racialization in Canada’s development that impact the social positioning of racialized immigrants in Canada, and are produced through immigration trends of who is coming to Canada and why they are leaving their homeland.

Key Concepts

A Sociological Perspective

The following chapters explore the ways that identity influence the experiences of Asian diaspora who work in the oil and gas industry in Alberta, Canada. Foundational to understanding how identity influences individuals’ experiences is a clear definition of what identity actually means and how identity formation takes place.

Identity

Identity, understood as a reflexive expression of self, is dependent on social context and social interactions, or in other words, social structure (Burke and Stets, 2003). Individuals and social structures are created reciprocally; many individuals acting in patterned ways create social structures, and individuals learning to act according to the feedback they get from the social structures create our understanding of self. We learn to identify ourselves according to how we

think we are being perceived by the social structures around us, meaning what we think others think about us. To unpack identity, it is essential to recognize that one person holds many different identities, as “there are different positions that one holds in society and thus different groups who respond to the self” (Burke and Stets, 2003, p. 8). A given individual’s collection of multiple identities equates to their overall self. In this study, I looked at individuals and the variability in their identities. I was interested to find out what identities took precedence over others for the research participants, and how this could influence their perception of their experience working in the fossil fuel industry and living in Canadian society.

Energy Transition

Many themes and concepts from existing energy transition literature are useful to consider. In particular, I reviewed concepts that were utilized in other qualitative and interview-based studies. The literature presented concepts of attachment and identity formation as they pertain to sense of place (Goodrich and Sampson, 2005; Masterson, 2017) and resource attachment (Bell and York, 2010) which have been present in studies on populations in rural and resource dependent communities resistant to industry shifts. Less explored in resource literature, and more so explored in the literature on sociology of work, is a connection between job title and identity (Caldwell, 2002; Melling, 2018). These concepts informed the first draft of my interview guide, although I expected some concepts that are extremely relevant for the aforementioned communities to not be particularly relevant to the participants of this study who had unique identities as Asian immigrant and migrant workers.

Attachment and Identity Formation

One analytical concept tied to energy industry shifts is the idea of sense of place, defined in terms of the meanings and attachment to a setting held by an individual or group. Sense of place is impacted by the physical/geographical makeup of the place and the social interactions in that place. Sense of place sheds light on how communities might respond to social-ecological system changes in two regards: (1) some literature suggests that strong place attachment may support adaptation to change, if residents are more attached to the place itself rather than their occupational status (Goodrich and Sampson, 2005); (2) Other research suggests that place attachment might act as a barrier to transformative change, particularly for groups that have

established themselves in a given place for generations (Masterson, 2017). The latter is more likely to occur when structural change requires a shift of occupation or location for the attached community. For members of rural and resource-based communities, as many workers migrate depending on where development projects they are working on take them, their attachment to their work may be more foundational to their identity than their attachment to a specific geographical location. Furthermore, Asian immigrants living in Western Nations already have a story of 'leaving' places tied to their identities, and often have to negotiate their identities, trying to fit into their host country while also trying to navigate the attachment they still feel towards their family's country of origin (Liu, 2015). This goes to show that identifying with a culture and feeling a sense of belonging, or sense of place, are not exactly the same things, and that the meaning of 'place' may fall somewhere in-between cultures, complicating how sense of place relates to the experiences of Asian immigrant and migrant workers. Looking at the Asian experience living in Canada through the lens of Asian immigrants and migrants as diasporic subjects provides a basis for understanding how Asian immigrants may lack a connection to place, or may feel a connection to multiple places at the same time, making it difficult to attach identity to one location.

In comparison to sense of place, occupational identity related to resource attachment or job title may also influence workers' views on energy futures. Resource based identity formation is a popular notion in the literature, particularly with coal workers, and often as a result of fossil fuel companies and their institutions instilling in their workers the idea that the resource is a part of their national history and personal identity (Bell and York, 2010). However, another form of economic identity that is lesser mentioned in literature regarding the energy industry, but is a common subject of interest in the subfield of organizational sociology, is identity relating to job title (Caldwell, 2002; Melling, 2018). In regards to energy workers, occupational identity may also differ depending on whether a person considers their ingroup to be among other low-status, blue-collar or white-collar workers (Lucas, 2011). Furthermore, a stronger ingroup identity may come about through comparison to the person's outgroups. Studies that have looked at immigrant identity in relation to work categorize it as institution identity (Friesen, 2012). Immigrants and migrants have different experiences from Canadian-born workers, as their education and even previous work experience in a different country may not be validated by institutions in Canada, and thus their previously held identities may be questioned.

Migration Studies

In my study, I interviewed first, 1.5, second, and fourth generation (each defined below) immigrant and migrant workers of Asian descent, who all have distinct experiences living in Canada. Understanding their experiences requires a general knowledge of the existing literature related to social and economic outcomes experienced by immigrants in Canada.

Immigrant Generation

First generation immigrants are those who immigrated as adults, 1.5 generation immigrants immigrated as children, and second generation immigrants include those who were born in a country with parents who immigrated to that country from a different country (Berry and Hou, 2017). The linear theory of assimilation, referring to the belief that the children of immigrants become more culturally and professionally assimilated than their parents, has been brought into question (Halli and Vedanand, 2008). There is variation in the experiences of second generation immigrants associated with factors such as if immigrant children have one or two foreign-born parents. There is also variation in the experiences of second generation immigrants in terms of outcomes. For instance, in the 2016 *Canadian Census*, second generation immigrants of Chinese, South Asian, Korean and Japanese descent self-identified as achieving a high level of education and moderate to high labour market outcomes, while Southeast Asians achieved a high level of education but low levels of employment and below-average earnings compared to third-plus generation White Canadians (Chen and Hou, 2019). It can be said that generally East Asian immigrants experience better outcomes in material terms of income, education and job status, than Southeast Asians, in particular Filipino immigrants. However, in my analysis (see *Chapter 4*) I move beyond a surface level understanding of why some Asian immigrants appear to ‘succeed’ in Canadian society while others have a harder time, by drawing attention to the lasting impact of white dominant ideologies.

Additionally, there is variation in experience for this group when measuring different aspects of wellbeing. Many ‘1.5’ and second generation immigrants living in Canada report a strong sense of Canadian belonging and ethnic belonging, and having such a sense of belonging is observed to be strongly associated with reporting a high level of wellbeing in terms of life satisfaction and mental health (Berry and Hou, 2017). However, nearly half of the same sample

of '1.5' and second generation immigrants reported experiencing some form of discrimination. Notably, those who felt the weakest sense of belonging were also the most strongly affected by discrimination. While generally it can be said that the reported experiences of second generation immigrants of Asian descent in Canada are positive (recognizing differences in the experiences of South, East, West and Southeast Asians), the energy transition could drastically change the sociocultural outcomes for second generation immigrants of Asian descent who work in petroleum based industries. It has been found in Western societies that both acute and chronic job insecurity, defined as "an employee's perception of the likelihood of losing their job involuntarily" (Burchell, 2010, p. 2), can affect wellbeing in the short-term and the long-term. Unexpected lay-offs can cause abrupt spikes in symptoms that indicate a decline in wellbeing. A greater rate of job insecurity brought on by the energy transition could negatively impact the wellbeing of immigrant workers of Asian descent who were previously employed in petroleum industries.

Sense of Belonging

For immigrants, having a strong sense of belonging in the country they immigrate to depends on "whether they feel accepted, secure, and "at home" in their adopted country" (Berry, Hou and Schellenberg, 2018, p. 1615). An individual can have a strong sense of belonging to their family's source country for immigration and to Canada simultaneously, and a strong sense of belonging to one country is not necessarily an indication of a low sense of belonging in another. Berry, Hou and Schellenberg (2018) suggest that there are four acculturation profiles that categorize immigrants' sense of belonging. If a person feels a strong sense of belonging to both their family's country of origin and Canada, they are part of the integration profile. If they only have a strong sense of belonging to Canada, they are part of the assimilation profile. If they only feel a strong sense of belonging to their family's country of origin, they are part of the separation profile. If they feel a weak sense of belonging to both Canada and their family's country of origin, they are part of the marginalization profile. Their research suggests that the majority of immigrants surveyed in the 2013 General Social Survey fit into the integration profile having a strong sense of belonging to Canada and their family's country of origin, followed by immigrants belonging to the assimilation profile feeling a strong sense of belonging to Canada and a weak sense of belonging to their family's country of origin. Criticisms could be made

about how accurate these acculturation profiles are, and whether they actually measure what they intend to, given that assimilation and acculturation are not necessarily indicative of strong sense of belonging but rather a successful feature of the colonial project of Canada. Cultural (dis)connection and assimilation are themes I address in *Chapter 3* and *Chapter 4*, respectively.

Asian Canadian Studies

The conceptual framework for this study was largely based on emerging themes from the field of Asian Canadian studies. The field of Asian Canadian studies has been demarcated by what is described as a ‘lateness’, as Western academic institutions have been late to allow for Asian Canadian studies to flourish within their walls, and even later to encourage the field as an area of study, despite people of Asian descent being some of the earliest migrants in settler-Canadian society (Lee, 2007). Through conducting this project, I have come to understand what is meant by “lateness”: The vast majority of literature that actually brings about a critical, nuanced and culturally-relevant understanding of the experiences of Asians in Western Nations has only come about in the last couple decades, which makes sense when considering that most of this literature has come about through Asian academics and activists who were not given a voice in Western academic spaces until fairly recently. The white settler imaginary depended on orientalism to paint Asian immigrants as the ‘other’, while in contemporary Canada, fears over globalization and the ‘crazy rich Asian’ have taken the place of outdated Asian stereotypes (Coloma and Pon, 2017). Both discourses have allowed for people of Asian descent in Canada to continue to be seen as ‘others’ despite making up a large portion of the Canadian population. The field of Asian Canadian studies is therefore crucial for disrupting and dismantling these discourses that have allowed for the experiences of people of Asian descent in Canada to be underreported, understudied, and underappreciated.

Anti-Asian Racism

Anti-Asian Racism in Canada is as old as Canada itself. The first Asian immigrants to land in Canada were already seen as a threat to white Canadian identity. However, Asian Canadian Studies has shed light on both the overt and covert forms of anti-Asian racism that should not be seen as coincidental, “but rather as a structure sustaining the racial divides inherent in capitalism, or racial capitalism, and its twin condition, settler colonialism, a system of conquest dependent

upon laws, ideologies and other state institutions to buttress property claims on stolen land” (Man, 2020, p. 25). A field of study dominated by racialized and marginalized folks themselves has also become a location for addressing the “legacies and effects of racism and other forms of oppression” (Lee, 2007, p. 2). Recognizing the root causes of Asian racism and the legacy of Canada’s colonial project are crucial for making way for a nuanced understanding of how different forms of discrimination, othering, micro-aggression and stereotyping are inherently linked.

Asian-Canadian Identity

The field of Asian Canadian studies has allowed marginalized academics, artists and writers to assert themselves into, and in some cases, rewrite the narratives about themselves that have been dominated by imperial and colonial thought for far too long (Zhang, 2004). Only through these first-hand accounts have nuanced understandings of Asian-Canadian identity made their way into academia. Paying attention to Asian-Canadian identity brings about a nuanced and culturally relevant understanding of how the uniqueness of Asian geographies, cultures, dialects, religions and sociocultural environments impact the experiences of different members of the Asian diaspora. Asian people are not a monolith, however it is possible to highlight these unique experiences while also finding opportunities for solidarity between members of the Asian diaspora and each other as well as with other diasporas and marginalized groups. Both the concepts of Asian racism and Asian-Canadian identity played a large part in my interview guide and my interpretation of the data.

Outline of Chapter 2, 3, 4 and 5

Chapter 2: Methodology

Before getting into the results and analysis, I outline the methodology of this project. There are four major components to the methodology chapter. Firstly, I discuss some of the epistemological considerations that encouraged an ongoing process of reflexivity throughout the project. Secondly, I go over the methodological frameworks that guided the research design, namely grounded theory and feminist theory. Thirdly, I provide a detailed summary of the methods that I used for the project, from the recruitment phase to the analysis of the data. Fourthly, I provide some preliminary demographic analysis, in order to paint a picture of the

research sample, and the ways in which the sample reflect the demographics of Asian immigrants and migrants in Alberta and Canada, and who is missing from the sample.

Chapters 3 and 4: Being an Asian Oil and Gas Worker in Alberta (Results)

This study focuses on oil and gas workers of Asian descent who are Asian diasporic subjects living and working in Alberta. Given the ways that Canada contributes to displacing Asian people from their homelands, it is obviously contradictory to be Asian and grateful for living in Canada. This is the contradiction that the majority of immigrants live with. Because their homeland is seen as undesirable, typically because of poverty, war, unemployment, or pollution, they become grateful for the opportunity to live in Canada even though Canada is one of the western nation states that has a part in producing the unfavourable conditions in Asian countries. Alberta has been a centre for anti-immigration attitudes, even projected by major political figures (Peake-Macalister and Pyska, 2020). Despite Alberta's particularly unwelcoming immigrant policies and attitudes, Alberta is seen as a desirable location for immigration, in large part because of the employment opportunities offered by its oil and gas industry. It is important to recognize the contradiction of working in oil and gas, while also not placing blame on immigrants and migrants who are in search of work opportunities that they may not have otherwise in their home country nor in other parts of Canada.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I discuss the results from interviews with fifteen immigrant and migrant oil and gas workers of Asian descent. In *Chapter 3*, I attempt to outline the varied and intersectional experiences that exist within the socially constructed category of "Asian" for immigrant and migrant oil and gas workers. I aim to provide a nuanced, culturally-relevant analysis that sheds light on the varied experiences under the dimensions of "race", class, gender and "age", sometimes pointing out the irrelevancy in these constructed categories and pointing to dimensions such as culture and immigrant generation that are more relevant than broader classifications. In *chapter 4*, I discuss underlying ideologies and theories of white dominance, aiming to broaden the discourse, moving away from just questions of what Asian immigrants working in extractive industries in Canada experience, and towards questions of why Asian immigrants participate in these industries even when they have continuously been taken advantage of by the Canadian nation state. I argue that neoliberal policy in postcolonial Canada is strategically designed to maintain the privileges associated with the White Canadian identity.

The Canadian government and its closely affiliated extractive industries perpetuate racism and inequality, never fully addressing the treatment of Asians living in Canada or allowing them to become fully Canadian, because that would threaten the privileges of the White Canadian dominant class. I posit pathways forward in the discussions and conclusion, namely looking for opportunities for solidarity between marginalized workers, groups impacted the most by climate change, and all racialized people in Canadian society.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In the final chapter of this thesis, I provide an overview of the project as a whole. In the results chapters that follow, I aim to offer a nuanced understanding of the concerns, values and priorities of Asian immigrant and migrant energy workers, who are likely to be impacted by industry shifts. I also aim to address racial theories that perpetuate discrimination towards Asians in Canada and keep them in a social position that benefits the dominant class in Canadian society. In the conclusion, I offer an explanation of how the results of the research offer different, but not necessarily opposing, visions for societal transformation that could come about through the energy transition. By doing so, I illustrate how these visions for the future do not have to conflict, but could be seen as justice-informed pathways for bringing about short-term and long-term transformation compatible with the goal of mitigating climate change and harm to marginalized communities.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Intersectionality as Epistemology

Given that my research revolves around the exploration of Asian Canadian identity and how that impacts the work and life of Asian immigrant and migrant oil and gas workers, and being a second generation immigrant of mixed Korean and Celtic ancestry myself, it is appropriate to bring intersectionality into my methodology. Through an intersectional lens, “identities are seen as complex and multidimensional, rather than conceived as monolithic, autonomous and separated from one another” (Labelle, 2020, p. 411). An epistemology that is informed by intersectional thinking takes into consideration relations of power and identity, between the researcher and research participants and each agent’s relation to the broader structures that influence the creation of knowledge. When this is considered in methodology, all interactions throughout the research must be understood as relational, and to understand my relation to others and to the data, it was essential to unpack my position relative to them. From the point of conceiving the idea for this project, to the point of writing, I have reflected on: “(1) the necessity to complexify how one positions oneself vis-a-vis participants beyond an insider–outsider binary; (2) the importance of unpacking one’s embodiment of privileges and pre-emptively engaging with its impact on the politics of knowledge production; and (3) the essential collective reassessing of one’s ethical responsibilities.” (p. 413).

Beyond the Insider-outsider Binary

It is important to consider how I was multi-positioned as an *insider and outsider* in my study. I was born in 1999, in Canada, with European ancestry on my mother’s side and Korean ancestry on my father’s (*Appa’s*) side, my father having moved to Canada from Korea as a child with his mother and two sisters, to meet his father in Vancouver. Within the study group, my personal experience as a second generation, generation Z, mixed ancestral Asian Canadian overlapped with that of the interview participants in different ways, to certain degrees, for a variety of reasons. I related to other second generation immigrants, in terms of being caught in between wanting to hold on to my family’s culture, but having some separation from it, as a result of being born in Canada, not speaking our family’s language, and only spending limited amounts of time with my grandparents (especially as an adult, as my Haraboji passed away when I was a child and my Halmoni got Alzheimer’s when I was an early teenager) and distant relatives. I also

related to the younger participants in the study, as we shared individualistic values, compared to our older relatives who were more focused on survival and who typically held more traditional views. In another sense, as someone of mixed Euro-Canadian and Asian heritage, I related to the two mixed Euro-Canadian and Asian participants as we all navigated the feeling of standing out because of our whiteness and our brownness depending on our surroundings. Finally, it could be said that I had a shared history with East Asian participants, and in particular, the Korean participant, whose family had also been impacted by Japanese colonization and the Korean War. That being said, I shared experiences with participants who had different generational status, ages and ethnicities than I did, because of similarities in Asian cultures, a deeply entangled cultural history and in the way that Asians are treated in Canadian society. Furthermore, even when I had little in common with participants myself, I was reminded of my brother, Appa, gomos, emos, cousins, and my best friends, and I could have reminded them of a daughter, niece, or cousin. In other words, we are all members of the Asian diaspora in postcolonial Canada. I acknowledge how these shared experiences could have impacted the interview process.

Firstly, I am acutely aware that my Asian identity inspired my research topic. It can be argued that being an “insider” of the oppressed group that one is researching means having access to knowledge that only insiders have. I chose a research topic that would allow me to bring my personal experience into the research rather than perpetuate the façade that research can be completely objective. Secondly, pursuing this topic allowed for me to combine my personal knowledge about my culture and my family’s history and my academic pursuit of knowledge for a greater cause. During the recruitment stage, many participants mentioned the feeling of wanting to “help out” when they saw a posting for a study focused on Asian minorities, pointing to a sense of solidarity. Although my recruitment materials did not explicitly state my ethnicity, one of my last names (*Kim*) being the most popular Korean last name likely gave away my shared Asian identity. A limitation is that although I hoped to recruit South Asian participants, for the most part I was unsuccessful perhaps because of using the word “Asian” or my East Asian identity being implicitly displayed on recruitment materials, giving away my outsider status to South Asians. This is something that I elaborate on in the discussions of *Chapters 3* and *4*. Thirdly, interviewees may have been willing to share information with me that they may not be willing to share with a researcher who is more of an ‘outsider’ (Vaidya, 2010). All participants were quite generous in their responses from the get-go, exemplified by the way that

the first section of my interview guide asking about participants' immigration generation almost always led to participants sharing with me their families' detailed immigration stories. I noticed participants were more willing to elaborate on the more uncomfortable points of conversation, for example when we talked about microaggressions they may have experienced, when I was able to make my insiderness transparent by sharing my common experiences. Most obviously, my position as a woman of Asian descent allowed for openness between myself and the women I interviewed in talking about their experiences with misogyny within and outside of the oil and gas industry.

In another sense, I was an outsider to the study group, because I was an environmental sociologist interviewing oil and gas workers. Not only was I likely perceived as an outsider, but considering tensions that exist sometimes between environmentalists and industry workers, participants could have been suspicious of my intentions given my stake in the energy transition. Point blank, a handful of participants spoke negatively about environmentalists during their interviews. When participants asked me about my research and my program of study, I answered honestly, and I was consistently met with a pleasant response. My position as an insider likely helped me to surpass any distrust that may have existed in other circumstances. Still, I can only imagine that interactions may have differed if I was an oil and gas worker myself, although having some distance from the industry may have allowed for a more critical evaluation of the energy industry.

Embodied Privilege

One form of privilege that I had was my role as a graduate level academic, whereas everyone that I interviewed held a Bachelor's degree, trade certificate or high school diploma as their highest level of education at the time of the interview. That being said, the majority of participants had degrees in engineering, and as a student researcher who lacks the hands on experience of oil and gas work, in other ways the participants were more knowledgeable than myself on many aspects of the discussion topics. It is possible that the academic setting for the research was one of the limiting factors when it came to recruiting blue collar workers, especially considering that many participants came across my posters at academic institutions and/or were affiliated with the University of Alberta either before or during the time of the study. In any case, I attempted to avoid instrumentalizing participants by encouraging them to ask questions about

my heritage, the project and my academic background, as well as giving them an opportunity to review, add to, change and revoke the interview transcripts, and promised to provide all participants with a summary of the research findings. By offering participants these opportunities to understand, review and be updated on my work, we became closer to co-producers of knowledge. I was also conscious of the power dynamics that exist given my position as a native English speaker and domestically-born Canadian, in comparison to about half of participants who spoke English as an Additional Language (EAL) and the majority of participants who were born outside of Canada. The privilege of having a high level of English proficiency, in addition to my role as the researcher in deciding on the questions to be included in the interview guide, was not something that I took for granted. One strategy I used to ensure that the interview guide was comprehensible was to have Asian elders and close friends of mine who spoke EAL to look over the interview guide to provide feedback on its comprehensibility.

Ethical Considerations

Considering my ethical responsibilities before designing and implementing my research project was imperative to legitimizing the decision to use in-depth interviews. One ethical consideration was making sure participants were giving their informed consent prior to the interview. I remember one of my older interviewees who spoke EAL mentioning that their daughter had to help them read, sign and send back the consent form for this project. I tried my best to accommodate them, providing them with topics that would be in the interview ahead of time so that their daughter could go over it with them if they wished. If I had had more funding for this project, I surely would have hired a translator or additional interviewers who spoke Asian languages/dialects to help make participants who spoke English as an additional language comfortable.

I tried to ensure that my participants did not share information during the interview that they may regret sharing later on. This required considerations before, during and after the interview. In my interview guide, I was intentional to not use direct language that could be triggering of negative emotions or memories associated with racist and misogynistic events. If participants brought up these particularly uncomfortable topics on their own, inspired by the interview questions, it was invited, but no participant was pressured to share potentially traumatizing moments with me, a stranger who was recording them. I also respected participants'

wishes to keep certain topics to themselves, such as confidential information about work projects. After the interview, ensuring that participants could revoke or change statements if they so desired gave further reason to give interview participants an opportunity to review their transcripts. Additionally, to respect participant confidentiality, I assigned participants pseudonyms and omitted other identifiable information such as their employers' company names, so that they need not be concerned about there being consequences for sharing with me. Despite my best efforts, due to the nature of academic research and my intention to collect, transcribe and analyze the interviews as data, I cannot claim that the power dynamic was entirely dismantled. I am still the sole person who gets to decide “who benefits from the research, who controls the dissemination of the findings, and who determines the particular processes chosen for the research” (Labelle, 2020, p. 219). Instead, I chose to compensate participants for their emotional labour, gave them ample opportunity to learn about me and the project, revoke or change statements and provide feedback, and I sent them the findings of the research, to appropriately recognize their contributions and respect their autonomy in our knowledge exchange.

Methodology

There were two components that made up the methodology of this project. One component dealt more with the research design and overarching process, and the other dealt with the micro-level interactions and interpretation of the data. Through *grounded theory*, I was able to acknowledge interview participants as co-creators in knowledge throughout the course of the project, allowing the research tools to evolve and for the themes to emerge from the bottom-up. Using a feminist approach allowed for relations of power to be accounted for in the interviews as well as while analyzing the data. Both grounded theory and feminist theory fit into an epistemology informed by intersectionality (not to mention that intersectionality emerged from feminist theory), as they required of me to be reflexive of my positionality, privilege and ethics at each step of the research process. Using a combination of these methodologies permitted me to create a space for myself and the research participants to co-construct knowledge based on lived experience and to bring stories to the forefront that have seldom been included in the energy transition literature.

Grounded Theory

My primary research methodology that guided the design of my study was adapted from grounded theory, fitted for a short term project with a single researcher and limited funding. The definition of grounded theory that guided my research was a process of data collection and analysis calling for constant comparison to discover or generate theory (Creswell, 2013; Myrick and Walker, 2006). In other words, my conversations with the research sample determined what literature I drew upon and were the basis for my analysis and conclusions. My study was constructivist in nature, given that I aimed to make questions of power and the possibility of multiple realities apparent and my conclusions are more suggestive rather than complete (Creswell, 2013). I used an iterative ‘zigzag’ strategy of data collection and analysis. Ergo, I continued to refer back to the literature throughout the research process, and modified the research tools I used depending on how well they were working for the project at hand. I was inspired by grounded theory because the study topic was relatively novel. Energy transition literature is relatively new and the population I worked with lacked representation in the existing literature. I was more interested in adapting existing theories and potentially creating preliminary theories that have not yet been identified rather than verifying themes that have already been touched on in the literature. For example, much of the energy transition literature with worker interviews are focused on predominantly white middle-aged male workers, and thus the findings of such studies can only be extended so far for understanding the experiences of workers who do not fit that category (Bell and York, 2010; Goodrich and Sampson, 2005; Masterson, 2017).

I took a bottom up approach, directly interviewing Asian immigrant and migrant workers to produce knowledge, because this design aligns best with achieving energy democracy and energy justice and an epistemology informed by intersectionality. Using grounded theory allows for flexibility and adaptability when it comes to data interpretation. Additionally, grounded theory is best suited for research that is relatively novel and under researched. The energy transition research is still an emerging field without well established themes, especially ones that are nuanced enough to really bring the experiences of nonwhite and specifically Asian immigrant and migrant workers to light. I aimed for the ‘middle ground’, between purist ideals of what grounded theory should look like, and more modern adaptations, specifically when it came to reviewing the literature (Dunne, 2011). Primarily, I did an early review of the literature to get a

stronger sense of what gaps existed in the field of interest, being the energy transition field. This allowed me to decide on what demographic to focus my study on, and provided me with justification to move forward with the study. Secondly, reviewing the literature early on allowed me to have some guidance in terms of constructing my interview guide.

My initial approach for reviewing the literature involved identifying what voices were missing from the energy transition dialogue. I determined that immigrant and migrant workers and Asian workers' voices were left out. I then did a rapid review of the immigrant and migrant studies and Asian Canadian studies literature to help with building my interview guide. Aside from questions typically included in studies focused on oil and gas workers, such as questions about their views on climate change and the industry, I also asked questions about their immigration stories, cultural identities and connection, and their desires for the future.

Feminist Theory

My methodology was also guided by feminism, the root of intersectionality. I took a feminist standpoint in my research by focusing on relations between knowledge and power rather than seeking direct connections between knowledge and reality (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 2002). A key aspect of doing so involved conducting interviews to get to know what the realities of Asian immigrant and migrant oil and gas workers look like as energy workers and immigrants in Canadian society. This position is compatible with the goals of energy justice and energy democracy as well. I did so by situating my interviewees' experiences in relation to their positions of power according to their intersecting identities, in their industries and in Canadian society, as well as by acknowledging the power dynamics between interviewee and interviewer. While keeping the interviews somewhat structured and ensuring that I followed proper procedures for informing my participants and obtaining their consent, I forewent some of the formalities that other interviewers may choose to uphold, in order to make our interviews less extractive and more conversational. For instance, I shared my family's immigration story openly with participants as I was asking for them to share their families' stories. Furthermore, as a feminist researcher from a Western academic institution, I also recognize how my own social location and 'knowing self' influenced my standpoint. I acknowledge that my positionality influenced both the interview process and my interpretation of the data. There may have been differences in the interview process from the process of another researcher; for example,

depending on the characteristics of each interviewee, as well as my particular characteristics as a young scholar who is female and of mixed Euro-Canadian and Korean descent. These differences ultimately may have influenced what participants decided to share and what they decided to conceal. Finally, by taking a feminist standpoint, I recognize that the knowledge produced through this study is partial knowledge that is not necessarily generalizable. However, as I take the position that all knowledge is constructed, and that much of the existing knowledge on the topic of the energy transition in the academic and political spheres excludes the perspectives of Asian immigrant and migrant workers, this partial knowledge can add something profound to the discourse surrounding energy futures.

Paying attention to power dynamics is something that applies to the research process, and in particular, the interviews, in my study. Trying to dismantle some of the power imbalance in my interactions with participants meant recognizing their agency in the research process. I asked my interview participants to choose the time and location (online or in person) of our interviews, provided them with interview questions ahead of time at their request, and gave participants multiple opportunities to ask questions about my background, education and thesis project during the interview, wanting participants to feel like our exchange was somewhat equal. However, as I am the one interpreting the data and getting credit for the ideas that we co-created, our exchange is not entirely equal. Providing participants with the opportunity to see my findings and provide feedback, as well as to make them aware of any future publication of this work is the least that I can do to amend this imbalance.

There are a couple reasons why I chose a feminist methodology to guide my interview process. Firstly, as a woman of colour in academia, there are certain aspects of feminism that strongly resonate with my personal experiences and life philosophy. Secondly, in a sense, I was an insider to the group that I was researching, and my goal was to bring the voices of other members of the Asian diaspora into a space that they have been excluded from, which are common experiences for feminist theorists who worked hard to bring the voices of their own communities into mainstream academia. Feminist theory also applied to the analysis of my interviews, the explanations that I searched for in existing literature, and how I went about recognizing where those explanations came from. For example, discussing the Black feminist origins of intersectionality through the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw was essential for using

intersectionality as a core framework in *Chapter 3*. Feminism, better than many other methodologies, acknowledges that knowledge comes from experience and that members of their own groups know their own experiences best, which is a reason why feminist theorists were some of the first to bring a discussion of the link between identity and systemic oppression into academia.

Methods

Recruitment

I used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling to access my sample of interview participants. I chose this method of recruitment because of the specific inclusion criteria for the study, being that I was looking to interview Asian oil and gas workers living and working in Alberta. I used purposive and snowball sampling for two main reasons: Firstly, because of the time and funding constraints of this project (Ghaljaie, Goli and Naderifar, 2017); and secondly, because purposive and snowball sampling is the best method for recruiting difficult to locate populations. Having less than a twelve-month period to complete this research as part of a Master's thesis project, I chose to use a sampling method that would allow for a relatively fast-paced data collection. In addition to the pacing of the project, I expected that it may be difficult to recruit participants in the oil and gas industry given my "outsider" traits as an environmental sociologist, and given that I chose to interview racialized immigrant and migrant oil and gas workers who have seldom been represented thus far in academia (Faugier and Sargeant 1997). I used the following recruitment strategies roughly in the order that they are listed, starting with personal networks and ending with broad online recruitment; however, I went back and forth between strategies whenever it seemed like one strategy was not producing the necessary results. Particularly when it came to online recruitment and putting posters up in various locations, I would go through second and third waves of using these strategies, each time diversifying the locations and recipients being contacted.

Firstly, I used personal networks for my initial recruitment. I reached out to family members, although I did not have any direct family members working in oil and gas, to pass along my recruitment material to their networks. I posted recruitment materials to personal social media channels via my Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Discord and Slack to share with various friend groups and online communities I have taken part in over the years, both within Alberta

and British Columbia where I lived previously. Online communities included fellow members of organizations that I had volunteered with including Iron and Earth, and academic colleagues. This initial recruitment strategy brought about my first two interview participants.

My secondary recruitment strategy revolved around the use of email communications with organizations with whom I had little to no personal connection, but who related in some direct way to my target demographic. Some of the organizations I contacted were involved in the migrant justice space, such as the Migrant Rights Network and Migrant Workers Alliance, and others were involved in the energy transition space such as Student Energy. I also contacted community groups that were related to the Asian communities in Alberta, such as Asian student associations at universities and colleges, Asian churches, Asian community centres, and Asian-focused organizations like the Edmonton and Calgary Lions Clubs. Additionally, I contacted student and professional associations for engineers and tradesworkers. Surprisingly, using this recruitment strategy I came up empty handed.

My third recruitment strategy involved putting up recruitment posters at various institutions and businesses. Some of the areas where I put up posters were targeted because there was a higher likelihood that people of Asian descent could come across them, for example, at Asian grocery stores like H Mart and T&T. I also put up posters in Asian cultural centres, churches and outside of Asian restaurants in Edmonton and surrounding areas. Other areas I put up posters were targeted because of the likelihood that people working in the oil and gas industry could come across them, such as in the engineering, mining, and geology wings of buildings at the University of Alberta and the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT). Finally, I put up posters in neutral spaces that were well travelled, such as common areas at the University of Alberta. Four interview participants were recruited to the study by seeing a recruitment poster in person.

My final recruitment strategy came about through a conversation with a colleague about recruiting through anonymous forums like Reddit. I posted my recruitment poster through an anonymous Reddit account to the subReddit threads for */Alberta* and */Edmonton* after receiving permission from the admins. I also asked */Calgary* admins if I could post my recruitment poster to the */Calgary* thread, but they denied my request. I reached out to the */aznidentity* subReddit to request permission to post, but I received no answer. Four participants were recruited via Reddit.

The remaining five participants were recruited through snowball sampling. Four of the five participants mentioned being referred by a family member, friend or colleague who saw a poster in person. It is unclear for the fifth participant whether their referee saw an in person or online poster. Three of these participants were referred by a friend, family member, or former colleague, while the remaining two participants were referred by a current colleague who saw a poster in person and who was also interviewed. For the three colleagues currently working together, although there was potential for bias due to their close working relationship, other factors such as their distinct ethnicities, immigration statuses, immigration generations, genders, educational attainment and job title (which overlapped with others who did not work for the same company or know each other) and upbringings, made for varied responses.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted recruitment in a few ways. I did not have many in-person communities to share my recruitment materials with, making online communities that I was already a part of even more vital. The pandemic slightly impacted my reach with contacting organizations as there were limited in-person events and opportunities to go to, resulting in primarily email correspondence. There is also a chance that fewer people were occupying the spaces where my posters were up than in pre-pandemic times, potentially leading to fewer interactions with the posters and overall less interest in the study. However, to this last point, this may have been made up for by the fact that many individuals spend more time online now than ever as school/work have increasingly moved online, and therefore more eyes may have been on the online recruitment materials than normal. My study illustrates the importance of online spaces. Their usefulness should not be underestimated even in a post-pandemic world (if we will ever truly be 'post'-pandemic).

Interview Guide Development

My original research questions were chosen based on a preliminary review of the literature and my experience conducting interviews with oil and gas workers in two previous projects. I looked beyond the energy transition literature, and incorporated questions related to concepts of attachment and identity formation, sense of place (Goodrich and Sampson, 2005; Masterson, 2017) resource attachment (Bell and York, 2010), job title and identity (Caldwell, 2002; Melling, 2018), as well as questions about environmental attitudes adapted from the New Environmental Paradigm Scale (Dunlap, 2010), although these changed as the project went on. My interview

guide included questions surrounding six major themes: connection to the land; relationships with family, coworkers and Canadian society; identity; industry; and the future. To help with making sure that my interview questions were comprehensible for people who spoke English as a second or third language, I asked for my friends and family to look it over. I asked my first generation Taiwanese and Korean best friends who are often the translators for their parents to look it over. My partner's lolo and lola, my Appa and gomos and other members of my kin all contributed to my recruitment materials and interview guide at some point or another.

As is expected in grounded theory research, the research instruments evolved along with the research. For instance, my original interview guide included the question "are you concerned about protecting the environment?" This question, vague and uninspiring, led to very little follow up in the first few interviews. However, other questions initially presumed unrelated to environmental concern such as "why did you decide to immigrate to Canada", and "what do you dislike about the oil and gas industry", led to far more meaningful answers. I adjusted the interview guide accordingly, replacing the environmental concern question with more specific examples relevant to participants' families' countries of origin. Specifically, I asked interviewees if they were concerned about pollution, natural disasters, and population growth, in Canada and in their family's country of origin. A handful of participants mentioned other environmental topics such as waste and overconsumption. Additionally, I added a follow up question to what participants disliked about the oil and gas industry, asking if they believed in climate change, if they were concerned about it, and whether or not they believed the government should act to mitigate it.

Towards the end of the data collection, I also noticed a shift in the language I was using for certain questions. For instance, when I started the project, I would ask interviewees for typical demographic information, as in where they or their families migrated from, when they immigrated, and why. I realized that the most open answers were being shared as stories, likely stories they had learned from their family members, passed down, rehearsed and retold. Thinking about my knowledge of my own family's immigration to Canada, as well as the power of oral story telling in non-western societies, I realized that speaking of immigration as a story was much more culturally relevant. Reconciling with this observation, later on, I would ask participants to share with me their "immigration story", and once doing so, the answers to my original questions came about naturally along with personal details and anecdotes about

separated families, initial impressions of Canada, and difficulties with the immigration process, all of which gave important context for uncovering what is left out when these stories are not told directly by those who experienced them.

Data Collection

Memo-ing

Memo-ing was an essential process throughout my data collection. I took fieldnote-style memos throughout the ethics application and recruitment processes to document why I made certain decisions and what alterations I could make to the data collection process. These memos reminded me of ethical and positional considerations to keep in mind throughout the research process. I also took memos directly following interviews, writing down quotes, ideas, and concepts to re-examine and place within the context of the literature review and in comparison to other interview transcripts later on in the research process. Post-interview memos also touched on how I could improve on conducting interviews, taking note of any misunderstandings, awkward pauses or dead-end responses to questions, that I applied to improve the interview guide. Post-interview memos also proved to be useful when I started to interpret my data.

Consistency in producing memos throughout the research process was crucial to my research process. Typically, I would take memos right after interviewing a participant, as well as whenever I was exposed to new ideas through reading literature, keeping up with the news or conversing with friends and family on the topic. Comparing memos to each other is what allowed for the interview guide to transform over time into a more relevant and useful tool. Comparing memos is also what provided me with evolving ideas of what literature was relevant to the data, so that rather than having a large break in reading in between getting the project approved and completing the data collection, I could continuously seek out literature to compare to the data I was collecting.

Interviews

I interviewed 15 participants. The median interview time was one-and-a-half hours. The shortest interview was one hour long and the longest interview was two hours long. No interviews took place in-person, given the ongoing health risks related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the difficulty of travel for both the researcher and the participants.

The inclusion criteria for this study was: a) individuals who currently work, or had previously worked in the oil and gas industry in Alberta, b) individuals of Asian descent, c) individuals who lived in Alberta at the time the study was taking place, d) first, 1.5 and second generation immigrants primarily, and potentially third-plus-immigrants. I was interested in speaking with workers of all different ages, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds, depending on who responded to my recruitment call. I recognize that no generalizations or conclusions about the target population based on these factors can be established given the relatively small sample I worked with. That being said, the goal of this study was to explore if identity and social position appeared to be a part of individual participants' experiences as it related to the research question.

There were two exclusion criteria for this study: a) those who were non-English speakers and b) those who were under the legal adult age in Canada at the time the study is taking place (18 and under). The first criterion was excluded to simplify the data collection and analysis. Due to the funding and time-permitting parameters of this research project, I did not have assistance with the interview process nor the transcription process, other than help from the transcription tool Otter.AI. Because I am only proficient in English, I had to limit my sample to individuals who could communicate proficiently in English. That being said, I did not exclude those who spoke EAL and I attempted to simplify the interview process to make it easier for participants who spoke English as an additional language. I excluded minors from the study to avoid ethical issues surrounding the participation of minors, to simplify the recruitment process, again to adhere to the time constraints of this project.

Fourteen of the interviews took place online using Zoom, and one took place over the phone. I gave the option to interviewees to be interviewed in person or online, but all interviewees chose an online interview, other than the one participant who preferred to do a phone interview. I gave participants the option for two reasons. Firstly, given the ongoing state of the COVID-19 pandemic, I did not want to make interviewees feel unsafe or uncomfortable by forcing them to do an interview in person. Secondly, for some people who do not speak English as their first language, they may have found doing an online interview helpful as it may have improved the clarity and comprehension in the interview by allowing them to focus on the questions being asked better than in a location with other noises or distractions, and because it

provided the interviewee with the opportunity to access online tools that could enhance their comprehension of the questions (for instance, using google translate to translate a specific word they were unfamiliar with). Providing interviewees with the choice to either meet in person or online, rather than exclusively online, was important because I imagined that some interviewees may actually find it easier to participate in interviews in person than online, particularly those of older generations who may have a harder time using technology or have a harder time hearing the interviewer. However, this was a non-issue, other than for the one person who I was able to accommodate by doing a phone interview. While there are certain aspects of interviewing in person that are missed out on when interviews are conducted online (ie. Non-verbal cues, body language, fewer risks of technological issues), there are also benefits for the interviewee, for instance being able to turn their camera off to enhance their sense of anonymity in the interview, and for myself as the interviewer, for example the ease of saving voice recordings directly through Zoom.

The interviewees who expressed interest were sent the general interview questions in advance of the interview. This was to help enhance comprehension of the interview questions prior to the interviews to make the interview process easier for participants who spoke EAL. As the questions were based around workers talking about their own experiences in the fossil fuel industry and in Canadian society, there was no foreseeable reason why providing the questions ahead of time would impact respondents' answers in a serious way. Providing the questions ahead of time to those who asked was beneficial because in addition to improving the participants' comprehension, it allowed them the time to reflect on the questions to make it easier for them to respond if English was not their first language, and also contributed to trust building between myself and the participants. Participants were also offered the opportunity to review their interview transcript to ensure that they were comfortable with everything that they had shared, and to provide them with the chance to change or revoke statements. However, no-one decided to revoke, change or add to their transcript.

Transcription

I transcribed interviews using the transcription assistance tool Otter.AI, the tool pre-approved by the University of Alberta. After uploading the transcripts to Otter I manually edited them. Transcribing took up about a quarter of the data collection process. This is a real life example of

how western academia has ignored the importance of listening to the voices of non-English speakers, as well as individuals who speak EAL. I found that, the stronger the non-Canadian “accent”, the worse the transcript was. The transcripts for those who spoke English as an additional language were practically unreadable, and required entirely manual transcription. This mirrors a common experience for many Asian-Canadians, which is the frustration that comes with being ignored, dismissed or infantilized as a result of speaking English as an additional language. This has an impact on more proficient English speaking Asian-Canadians as well, as many second, third etc. generation immigrants must accompany their parents to appointments and make phone calls on their parents/grandparents’ behalves, in addition to facing discrimination based on their appearance up until they speak, at which point they hear micro-aggressive comments about how their English is better than anticipated.

Analysis

I used NVivo to organize my data. The dataset consisted of fifteen transcripts, ranging in length from twenty-one pages to thirty-seven pages. In my analysis, following the traditions of grounded theory, I worked my way from basic description to conceptual ordering to theorizing. I used a Straussian method of coding, moving from open coding, to axial coding, to selective coding. During the open coding stage, I went through each transcript and coded at the sentence and paragraph level, creating new codes until the code book was saturated. This happened around the point of coding the last third of the data. Once I reached saturation, I went back to the first two-thirds of the data to ensure that all of the data was coded according to the full range of codes. After the open coding stage, I moved onto axial coding, looking to “understand categories in relation to other categories and their subcategories” (Myrick and Walker, 2006, p. 553) at which point I drew connections between the open codes and created the codebook that can be found in *Appendix C*. Based on moving between the literature and the codebook, I selected the most apparent and relevant codes that became the themes discussed in *Chapter 3* and *Chapter 4*.

I used an intersectional approach to examine the relationships between ethnicity/race and class as it pertained to immigrant generation and employment status/mobility, alongside differences in gender, age, and other identities as they emerged from the data. While taking this approach, it was essential to ‘de-whiten’ intersectionality to make it appropriate for this study (Abdi, Calafell and Eguchi, 2020). I did so by paying attention to culture-specific nuances that are often not captured in depictions of the general categories of the racial ‘Other’, represented in

studies and government policies through the lens of ‘visible minority’¹ and ‘Asian’ or ‘Asian Canadian’. I examined multiple dimensions of racial identity and class, to move beyond a ‘model minority’ understanding of why some Asian immigrants in Canada achieve better social outcomes than others, as placing people of Asian descent within this categorical box feeds into an exceptionalist narrative that perpetuates white supremacy. In other words, rather than looking at why some Asian immigrants fit into Western society more easily than others, I looked at the differences in participants’ experiences based on differences in their multiple intersecting identities. I highlighted the cultural knowledge that participants shared with me. I tried to understand the data through a critique of Western systems that perpetuate the social conditions that continue to ‘other’ and divide Asians living in Canada.

Demographics

Out of fifteen participants, the youngest participant was 24 and the oldest participant was in his late 50s. 11 participants identified as male and four identified as female. It is worth noting that participants’ ethnicities may be different than their families’ countries of origin, which may also differ from their locations of birth. This difference will be elaborated on in *Chapter 3*. It is also worth noting that participants self-identified their ethnicities and their families’ countries of origin, however, due to the thousands of years of conflict, migration and cultural exchange within Asia, most people of Asian descent have mixed Asian lineage if traced back far enough. For example, I identify as half Korean, and all of my paternal side of my family identifies as Korean, however due to Japanese colonization of Korea my grandmother’s (*Halmoni*’s) family ended up in Japan for a couple generations and my family certainly has some Japanese heritage. How participants self-identified was important for their sense of identity and therefore that is what is relevant in this study. Additionally, participants from Asian countries that define themselves as ethnically distinct from each other, for instance Taiwanese versus Chinese from Mainland China, are described as such here based on how interviewees identified themselves, although there is debate over whether these distinctions are technically ethnic or cultural. If

¹ As noted earlier, the term minority was engaged with originally in Canada through signing the United Nations Charter and the Multiculturalism Act. The term visible minority is defined under the *Employment Equity Act* as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour” (Statistics Canada, 2021b). The term is used for federal employment “equity purposes” to keep track of workplace statistics.

² While industry and government keep track of exact figures for Indigenous and visible minority workers, they do not provide specific information as to how many Asians work in oil and gas. However, presumably based on Asians being the second largest and fastest growing racial group in Canada after Euro-Canadians, Asians making up half of the total number of immigrants in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022), and considering the demographics presented in

someone described their ethnicity as Taiwanese, that is what was included here, versus those who talked about themselves as “Chinese ethnically” with family from Vietnam, Singapore or the Philippines. Typically, the difference was in how far back their family emigrated from China, as well as how being ethnically Chinese in their country of origin impacted their identity in that country as they could be considered an ethnic minority or ethnically distinct because of their Chinese heritage. A final note is that information about clan affiliation is not included here, as it was not mentioned by any interview participant.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Interview Participants

Name*	Age	Ethnicity	Family's country of origin	Generational status	Location of birth	Location at time of interview	Location of O&G work	Highest level of educational attainment prior to O&G position	Work position(s) in O&G (direct or indirect)	Currently working in O&G (Y/N)
Andrew	Mid 50s	Filipino	Philippines	1 st generation	Philippines	Edmonton, Alberta	Edmonton, Alberta	B-certificate welding	Assistant foreman, B welder	Y
Boris	Mid 40s	Chinese	Mainland China	1 st generation	Mainland China	Edmonton, Alberta	Edmonton, Alberta	B. Eng Engineer (int.), engineering certificate	Engineer	Y
Clive	47	Vietnamese	Vietnam	1.5 generation	Vietnam	Edmonton, Alberta	Edmonton (Nisku), Alberta	Civil Engineering trades certificate	Field Technician, Field Coordinator	Y
Dede	30s	Chinese	Singapore	1 st generation	Singapore	Edmonton, Alberta	Edmonton (Nisku), Alberta	B.Eng Industrial and Systems Engineering	Production Planner, Manufacturing Engineer	Y
Eric	24	Half Filipino, half Euro-	Philippines	2 nd generation	Swift Current, Saskatchewan	Calgary, Alberta	Calgary, Alberta	IT certificate	IT Administrator	Y

Canadian										
Fred	Mid 40s	Chinese	Vietnam	1.5 generation	Vietnam	Calgary, Alberta	Calgary, Alberta	BSc Astrophysics, machinist certificate	Assemblyman, machinist, Quality Assurance Coordinator	Y
Gary	25	Filipino	Philippines	1.5 generation	Philippines	Edmonton, Alberta	Red Deer, Alberta	High school	Electrician	N
Henry	Mid 40s	Chinese	Vietnam	2 nd generation	Vietnam	Edmonton, Alberta	Edmonton, Alberta	B.Eng Environmental engineer	Industrial engineer, consultant, fire-resistant coverall manufacturer, environmental inspector for lodging company	Y
Iris	30s	Half Japanese, half Euro- Canadian	Japan	4 th generation	Brooks, Alberta	Big Valley, Alberta	Cold Lake, Alberta	BSc Geology	Geologist	Y
Jin	22	Korean	Korea	1.5 generation	Korea	Edmonton, Alberta	Fort McMurray, Alberta Calgary, Alberta	B.Eng Mining engineering (still in school)	Engineering	Y

Karina	Mid 20s	Filipina	Philippines	1.5 generation	Philippines	Edmonton, Alberta	Fort McMurray, Alberta	High school	EMS worker on site	N
Lawrence	30s	Taiwanese	Taiwan	1.5 generation	Taiwan	Edmonton, Alberta	Edmonton (Fort Saskatchewan, Conklin), Alberta	B.Eng Chemical Engineering	Project Coordinator, Project Manager	Y
Martin	32	Chinese	Philippines	1 st generation	Philippines	Edmonton, Alberta	Edmonton (Fort Saskatchewan), Alberta	B.Eng Engineering	Process Engineer	Y
Naomi	32	Chinese	Mainland China	2 nd generation	US (Born in San Francisco), moved to Calgary, Alberta at 1 y/o	Edmonton, Alberta	Edmonton (Fort Saskatchewan), Alberta	BSc Chemistry, B.Eng Engineering	Operations Support Engineer (Process Engineer)	Y
Ori	33	Indian	India	1 st generation	India	Edmonton, Alberta	Edmonton (Fort Saskatchewan), Alberta	BSc Engineering	Design Engineer, Processing Engineer	Y

*All names of participants have been changed to pseudonyms to maintain participants' anonymity

Participants identified as ethnically Filipino (n=3), Chinese (n=6), Vietnamese (n=1), Taiwanese (n=1), Korean (n=1), and Indian (n=1). One participant was of mixed Euro-Canadian and Filipino (n=1) descent and one participant was of mixed Euro-Canadian and Japanese (n=1) descent. Their families' countries of origin were the Philippines (n=5), Mainland China (n=2), Vietnam (n=3), Singapore (n=1), Taiwan (n=1), Japan (n=1), Korea (n=1) and India (n=1). The majority of participants were born outside of Canada (n=11), with three participants born in Canada and one born in the US. Participants born outside of Canada emigrated from the Philippines (n=4), Singapore (n=1), Mainland China (n=1), Taiwan (n=1), Korea (n=1), Vietnam (n=2) and India (n=1). One of the participants born in Canada had one-parent born in the Philippines and the other had great grandparents born in Japan. The third participant born in Canada stated that his mother was pregnant with him when they arrived in Canada from Vietnam. The one participant born in the US had parents who both emigrated from China. Participants were mainly first generation immigrants (n=5), 1.5 generation immigrants (n=6), and second generation immigrations (n=3). One participant was a fourth generation immigrant.

According to Statistics Canada (2017), the majority of immigrants in Alberta live in either Calgary or Edmonton, Alberta's metropolitan cities, which makes sense in terms of general migration trends of cities accommodating more immigrants. In my sample, 12 participants lived in Edmonton and two participants lived in Calgary. In total, 14 participants lived in urban areas. Only one participant lived in a rural area (building a house in Big Valley and originally from Brooks, Alberta). The locations where participants worked in the oil and gas industry were more diverse, including Edmonton, Calgary, surrounding areas of Edmonton (Fort Saskatchewan and Nisku), Cold Lake, Fort McMurray, and Red Deer.

Looking at the general population in Alberta, the top three Asian source countries of immigration to Alberta overall are the Philippines, India and China (Statistics Canada, 2017). The majority of interview participants in this study were ethnically Chinese, and the country of origin for the majority of participants was the Philippines. The fourth source country for immigration to Canada overall is Vietnam, which is the country of origin of the second largest portion of participants in this study after the Philippines. My sample had equal numbers of participants of Korean (n=1), Japanese (n=1), Singaporean (n=1), and Taiwanese (n=1) descent. Although one person cannot speak for an entire ethnic group, the number of participants from

each of these countries is similar to the percentage that these groups make up of the total immigrant population in Alberta compared to the Filipino, Chinese and Vietnamese who make up a much larger percentage of this study's sample as well as the total immigrant population in Alberta. Additionally, six participants' families' were from East Asian countries, and eight participants' families' were from Southeast Asia, allowing for some comparison between these slightly larger reference groups. The Asian immigrant demographics of Alberta are reflected in my sample, except for one major limitation, which is the lack of South Asian representation. There was only one participant of Indian descent, and he was actually the last person that I interviewed. He was referred through a colleague of Chinese descent. Unfortunately, it would be extremely farfetched to expect one person's story to represent the experiences of an entire ethnic group. This characteristic of my study points to some very important insights when it comes to directions for future research, which will be discussed further in *Chapter 3*.

Participants had a variety of educational backgrounds and work positions. Nine of 15 participants had an engineering university background and six of these participants were working as engineers in the industry at the time of the study. Almost all of the East Asian participants and the South Asian participant had an educational background of a Bachelor's Degree or higher, most of which were in engineering. This aligns with the fact that 41% of the engineering workforce is made up of immigrants, that Chinese and South Asian people are highly represented among engineers, and that a large portion of East Asians and South Asians in Canada have a bachelor's degree or higher (Government of Canada, n.d.; Hou and Picot, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2023). Out of those who did not work in engineering specific professions, three participants had an engineering educational background but worked in non-engineering specific roles, two participants had non-engineering specific university education and worked in white collar professions, one participant had certificate training and worked in a white collar profession and three participants had high school education or certificate training and worked in blue collar professions. The majority of participants who did not have an engineering background were of Filipino descent, and the majority of participants who had an engineering background but who were not working in engineering specific fields were of Southeast Asian descent, which also aligns with 2021 census data (Statistics Canada, 2023).

The work experiences for white collar workers of Asian descent may differ greatly from the experiences of blue collar workers of Asian descent in a number of ways, and there is often tension between these different categories of workers. Therefore, it cannot necessarily be said that the experiences of white collar workers who belong to marginalized groups can be directly compared to, for instance, the experiences of blue collar white workers, and the experiences of blue collar white workers likely are similar to the experiences of blue collar marginalized workers in some distinct ways. However, as I discuss in *Chapter 3* and *Chapter 4*, it is valuable to identify how class and racialization interact and alter the experiences of Asian workers in comparison to the dominant group of white workers in Canadian society, along with other factors like gender and age, as well as how racialization does lead to similar experiences among distinctly racialized people. Considering class as one axis of intersectionality also points to potential opportunities for solidarity amongst blue collar workers of different identities, who tend to have fewer workers' rights than their white collar counterparts, as well as between workers of different identities, across different class groups, who have common experiences of marginalization. I discuss this further in *Chapter 3* and *Chapter 4*.

Chapter 3: Using an intersectional approach to examine the experiences of Asian immigrant and migrant oil and gas workers in Alberta, Canada

Introduction

According to Natural Resources Canada, 29% of workers in the energy industry are immigrants, and 18% identify as visible minorities (Natural Resources Canada, 2022). The top source countries for migration to Canada within the past decade are China, India and the Philippines (Statistics Canada, 2021a). Despite the large presence of Asian immigrant and migrant workers in the oil and gas industry², only a few studies have sought out the voices of Asian workers and immigrant and migrant workers in Alberta to uncover the unequal burdens they experience. Sociological studies which have engaged with Asian immigrant and migrant workers have focused on trades workers, service workers, caregivers and foreign temporary workers in settings unrelated to energy transitions (Dorow and Mandizadza, 2018; Foster and Taylor, 2013; Hill, Dorow, Martinez, Barnettson and Matsunaga-Turnbull, 2019). Asian immigrant and migrant oil and gas workers continue to be left out of much of the public discourse surrounding carbon-intensive industry transitions.

The newly released *Sustainable Jobs Plan* (Natural Resources Canada, 2023) does the bare-minimum for addressing this group of workers. The plan mentions migrant rights as one of many topics flagged by think tanks and research organizations, suggests reducing barriers to job opportunities as a way to improve inclusion for racialized individuals and “other marginalized peoples” (p. 26), and fails to mention Asian workers explicitly. A “just transition” away from carbon-intensive industries requires uplifting the voices of marginalized groups that are most likely to be left behind (Mertins-Kirkwood and Deshpande, 2019). The current research attempts to fill this gap by enquiring into the first-hand experiences of Asian immigrant and migrant oil and gas workers who hold multiple and differing identities in Alberta, Canada to answer the question: *what would an energy transition that uplifts the voices of Asian immigrants and*

² While industry and government keep track of exact figures for Indigenous and visible minority workers, they do not provide specific information as to how many Asians work in oil and gas. However, presumably based on Asians being the second largest and fastest growing racial group in Canada after Euro-Canadians, Asians making up half of the total number of immigrants in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022), and considering the demographics presented in *Chapter 2* outlining the large number of Asians working in STEM, as well as the testimonials of participants who mentioned having many other Asian colleagues, I state here that there is a large presence of Asians in oil and gas, and that many of their voices have gone unheard in other just transition consultations and research.

migrants look like? This research uses an intersectional approach to examining Asian workers' experiences, recognizing that any attempt to bring these voices into conversation must use a multi-dimensional framework that can bring forward de-whitened, nuanced, and culturally-relevant analysis.

Drawing on fifteen semi-structured interviews with Asian immigrant and migrant oil and gas workers, I examine four dimensions of intersectionality, being race, gender, class and age. I treat each of these dimensions as equally insightful and important to uncovering the concerns, values, and priorities of the research participants. Upon examining these intersections, the complexities that exist within the experience of being an Asian immigrant/migrant oil and gas worker come to light. I then discuss what the implications of these findings are for the energy transition, bringing into question the relevancy of some focuses of the energy transition in addressing the particular needs and desires of the research population. I conclude by noting the hopefulness I have for the energy transition given the resiliency of Asian immigrant and migrant workers and the opportunities for solidarity that exist within and between groups who experience multiple axes of oppression.

Literature Review

An Introduction to Intersectional Theory

Intersectionality originated from the scholarly work of Black lawyer and feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). She illustrated how race, gender and class intersect, and argued that their implications cannot be understood by looking at social categories in isolation from each other. She explained how hierarchies of domination along the axes of gender, class and race are perpetuated by similar structures, policies and norms. She divided intersectionality into three categories: *structural intersectionality*, recognizing the qualitative difference in the lives of women of colour as a result of the multiple levels of subordination that they experience; *political intersectionality*, acknowledging how separating feminist and antiracist theory actually perpetuates the overarching systems of violence; and *representational intersectionality*, describing how social constructs and norms regarding different identities impact the experiences of women of colour (Crenshaw, 1991). Hill Collins (1990) expanded on the term intersectionality to explain that within what she calls the *matrix of domination*, there are intersectional paradigms: oppressions working together to produce injustices. She notes that

across all intersectional paradigms, “structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power” are at play (p. 18). Abdi, Calafell and Eguchi (2020) have criticized scholarly work that attempts to use intersectionality to essentially break the glass ceiling, while continuing to work off of logics that reproduce white supremacy and white privilege. In practice, they criticize studies that focus on social categories such as gender or class without discussing the overarching implications of race. They call for the *dewhitening of intersectionality*, which means bringing intersectionality back to its roots by de-centering and disrupting white, Western, patriarchal knowledge production that tends to ignore the lived experiences of marginalized people of colour as well as the ways that racialization is interlinked with other forms of oppression.

There are important distinctions to make between intersectionality and standpoint theory. Intersectionality brings attention to the possibility for multiple identities and standpoint theory typically settles on placing some people on the “margins” of society and others at the “centre” (Hancock, 2016). A distinction should also be made between intersectionality and multicultural feminist thought, which have similar origins. All three of these frameworks “claim to provide space for group-level analysis of difference” (p. 80). However, intersectionality uniquely identifies that there are interacting categories of difference, meaning that oppression and privilege are not mutually exclusive because individuals can hold multiple identities. This study takes an *intracategorical intersectional* approach, a typically qualitative strategy emerging from narrative studies, its intellectual forbear. This approach attempts to uncover the complexities that exist within a group supposedly located at one dimension of the same social location (McCall, 2005). The objective is to bring to light the diversity and difference within a single social group. In comparison to *anticategorical* work which deconstructs categories and *intercategorical* work which uses existing categories in a strategic way, intracategorical intersectionality falls somewhere in between, treating broad social categories as real due to their material and discursive consequences, while focusing “on the process by which they are produced, experienced, reproduced, and resisted in everyday life” (McCall, 2005, p. 1783). In this case, the broad social category being examined and picked apart is that of “Asians” living and working in Canada. This study interjects itself into the energy transition literature to address the gaps that exist due to a “lateness” when it comes to Western academic institutions supporting and including Asian Canadian voices in academia (Lee, 2007).

Intersectionality in the Energy Transition

Intersectionality as a concept and theoretical framework has recently been integrated into Western energy transition literature in a number of ways. The most common incorporation of intersectionality into the energy transition has been focused on gender with only limited mention of other marginalized identities (Cannon and Chu, 2021; Clancy and Feenstra, 2020; Johnston et al., 2020; Karakislak, Sadat-Razavi, and Schweizer-Ries, 2023; Lieu et al., 2020). Typically, intersectionality in these studies is seen as a way to examine “how gender inequality interacts with other inequalities of ethnicity, race, class and age” (Johnson et al., 2020, p. 101774). Gender and class are often examined together, given that this can be a useful strategy for examining energy poverty (Clancy and Feenstra, 2020). An intersectional lens to examine the experiences of women working in the oil and gas industry has been lacking, although notably, gender inequity in Alberta’s energy industry for workers has been gaining attention with the use of other feminist methodologies (Miller, 2004; Murphy, Strand, Theron and Ungar, 2021). It has been suggested that energy justice could benefit from an intersectionality-informed lens to investigate how hierarchies perpetuate energy inequalities, how social location may impact how different groups experience those inequalities, and how hierarchies influence decision making processes determining energy futures (Cannon and Chu, 2021). It has been noted that there is potential for intersectionality to lend itself to examining the needs of different genders and groups, and for this to be a pathway towards building trust between these groups and the government in Alberta’s energy transition (Lieu et al., 2020). Furthermore, in their intersectional review of energy transition literature, Johnson et al. (2020) revealed that moving towards renewable energy does not necessarily dismantle structural dynamics that reproduce gender and social inequity, pointing to the importance of continuing to use an intersectional lens to not only examine the fossil fuel industry but also the energy transition and its socio-political implications.

Fewer studies have provided a nuanced understanding of how intersectionality can be a useful concept for taking an in-depth look into how other marginalized identities relate to injustices perpetuated by the energy industry. An intersectional ethos that goes further than looking at how gender interacts with other minority identities makes way for the colonial origins of hierarchies within the energy industry to be addressed. Recognizing that valuing some groups’ quality of life over others was a necessary logic in the colonial project that required the mass

production of energy through occupying land, exploiting labour and stealing resources (Lennon, 2017). Furthermore, looking beyond the gender-energy nexus allows one to see how intersectionality can be applied more wholly to examine how “gender and patriarchy, racism and whiteness, and colonialism and imperialism” are “multiple regimes of domination” that work together, “interrelate and shape each other” (Sovacool et al., 2023, p. 102996). Intersectional analysis can provide nuance to the energy transition, accounting for the agency of actors who internalize certain identities, as well as the external forces that are perpetuated by social structures and institutions. While the implications of intersectionality in the energy transition literature has been expanded to look at how Black and Indigenous communities are disproportionately impacted by energy injustice (Lennon, 2017), still lacking from the literature thus far is an analysis of Asian and immigrant/migrant communities’ experiences in the energy industry through an intersectional lens.

Results

1. Participant Demographics

*Note: Refer to **Table 1** for demographic information.

Out of fifteen participants, 3 identified as ethnically Filipino, 6 as Chinese, 1 as Vietnamese, 1 as Taiwanese, 1 as Korean, 1 as Indian, 1 as Euro-Canadian and Filipino and 1 as Euro-Canadian and Japanese (Refer to *Table 1**). Five participants identified the Philippines as their family’s country of origin, followed by Vietnam (n=3), Mainland China (n=2), and 1 participant each identified their family’s country of origin as Singapore, Taiwan, Japan, Korea and India. The majority of participants were born outside of Canada (n=12), with two participants born in Canada and one born in the US. Participants born outside of Canada emigrated from the Philippines (n=4), Vietnam (n=3), Singapore (n=1), Mainland China (n=1), Taiwan (n=1), Korea (n=1), and India (n=1). One of the participants born in Canada had one-parent born in the Philippines and the other had great grandparents born in Japan. The one participant born in the US had parents who both emigrated from China. Participants were mainly first generation immigrants (n=5), 1.5 generation immigrants (n=6), and second generation immigrations (n=3). One participant was a fourth generation immigrant. Participants occupied a variety of roles in the industry ranging from field labourers, to administrative staff, to professional engineers. Nine of 15 participants had an engineering university background and six of these participants were

working as engineers in the industry at the time of the study. Eleven participants identified as men and four participants identified as women. At the time of the interviews, four participants were in their 20s, six participants were in their 30s, and five participants were 40 and above.

2. Race and Ethnicity

2.1 Culture More Meaningful than Race or Ethnicity

For many participants, the identity of being Asian was more of an experience of being labelled or called Asian, or knowing that they “looked” Asian, rather than something that they strongly identified with. One participant described the experience of becoming “Asian” through the experience of being labelled as such once arriving in Canada:

I knew that I was in Asia. But not until that I came to Canada, that I can say, oh, I'm actually Asian... Like yeah, I identify with, like Filipino culture, but like on the grander scheme of things, I also am Asian, and I wasn't able necessarily to claim that up until I came to Canada. Like that identity of me that you know, that watched anime growing up... Like, I didn't know that that was like such a part of Asian culture, growing up with like rice and noodles, growing up with soup on the table all the time, growing up with, like such strong family ties. I didn't embrace my Asian heritage, or I didn't know, I had that Asian heritage in me up until I came to Canada... I didn't know that was part of being Asian. – Karina, mid 20s, 1.5 generation, Filipina

While the term Asian was not particularly meaningful to participants, many shared similar experiences when it came to how they have been treated as “Asian” in Canadian society. Many participants mentioned facing migro-aggressions, bullying, and other forms of racism, typically in school and to a lesser degree at work, although when they spoke about these experiences participants often minimized them and spoke of them as “unavoidable”, especially situations that happened when they were growing up. It was apparent that regardless of how participants preferred to identify, there were tangible consequences to being labeled as Asian; however, it was commonplace to have been conditioned to shrug these types of experiences off, as it was an accepted part of the experience of being Asian in Canada.

Hyphenated identities were more meaningful to participants than being Asian, although some participants expressed being unsure whether they would be considered “Chinese-Canadian” or “Vietnamese-Canadian”, for example, when their ethnicity and their cultural identity differed. It was important to participants to differentiate their ethnicity from their culture when that difference was part of their identity. Many participants called themselves “ethnically Chinese”, but culturally connected to Vietnam/Singapore/Taiwan/the Philippines. For the participants from Vietnam, they mentioned being kicked out of Vietnam after the Vietnam

War in part because of their Chinese heritage, and therefore this distinction was not just important to their identity but also integral to their understanding of their families' immigration stories. Lawrence, who was from Taiwan, distinctly called himself Taiwanese and only "technically" Chinese. Dede spoke about how outside of Singapore, it was important to differentiate oneself from Mainland Chinese, however in Singapore, it was important to define oneself as Chinese-Singaporean in comparison to Malaysian-Singaporeans:

Because Singapore is richly diverse like it is in Canada. It is a little bit interesting. When we are in Singapore, we identify as Chinese... Outside Singapore, we identify a Singaporean... And non-mainland Chinese, we hate being called mainland Chinese. – Dede, 30s, 1st generation, Singaporean

Participants noted that these distinctions were rarely recognized by those outside of their communities. Many of the same participants spoke about knowing that they "look Chinese", however this did not align with their cultural identity.

Different from race and ethnicity, participants provided many examples of what cultural identity meant to them. In most cases, culture related most strongly to family values, food and language. Family values showed up in many forms. For instance, the topic of respecting elders came up in multiple interviews:

[We value] respecting parents, elders. I'm not saying most [North Americans] don't but it's a different level of responsibilities and attitudes. – Lawrence, 30s, 1.5 generation, Taiwanese

Family values were also framed as family helping family, extending beyond just elders and parents, with an emphasis placed on looking out for those who are a part of your family's "clan":

They are all very much into the clan mindset where "you belong to this family and whoever else is part of it. And so you have to help us." And I don't mind helping them. – Naomi, 32, 2nd generation, Chinese

While these values were instilled through participants' families, the lessons they learned extended to kin outside of their immediate families. This was especially relevant for participants like Martin who immigrated to Canada to work in the oil and gas industry without their families. One example of help was the way that participants like Andrew and Gary were able to secure their jobs in Canada because of family members in the industry. As Andrew put it, whoever from the family arrived in Canada first "paved the way" for others later on. Gary, one of the youngest participants who worked as an electrician, talked about how his uncle, who he described as

“family-oriented”, “stuck it out” in a job that he did not like so that he could help his other uncle get in with the company.

Participants also spoke about how food was important to cultural identity. Karina talked about how she felt for her father who had worked as an electrician in oil and gas for years in Canada without his family, before they were able to come and join him. She did not know what it was like at the time, but after she had experienced living in a camp onsite herself, she found a new appreciation for how lonely her father must have felt. She talked about how when she was at the camp, while on paper the accommodations were nice, a degree of comfort was missing:

I did that camp job for like 14 days straight. And I was like, oh my god, I don't know how people do this. Because I'm used to like, coming home and like my mom would have like rice for me or like soup and that's like, that's so comforting to me. And then you get to camp and yes, you have a clean bed. Everything's nice, everything's tidy, someone's doing that for you. But the environment itself... it just didn't feel like home. – Karina, mid 20s, 1.5 generation, Filipina

Even those who felt relatively disconnected from their Asian culture mentioned the comfort found in traditional food:

I pretty much use the same, like the same recipes like my aunts are using. So I will like call my aunt, like, hey, so like good luck noodle soup. I'm gonna need you to walk me through this again... That was the one thing for like New Year's, it was like you had good luck noodle soup. That was the one thing they kind of kept. – Iris, 30s, 4th generation, mixed Euro-Canadian and Japanese

Participants also addressed culture by discussing the importance of language. Those who spoke their family's native language said it made them feel connected to their culture and others who shared that culture, while those who did not know their family's language felt disconnected. Those who primarily spoke an Asian language and English as an additional language, and others who compared their experiences as 1.5 or second generation immigrants to the experiences of their first generation parents, discussed how this could be a hindrance to forming connections once they arrived in Canada:

[My parents had] a whole childhood of being Vietnamese. So when they're talking, they're thinking of Vietnamese, right, and they have all these cultural, you know, they grew up in that culture and whatnot. So the communication is a little bit harder. And I think that when the communication is a little bit harder, it makes it harder to socialize and to build relationships. – Clive, 47, 1.5 generation, Vietnamese

All in all, it seemed like cultural identity to participants outweighed that of racial or ethnic identity. Cultural identity was defined through connection to family, food and language. What all of these aspects of cultural identity have in common is that they bring about a sense of comfort, one that is generally lacking when someone moves to a new place from their family's

country of origin, sometimes away from their family, and away from the food and language they are familiar with. For participants who were born in Canada or who had lived in Canada for a long time, even if their cultural identity associated with their family's country of origin was not as strong, most engaged in family rituals or found some level of comfort in their culture's food or connecting to others with similar cultures through language, and all participants upheld strong family values.

3. Class

3.1 Education and Profession

Job title and educational attainment did appear to be important to participants' experiences, opinions and identities. Engineers typically described themselves as evidence-based thinkers, challenge-seekers, and life-long learners. One participant noted that his experiences on a technical engineering team likely would differ quite a bit from those working in the field:

I think what your job is, and who you're working with will completely change, like the perceptions of, I guess, of oil and gas. Like, for me, I worked in a very technical team doing process optimization. So I work with a bunch of people that were essentially just all, all engineers, right. I didn't really have interaction with just like, trades people in the field and stuff. – Jin, 22, 1.5 generation, Korean

Participants' educational and professional fields were related not just to their experiences working in the field and their perceptions of the industry, but also their perceptions of their own and others' perspectives on climate change. Those in the engineering fields tended to explain their perceptions on climate change as evidence-based, although their interpretation of that evidence varied as some participants were concerned about climate change and believed that reducing greenhouse gases should be a priority, while others acknowledged that climate change was happening although they questioned whether it was a serious issue. Those with an engineering background often compared themselves to those in trades, and when it came to climate change, it was suggested that those who did not have a background in STEM may have a more difficult time accepting climate science:

In the industry is a lot of the actually engineers, or a lot of the engineers understand that, like, climate change is real, and like, we should do something about it. But what I noticed is a lot of people, maybe I don't know, maybe if it's bias or something, but if it's like a union or trades position, sometimes they're the ones that are like, that says, "oh, it's just, it's just all propaganda", or "it's, it's just because the Liberals are saying it" or something like that. – Martin, 32, 1st generation, Filipino

Contrary to this belief, the four participants who came from non-STEM backgrounds all believed in climate change, and three of these participants, who were also the youngest participants in the study, were the most adamant about their environmental concern. Only one participant was adamant about their doubt in climate science, and they were one of the participants with a STEM degree, although his degree was not in engineering.

Many participants expressed that they chose their fields based on family expectations, either because their relatives had worked in similar fields or because the field they went into was considered stable and likely to bring about opportunity. This was particularly relevant for those in engineering, but also applied to the younger participant who worked as an electrician:

My dad was always practical. He's the practical voice. And he's like, oh, just be an electrician, you're working. And then while you're working, you can think of what you really want to do. – Gary, 25, 1.5 generation, Filipino

Another participant, Karina, mentioned that growing up in Fort McMurray, the expectation for most of the men she went to school with was that they would work in the oil patch, and that most of the women would become health care workers, although she also mentioned it was common for Filipinos in Fort McMurray to take on other service work depending on whatever was available. Some participants spoke about their families settling in Alberta in part because of the expectation of being able to work in the oil and gas industry or connected industries. Clive, who's family arrived as Vietnamese refugees after the Vietnam war, spoke about how the industry helped members of the Vietnamese community build a life for their families in Alberta:

Many of our family, friends and in our community and whatnot, were, you know, machinists or some sort of engineers or whatever... I feel like the oil industry was a big part of us being able to find jobs, and build a family here. You know, there's, there's plenty of people in the community that did other things. But I do feel like the oil industry was, you know, it's supported a lot of other adjacent industries as well. – Clive, 47, 1.5 generation, Vietnamese

Family expectations often influence people's career aspirations. However, in the case of Asian immigrants and migrants, family may play an even bigger role because of the dynamics and values tied to being Asian as well as being an immigrant or migrant family doing what is necessary in order to make a life in Canada.

3.2 Job Security

Many participants recognized the boom and bust nature of the oil and gas industry as an inherent part of the industry at large. There was general concern from participants over the implications of a rise in remote work, technological advancements, and moving away from fossil fuels for job security within the industry. A majority of participants expressed that they would consider working in the renewable energy industry, however a perceived lack of job security often made them more skeptical:

It's very like project reliant I hear. Which is similar to oil and gas... But it seems like solar panels and stuff at least, is the example I'm thinking in my mind, is very small scale. Like once you're done a house, how long does that last for? So I think in my head there was also that consistency concern. Because once we build up all the panels... Is there still work after? – Gary, 25, 1.5 generation, Filipino

Those who believed they had invaluable transferable skills felt a stronger sense of security in their fields. In particular, those with engineering backgrounds saw themselves as likely being able to get similar positions in the renewable energy industry or other industries. However, some participants shared stories of a lack of job security when they arrived to Canada without accreditation from a Western institution. It was also noted by some participants that being a more recent immigrant meant being at a disadvantage when it came to the job market because of a lack of connections, in comparison to their Canadian-born competition.

3.3 Job Mobility

It was exemplified by participants that job mobility was not always tied directly to educational attainment and/or skill level. Participants who were born in Canada or who grew up in Canada typically had more perceived job mobility than those who came to Canada later in life. One participant, Ori, spoke about his struggle with finding a job that matched his skill level as an engineer for his first couple years in Canada, having worked at a mobile kiosk at a mall for months before being able to secure work in his field of processing engineering. Not only did he have an engineering degree from an Indian institution, but he had also spent years working in his field in India before immigrating to Canada. Another participant, Fred, a 1.5 generation Vietnamese immigrant who held a machinist certificate as his relevant education, compared himself to other Asian immigrants at his shop working in positions they were overqualified for:

I've worked with a lot of Southeast Asians, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese. Yeah. And they're all immigrants. For the most part, they're like engineers, and really smart people. But they were working with me on the shop floor... And were just like, skilled workers, but back in their country, you know, they went to university, they got their engineering degree, they got their doctorate. But when they moved to Canada, language would, I guess would be a huge barrier for some of them, particularly the older generation. So gotta do what you got to do to survive, right. – Fred, mid 40s, 1.5 generation, Vietnamese

One participant, Dede, identified herself as an expatriate migrant because she transferred to working in Canada through the same company she worked for in Singapore, and eventually received PR status. However, even she expressed concerns over her perceived lack of job mobility because of the difficulty she would have navigating the job market in Canada if she were to leave her current company:

I would stay with the company because I need my salary to pay my bills. And Canada is a new country to me. I don't even know how to go about looking for a job here. – Dede, 30s, 1st generation, Singaporean

Generally, participants believed that they had opportunity for upward mobility within their companies. However, a number of participants spoke about discrimination they had experienced or witnessed in the workplace. One participant spoke about his coworker at a previous workplace not getting a promotion, in his eyes, because of the employer's view of who looks like a 'leader':

I personally thought he probably should be given a shot to be promoted past the project manager level. But he was never. Just things like that where I always do wonder if it was because, like subconsciously... they just didn't look at a guy like him as a leader because he is Asian. – Lawrence, 30s, 1.5 generation, Taiwanese

Another participant, Henry, spoke about how he had found it more difficult to find a job during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite having 20 years of prior experience, and he questioned whether or not racial discrimination was a factor. Despite participants often mentioning that they chose fields that they thought would provide them with transferable skills and good opportunities, factors such as immigration status, smaller networks and discrimination still limited their options. A lack of job security and job mobility could threaten the identity of participants who strongly identified with their job titles.

4. Gender

4.1 Underestimated Based on Gender

The women I interviewed all talked about how the industry is noticeably male-dominated. There was a certain level of nonchalance when talking about this, giving the impression that for women working in the industry being a minority is inevitable. It was noted that there was a lack of representation of women in the industry. However, one participant, Naomi, actually felt that the recent focus on improving diversity within engineering had

benefitted her because it helped her “check one more diversity box”. Despite the increased focus on diversity, women were still underestimated and often had to overcome negative stereotypes in the workplace:

It is just especially for women more pronounced in oil and gas, because it is predominantly a male industry, right? So when you want to hire women, then you have the, oh can she lift as much as a man can. And things like that. – Dede, 30s, 1st generation, Singaporean

One participant, Iris, remarked how she had become accustomed to exhibiting that she had a “thick skin” to gain respect from her male co-workers from working in male-dominated fields throughout her life:

You kind of just call them out on the bullshit, for lack of a better word. And then they kind of like, once they figure out that you're, you got a thick skin. And that you're just like, guys, I'm just here to work. I'm not here to cramp your style, because I'm the girl, or new girl, like, no, I'm just here to work... I've never really been in a female dominated work area. So I know how to like deal with all of them. And you're just like, guys, it's fine. And then once they figure out that you're not there to be the pretty, pretty princess, that can't do anything, that you're pretty much self sufficient then they're like, “okay, now she's fine”. – Iris, 30s, 4th generation, mixed Euro-Canadian and Japanese

Others spoke about the ways in which they were underestimated by higher-ups. One woman talked about how her boss would often assign her busywork that was unrelated to her position, despite her being highly qualified and highly paid in the company:

I am one of the most highly paid people [at my company]. And then my boss still comes and asked me to do arts and crafts stuff so that they can do whatever they need to do. But I guess, fine. Sure. If you want me to pay me big bucks to cut the paper, so you can do arts and crafts. I'll do it. – Dede, 30s, 1st generation, Singaporean

All of the women interviewed described themselves as competent workers, oftentimes more highly educated than many of their colleagues. However, it was a common occurrence to be stereotyped by male colleagues. Unlike their male colleagues, women felt like they had to gain respect, or prove themselves in some way in order to bypass negative gender stereotypes.

4.2 Finding Solidarity in Isolation

In addition to the already isolating environment of rural and remote oil and gas work, the male-dominated nature of the industry for some felt isolating:

I just felt so isolated in a way, especially as a woman too in the industry, like majority of the people that you see, mostly are men. – Karina, mid 20s, 1.5 generation, Filipina

However, there was also an obvious display of solidarity amongst women working in the oil and gas industry. All the women participants spoke about the close relationships they had made with the other women in the industry that they encountered. Karina spoke highly about a

program called *Women Building Futures*, and suggested that this program was useful not just for women but in particular for immigrant women who were looking to build a network and seek greater opportunity. Naomi talked about how the women's change room onsite in Fort McMurray acted as a safe space for women to decompress:

It got to the point that, some of the operators, because I went to the women's change room [in Fort McMurray]. I was like, oh, isn't this such a great place. Like they made it really home-y. They've got like, you know, like fancy soaps, and like, you know, they made it. And they're like, "yeah, this is great. There's only six of us and we can come here to cry". I was like, oh my god. Because there's hundreds of males, but there's only maybe like six or 10 women doing what they're doing. It's a very tough job. It's very hard to get respect sometimes. – Naomi, 32, 2nd generation, Chinese

It was clear that being in a white-male dominated industry can feel isolating for women, however they are able to find ways to build solidarity by making strong friendships, building networks and finding safe spaces.

4.3 Double-barreled by Culture and Gender

4.3.1 Industry

Some participants spoke about the way that being a woman of Asian descent impacted their experiences. When it came to the oil and gas industry, Iris commented on how her field in particular, was not just male-dominated, but white male-dominated. Karina spoke about her experience as a Filipina working as an EMS worker in Fort McMurray being mistaken for a service worker:

When I first came in... I was wearing blue scrubs, because I don't know, I had blue scrubs, I guess one of the workers thought I was like a service person, instead of actually one of the EMS people... I found that people just assumed that I'm a service worker, because I'm Filipino, especially at site... And even meeting Filipinos, even meeting my, like my people, they just assumed that I'm in the service industry, but no, like, I'm actually in the healthcare side of things. So I guess in that way I stood out, because people just assumed that I would be in the service industry. But I wasn't. – Karina, mid 20s, 1.5 generation, Filipina

Another participant spoke about how before she would arrive onsite, her white male coworkers would have preconceived notions based on having seen her name because it gave away her gender and cultural identity. Upon arriving, she would feel the need to explain herself, and would not only face micro-aggressions related to her ability to speak English well, but would then also have to defy the gender stereotypes by proving her ability. This illustrates how racialized women have to jump through multiple hurdles in order to gain respect from their colleagues that others are granted automatically solely based on their gender and race.

4.3.2 Immigration

There were also gendered experiences when it came to participants' immigration stories. A few participants talked about watching their mothers struggle when they were growing up. One participant described his situation as that of a "satellite family", with his father continuing to work overseas in Taiwan and sending money over, while his mother raised him and his sister in Canada:

It's always just been my mom, my sister and I mostly. It definitely was hard. Lookin back now, my mom was tough as shit for going through what she did on her own. You know, having children of my own like it's, I can't imagine leaving my wife and also only seeing my kids twice a year for like a couple of weeks at a time. That's really hard. – Lawrence, 30s, 1.5 generation, Taiwanese

On a similar note, another participant reflected on how her mother had to become the sole caretaker of her and her sister when they arrived in Canada from the Philippines. Not only did they no longer have other family members around to help take care of the children, but her mother, who had been a working professional in the Philippines, had to change paths and become a stay-at-home mother:

How our lives were in Philippines was that we'd have helpers and like, you know, it takes a village to raise a child like that's how society works in, you know, Asian countries predominantly. And so coming to Canada, we didn't have helpers, we didn't have family surrounding us. And so my mom had to be a stay at home mom for like the duration up until like, my sister probably turned 10 or 11. And then she started working. And so the dynamic shifted from like my mother being like, you know, boss woman [in the Philippines], to stay at home mom. And that was like, the dynamic kind of just shifted between my mom and dad... I saw how difficult it was for my mom. – Karina, mid 20s, 1.5 generation, Filipina

Another participant, Ori, spoke about how his wife, who moved from India to join him in Canada so that he could follow his work aspirations, had struggled to find a job and make friends. Being an immigrant is hard enough, but being the wife of someone who chooses to work overseas can be even more difficult. A number of participants spoke to the sacrifice that the women in their lives had to make, often left with not much choice but to follow their husbands who were pursuing career opportunities. All of these women were resilient, despite it being a lonely experience without their family or friends around them in Canada.

4.3.3 Family Expectations and Gender Roles

Specific to the experience of being an Asian woman, one participant spoke about Chinese family values of valuing sons over daughters:

I don't know if I would be able to continue some of the stuff... Like I really don't believe that the males should get any more significance than females. I don't like that. – Naomi, 32, 2nd generation, Chinese

One of the male participants reiterated the value that is placed on men in Chinese culture, which he simultaneously felt the pressure to fulfill while also acknowledging that these values were not something he wanted to pass onto his own children:

There's certain things obviously... that I don't like... Like weighing heavy on having a boy. I have two kids now, a daughter and a son... when I had my son, I felt relief of pressure to carry on the family name... because I was the only son in, with my dad's side of the family. So things, just little things, nuances like that where, I see the negative sides of Chinese culture I don't want to pass on to my kids. – Lawrence, 30s, 1.5 generation, Taiwanese

These examples showcase how gender roles and expectations in Asian families can be quite traditional. However, one could say that even by working in fields such as engineering and geology, Asian women working in oil and gas defy traditional gender expectations.

4.3.4 Negotiating Work and Family Responsibilities

There were certain negotiations that participants had to make in their personal lives as Asian women working in the oil and gas industry to balance family and work responsibilities and expectations. For example, Iris described what it looked like to essentially choose a demanding and unpredictable career over having children:

My brother has kids. But no, I decided that that wasn't the route I needed to take... I work away. So like, and yeah, that would have been a thing too. If I would have started a family, I wouldn't be in this job still. Because it'd be like, I've worked like 44 days in a row. You can't really do that and have like, kids at home. Like my husband was barely, you know, I mean he's pretty self sufficient. But yeah. And that was the thing too. You know, I don't have a really set schedule with my work. And so it's really hard to try and organize life in general, let alone like my life, let alone life for a family with kids. – Iris, 30s, 4th generation, mixed Euro-Canadian and Japanese

Others also touched on the way that having a family influenced their career aspirations. Dede, who had a three-year-old son and a husband also working in oil and gas, talked about the difference in her and her husband's roles and called herself an "oilfield wife":

So that is one of the challenges of working in the oil field, of being an oilfield wife, right? Because my husband is not at home. He works 15 days, and he's home six days. So if my son is sick, then I'm basically it's, I'm basically screwed. So I either work from home with a screaming kid, or I take days off. – Dede, 30s, 2nd generation, Chinese

Dede also talked about how she had to be considerate of the difficulties with relocation, which is something she did not have to consider until she had a family of her own. Dede had worked in three locations with the same company: Singapore, Brazil and Canada. She met her husband on site while working in Brazil, and together they moved back to Singapore, where her husband was unable to work because of Singapore's foreign worker policies. As a result, they both moved to Canada to continue working with the same company, and had their son in Canada

shortly after. Dede remarked a change in her priorities once she had a husband and a son, compared to when she only had to consider what she wanted for her own career. She also talked about maternity leave and having flexible hours to take time off when her son was sick as priorities that came about during motherhood.

Iris and Dede had seemingly opposite experiences, yet they both stemmed from needing to negotiate their individual careers with their family lives. Their partners, who worked similar lines of work to them, did not have to make these same concessions. In Iris's case, she spoke about how the nature of her work would not have been conducive to a life with kids, without mentioning the possibility that her husband could have taken on the responsibility of watching the kids if she wanted to have kids and continue working as an onsite geologist. For Dede, there was a clear shift in the way that she thought about what was possible for her work life once she had a husband and a son, and her more recent decisions regarding her work were revolving around what was best for her family. For both women, the gender expectations that come along with being a wife and mother impacted the choices that they made regarding their work and personal life.

5. Age and Generation

5.1 Immigrant Generation

Participants' immigrant generation strongly influenced their sense of identity, their ability to communicate and their opportunities. Those born in Canada tended to have a stronger connection to their "Canadianness" and a weaker connection to their Asian cultural identity than those who came to Canada later on in life. Those who immigrated as children had very different experiences than those who immigrated as adults. Many participants also remarked differences between them and their family members who were different ages when they immigrated to Canada:

It's definitely harder for [my parents] to get adjusted to the life and culture here than it was for me as a young kid. – Jin, 22, 1.5 generation, Korean

Immigrant generation also related to participants' ability to make networks. Newer immigrants mentioned that most of their networks were made up of family, others from their source country or friends they made through work or networking platforms like LinkedIn, whereas those born and/or raised in Canada made their close ties with more diverse groups throughout their many years learning and working in Canada. What this illustrates is that the

immigrant experiences of each person within one family can differ tremendously depending on how old they were when they immigrated. Newer immigrants and in particular those who come specifically to work in Canada lack a strong network upon arriving.

5.2 Old vs New Generation

There were essentially three age groups of participants: Those in their 20s (generation Z), those in their 30s (millennials) and those 40 and above (generation X). A common topic amongst the younger participants was a desire to see more mental health services, especially for oil and gas workers onsite who had numerous days on in remote areas apart from their families and other comforts. It was also clear that younger participants had a greater perceived ability to relocate or change career paths and wanted to take advantage of that while they were young, and older participants tended to see that as something that was easier to do as a young person. Jin, who was in his early 20s, who had done co-op terms in the industry and was now in his final year of study in mining engineering, demonstrated this line of thought:

Right out of university, like when I graduate in April, I don't really have a preference of where I work. I don't really have to live in a city. I think the most important thing is to gain valuable work experience as quick as possible so I can leverage that later in my career. I think eventually, at my later stages maybe if I have a family or something I wouldn't be wanting to fly in and out of work every week. I would want to have like an office job. Where I'm home every night. – Jin, 22, 1.5 generation, Korean

Notably, older generations believed that major industry shifts would not happen before they retired. Younger generations tended to be more interested in potentially working in renewable energy, while those in the middle age group wanted to see out oil and gas as long as they could, and a majority of both groups believed that the industry was headed in the direction of renewable energy, although there was a lack of consensus of what that timeline would look like. Most participants believed that oil and gas would always be necessary in some capacity, although a few participants were optimistic about the fossil fuel industry eventually phasing out. As one of the 30-something year old participants put it:

We've talked about this among my colleagues, every now and then when we are having lunch or something. And we believe that our generation is probably the last generation where you have your entire career in the oil field. – Dede, 30s, 1st generation, Singaporean

Some of the younger participants spoke about feeling slightly misunderstood by older generations, for example for choosing work or education aligning with their passions rather than options like engineering that were seen as more stable by their parents and relatives. Out of the four participants in their 20s, only one had a background in engineering, while eight of the eleven participants 30 and over had a background in engineering. Mirroring this, some older

participants described the younger generations as “spoiled”. Despite this tension, younger generations consistently spoke about having respect for their elders, and older generations suggested that as long as their children were either married or followed a secure career path in something like engineering they would be happy. While younger and older generations did not always see eye-to-eye, all participants demonstrated a desire to do what they thought was best for their families and agreed on wanting the best for future generations.

Discussion

Unique and Interrelated “Asian” Identities

Answering the question of what an energy transition that uplifts the voices of Asian immigrant and migrant workers requires consideration of the multiple identities of those who fall into the socially constructed category of “Asian”. Using an intracategorical intersectional lens to examine the experiences of these workers reveals unique, and yet interrelated values, concerns and priorities that must be accounted for in the energy transition. It was apparent in these worker interviews that there were strong family and cultural values that often interacted with gender, class and generational identities. There were concerns that were rooted in race-based, class-based and immigration-related discrimination. The priorities of workers came through these discussions of values and concerns. While their testimonies were unique based on their differing family histories, gender identities, workplace experiences and generational statuses, there were commonalities in the ways that they were connected/disconnected from their cultures, the burdens they faced at work and at home, and their desires for a better future for their families and future generations.

Implications for the Energy Transition

Using a “de-whitened” (Abdi, Calafell and Eguchi, 2020), intracategorical intersectional analysis reveals nuances that exist within the experience of being “Asian” in Canada. This is a useful approach to take in the energy transition because interventions that uplift Asian immigrant and migrant workers should recognize the nuanced experiences and cultures of the people they are trying to support. For instance, this study showed that Asian immigrant workers face specific obstacles such as having less job stability and mobility depending on the parameters of their immigration, may take jobs they are overqualified for, and Asian workers generally may lose out

on promotions or upward mobility because of degrading stereotypes. Additionally, women in this study were double-barreled by the gendered expectations placed upon them in the workplace as well as within their family dynamics. Different from other studies in the energy transition literature that use intersectionality to primarily shed light on gender (Cannon and Chu, 2021; Clancy and Feenstra, 2020; Johnston et al., 2020; Karakislak, Sadat-Razavi, and Schweizer-Ries, 2023; Lieu et al., 2020), this study shows how for racialized women, oftentimes their cultural and gender identities are intertwined and these experiences are missed out on if culture is not given enough weight. Men had stories to share as well, detailing the impacts that gender roles had on their family dynamics overall. This study also expanded two dimensions of the matrix of domination that are often used in research, being race and age. While the social category of “Asian” was the starting point for the intracategorical analysis, and there proved to be real consequences for participants related to their racial and ethnic identities, their cultural identities were much more meaningful to participants, whether or not they felt strongly connected or disconnected to these identities. On the other hand, age was replaced in this study with immigrant generational identity and old vs. new generational identity. Even within one family, concerns, values and priorities of each person may significantly differ depending on their immigrant generation and whether they are part of the younger or older generations, although participants in this study shared the common goal of securing a better future for their families and future generations.

Pathways Forward for a Culturally-Relevant Energy Transition

Part of Canada’s strategic exploitation of Asian labour has been to separate labourers from their families, in an attempt to keep them focused on work as well as to encourage their eventual return to their source country (Dere, 2013). A just transition that includes immigrant and migrant workers must work to reunite old families, keep more families from getting torn apart, and must help with the reunification process that can be extremely difficult for families who sometimes stay separated for many years. An example of an organization working towards these goals is *Migrante Canada*, with chapters in provinces across Canada including Alberta. Migrante works directly with members of the Filipino community to address Asian migrant issues, particularly when it comes to family reunification (Migrante Alberta, n.d.). Organizations like Migrante as well as the Migrant Rights Network and Migrant Workers Alliance have

expertise that can guide other efforts to improve circumstances for Asian migrant families across Canada.

Addressing the lack of comforts that Asian immigrants have when they come to work in Canada could be another priority for a more culturally-sensitive just transition. While it may seem inconsequential, a lack of cultural food particularly for workers who are onsite in remote areas, and workers feeling isolated by language - either in the sense of having difficulty fully expressing themselves because of a lack of English skills or a difficulty connecting with their culture because of a lost native language - disconnects people further from their cultural identity and their communities. Hall (1996) suggests that members of diaspora connecting to their unified, albeit socially contingent, cultural identities is a revolutionary act, as it can motivate people who share that identity to come together in struggle to address the overarching social inequities that have led to their displacement and disconnection.

Another priority of the energy transition that could be relevant to Asian immigrants and migrants is providing opportunities for people to learn their family's languages. This is important for building and maintaining family relationships, as well as for younger generations to connect with their roots. Language classes offered by cultural schools or organizations like *Migrante Canada* should be available to all workers in the energy industry, many of whom spend weeks if not months apart from their families which could be taking away from their cultural learning. Language classes for EAL workers should also be accessible for more recent or temporary workers to be able to gain credit for their skills and to be able to advocate for themselves with their employers. The energy industry is good at keeping people focused on their work, and if we allow for this to continue then immigrants and migrant workers will continue to lose their sense of cultural identity while racialized Canadian-born workers will never come to understand theirs.

In this study, there were certain experiences, opinions and identities tied to education and job title, in particular for those with engineering backgrounds when they compare themselves to other classes of workers. This finding is consistent with previous research (Friesen, 2012; Lucas, 2011; Miller, 2004). However, future research should look into whether a real or perceived lack of job security and job mobility threatens the professional identity of racialized immigrant and migrant workers. Many workers expect that the industry cannot last forever and expect there to be bust periods, but those who have job mobility are less concerned. The problem is that job mobility is more likely for certain people than others, namely those who hold citizenship status,

who have higher education credentials recognized in Canada, who are not on temporary visas, who have sufficient English language skills, who have a network in Canada, and who have family to fall back on in Canada. Guo (2013) calls this the *triple glass effect*, as the *glass gate* makes it more difficult for immigrants to become part of professional communities, the *glass door* blocks immigrants from high-wage positions, and the *glass ceiling* limits immigrants' job mobility, especially when they are racial, ethnic and cultural minorities. Will upskilling programs include immigrant and migrant workers, and even if they do, will they be found useful if other aspects of social mobility are not addressed? Both Canadian-born and foreign-born Asian workers are also subject to the *bamboo ceiling*, with expectations of what a leader looks like typically aligning with those who are already in power, being the white-patriarchal-middle/upper-class, reinforcing hierarchies within the labour force (Yu, 2020). How do we ensure that the energy transition does not magnify these disadvantages that Asian immigrant and migrant workers already experience? These are questions I encourage worker-led organizations like Iron and Earth and workers' unions to ask themselves.

When it comes to gendered experiences, although the women identifying participants did not feel like opportunity was lacking based on their gender, it does not mean that there is not still a major diversity issue in the oil and gas industry. Participants noticed the lack of other women in the industry, which is because of a history of discrimination and exclusion of women from fields like engineering. This has translated into fewer women taking up opportunities and pursuing certain fields, exemplified by the low rates of women in school for engineering despite women outnumbering men in postsecondary institutions overall (Chan, Frenette and Handler, 2021). Women who are in engineering may be seeing more employment opportunities, but there is still a gap when it comes to who decides to take up those opportunities, and how they are treated once they get there. Asian women are double-barreled, not just impacted by the stereotypes and prejudice they face at work but also by the expectations and gender roles of their families, the specific difficulties associated with being the wife and mother in an immigrant family, and the need to negotiate family and work priorities. Participants provided examples of what solidarity can look like between Asian immigrant and migrant women in the industry, with organizations like *Women Building Futures* helping to facilitate these networks. However, it is essential that Asian men help dismantle constrictive patriarchal gender roles and expectations, that consequently also confine them to fulfilling certain expectations laid out for Asian men.

Perhaps the most hopeful implication for the energy transition that comes about through the experiences of Asian immigrants and migrants in the oil and gas industry is the realization that these workers are extremely resilient, despite being faced with multiple and unique barriers. Many scholars have drawn attention to the ways that marginalized communities are highly resilient, even in the face of structural dynamics that operate to keep them on the margins. Resiliency in the face of social transformation, such as that which will come about through a combination of climate change and industry transition, is essential. If Asian immigrant and migrant energy workers can feel supported in the energy transition and some of the everyday burdens that they face can be lifted, their resiliency can be channeled into not just surviving, but thriving in Canadian society. Resiliency, paired with the desire to build a better world for future generations, can be a revolutionary combination.

Limitations

The glaring limitation of this study is in reference to the Asian immigrant and migrant groups that were not represented in the study sample. One of these groups is undocumented migrants and temporary foreign workers. Undocumented migrants and temporary foreign workers are not only some of the most difficult groups to recruit for research, but also some of the most vulnerable participants considering the precarious nature of their work and status (Cornelius, 1982). However, it is imperative that their stories get told, and I strongly encourage the pursuit of funding and networks that can make research including undocumented Asian oil and gas workers possible. While foreign temporary workers of Asian descent have been included in conversations surrounding barriers to social cohesion and their integration into boomtown communities (Foster and Taylor, 2013), a follow up study comparing the experiences of racialized, immigrant/migrant oil and gas workers to other workers in terms of their opinions regarding things like climate change, renewable energy, sense of identity, and their treatment in the industry could solidify some of the findings of this study. There was also little gender diversity within the sample, and only minimal class diversity. While the findings of this study clearly illustrate gendered and class-based differences in the experiences of Asian immigrant and migrant oil and gas workers, more diversity along these dimensions of identity in future work would provide valuable insights.

There was also a lack of representation of South Asian immigrants and migrants in this study compared to East Asian and South East Asian immigrants and migrants. This is a limitation considering that India is one of the top three source countries for migration to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2021a). Although it was intended that South Asians have representation in this study, the lack of success in recruiting South Asians was likely due to unintended biases of the researcher that came through in the study design and recruitment process. I spread out recruitment materials across an equal number of East Asian, Southeast Asian, South Asian and neutral organizations, however the language on the materials asked for participants of “Asian” descent. Upon reflecting, although I anticipated that people of South Asian descent may not resonate with the category of “Asian”, it appears to have been so much so that the term “Asian” deterred the participation of South Asians who came across the materials. The one participant of South Asian descent in this study was recruited through the snowball method via his colleague of Chinese descent. Feeling a part of the Asian community seemed to be important to motivating participation as a number of participants mentioned wanting to “help out” their community when they reached out for an interview. Additionally, the cultures represented in this sample were that of Chinese, Taiwanese, Singaporean, Vietnamese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino and Indian participants. Asia is the largest continent in the world and the identities of Hong Kongers, Thai, Malaysian, and Indonesian immigrants in Canada were unintentionally excluded, in part because of the sampling methods, as well as the time and funding parameters of this project. Future researchers should be considerate of their personal biases that could influence recruitment materials, in turn effecting who chooses to participate, and, time permitting, may benefit from making ongoing adjustments or multiple versions of recruitment materials depending on initial response.

Conclusion

The point of intracategorical intersectional analysis is to bring to light the differences and complexities that exist within a broadly defined social group, in this case Asians living and working in Canada. Using this lens shows that the descriptor of “Asian”, while having real consequences, does little to recognize the differences in culture, values, experiences and concerns of Asian immigrant and migrant oil and gas workers in Alberta. Placing more emphasis on cultural-relevancy in energy transition scholarship, policy and activism could bring about more interventions that address the needs and incorporate the knowledge and skills of Asian

immigrant and migrant workers. However, as exemplified in this study, this nuance is revealed when the voices of Asian immigrant and migrant workers are brought directly to the forefront.

This study draws out the complexities embodied within the experience of being an Asian immigrant or migrant living in Canada and working in the oil and gas industry. Through the lens of intersectionality, I unpacked the ways that typical social categories of “race”, “class”, “gender”, and “age” influence the experiences of fifteen Asian immigrant and migrant oil and gas workers in Alberta. While establishing the ways in which intersectionality can be used to understand the intracategorical group of Asian immigrants and migrants working in the oil and gas industry in Alberta, I demonstrated how a more nuanced understanding of these experiences lends itself to a deeper inclusion of the concerns, priorities and values of Asian immigrant oil and gas workers in the energy transition. Furthermore, I discussed the implications and limitations of this research. I outlined specific interventions, policies and activism that could reflect the experiences of Asian immigrant and migrant workers in a way that has been lacking from academic, political and public discourse. I also suggested pathways forward, recommending that Asian immigrants working in oil and gas in Alberta look for opportunities for solidarity within and between the dimensions of the matrix of domination that they are subjected to.

Chapter 4: The energy transition as an opportunity for systemic change for the Asian immigrant and migrant labour force: Addressing the legacy of exploitation and white hegemony in so-called Canada

Foreword: Canada vs. So-called Canada

In this paper, I refer to: 1) “Canada”, the nation state with an established government that has exerted control over the people on this land for 156 years, that has created a white “Canadian” identity that many settlers/immigrants have come to adopt, seek, and see as real; and 2) “so-called Canada” the land on which Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island have been displaced and marginalized despite their inherent rights to the land, resources and self-determination. The former is used when discussing Canadian policy and identity that have real consequences on the experiences of all people living on this land. The latter is used as a literary tool to acknowledge the colonial nature of the naming of “Canada”, and to detach the nation state and its colonial project from the actual land on which we reside.

Introduction

The realities of the exploitation of Asian immigrants throughout Canada’s history have been coming to light within academia primarily through the stories of Asian minority academics and activists. However, within the energy transition literature, the inherently racialized properties of the energy industry have largely been ignored (Lennon, 2017; Lennon, 2020; Newell, 2021). The creation and maintenance of a complicit Asian immigrant and migrant labour force is a strategic move on the part of the Canadian nation state. Although race-based policies dissipated in the mid 20th century, the ideologies of white dominance have continued to influence the way that Asians in Canada are perceived and their social position in Canadian society. This is something that must be addressed within the energy transition, to move beyond including marginalized workers in conversation. Regarding this gap in the literature, I ask: *what would an energy transition that addresses underlying racial injustices look like?*

In this study, I begin by providing an overview of how the concerns of marginalized workers have been included in the energy transition dialogue thus far. I do so in order to draw attention to the limitations to only consulting marginalized workers on issues directly tied to energy projects and futures at a surface level. I move on to discuss the underlying systems of

power that have been used, and continue to be used, to exploit and discriminate against Asian immigrant and migrant workers in so-called Canada. Through the analysis of 15 interviews with Asian immigrant and migrant oil and gas workers, I move on to reveal the underlying systems of power at play that impact their experiences of immigration, assimilation, and othering, and the constraints that are upon them. In the discussion, I suggest pathways forward, highlighting the importance of building solidarity with other racialized peoples in so-called Canada.

Literature Review

Worker Justice in the Energy Transition

The term *just transition*, popularized by the Green New Deal in the US and the Leap Manifesto in Canada, has become a term typically used within political spaces to define a shift towards renewable, green, decarbonized energy as a strategy to curtail greenhouse gas emissions, while putting effort into minimizing the negative effects that such a shift will have on energy workers and resource dependent communities (Pai et al., 2020; The Leap Manifesto, n.d.). While the terminology of the just transition has been co-opted by governments, there are many different imaginings of what an energy transition that centres environmental, social, racial, gender and worker justice could look like. In this paper, I intend to elaborate on the energy transition as an opportunity for social transformation, that addresses and works to dismantle racial hierarchies that justify the exploitation of resources, the environment, and certain bodies in order to continue business-as-usual that benefits only a small portion of society.

Workers' mobilization has been a key part of much of the social transformation that has taken place throughout history. The energy transition literature is broadening to include workers in the conversation, namely by discussing the role that workers can play in influencing policy and forming coalitions (Atkinson, 2023; Hess, 2018), as well as factoring in workers' concerns and views of the energy transition into determining what energy futures should look like (Banerjee and Schuitema, 2022; Hussey, 2023; Sicotte, Joyce, and Hesse, 2022). Recent studies have suggested that workers should be at the centre of the energy transition and climate policy, and that their involvement could be crucial to moving the transition along (Brannstrom et al., 2022; Cha, 2017). However, the literature so far is lacking a discussion of how the ideologies of white dominance continue to influence Asian workers' complicity in the systems that perpetuate harm towards them and other marginalized groups. Addressing underlying systems of power can

open up conversation for moving towards class consciousness and solidarity among workers in the energy industry, and on a larger scale racialized groups in and out of so-called Canada, to demand a truly transformative shift at this pivotal moment in history.

The Canadian Colonial Project and the Asian Labour Force

To discuss the role that Asian labourers played in the Canadian Colonial Project, it is necessary to acknowledge that so-called Canada is a settler society built at the expense of the people, resources and land of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples, plants and fauna on Turtle Island were used as resources to create so-called Canada, as well as being taken and sent back to Western Europe to further development of other Western colonial powers (Collis, 2022). Indigenous land was seen by settlers as untouched land, and was packaged as such to incoming European migrants. Through settlement, Indigenous peoples were stripped of their connections to the land, and along with it they were stripped of many of their cultural practices and their own governance systems. Settlers brought their own cultures, people, flora and fauna onto Indigenous land for settlement, that led to a fast decline in Indigenous populations as they were exposed to diseases that they were not used to. Settlers attempted to also recreate many of their own agricultural practices, developed in starkly different ecological contexts, on Indigenous land, leading to the depletion of Indigenous flora and fauna and degradation of Indigenous lands.

So-called Canada was also built using the labour and resources of Asian immigrant workers. In the late 19th century, trade networks linking Asia and so-called Canada were used to ship many resources, and people, across the Pacific Ocean (Yu, 2009). These networks were integral to building the foundational infrastructure that allowed Canada to flourish as a nation state. Chinese migrants, as well as some Japanese and Indian migrants, were essential labourers contributing to building the railroad that allowed other European immigrants to settle in so-called Canada (Ungerleider, 1992). Chinese labourers were on some of the first settler ships arriving on Turtle Island at the onset of settler-Indigenous contact (Yu, 2009). After their labour was used to construct Canada as a nation state, laws were used to limit the freedoms and perpetuate discrimination against Asian immigrants in order to preserve a White Canadian identity (Coloma, 2013). Initially, immigration was dealt with explicitly through the *Department of Immigration and Colonization* (Dench, 2000a). Only in 1950 did it get replaced with the

Department of Citizenship and Immigration (Dench, 2000b). The Chinese head tax of 1885, passed moments after Chinese immigrants completed the transcontinental railroad, was a policy used to limit the number of Chinese immigrants that wished to migrate to so-called Canada (Yu, 2009). Asian immigrants also faced “disenfranchisement and legal segregation in housing and employment,” such as laws prohibiting Chinese businesses from engaging in certain activities or from operating at certain hours (p. 1015). The precedent set by the denial of the *Komagata Maru* ship that hundreds of Indian migrants travelled on (Munshi, 2016), Asian migrants being denied the right to vote (Ungerleider, 1992), Japanese internment camps and the exile of 4000 internees during World War II (Day, 2010), are just some of the examples of the discrimination faced by early Asian migrants at the hands of the Canadian government. Using Asian labour, and then subjecting Asian migrants to disenfranchisement and assimilationist policies, was integral to the “successful” expropriation of Indigenous land on Turtle Island. While the Canadian nation state eventually moved away from the use of overtly race-based policies, the ideologies of white supremacy have continued to reinforce the marginal social position of Asians in so-called Canada.

Ideological Hegemony in Postcolonial Canada

Neoliberal and Colourblind Policies

The contemporary Canadian strategy for dealing with immigration follows a neoliberal rationale. Immigrants and migrants are treated as a commodity, and valued in terms of how much they can contribute to economic growth (Bhuyar, 2017). This system benefits private companies who want to hire temporary workers as cheaper labour. Canada’s use of migrant labour to fill gaps in the labour market has been described as a process of “neoliberal migration” and an increase in “unfree labour” (Choudry and Smith, 2016). However, these neoliberal policies have implications for immigrants as well. The point system favours applicants with a high level of education, who can prove in some capacity that they already hold a high economic class, who are younger and able-bodied, who have talents that are seen as valuable, and who have proficient English/French skills and/or accreditation from Western institutions, to be able to maximize their contributions to the labour force. Canada makes its neoliberal policy attractive by building a “brand” of national unity, “compelling subjects who may not benefit from the global economy to nonetheless be invested, emotionally and politically, in nationhood” (Choudry and Smith, 2016,

p. 51). The policy is purposefully ‘deracialized’ in terms of what language is used, to allow Canada to position itself as a “welcoming nation for immigrants” (p. 51), giving Canada a competitive edge by appearing attractive to potential labourers abroad. The neoliberal ideology manipulates the dreams Asian immigrants and migrants have for a better life for themselves and future generations, distorting this passion into a chase for the “Canadian Dream” of improved social class coming from the individual pursuit for upward mobility (Li, 1988). Conveniently, a certain portion of Asian immigrants improving their material wealth allowed for underlying issues relating to Canada’s dependence on the exploitation of Asian labour to take a backseat.

The Canadian nation state also projects a welcoming image through the use of colourblind policies. Canada first “addressed” discrimination within Canadian policy by acknowledging immigrants, French-Canadians, Indigenous peoples and women, under the umbrella term of “minorities” through signing the United Nations’ Charter in 1948 (Ungerleider, 1992). This was followed by Canada developing its official multiculturalism policy that emerged in the 1970s (Bakhov, 2013). The multiculturalism policy set forward four main goals: (1) promoting the inclusion and full participation in all aspects of Canadian society for ethnic and cultural groups, while maintaining and flourishing their unique cultural identity; (2) to encourage exchange between all Canadian ethno-cultural groups; (3) to help these groups overcome cultural barriers; (4) and to help immigrants learn at least one of Canada’s official languages. The multiculturalism policy once again grouped together ethnic minorities and attempted to use a single policy to address the discrimination faced by diverse groups with unique cultural histories and identities.

This type of policy does little to address the particular histories, nor the specific forms of discrimination faced by different racial, ethnic and cultural minorities. The Multiculturalism Act could be seen as a colour-blind policy used to create the illusion that discrimination is being addressed, while white supremacist ideology carries on within the structures of the Canadian nation state. This ideology carries on in covert ways, and is enforced upon Asian immigrants and minorities who feel like they need to comply in order to succeed in Canadian society, showing the *hegemonic* nature of white supremacy (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Carroll (2006) argues that concrete hegemony, meaning the dominance of one group over another, in contemporary society through the control of capital, “can be realized by any combination of ideologies that instill

compliance in the workforce while discouraging effective challenge to the system” (p. 12). White supremacy is one of many ideologies that work to fragment the subject population in neoliberal, postcolonial Canada. In the case of Asian immigrant and migrant workers, the ideological tools of orientalism, the model minority myth and white adjacency are used to assert white dominance as well as instill complacency.

Orientalism

Edward Said (1978) explains how the discourse of orientalism is the product of a relationship between the Occident and the Orient through the eyes of the Occident. The Occident defines itself in comparison and relation to the Orient, while always maintaining a position of superiority. Said (1978, p. 7) argues that:

“it is hegemony, or rather the result of cultural hegemony at work, that gives orientalism... durability and... strength... Orientalism is... a collective notion identifying “us” Europeans against all “those” non-Europeans, and indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures. There is in addition the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness, usually overriding the possibility that a more independent, or more skeptical, thinker might have had different views on the matter.”

Orientalism has informed the majority of depictions of Asians in Western popular media, academia and politics. These depictions have only been brought into question within Western spaces in the past couple decades through the work of Asian scholars and activists; regardless, the *ideological hegemony* of white supremacy continues to have long-lasting impact on the ways that Asians are perceived in Western society.

Model Minority Myth

The model minority myth is a social construct used to tokenize Asian people in white dominant society as a racial group that has successfully assimilated as evidenced by their perceived or real academic and financial success, despite and because of their racial difference from the dominant class (Walton and Truong, 2023). The model minority myth is connected to orientalism because

it came about in order to explain the success of certain minorities within Western nations, as a result of Asian “others” successfully assimilating into Western culture, to maintain the idea of Western ideological superiority. Additionally, Asians are treated as a monolith, with little attention paid to differences in gender, class, immigration status, or culture. The model minority myth was created to directly juxtapose Asian Americans against Black Americans after World War II and during the civil rights movement, to label the latter as “bad” minorities (Walton and Truong, 2023). This ultimately drove a wedge between racial minorities, and conveniently aligned with the neoliberal logics that were gaining popularity in the post World War II era. The model minority myth draws attention away from institutional racism and replaces it with an individualized explanation for economic success or hardship. There are consequences to the perpetuation of the model minority myth, particularly when it comes to the social impacts related to identity and social belonging.

When the model minority narrative is imposed, racialized minorities may subconsciously submit to subordination to the white dominant class (Seet, 2021). By doing so, they become complicit in the systems that continue to perpetuate harm towards their own and other racialized and marginalized groups. The imposition of the model minority myth has been used to help explain underreporting of discrimination (La, Lee, Saw and Yi, 2022), as well as the role that it may play in cross-racial solidarity work (Atkins, Gabriel, Matriano and Yoo, 2021). Different than previous studies that suggest the model minority myth is reinforced through a process of internalization, in this study I draw out some of the nuance of how white dominant ideology *constrains* the choices of Asian immigrants and migrants, as well as why the Canadian nation state benefits from deliberately enforcing the social position of model minority. I do so by using interviewee testimonies to illustrate how Asian immigration is often influenced by external factors, how Asian immigrants are simultaneously encouraged to assimilate and made to feel “othered” within Canadian society, and how this keeps them from fully coming into class consciousness and solidarity with other racialized groups.

The Illusion of White Adjacency

Are you perhaps more [Canadian] if you’ve made money, if you’ve bought into and achieved the [Canadian] dream? And between race and class is also complicity. Are racial/ethnic minorities destined to never be “[Canadian] enough” by virtue of not being white, no matter their accent, no matter their birthplace or residency, and no matter how much they earn or achieve? - Bundang, 1996

Orientalism is the lens through which Asian ‘others’ are subjugated in comparison to the white dominant class, while the model minority myth divides Asian diaspora from other racialized communities and in essence pits them against each other rather than focusing on their shared experience of oppression. What this creates is a difficulty navigating the Asian Canadian identity, feelings of being “in between”, that lead to Asians in Canada being labeled as *white adjacent*. White adjacency has been brought up in academia to describe the experiences of Asians in the Americas, and in particular the issues that this label brings about (Korn, 2022). White adjacency is another feature of white supremacist ideology that is used to make Asian minorities aware that no matter how much they do to assimilate and chase the Canadian Dream, and fit into the model minority mold, they will still not be entirely a part of the dominant class because of their status within the racial hierarchy. This concept is also used to distance Asian minorities from other racialized minorities, as Asians are encouraged to maintain their position in the social hierarchy and to not jeopardize it by conspiring with other racial minorities. This is similar to what Saranillio (2008) calls “subordinate supremacy”, essentially meaning that staying silent or neutral “is to support the status quo” (p. 275).

Results

Looking for “A Better Life”

You get a better life... A better life here, than in the Philippines. **I want a better life in the Philippines, cause that’s where you’re born, right. But you don’t get that,** right. – Andrew, 1st generation, Filipino

Out of fifteen participants, ten participants’ initial response to why they immigrated to Canada was because they or their family’s wanted a “better life”, for themselves or for future generations. Of those who did not explicitly use those words, four synonymously cited “better opportunity” as their reason for immigrating. However, it became apparent that there were reasons why participants or their families felt like they *had* to leave, if not because they were literally forced out, because they would not have an equivalent opportunity if they stayed in their country of origin.

Geopolitical Issues

When participants spoke about why their families left their countries of origin, they often spoke about geopolitical factors. For instance, the three participants from Vietnam all came as refugees

as children after the Vietnam War. The one participant from Korea mentioned how he and his brother would have had to join the military had they not immigrated to Canada as children and became citizens. Although she doubted the story's legitimacy, the participant of Japanese descent mentioned that her family told stories of her great-great grandfather being a "dishonoured samurai" as the reason for needing to leave Japan. The participant from Taiwan mentioned that the tension between Mainland China and Taiwan was a reason why his parents decided to immigrate to Canada.

Environmental Issues

All of the participants spoke about different environmental issues that they or their families had experienced in their countries of origin. Only one participant, Martin, explicitly mentioned that the disasters in the Philippines factored into his decision to immigrate to Canada:

One of the factors was like the, like in terms of disasters, because Philippines is like a very disaster prone country, there's like volcanoes, earthquakes, floods, typhoons. So a lot of at least like, for example, when I moved to Alberta, we don't have a lot of natural disasters, like, yeah, there's still like wildfires and those things, but it's not as frequent. As far as what we had, like we had 20 typhoons this year. So it's much more peaceful life, I guess. – Martin, 1st generation, Filipino

Although other participants did not see environmental issues as directly related to their immigration stories, the overwhelming perspective was that the environment in Canada was not as threatened as the environments in Asian countries. For instance, one participant who talked about his concern for wastewater pollution, plastic pollution, and emissions from industry and vehicles in Manila, only expressed concern for emissions in Canada with much less urgency:

Here in Canada, it's definitely a lot better. Yeah. No particular concerns with pollution. I mean, obviously, co2 pollution and greenhouse gases is a, is a concern among a lot of developed countries. But yeah, I don't really know if I could speak too too much to that. – Eric, 2nd generation, mixed Euro-Canadian and Filipino

There was agreement among the majority of participants that carbon-intensive industries were more regulated in Canada than in developing countries, which lessened their concern for the environment in Canada:

I'm not worried about pollution in Canada. I think that in Canada, it's, the industry is quite regulated. – Clive, 1.5 generation, Vietnamese

There was also less concern over pollution in Canada exhibited by participants because of the perspective that Canada is a large country with a relatively small population:

The thing is, Canada is a huge place. So I don't think we're going to experience this, the same level of pollution as other countries with higher population densities. – Fred, 1.5 generation, Vietnamese

This was a common perspective, especially among those who had experience living in highly industrialized and highly populated Asian countries, as well as those who had grown up in Canada.

Overall, whether or not participants mentioned the environment being a factor that consciously played into their immigration stories, there was unanimous perception that the environment in Canada was less degraded than the environment in their families' countries of origin.

Economic Issues

Another common reason for leaving was related to economic issues that made it difficult for participants or their families to make an income and support their family in their country of origin. Andrew, who immigrated to Canada from the Philippines when he was a young adult, talked about his family's financial situation that led his father and eventually him and his brothers to leave the Philippines:

In the Philippines, we were poor, we were really poor. So, it was really better when my dad came to Canada, he really tried to get us here... We were young, and we don't have a mother. My mother passed away when we were, when I was only 4 years old, my brother was only 1. That's why, when my dad came to Canada he tried to get us here... we were really poor family. We lived in a slum. – Andrew, 1st generation, Filipino

It is clear that his father saw no other option than to leave the Philippines if he was to provide for his family. His options in the Philippines were extremely limited, and getting out of poverty in the Philippines would have been much less likely than getting out of poverty by leaving the Philippines. Another participant, Karina, explained how her father came to Canada for a similar reason, because he saw more opportunity in Canada compared to the life they could have in the Philippines:

Opportunity wise and like, the stuff that, I don't know the gap for the disparity between the poor and you know, the middle class, [the disparity in Canada] is not so big, like it is in the Philippines. And so like as a 13 year old, I could say, I can go work, I can get my own iPhone. In Philippines, you're not able to do that just because of inflation. – Karina, 1.5 generation, Filipina

For those who were fortunate enough to have an education and/or a career before arriving in Canada, it often came down to the opportunity within the industry they worked in. For instance,

one participant talked about how the compensation in the oil and gas industry in Canada was greater than what he could have made in the Philippines:

The biggest difference that I see is like the compensation, like, if I were to gauge it versus the company, the compensation here versus compensation there, probably in Canada, I would be making like four or five times with the same, same job in terms of compensation. – Martin, 1st generation, Filipino

Another participant, Ori, who came to Canada recently from India, reiterated the compensation gap between India and Canada as a motivator for his immigration, as well as mentioning that the prospects within oil and gas specifically were greater in Canada than in India:

The reason for me choosing Canada is because all my career is in oil and gas. And Canada is one of the foremost countries when it comes to oil and gas sector. – Ori, 1st generation, Indian

Although there was a wide range in the financial means of participants when they arrived in Canada, the commonality was the perception that it would be easier to secure a reasonable income and to provide for their families if they left their country of origin than if they stayed, either because of inflation, compensation gaps and/or the type of industries they could work in.

A Constrained Choice

The first way Canada manipulates the dreams of immigrants is by hiding its involvement in the project of global imperialism. Canada frames itself as an innocent land of opportunity, however, the reality is that immigrants' choices become constrained because of factors that have been contributed to by Western nations that make it difficult to survive/succeed in Asian countries. In this sense, Asian immigrants get forced or coerced into leaving their homeland because it is the best option available to them.

This idea of choice and the pursuit of a “better life” reinforces white dominance, because Canada is able to present itself as a land of opportunity that is providing a better life for immigrants, without acknowledging the ways in which it contributes to their outmigration as a result of geopolitical, environmental and economic issues. Canada gets to continue to exploit Asian labour to accumulate wealth for the dominant class, all the while maintaining its image as a colourblind state in which anyone can succeed if they adopt a neoliberal, “Canadian dream” mentality.

Pushing the Model Minority Narrative

Forced or Encouraged to Assimilate

Whether through direct or indirect means, participants described situations in which they were encouraged to assimilate. One of the stories that exhibited Asians being forced to assimilate came from Iris, the only 4th generation immigrant in the study, whose great grandparents and grandparents had been subjected to the Japanese internment camps in Canada during World War II:

We're more Canadian than Japanese. I think that's mainly due because of the camp situation that they were in. And that everything that had any Japanese connection was taken, was seized by the government. So my, like my grandmother, my great grandmother's wedding kimono, that was seized. They had no real physical, tangible objects that they were allowed to keep. So those connections, they were severed pretty harshly, and not by choice. So you couldn't really hold on to something like that. And make it part of your cultural identity when it was being forcibly removed from you. Due to fear and oppression and whatever else was driving, the reasons for it. – Iris, 4th generation, mixed Euro-Canadian and Japanese

Through her story, and her explanation of her own identity, Iris showed the intergenerational effects of forceful assimilation. She saw herself as quite removed from her Japanese heritage, but she recognized that this was because it was forced out of her family.

For first generation and 1.5 generation immigrants, it was more likely for them to have experienced more covert forms of assimilationist ideals. One participant explained that when she arrived to Fort McMurray as a child, she was put in a school with very few Filipinos because that is the district the school board placed her in, despite her parents originally hoping she would be able to go to a different school with a larger Filipino community:

I remember going to that school. And there were probably like... in 60 kids, within those 60 kids, or like 70 kids, there were probably four Filipinos, and none of them, all the Filipinos didn't speak, like my language at all. And so I just had to be forced to speak English. And I think that's where it kind of just like, switched for me. That instead of like, not that I can't embrace my Filipino culture, but it was easier for me to get into the Canadian culture, like I streamlined it because I was forced to. – Karina, 1.5 generation, Filipina

Another participant who grew up in Calgary talked about how she did not feel very connected to the Chinese community because in Calgary most people around her spoke English:

There's not that many Chinese people, I guess growing up. We had people from pretty much all around the world, but not like we, it's not like we would speak in Cantonese. We would always speak in English. Because that's what everyone speaks. – Naomi, 2nd generation, Chinese

This shift from forceful assimilation to a more covert “encouragement” to assimilate aligns with the shift towards colourblind, neoliberal politics and white hegemony that still becomes ingrained in Asian immigrants, who want to do whatever they can to thrive in Canadian society.

Visible Minority to the White Majority

Participants spoke about the Canadian identity as a white identity being reinforced to them. One of the terms that was used to reinforce this idea was “visible minority”. For example, Martin explained how he had not heard that term up until arriving in Canada:

No, actually, that's the stuff the first time that I heard that, that term. And then I kind of knew that, if you don't look white, then, then you're a visible minority, or something like that... Moving to Canada, that's when I heard that formal term, that term visible minorities. – Martin, 1st generation, Filipino

One participant even mentioned that her and her other immigrant friends had discussed how being a visible minority meant not being Canadian:

People say that you are not Canadian because you're a visible minority. That's what I've heard from my friends when they were doing the census. You can't be Canadian. You're a visible minority. Nope, I'm Canadian. No, you're a visible minority. – Dede, 1st generation, Singaporean

Another participant, despite being a 2nd generation immigrant whose mother was pregnant with him when their family arrived in Canada, who felt more Canadian than not, talked about how he still felt that other people saw him as Canadian adjacent:

It's not just my passports, values, right... The recent or longer term immigrants like myself... you're here, you've done everything, you know, that we've been asked to, to integrate and be part of this country, right. And, you know, it is tough... there's always been, I think, maybe not necessarily, like overt discrimination it's just kind of like you're, you're, you're Canadian, *but*. But I think that's, that thing has kind of always been there. – Henry, 2nd generation, Vietnamese

Although participants were made to feel Canadian adjacent, participants still showed a desire to be or become Canadian. As Martin was a more recent immigrant, he was hoping that once he moved from PR to citizen status, he would feel more Canadian:

Since I'm PR, yeah, maybe it's, I feel some connection, but it's not that strong yet. Maybe when I get my citizenship, hopefully in the next one to two years, then that connection will even be stronger...

However, he expressed that even though he had a desire to be Canadian, he was not sure if others would see him that way because he would still lack the white identity that is associated with Canadianness:

I guess I don't know. There's also some uncertainty, uncertainty because I look Asian. And then like, like, normally, when people think of Canadian, they think of white, white people. So I don't know if there will come a point in time where like, everyone will really like think of me as a Canadian. – Martin, 1st generation, Filipino

Participants noted that being labeled as a visible minority painted a clear line between the white majority and visible minorities. Even when participants themselves feel Canadian or have a strong desire to become Canadian, they were reminded of their “otherness”.

Ideology Translating into Material Constraints

Despite being encouraged to assimilate, while simultaneously being made to feel as if they are not Canadian enough, there was still an overall positive perception of Canada and a desire to integrate and succeed in Canadian society.

Doing What is Needed to “Survive”

There was an idea that immigrants need to do whatever they can to survive. One participant, Fred, reflecting on some of his immigrant coworkers who were working in positions he knew they were overqualified for, said that new immigrants “gotta do what [they] got to do to survive”. This is amplified when they have family back home who are trying to do the same, to whom they are sending money. Gary, who was one of the participants who expressed the most awareness for environmental and social injustices, remarked that when he would bring up these topics with his family it would often not go anywhere as his family members had more immediate concerns:

Everyone’s just busy, I guess, over there, surviving. And over here, similar, but not to that same extent... Just everyone has their own concerns, I suppose for some reason. Yeah. Dealing with their own sh-t... just financially... and perhaps because of a lot of the structural issues there. A lot of people become more passive. – Gary, 1.5 generation, Filipino

Because of the larger and immediate issues that his family back in the Philippines has to deal with, and his family in Canada being concerned about his family back home, he suggested that they do not spend much time talking about his concern for the environment.

There was a certain sense of pride exhibited by some participants when it came to seeing themselves and other Asians as hard workers:

Asian people, we are good workers. Hardest working people on the planet. – Andrew, 1st generation, Filipino

A similar sentiment was expressed by participants who had recently immigrated, who compared the work-life balance in Canada to what they had experienced in Asia. As Dede put it:

In Singapore, it's a typical Asian country where they just work you like you're a dog, right? They work like dogs. They don't care. You complain too many times, you refuse too many times, and then they just fire you. There is nothing against firing people... the government here, they don't want you to do overtime... developing countries they can work you like a dog. Here they cannot. – Dede, 1st generation, Singaporean

Those who had experience working in Asia, in particular the first-generation immigrants, saw Canada's oil and gas industry as better in their treatment of workers than those in their countries of origin. However, this meant that they often accepted conditions that they were aware Canadian-born workers may not as easily accept, such as working night shifts or taking on "junk projects" that lost money, or tasks below their skill level. Andrew, who worked night shifts for 30 years, said he did so because his wife worked in the day, so to save money him and his wife would take shifts taking care of their kids. These are concessions that immigrants trying to provide a better future for their children often have to make.

Pursuing Upward Mobility

There was a perception that obtaining an education could allow for immigrants and the children of immigrants to break out of the jobs that newer immigrants are often subjected to:

Most of our workers in our camps, right... you know, they're, they're from out of country, they're immigrants, right? They're the ones cleaning the toilets, cooking the food, or anything else, I mean, jobs that don't, people who are locals like, and not just Caucasian, or like, just like, oh, I got an education, I got a trades like, I got that so I wouldn't have to like clean a toilet, right? – Henry, 2nd generation, Vietnamese

This quote exemplifies that not only is there the idea that getting an education will differentiate someone from other migrants, but it will also give that person the options that are more similar to the dominant class, the 'caucasians,' the locals. While other participants did not outwardly juxtapose their upward mobility against other migrants, they did generally have a positive perception of formal education, and upward growth within the corporations that they worked for.

It is worth noting that the two participants in their 20s who did not have university degrees, both of whom were 1.5 generation Filipinx, were pursuing further postsecondary education in order to improve their career opportunities, compared to the one first generation Filipino in his 50s who described himself as close to retirement. While the younger Filipinx saw leaving the industry as the path for upward mobility, the older Filipino who arrived in Canada in his 20s, when there were not many options for work, sought out upward mobility within his company, moving from an entry-level welder, to a foreman, to the night shift manager. This comparison exemplifies the different forms that the pursuit of upward mobility can take, depending on what perceived opportunities exist for immigrants of different generations and statuses. However, it also shows that, even though all three of these participants held Canadian citizenship, for those who enter Canada later in life, in poverty, without networks and as foreign workers, there are greater constraints on what opportunities they imagine are possible for themselves.

Dealing with Racism

When it came to dealing with racism, the typical response was either to brush it off as lighthearted, or to just ignore it completely. Those who brushed it off, explained it as reacting in a way that showed the comments did not bother them, such as how Gary reacted when his white coworkers made racist remarks:

I always was sort of conflicted with how to react because those, but, but learning from my dad and uncle, I always just pulled back. I was like, well, all you white guys look the same too you know, sh-t like that [laughs]... So that's why, but we always made a joke out of it... They had the impression that I don't care too much. – Gary, 1.5 generation, Filipino

It was common for participants to downplay the racist intent of those who made these types of remarks to them. For example, Naomi talked about the micro-aggressions she faced, but also said that she did not believe there was malicious intent behind it:

The one question that trips me up is “where are you from?” And when I say Canada, they don't get it. I don't know what to say. Because I've only been to China, maybe a few weeks of my entire life... it's mostly people trying to make small talk, when they first get to know you. Which is, which is why I'm not offended because they don't do it with malicious intent. They're just curious. – Naomi, 2nd generation, Chinese

Another participant, Lawrence, similarly downplayed the intent behind the comments made toward him:

Some guys just have a certain type of humor, at the expense, obviously, of certain places or cultures. Yeah. So it's things like that where it's, you know. But it's not that bad, obviously I grew up with it, I'm used to it, it doesn't really bother me. It doesn't mean it's right, but, you know, I see it as just another day...

However his approach to dealing with these situations was usually to ignore them completely:

I think for most I just don't react. Or depending on the situation, I would bark back, but depending on what it is and what the context of it is. But most of them I do kind of brush it off. – Lawrence, 1.5 generation, Taiwanese

Across interviews, it appeared that the common response to racism was to downplay it and brush it off. It seemed like avoiding conflict was the preferred way of dealing with such occurrences, even though most participants had experienced some form of racism. Racism was usually experienced in work or school settings, and in some cases those making the comments were actually friends and colleagues of the participant, showing how although Asians experience racism from those close to them and on a fairly regular basis, they oftentimes do not confront this racism as they either believe there is not malicious intent behind it, or they feel as though it is beneficial to keep conflict at bay.

Desire for Solidarity

A number of participants mentioned being sympathetic to the experiences of other racialized people. Solidarity was felt between participants when they had mutual experiences with other racialized people of being racialized:

My best friend, he's East Indian. He's born here as well. And it's something that, you know, I discussed with him, that we, you know, we're both born here, and we're both raised here, you know, we're from here, right, and you know, I asked him... do you feel kind of like, not isolated but you know... [like] we're getting pushed out? – Henry, 2nd generation, Vietnamese

The same participant said that he had an experience walking into a café full of White patrons with his Indigenous coworker and, noticing that everyone went silent, he wondered if it was because he looked Chinese and was with an Indigenous woman. Another participant spoke about his few experiences with racial discrimination since he arrived to Canada in 2004. He explained how in the eyes of those who discriminate against him, it comes down to him being a person of colour:

Some white people... they think the white people is white people, the coloured people is coloured people. – Ben, 1st generation, Chinese

This quote suggests that he recognizes a racial hierarchy exists in which the ideology of white supremacy places all racialized people lower in the hierarchy.

Those who came from countries with a colonial history indicated a deeper understanding of the impacts of the colonial history of Canada on Indigenous peoples. For instance, Martin spoke about his knowledge of the diversity of Indigenous languages and cultures, the treaties, abuses, residential schools, and lasting intergenerational impacts, and in comparison to Spanish and US colonization of the Philippines, he noted their similarities:

I know that there is a trauma between the relationship between Canada and First Nations people... there's so much similarities [to the Philippines]. – Martin, 1st generation, Filipino

Another participant who was a second-generation Chinese immigrant, noted that she recognized that the Chinese in Canada and Indigenous peoples had both experienced racial injustices, while acknowledging the particular trauma for Indigenous peoples that comes from settler colonialism:

There were injustices in different ways. I think what's traumatizing kind of with the First Nations is that they live here. So this is just, this is a full generation that they affected. – Naomi, 2nd generation, Chinese

Not only did a number of participants recognize that racial hierarchies in Canada exist, but some also exhibited a high level of critical reflection when it came to unpacking their different and similar experiences with other racialized groups. Despite participants being sympathetic to other racialized groups, many also had reservations when it came to outward expressions of solidarity. For instance, one participant who mentioned his support for the *Black Lives Matter* movement also mentioned in the same breath that he was not the type to go and protest:

For the most part, I'm not one, I'm not the activist type who would go to the Leg[islature] grounds and protest. I guess there's never really been like something that's stayed this long, kind of like a Black Lives Matter type of deal, where like we've got to show solidarity. But at that time or I guess even if there is... It's not my thing. Like I'm kind of living my life and doing what's right for me and my family and that's kind of it. – Lawrence, 1.5 generation, Taiwanese

Similarly, Iris talked about how she would be hesitant to outwardly express solidarity in the workplace, as it was more typical to stay close to those who belonged to the same work group:

You kind of sit with your work group, or you kind of more acknowledge your work group... I mean, sure if some Asian guys sits across from me and is like, "mind if I sit here". I'd be like, yeah, sure. I don't care. But that's not something I would do personally. – Iris, 4th generation, mixed Euro-Canadian and Japanese

However, when I asked Iris if she felt a sense of solidarity with other workers of Asian descent, she gleefully agreed and said that although she would not say anything out loud, she would think to herself “I’m not the only one!”. Only one participant, Gary, who had worked as an electrician in a predominantly white company in Red Deer, spoke about an outward display of solidarity in the workplace, when a contracted group of Chinese workers who were mostly non-English speakers came to work under his company, and he found himself calling out his white coworkers for some of their overtly racist remarks:

I remember when the Chinese workers came, I think that I did hear some comments. I forget what exactly, but there were racist comments. And I think I'd be like oh, they have names, you know, or something like, just a comment saying why are you saying that. – Gary, 1.5 generation, Filipino

Even though his coworkers saw the Chinese workers as more foreign than Gary due to their lack of English language skills, Gary recognized a connection between himself and the other Asian workers and felt as though he should intervene when they were being othered.

Another participant, Karina, exhibited a kind of solidarity as well, by trying to educate her parents on the treatment and intergenerational impacts of trauma on Indigenous peoples in Canada:

It took [my parents] a while for them to realize that... and if it wasn't for probably my sister and I kind of educating them on those kinds of, you know, perspectives, they wouldn't have known. Like immigrants just come to Canada, hear... the negatives of all of it and just assume like, that's just how they are. Or like, that's why the government treats them as such or like they're just freeloading but like no, like I wish there was more education when it came to immigrants... they should learn about their perspective, these perspectives, these ideas, or these you know, what's really happening with the indigenous population. – Karina, 1.5 generation, Filipina

Karina’s comments point to two really important insights. Firstly, the way that older first generation immigrants, like her parents, lack opportunities to learn about Indigenous issues in Canada, and how in turn, that means they may be more susceptible to adopt the narratives that are perpetuated by those who maintain a white dominant ideology. Secondly, her effort to educate her parents shows how solidarity can take place on a smaller, yet effective scale, starting with educating one’s own family members, and how this is a role that many younger generation Asian immigrants take on within their families. This second insight is a hopeful one, although it is important that the burden of education not fall solely on the shoulders of immigrant daughters as it so often does.

Among interviewees, it appeared that there was a desire to be in solidarity with other Asian and racialized minorities. However, desire did not always translate into outward expressions of solidarity. Participants had reservations that made it difficult to come into solidarity with other racialized people, groups or movements. There is no doubt that it is hard to negotiate taking the opportunities that are offered when one adopts the dominant white ideology - especially when one comes from a family of immigrants who came to Canada for opportunities they lacked in their country of origin – with the possibility of coming into class consciousness and mobilizing to dismantle racial hierarchies.

When it came to coming into solidarity with Indigenous peoples in so-called Canada, another obvious constraint was a lack of knowledge of Indigenous resistance and where it comes from. 13 of 15 participants expressed knowing little about indigenous rights, culture or connection to land. Of the newer immigrants, one mentioned learning about residential schools and treaties through a mandatory course put on by her work, and another learned some basic history from the Discover Canada booklet while studying for the citizenship test, and Youtube. Most were educated within Canadian school systems, although older participants who grew up in Canada mentioned that when they were in school there was little discussion of Indigenous peoples and history. Of those who had learned about it in school, they would answer something like the following:

For high school, obviously, we went through all the, all the topics that everyone goes through... I do know them. I just don't know about them off the top of like, all the treaties and all the stuff off the top of my head. It was definitely in the course material. But I think I took that quite a while ago, so. I'm not sure if I can remember everything. – Jin, 1.5 generation, Korean

They would answer yes to the question of whether they knew about the history and relations between Canada and Indigenous peoples, however when pressed they would not be able to provide any further information about what they knew because of the brevity of what they were taught and/or not having exposure to the culture or Indigenous peoples outside of school. Most of what participants confidently knew was not from what they learned in school, but rather came from their direct interactions with Indigenous coworkers or Indigenous members of their local communities. For instance, one participant had recently gotten the chance to attend a Blackfoot Tea Dance and said most of what he knew was from attending that ceremony. Some also mentioned wanting to learn more after seeing news of the unmarked graves from Residential Schools in the past couple years, at which point they sought out information online themselves.

Only one participant, Martin, explicitly talked about colonization. He had taken it upon himself to learn about Canada's colonial history by taking the free online Coursera course. He also easily recognized the similarities in the colonial histories of Canada and the Philippines. One other participant, Naomi, described settler colonialism, and explicitly spoke about the impacts of intergenerational trauma. She attributed much of what she knew to an Indigenous teacher she had when she was young. She was clear about her opinions on the difference between the experiences of Indigenous peoples and Chinese in Canada:

[The Chinese] came here to, essentially hustle to, like, make a better life for themselves. With the, with the First Nations like they live here, this was their life, and their life got bulldozed into a way that was, that other people deemed acceptable. – Naomi, 2nd generation, Chinese

By including brief information about Indigenous culture and history in school curricula and the citizenship prep material, the government can check off a box without making meaningful attempts to address their wrongdoings. This sheds light on the Canadian nation state's tendency to give lip service when it comes to reconciliation, while keeping critical information hushed about Canada's colonial history and ongoing Indigenous struggles for sovereignty. This discourages Asian immigrants from empathizing with Indigenous struggles for sovereignty due to a lack of understanding. Unless they have personal connections or the time, curiosity and know-how to seek out more information themselves, they may be more susceptible to believing narratives that put the Canadian nation state in a benevolent light. However, it is hopeful that those who learn more about Canada's colonial history exhibit a high level of reflexivity when it comes to understanding their cultural history in relation to that of Indigenous nations in so-called Canada.

Discussion

Why is Solidarity Necessary in the Energy Transition?

I set out to answer the question of what an energy transition that addresses underlying racial injustices may look like. The results of this research show how racial narratives continue to impact the experiences of Asian immigrant and migrant oil and gas workers. Asians continue to be displaced from their homelands, being led to believe that Canada is a welcoming land of opportunity to which they should devote their labour and loyalty. However, Canada contributes to the geopolitical, environmental and economic issues that lead to the outmigration of Asian countries. Upon arriving in so-called Canada, Asian immigrants and migrants are pressured to

assimilate, made to feel ‘othered’, and are told they are white adjacent. Constraints are placed upon them, as they wrestle with being aware of their racialization and in many ways wanting to come into solidarity with other racialized people, while adopting individualized pursuits of survival and success in order to provide for their families and secure a ‘better life’.

These pressures and constraints exemplify ideological hegemony being used to reinforce concrete hegemony in so-called Canada. In the specific case of the fossil fuel industry, keeping Asian immigrant and migrant workers complicit in industries and systems that contribute to their disconnection from their culture and class through outmigration, assimilation and ‘othering’, is beneficial to the dominant class who benefits the most from maintaining a social order that facilitates business-as-usual. This is where the energy transition becomes a location for societal transformation that goes deeper than moving towards renewable energy. A radical and just energy transition that actually acknowledges racial injustice must be counter-hegemonic in nature. Carroll (2006) suggests that “a viable counter-hegemony draws together subaltern social forces around an alternative ethico-political conception of the world, constructing a common interest that transcends narrower interests situated in the defensive routine of various groups” (p. 21). In other words, building solidarity among racialized workers and people impacted by energy decisions is critical to bringing about racial justice in the energy transition.

Is Solidarity Possible?

Tuck and Yang (2019) argue that colonial equivocation is a settler move to innocence. In essence, colonial equivocation involves calling all imperialism a form of colonialism, and as follows, any work that resists imperialism or oppression against any minority group becomes falsely labelled as ‘decolonial’ work. The problem with colonial equivocation is that it leads to generalized social justice language and discourse rather than real decolonial action. Colonial equivocation is unhelpful, for example, if trying to conflate discrimination towards Indigenous communities to that of Asian settlers, as Asian settlers are uniquely victims of institutional racism on one hand, while being perceived as model minorities on another. On the contrary, Karki (2021) believes that “if diasporas are peoples living in a country away from their places of origin out of coercion or volition, then Black people, Indigenous peoples, and immigrant people of colour including refugees are diasporas in Canada” (p. 146). The reason why Karki considers Indigenous peoples as diasporas is because Indigenous peoples were “strategically invaded,

dispersed, [and] subsequently dislocated in their own Native space” (p. 147). Cho’s (2007) notion of Asian immigrants as diasporic subjects who feel a sense of *unhomely*-ness, a feeling of loss and mourning for relatives and ancestors who were displaced lends to an understanding of these shared feelings. Karki argues that the trauma of losing one’s homeland, whether the loss feels distant or recent, total or partial, is experienced in a similar way by Indigenous peoples and other racialized immigrants in so-called Canada. These groups may also experience similar feelings of cultural loss, specifically of language, and likely face discrimination and racism. To Karki, the solution to the discrimination faced by Asian immigrants and Indigenous peoples lies in “various diasporas of colour [coming] together based on their common experiences of dislocation, injustices, discriminations, and marginalization” (p. 154).

Tuck and Yang (2019) explain in depth why it is important to avoid equating all experiences of oppression of racialized people. The result of such equivocation is precisely the kind of thinking that led to a generalized multiculturalism policy, which does little to address the nuanced experiences of the different groups that are considered to be ethnic minorities. However, what I aim to put forward in this discussion is the difference between equivocation and solidarity, between colourblind policy and people-powered action for a common goal. I suggest that solidarity among Indigenous peoples and Asian settlers, between subjects of racialization, between diasporas on Turtle Island, actually requires addressing the underlying narratives of white supremacy that work to keep us divided. Doing so not only requires creating opportunities for members of the Asian diaspora who have been strategically disconnected from their cultures to come into cultural consciousness, but also requires that they come into consciousness of their complicity in the oppression of other racialized groups and in turn, advocate for and support the movements that these other groups are calling for.

Developing a Narrative of Collective Resistance

Solidarity within Asian Communities

Energy transition proponents can advocate for creating opportunities for cultural connection, relationship-building and education to strengthen the possibility for solidarity among members of the Asian diaspora. When people become disconnected from their culture as a result of western imperialism and colonization, they become complicit in the actions of their oppressors.

Culturally relevant programs for Asian youth and other members of the Asian diaspora born and/or raised in so-called Canada can help connect them to their unique histories and build networks amongst each other. When I was a child I attended summer overnight camps put on by C3 society in BC. Later as an adolescent I participated in the *OKFriends Homecoming* program, a highly subsidized Korean cultural program that brings Korean youth from around the world to Korea to participate in cultural activities. When I participated in the latter program in 2018, it was the first time I was able to take the expensive trip to Korea as someone who grew up in a low-income family. Through discussions about Korean politics (reunification), engaging in cultural activities and learning skills (dancing, making pottery, fishing), and language (exposure and formal classes), these programs greatly enriched my understanding of my Korean identity in relation to my mixed-European ancestry and growing up “Canadian” and inspired my ongoing desire to be a part of my community. A focus on creating opportunities for cultural consciousness that respects and embraces heterogeneities within Asian communities, and then builds on their shared histories, values and/or goals could be a more appropriate way to build pan-Asian solidarity than attempts that treat Asians as a monolithic group (Espiritu, 2006).

Solidarity with Other Diasporas on Turtle Island

Earlier in this paper, I established that the model minority myth was created with the intention of dividing racialized communities within the US and so-called Canada. The participants in this study expressed a desire for solidarity with movements like *Black Lives Matter*, however there are constraints on acting on these desires, such as concerns for one’s own family, underlined by the narrative fed to Asian settlers that coming into solidarity could jeopardize their social position. The land, resources and labour of Black and Brown people have been exploited for the colonial projects of every Western colonial power, and colonial expansion requires the exploitation of natural resources. For this reason, racialized people, diasporas in so-called Canada, who have similar experiences of being displaced from their homelands, must work together to make space for themselves within the energy transition. I have witnessed firsthand the solidarity that is possible when diasporic subjects support each other, for instance in the way that *Migrante Alberta*, a Filipino migrant organization, supports Mexican, Thai, and South American migrants who face similar struggles to their own community. However, what is essential to building this solidarity is that Asian settlers must address the racist narratives that

have infected our own communities that keep us divided, as Trask (2008) puts it, “immigrant hegemony”, and as Saranillio (2008) calls it “subordinate supremacy”, that leads to Asian settlers feeling entitled to our social position above other racialized groups because white society tells us that we worked harder than other groups to attain it.

Solidarity with Indigenous peoples in so-called Canada can be built on the grounds of acknowledging similar histories endured by colonized peoples, without suggesting that these histories are the same, but rather drawing attention to the similar underlying logics of white supremacy and the tools that have been used to perpetuate these logics. Attention to the process of pacification in Asian countries subjected to US colonization and pacification through educational institutions and how that impacts the inherited narratives carried on by Asian immigrants could provide useful insights into what produces *colonial amnesia* and how to undergo a process of unlearning those narratives, and learning about the colonial histories of their homelands and the lands of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island (Saranillio, 2008). Coming to understand the histories and importance of connection to land for Indigenous peoples may encourage Asian settler support for Indigenous sovereignty and *land back*.

Another shared experience for many Asian immigrant and Indigenous families is how the government has had a role in fracturing parent-child relationships. Immigrant workers are away from their families for weeks or months working onsite, or for years when they come to so-called Canada to work while sending money back to their families in Asia. Many Asian families know the hurt, confusion, and intergenerational trauma that comes from being alienated from one’s own family, not to mention the difficulties that come with the reunification process for families who have been separated for long periods of time, however, this experience is not frequently talked about. Some of the testimonies in this study also shed light on important opportunities for learning passed on from children to parents when it comes to discussing social and environmental issues, that are missed out on when families are fractured. I am not suggesting that the traumas resulting from Asian families being separated by immigration and the 60s scoop and legacy of the *Indian Residential School System* are equal. What I am arguing is that the common feelings of loss and disconnection can bring about empathy on the part of the Asian community and a desire to change the systems that continue to impose harms on Indigenous peoples and land rather than remaining complicit to them.

Transnational Solidarity

Those who can afford to get on a plane and go to somewhere like Canada... those who can't go up to the mountains... the root causes are the same. – Marco Luciano, 1st generation Filipino migrant, Co-founder of *Migrante Alberta*, personal relations [Talking about how Filipinos get out of a cycle of poverty and corruption]

The ideology of white supremacy is a tool to keep people complicit in a system that values some bodies over others. Orientalism and the model minority myth stem from the same ideology, repackaged to affirm narratives that validate white dominance in different contexts. Looking beyond the implications that this ideology has for Asian immigrants who come to so-called Canada, racial hierarchies are used by the dominant class to justify the development of Western nations at the expense of the underdevelopment of others. There is power to be found in immigrants coming together, especially those who have protection via their citizenship, to advocate for system change for our Asian brothers and sisters who are being silenced or harmed for protesting abroad. Lennon (2017) has suggested that this is a necessary move for transnational solidarity between Black energy democracy activists and Global South activists protesting exploitative use of Brown bodies to build solar panels for export, pointing to the importance in addressing underlying racial hierarchies that produce injustices on a global scale as we move towards developing renewable energy. Furthermore, transnational solidarity is important because it relates to the continued outmigration of Asians from their homeland as a result of geopolitical, environmental and economic struggle at the hands of Western imperialism and globalized markets. Dunlap and Laratte (2022) note that extraction for 'green' technologies, seen as the ethical replacement for fossil fuels, produces many unintended costs and injustices, and Lennon (2017) and Newell (2021) draw attention to the way harms from energy-related extraction is unequally felt by racialized bodies. Looking towards more radical theories of change, such as degrowth (Dunlap and Laratte, 2022), could be an option for addressing the socio-ecological costs of energy infrastructure development on multiple scales, within Canada and abroad.

Limitations

Drawing on only fifteen interviews means that these findings are not necessarily generalizable, nor representative of the experiences of all Asians in Canadian society. However, the goal of this

study is not to suggest that all Asians have the same experiences, but rather to demonstrate how the underlying logics of white dominance continue to influence the experiences of Asians living and working in Canada in different but related ways. While the experiences between participants differ, the logics that lead to their othering and how that translates into constraints on their lives are similar. Treating the social group of “Asian” as one that has material consequences for those who fall into the socially constructed category is necessary for tracing the legacy that white dominance built off of justifications of racial hierarchies and anti-Asian policies have had on the contemporary experience of being Asian in Canada. Additionally, because these ideologies translate in such distinct, and often covert ways, a select number of interviews allows for a more nuanced analysis than what could be captured in a larger, generalizable survey.

Conclusion

Bringing about class consciousness among Asian immigrant and migrant workers requires lifting the veil of the intention of the Canadian nation state, which has always been to move forward with Canada’s colonial project. Canada’s dependence on Asian labour, and simultaneous desire to maintain a white national identity, has led to a history of Asian exclusion, followed by contemporary neoliberal and colourblind policies used to mask the racial hierarchies that continue to exist within “Canada”. The Canadian government is then able to pitch “Canada” as a multicultural land that provides a better life and abundant opportunity for Asian immigrants, despite the fact that Canada contributes to creating the issues in Asian countries that lead to people “choosing” to leave. Racial hierarchies are then reinforced through the overt and covert pressures put on Asian immigrants to assimilate, creating a class of “model minorities” that hope to access all the opportunities associated with being Canadian but are reminded that the best they can achieve is the illusion of white adjacency. The white hegemonic dominant ideology is imposed upon Asian immigrants and migrants, constraining their choices as they continue to work hard and pursue higher educational attainment and careers in exploitative industries in order to get as close as they can to achieving the “better life” they came to Canada for, suppressing desires for solidarity with those labelled as “foreign” migrants, Indigenous peoples, and other diasporas.

But what if Asian workers saw the energy transition as an opportunity to demand a better future in which they did not have to make these concessions, in which they did not have to lose

connection to their culture and could openly reject the pressures of the assigned model minority social position without it jeopardizing their ability to provide for their families? What if advocates for the energy transition demanded that underlying systems that use race-based justifications to exploit the labour of racialized bodies and indigenous land be addressed? This kind of energy transition would look much different than the one being proposed by governments and industry. It might be one that favours *land back* in so-called Canada or *degrowth* on local, national and international scales, but surely embodies something more transformative than moving from fossil fuels to renewable energy without addressing underlying racial hierarchies and the logics of white supremacy.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

At the outset of this research project, I had five main objectives: (1) To shed light on the real, lived experiences of marginalized fossil fuel workers; (2) To identify relations of power that could contribute to marginalized workers being disproportionately impacted by injustices if they remain unchecked as we move towards renewable energy; (3) To learn what Asian immigrant/migrant fossil fuel workers want energy futures in Canada to look like; (4) To provide nuanced, culturally specific understandings of the Asian experience in Canada, to move past the model minority myth that divides Asian groups and perpetuates white supremacy; and (5) To address how identity politics and intersecting identities influence the experiences of Asian immigrants and migrants working in Canada. What is interesting about my journey throughout conducting this project, is that while these five objectives remained the same, my understanding of what they meant changed drastically.

The first objective was addressed by conducting interviews with Asian immigrant oil and gas workers in Alberta, Canada, by co-producing knowledge with participants and by allowing for themes to emerge organically from the data. The second objective was addressed by identifying racial hierarchies, the legacy of using Asian labour to develop Canada as a Colonial nation state, and the ongoing ideological hegemony of white dominance that continue to influence the experiences of Asian immigrants and migrants and other racialized groups inside and outside of Canada. The third objective may be the most complex, because while I sought out to ask participants directly about their perspectives on energy futures, I gained an understanding of what an energy transition that is nuanced, culturally-relevant, and that addresses underlying systemic injustices may look like looking between the lines of the interview transcripts. The fourth objective was addressed firstly by providing context of the different and intersecting histories of Asian migration to Canada, and secondly by looking at the lasting impact that policies, theories and perceptions of Asians in Canada have had on the lived experience of first, 1.5, second and fourth generation Asian immigrants. The fifth objective required interrogation into the varied, interrelated dimensions of race, class, gender and age and how different combinations of these identities lead to completely different and yet comparable experiences for Asians living in Canadian society.

Overview of Chapter 1, 2, 3 and 4

In the introduction, I discussed the difference between energy justice and energy democracy, and how both concepts enhance an energy transition that takes into consideration those who are and will be the most impacted by energy industry and societal shifts. I then situated this thesis within the historical context of Asian immigration to Canada, shedding light on the legacy of discriminatory, race-based and assimilationist policies. This was also my attempt at highlighting the unique, yet interrelated, histories of Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Korean, Filipino and Vietnamese immigrants coming to Canada, the ethnic groups that predominantly made up my research sample. I could not capture all of the distinct features of these communities given the space and time allocated for this thesis. That being said, the authors I cited all do a proficient job at capturing these cultural nuances. To that regard, while acknowledging cultural difference, my focus was on locating the overlaps between the experiences of Asian immigrants in Canada and their reasons for leaving their homelands. At this point, I introduced the idea of Asian immigrants as diasporic subjects, peoples collectively living in a place away from home who share a lingering feeling of “unhomeliness” as a result of the displacement of themselves, their relatives and/or their ancestors. Understanding Asian immigrants as members of a diaspora makes way for acknowledgement of how even in “postcolonial” Canada, the colonial project continues as Asian peoples are displaced from their homeland as a result of direct and indirect contributions on the part of the Canadian government and industries, masking these contributions with the façade of portraying Canada as a welcoming land of immigrants through the use of neoliberal and colourblind policies that do little to address underlying systems of oppression. At the end of the introduction, I introduce key terms from the fields of sociology, migrant studies, Asian Canadian studies and the energy transition literature that guided the project.

In *Chapter 2*, I explained how intersectionality informed my epistemological considerations, specifically as it pertained to my position as both an insider and outsider to the social group I was interviewing, the embodied privilege in relation to my intersectional identities, and the ethical questions that I addressed while making decisions for conducting the research. I laid out the recruitment process and interview guide development that took place at the early stages of the research, and the data collection, transcription and analysis of the interview data that followed. Finally, I provided a descriptive analysis of the demographic

characteristics of the interview participants, comparing the demographics of the research sample to the general population of Asian immigrants and migrants in Alberta and Canada who work in professions similar to those of the research participants.

The results of this study were split up into two chapters, *Chapter 3* and *Chapter 4*. While *Chapter 3* provided an outline for how supports for Asian immigrants and migrants working in oil and gas should be included in energy transition scholarship and policy, *Chapter 4* imagined the energy transition in terms of how workers can mobilize outside of systems of exploitation and in solidarity with other exploited workers, marginalized and racialized groups. These are not mutually exclusive ambitions, as pressures from within and outside of established social systems can make way for social transformation. The application of societal transformation as a concept in the environmental literature is diverse (Feola, 2015). In regards to societal transformation as a response to climate change, the IPCC (2022) notes that transformation, defined as fundamental change to the structures, goals and values of a system, happens on many different scales. In fact, when discussing anthropogenic climate change, it rests on the idea that humans have *rapidly and profoundly transformed* the natural and material world over the course of the past 200 years, recognizing the agency that humans have to bring about transformative change. It is also proposed that mitigating climate change will take widescale, long-term transformation. In this regard, “transition” is defined as the process of how that fundamental change will come into fruition. A push for societal transformation can put pressure on governments to take climate action informed by social justice, reaping more immediate benefits (Patterson et al., 2017). However, there is also an acknowledgement that long-term societal transformation compatible with mitigating climate change requires imagining an equitable post-carbon future that goes beyond industry shifts, beyond minor tweaks in business-as-usual practices. I propose that the findings in this study that are useful for shaping energy transition policy could be seen as a way to bring about incremental change over time pushing towards a threshold of transformation, while the findings that bring to light underlying systems of oppression are more radical, more disruptive, and in turn, if addressed, could empower communities in solidarity to push for long-term transformation.

Contributions to the Energy Transition and Environmental Sociology Literature

This research can add to the energy transition literature in a number of ways. The first relates to my first research question: *what would an energy transition that uplifts the voices of Asian immigrant and migrant workers actually look like?* The sociological transition literature has been dominated by studies that focus on relatively homogeneous, predominantly white, boomtown communities, and the social construction of their identities in relation to sense of place (Masterson 2017; Goodrich and Sampson, 2005) or resource attachment (Bell and York, 2010). I broaden my analysis to examine other aspects of identity that influence workers' experiences, such as occupational identity (Caldwell, 2002; Friesen, 2012; Melling, 2018; Miller, 2004). I do so by utilizing an intersectional framework, which has been underutilized in the energy transition literature, outside of gender-based analysis (e.g. Cannon and Chu, 2021; Clancy and Feenstra, 2020; Johnston et al., 2020; Karakislak, Sadat-Razavi, and Schweizer-Ries, 2023; Lieu et al., 2020). Within my analysis, I pay attention to cultural nuances, answering the call to “de-whiten” intersectionality and bring it back to its roots (Abdi, Calafell and Eguchi, 2020). Not only is intersectionality an analytical tool in this project, but I also explore how it can be brought into the methodology of the research, and how this can lead to a high level of reflexivity throughout the research process (Labelle, 2020). Future energy transition research could consider intersectionality as both an analytical tool for discussing multiple dimensions of identity that influence different marginalized communities impacted by energy decisions, as well as a methodological principle that directs researchers towards strategies for considering their own positionality, privilege and ethical questions in relation to their own identities and the identities of their participants throughout the research process.

Additionally, there are contributions relating to my second research question: *what would an energy transition that addresses underlying racial injustices look like?* Race-based and culturally specific analysis within the energy transition literature is severely lacking, especially considering that many questions asked within the energy transition literature are highly technocratic, ignoring the social constructs and hierarchies that have been used, and continue to be used to justify some bodies being valued more than others (Lennon, 2017; Lennon, 2020; Newell, 2021). Those studies which have brought race into the dialogue have focused mostly on Indigenous and Black communities, racialized people in the Global South, and specifically focus on activist voices rather than centering energy workers. Furthermore, questions of how racial

hierarchies play into complicity have rarely been addressed. Researchers can start addressing underlying systems of oppression, including racial hierarchies, in the initial stages of research when they consider what research questions they are asking, why they are asking them, and how they are being asked/how data is being collected. Bringing more workers of colour into this dialogue can add nuance to the energy transition discourse, especially when it comes to questions about complicity, as well as opportunities for mobilization and solidarity to bring about long-term, radical social transformation.

This research also contributes to the environmental sociological literature at large. By bringing Asian perspectives into discourse surrounding energy and societal transitions, this research disrupts the “white spaces” of environmental sociology (Carrera et al., 2021). More attention is being drawn to the importance of doing anticolonial work within environmental sociology, drawing attention to the way that environmental degradation goes hand in hand with the exploitation of racialized bodies, especially Indigenous and Black bodies, to further western colonial projects and capital accumulation (Murphy, 2020). As Murphy (2020) puts it, “these plantation logics persist precisely because they have never been adequately addressed, for doing so would entail a radical reconfiguring of our collective mode of being together on earth, and not as individuals maximizing our relations for private gain and property accumulation” (p. 129). I add to this perspective, by discussing the history of Asian immigration and discrimination, and the lingering impacts of white dominance and colonialism, and how the Asian community can come into solidarity with other racialized peoples, other diaspora in so-called Canada.

Furthermore, this paper answers the call of Araos, Klinenberg and Koslov (2020) to treat climate change as a central concern to social life. In addition to the fossil fuel industry contributing directly to climate change which has impacts on every facet of social life, the energy transition will also have social repercussions, that will be unevenly felt by marginalized groups. Furthermore, I recognize that “renewable energy development holds potential either to imitate the extractive political and institutional patterns of coal, oil, and gas or to take a different trajectory altogether” (Araos, Klinenberg and Koslov, 2020, p. 661). What I put forward in this thesis is recommendations of what a culturally-relevant, nuanced, de-whitened energy transition guided by the concerns, values, and priorities of Asian immigrant and migrant workers could look like. I do so firstly by bringing literature from the fields of migration studies and Asian

Canadian studies into conversation with the energy transition and environmental sociological literature. Secondly, I take an intersectional, sociological approach to seeking out and analyzing the experiences of Asian workers, identifying opportunities for cultural connection and building solidarity that could make the energy transition something truly transformative.

Overall, this thesis project has been in response to the ‘lateness’ of western academia to fund, include and support the voices of Asians living in western society (Lee, 2007). When I started this project, as a mixed Euro-Canadian and Korean second generation immigrant who has gone through 18 years of education in western institutions, I was in search of cultural consciousness myself. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to spend the duration of this process learning from Asian academics by reading Asian Canadian literature, learning from Asian energy workers through participant interviews, and outside of this research, being validated by spending time with my Asian family, friends, and members of my community. The most validating part of this research, both in terms of personal fulfillment as well as validity in the sense of academic rigour and credibility, has been the continuous cycle of finding something meaningful in the data, and then hearing other Asian immigrants and migrants talking about their real-life experiences that mirror what I had just read or wrote on paper. It is this cycle of reassurance that leads me to believe that my contributions are valuable, important, and relevant.

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Appendices

Appendix A. – Information Letter and Consent Form

Project Title: “Just for Whom? Including Asian Migrant and Immigrant Workers in the Just Transition Dialogue in Alberta, Canada”

Principal Investigator: Ella Kim-Marriott. MSc Rural Sociology student, Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology, University of Alberta, kimmarri@ualberta.ca

Research Supervisor: Debra Davidson, PhD, Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology, University of Alberta, ddavidso@ualberta.ca

Letter of Information

1. Invitation to Participate

You are invited to participate in this research study about the energy industry. We are looking for oil and gas workers of Asian descent.

2. Purpose of the Letter

This letter provides you with information about the research study. After reading this letter, you should be able to make an informed decision about your participation in this research.

3. Purpose of this Study

The Canadian government wants to lower GHG emissions. People are asking the government to invest more into renewable energy. Some groups will be more affected by these changes than others. The views and experiences of Asian workers should be heard as we think about making these changes.

4. Inclusion Criteria

All participants must:

- Live in Alberta, Canada
- Be 18+ years old
- Be currently employed, or have been recently employed, in the fossil fuel industry / fossil fuel supply chain
- Be an individual of **Asian descent**
- Be an individual who immigrated/migrated to Alberta/Canada from an Asian country OR have parents, grandparents, etc. who immigrated/migrated to Alberta/Canada from an Asian country

Exclusion Criteria

Anyone who does not meet the inclusion criteria will be excluded from the study. Anyone who is not fluent in English will also be excluded from participating in this study as I am a student who lacks the funds to hire translators/transcribers. No exclusions will be made based on class, gender, or age.

5. Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to answer a series of interview questions. The entire interview will take approximately one hour. The interview will either be in-person or over Zoom/Google Meet at a time that works for you between September-December 2022. If you agree, the interview will be recorded. If you would prefer not to have the interview recorded, I will take hand written notes. To maintain your confidentiality over Zoom, log in using the code provided ahead of time in the place of your name. If you forget to do so, I will change your name before I start recording. You may turn off your camera, and you can mute your microphone at any time during the interview.

6. Possible Risks and Harms

There are no known or anticipated risks. If you would like to participate but feel any discomfort or have any questions/concerns, please let me know as soon as possible.

7. Possible Benefits

You will have the opportunity to voice your attitudes, concerns and questions as an Asian oil and gas worker, which can be potentially beneficial should this research end up informing energy transition work in the future. You may also feel personal benefits from reflecting on and sharing about your life.

8. Compensation

You will be compensated \$50 for your participation in this research. You will be compensated this amount when the interview is complete. You will be compensated even if you end the interview early or decide to withdraw your interview.

9. Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions from the study at any time with no effect on you. You may redact statements from your interview for up to three weeks after you are sent the transcript. You can withdraw completely from the study at anytime up until the written product of this project (Masters thesis) is finished in the first week of May 2023.

10. Confidentiality

The data we collect will not be shared. It will only be accessed by the graduate student and her supervisor and only for the duration of the study. The data will be stored on a password locked computer. All the files with personal information that can identify you will be locked and encrypted. Identifiable information will be destroyed when the graduate project is complete. When the research is over, study data will be moved to a USB flash drive. This will also be password protected and encrypted. The USB flash drive will be held at the U of A for 5 years. The data will then be destroyed, unless it is picked up for a new study and new ethics approval is obtained. If that happens, it will be kept on the USB indefinitely for future use. If the results of the study are published your name will not be used. Your identity will not be shared without your consent.

11. Contacts for More Information

If you want more information, contact Ella Kim Marriott, at kimmarr@ualberta.ca .

Contact for Concerns or Complaints about the Study

You have rights as a research participant. If you have any concerns or complaints about your experience please contact the Research Ethics Office at the U of A. Their email is reoffice@ualberta.ca.

12. Consent

By signing this form you are agreeing to participate in this study. You can withdraw your consent at any time before the study is published.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Consent Form

Project Title: Graduate (MSc) Thesis project titled “Just for Whom? Including Asian Migrant and Immigrant Workers in the Just Transition Dialogue in Alberta, Canada?”

Principal Investigator: Ella Kim-Marriott. MSc Rural Sociology student, Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology, University of Alberta, kimmarri@ualberta.ca

Student Researcher: Debra Davidson, PhD, Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology, University of Alberta, ddavidso@ualberta.ca

I have read the Letter of Information. I have had the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Participant’s Name (please print): _____

Participant’s Signature: _____

Date: _____

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): _____

Date: _____

Once you have signed the consent form, please email the signed copy back to the PI at kimmarri@ualberta.ca

You must sign this letter before proceeding with the interview. If you have any questions before signing, please do not hesitate to contact the research team.

Appendix B. – Interview Guide

Introduction: Before we get started, I want to thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. I am really looking forward to learning from you during our session together! Our interview may take up to an hour. I want to remind you now, that if at any point you would like to end the interview completely, you can. I also want to remind you that your personal information, such as your name, will not appear in the written material I produce following this interview.

This was included in the information letter you read, but I want to check with you again that it is okay for me to record this session, so that I can transcribe our interview following this session. (*wait for them to agree or disagree to being recorded*). Alright, great! Let's get started then.

I am going to go through a list of questions that I have prepared. If at any point, you would like for me to repeat or clarify a question, I can most definitely do that. Do you have any questions for me before we get started? (*Wait for them to say yes or no to questions*). Okay, wonderful. If you have questions for me at the end of our interview, I can answer them then.

The purpose of this study is for me to learn about your experiences as a person of Asian descent working in the fossil fuel industry and living in Canadian society. If you are ready, we'll get started...

I. Connection to land

- 1) Where do you reside currently?
- 2) Where do you work?
- 3) Where did you/your family immigrate from? Why did you/your family move?
- 4) What do you know about the history of the place where you live?
 - a) Do you know the First Nations in your area?
- 5) Do you like where you live in Canada?
- 6) Do you want to stay where you live long-term?
 - a) Do you want to move/have plans to move (ie. Different town/city/province, different country, back home?)
- 7) What place do you consider 'home'?
 - a) What makes this place feel like home?
- 8) Was there pollution where you lived before? Do you see pollution here in Canada? Are you concerned about it?
- 9) Are you concerned about Canada's population increasing?
- 10) Were there "natural disasters" where you lived before? Are you concerned about them here?

II. Industry

- 1) Tell me a bit about your work...
 - a) What is your job title?
 - b) Are you a temporary/contract or permanent worker?
 - c) What does a typical day at work look like for you?
 - d) Do you have supervisors/do you report to anyone? Does anyone report to you?

- 2) Did you have a similar job before you came to Canada? Did your parents work similar jobs before they came to Canada?
- 3) How did you hear about your current job? Does anyone else in your family work there too?
- 4) What do you like about your job? What do you dislike about your job?
- 5) What do you think about the fossil fuel industry?
 - a) Do you think it's good/bad?
 - b) Do you believe in climate change? Are you worried about it? Do you think the government should do something about it?

III. Relationships

- 1) Are you friends with your coworkers?
 - a) Do you spend time with them outside of work?
- 2) Do you have (other) friends here? How did you meet them?
- 3) Is your family here with you?
 - a) Who is? Who isn't?
 - b) What kind of communication do you have with your family members who aren't here with you?
- 4) Are you involved with any groups/teams/organizations outside of work?
- 5) Do you find it easy to make friends with people in Canada? From other cultures (other immigrants)? Or do you find it difficult?

IV. Identity

- 1) Do you feel a strong personal connection to...
 - a) Canada? Would you describe yourself as Canadian?
 - b) You/your family's homeland? Would you describe yourself as [Filipino/Korean/Indian/etc.]
- 2) What does the term 'Asian Canadian' mean to you, if anything?
 - a) Have you ever described yourself as Asian Canadian?
 - b) Has anyone else ever described you as Asian Canadian?
 - c) Do you feel connected/sense of solidarity to other people of Asian descent?
- 3) Who immigrated to Canada first (you, your parents?)
 - a) Do you feel like your values and/or point-of-view are different than other members of your family from different generations?

V. Future

- 1) What do you want the future to look like for you??
 - a) If you could have a different job, would you
 - b) What do you want your children's future to look like? Would you want your children to work the same job as or different job than you?
 - c) Do you want to move?
- 2) What, if anything, would you like to see change about the place where you work/the fossil fuel industry?

- 3) What do you know about renewable energy?
 - a) Would you want to work in the renewable energy industry?
 - b) What, if anything, would make you want to work in the renewable energy industry?

VI. Demographics

- 1) What is your age?
- 2) What are your pronouns?
- 3) What is your ethnicity?
- 4) What generation of immigrant are you?
 - 1st gen: You immigrated to Canada as a teen/adult
 - 1.5 gen: You immigrated to Canada as a child and grew up in Canada
 - 2nd gen: Your parents immigrated to Canada, you were born in Canada

Appendix C. – Codebook

Categories	Category Description	Properties (Codes)	Dimensions
Asian Canadian identity	Discussing how interviewee feels or is recognized by others as Asian/Asian Canadian	Becoming Asian/Asian Canadian Being Asian/Asian Canadian	Explaining the process of when they started to see themselves as Asian/Asian Canadian Interests, attitudes, or experiences that they believe are characteristically Asian
Canadian identity	Discussing how interviewee feels or is recognized by others as Canadian	Becoming Canadian Being Canadian Canada as home Individualism Sense of belonging	Explaining the process of when they started to see themselves as Canadian Interests, attitudes, or experiences that they believe are characteristically Canadian Talking about Canada as their home, currently and/or for the long term Adopting values of individualism when it comes to lifestyle, spiritually, career, or family Feeling comfortable in Canada, or comfortable calling Canada home
Environmental concern	Interviewee talking about environmental concerns in Canada, their family's country of origin or globally	Climate change Natural disasters Consumption Pollution Population growth Waste	Concern regarding emissions and/or the impacts of climate change Concern regarding extreme weather, or single incidents such as fires, floods, earthquakes, or tornadoes Concern regarding the overconsumption of resources to the point of them becoming obsolete, or causing further environmental harm in order to produce them Concern regarding different types of air, water, or general environmental pollution Concern regarding the relationship between population growth and environmental harm Concern regarding the lifecycle of products and the creation and/or disposal of waste
Environmental apathy	Interviewee talking about a lack of concern regarding the environment or the causes of environmental harm	Climate denial Fossil fuels as necessary Overexposure Shifting blame	Raising doubt in the novelty of climate change Seeing fossil fuel industry as integral, either because of energy needs or its connection to several aspects of society Having grown up with environmental issues to the point of seeing it as normal Blaming specific stakeholders such as CEOs of companies, other countries, non-fossil fuel related industries or non-oil and gas industries (renewables and coal)
Ethnic identity	Discussing how interviewee feels or is recognized by others as their ethnic identity	Culture Disconnecting	Lifestyles, habits, food, popular culture related to their ethnic identity Explaining the process of how they became disconnected from their ethnic identity

		Religion Traditions Values	Religious views, traditions or practices related to their ethnic identity Traditions, celebrations and ceremonies related to their ethnic identity Values, often related to family, clan mentality, or collectivism, related to their ethnic identity
Life in family's country of origin	Interviewee talking about the aspects of life in their family's country of origin that impacted their family's experiences	Industry Lifestyle Government Rural life Urban life	Major industries, including energy industries, how they are structured and what they produce Work culture, and life outside of work Structure, views of and experiences with the government Aspects of experience related to rural location Aspects of experience related to urban location
Gendered experience	Female interviewees talking about their gendered experiences	Family Industry	Gender influencing experiences within their family Gender influencing experiences within the industry
Generational differences	Differences interviewees discussed in reference to their values, beliefs or experiences compared to other members of their families	Beliefs Experiences Values	Differences in beliefs between individual and their family Differences in experiences between individual and their family Differences in values between individual and their family
Imagining the future	What the interviewee wants the future to look like	Career Energy Environment Future generations	What they want their future career to look like What they want the future of energy to look like What they want the environment to look like What they want for future generations
Immigration stories	Interviewee discusses their experience immigrating to Canada	Difficulties with immigration Paving the way Reason for coming Reason for leaving	Any difficulties with the immigration process, receiving PR or citizenship upon arrival, or adjusting to living in Canada as a new immigrant Being the first in their family to come to Canada and what they did to help others come to Canada or to succeed in Canada Reasons they came to Canada Reasons they or their family left their family's country of origin
Inbetweeners	Interviewee expresses being 'in between' their ethnic identity/culture and Canadian culture, or being in between their family's traditions or expectations and their own life path	Being mixed Being a translator/helper	Mixed identity (ethnic and Canadian), either because of having mixed ancestry or being a 1.5+ generation immigrant, leading to feeling 'in between' Literally being a translator/helper in between other immigrants/migrants and Canadians or Canadian systems
Job mobility	Interviewee's perceived ability to change jobs, either in a horizontal or upward direction, within the energy industry	Facilitators Limitations	Things that make it easier for them to have job mobility, such as education, citizenship, connections and transferable skills Things that make it more difficult for them to have job mobility, such as a lack of education, citizenship, connections and

			transferable skills
Job security	Interviewee's perceived feeling of job stability within the energy industry	Facilitators Limitations - individual Limitations – external	Things that make it easier for them to have job mobility, such as education, citizenship, connections and transferable skills Things on an individual level that make it more difficult for them to have job security, such as a lack of education, citizenship, connections and transferable skills Things that make it more difficult for them to have job security that are out of their control, such as the cyclical nature of the energy industry, or other economic crises that impact all industries
Model minority	Interviewees describing how they think or act in ways that reinforce the stereotype of the 'model minority'	At work Outside of work	Describing themselves or providing examples of ways that they act as 'model minorities' at work, such as taking worse hours, keeping quiet in the face of adversity, or "working hard" despite hardships Describing themselves or providing examples of ways that they act as 'model minorities' outside work, such as keeping quiet in the face of adversity
Relationships in Canada	How interviewees make, uphold and perceive their relationships in Canada	Coworkers Family Friends	Feelings towards coworkers Family in Canada, upholding relationships with family outside of Canada Making friends in Canada other than coworkers and family
Solidarity	Examples of and opportunities for solidarity with other marginalized people or groups described or exemplified by interviewees	Examples of Opportunities for	Examples of interviewees acting or speaking in ways that have exhibited solidarity with other marginalized people or groups Recognition of synchronic or similar experiences with other marginalized people or groups
Racialized experience	Interviewees talking about the ways in which they feel, or are treated, as racialized in Canada	Being 'other' Racism Visible minority White adjacency White Canadian identity	Being told that they are or treated as if they are 'other' than Canadian Experiencing racism in Canada Being told that they are or treated as a visible minority in Canada Recognizing or being told that they are close to being white or Canadian, or that they may bypass racialization in some ways while being subjected to it in others Recognizing or being told that the Canadian identity is inherently white