Who Is "Diverse"?: (In)Tolerance, Education, and Race in Hong Kong

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Abstract This chapter will take a critical perspective on discourses of "diversity" in Hong Kong as expressed in the education system and the media, in order to argue that despite their apparently positive intentions, many efforts at raising awareness of "diversity" contribute to homogenizing racial groups, reinforcing racial and linguistic boundaries and rationalizing social stratification. Through ethnographic research with South Asian students at a multiethnic Hong Kong secondary school as well as analysis of Hong Kong media and policy, this chapter will demonstrate that such discourses of diversity depend on an understanding of society as composed of distinct and homogeneous blocks and thus help cast South Asians as a unified and exoticized group who are permanently "diverse." This chapter joins with other work which takes a critical perspective on what it means to talk about diversity, in order to consider how awareness of Hong Kong's linguistic and racial diversity could be supported in ways that might truly contribute to minority equality and empowerment.

1 Introduction

South Asians in Hong Kong, like many other minority groups in contexts around the world, are often portrayed in media and policy discourse as problematic residents who have not successfully "integrated" into mainstream society (Erni and Leung 2014). Language is frequently cited as the central, sometimes even the sole, factor in achieving this integration – successfully learning Cantonese is presented as the key to accessing quality education and jobs, which will accompany an overall move toward cultural assimilation into the ethnic Chinese mainstream (Chow 2013; Ngo 2013).

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Circulating at the same time as these assimilationist discourses is an apparently more positive portrayal of South Asians as a source of enriching multiculturalism and diversity in an internationalized Hong Kong. Yet are these two discourses really so contradictory as they might initially appear? In this chapter, I will critically analyze discourses around "diversity" in relation to Hong Kong South Asians. Focusing on educational contexts, this chapter will ask – what does it actually mean to talk about diversity? What forms are diversity are acceptable or valued? And in what ways does it benefit – or not benefit – individuals to be seen as "diverse"?

This chapter will demonstrate that despite apparent good intentions, many efforts at raising awareness of "diversity" contribute to the homogenization of racial groups, reinforcement of racial and linguistic boundaries, and the rationalization of social stratification. "Diversity" and "integration" are therefore mutually reinforcing. Through ethnographic research with South Asian students at a multiethnic Hong Kong secondary school as well as analysis of Hong Kong media and policy, this chapter will demonstrate that such discourses of diversity depend on an understanding of society as composed of distinct and homogeneous blocks and target only superficial forms of diversity, like food and clothing, for celebration. Thus they help cast South Asians as a unified and exoticized group who are permanently "diverse." Schools are a key site within which these processes are reinforced, and accordingly this analysis will draw on ethnographic data from a Hong Kong secondary school, as well as considering how such ideologies are reflected in policy and the media.

2 Hong Kong as a Diverse City

Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China with a population of approximately 7.34 million in 2016 (Census and Statistics Department 2016). Its national branding has explicitly emphasized Hong Kong's international cosmopolitanism, positioning itself as "Asia's World City." However, the treatment and portrayal of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong operate on racially and socioeconomically stratified lines. Particularly, South Asian minorities face discrimination in employment, housing, banking, healthcare, and other domains and are underrepresented in higher education (Erni and Leung 2014).

According to the 2016 by-census, 92% percent of Hong Kong's population is ethnically Chinese. The largest South Asian groups include people of Indian (36,462 or 0.5% of the overall population in 2016), Nepali (25,472 – 0.3%), and Pakistani origins (18,094 – 0.2%) (Census and Statistics Department 2016). South Asians have a long history in Hong Kong – they have been present since its colonial beginnings in the 1840s. During the earlier days of rule by the British, South Asians came to Hong Kong primarily as merchants, soldiers, and ship workers (White 1994, p. 15). Many remained in Hong Kong and established the longstanding participation of South Asians in the police force and civil service, although Cantonese language requirements implemented since the handover in 1997 have largely eroded this

presence. Hong Kong's Racial Discrimination Ordinance (RDO) was implemented in 2010, significantly later than other types of anti-discrimination ordinances – the Sex Discrimination Ordinance and Disability Discrimination Ordinance were passed/implemented in 1995–1996 and the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance in 1996–1997 – and the RDO has been criticized as being weaker than these other ordinances (Erni and Leung 2014). Despite this, there is a widespread sense that racism is not a problem in Hong Kong, particularly because there has been little racially motivated violence (O'Connor 2010).

Hong Kong's overall education policy is complex and changing. The government promotes a language policy of "biliteracy and trilingualism" meant to encourage fluency in Cantonese, Mandarin, and English and literacy in English and Standard Written Chinese, although what exactly this standard is meant to look like on a societal level and who is meant to attain it is often left unspecified (for further discussion, see Fleming 2017). Debates over the medium of instruction have resulted in a generally stratified school system, especially at secondary level, in which the best schools teach in English and attending a Chinese-medium school means effectively being streamed into the "non-university track" (Lin and Man 2009; Tsang 2009). Newer "fine-tuning" policies implemented since 2013 have attempted to address this imbalance (Chan 2014), but English-language education is still a mark of prestige and seen as better preparation for Hong Kong's universities, which are all English-medium.

The majority of working-class South Asians attend Chinese-medium (CMI) schools (where "Chinese" generally means spoken Cantonese and Standard Written Chinese in traditional characters), which often have little in the way of Chinese as a Second Language (CSL) provision. Despite Hong Kong's Chief Executive vowing in 2014 to improve CSL provision, relatively little has been accomplished in terms of actual curriculum development, and so teachers at Hong Kong schools serving CSL learners are largely left to fend for themselves. As a result CSL provision is very inconsistent across schools in Hong Kong and is largely up to the will, time, and expertise of individual teachers and schools. Unless parents can afford very expensive school fees at Hong Kong's international schools, the most common alternative for minority students to CMI education are the formerly so-called "designated" schools, which target working-class ethnic minorities specifically. These schools teach in English but do not share in the prestige of mainstream English-medium schools and generally have lower university admission rates. Designated schools have also faced criticism for being segregationist; in 2013–2014 the Education Bureau removed the designated school label and introduced funding measures designed to get more South Asian students into mainstream schools, but the former designated schools still exist in largely unchanged form. In 2009, about one fourth of Hong Kong South Asian students were attending designated schools, and the majority of the rest were at CMI schools (Tsung et al. 2010, p. 18).

Terminology around different ethnic groups in Hong Kong is somewhat contested; the term "ethnic minorities" in Hong Kong is typically understood to be referring specifically to working-class nonwhite minorities, particularly South and Southeast Asian groups. Middle and upper class minorities, especially white

minorities, are usually termed "expatriates." I have generally used "South Asian" to refer to the people I am discussing, but this is also not a perfect term, as individuals with non-South Asian backgrounds are sometimes treated as part of the same category or may share similar experiences. Of course, the "groupness" of any of these terms' referents should not be taken for granted. The extent to which there are easily definable and identifiable ethnic groups at all is highly questionable – these categories are much more diffuse and overlapping than the use of these terms suggests. Individuals also may have very different orientations to these labels. The fact that ethnic category terms are often taken for granted is one of the problems of the discourses I outline below.

This study draws on ethnographic fieldwork which took place at a secondary school I call MSC Secondary. I conducted 5 months of fieldwork here between February and June 2013, including participant observation, interviews, and questionnaires; this chapter primarily draws on data from interviews and ethnographic observation in the school. At the time of fieldwork, MSC had recently undergone some significant changes, moving from a school which primarily served recently immigrated students from mainland China to one which in 2011 had begun recruiting South Asian students in order to combat the threat of falling enrollment. This meant that while upper forms were still entirely ethnically Chinese, lower forms were split into three streams – a Cantonese-medium stream for ethnic Chinese students, an English-medium stream for South Asian students, and a bilingual stream for the best students from each ethnic grouping. Most of my time at MSC was spent with students in the English-medium and bilingual classes in Form 1, who were generally around 11–13 years old. The analysis that follows draws on my experiences with these students, as well as discussions with teachers, and media and policy analysis.

Due to the importance that has been placed on learning Cantonese and how central language is to structuring social stratification in Hong Kong, language ideologies offer a particularly useful lens through which to examine the issues below. Beliefs about language "often index the political and economic interests of individual speakers, ethnic or other interest groups, and nation states" (Kroskrity 2010, p. 192) and thus provide a way to examine how beliefs about broader social structures are encoded (Irvine and Gal 2000; Kroskrity 2010; Silverstein 1979; Woolard and Schieffelin 1994). Semiotic relations of indexicality link linguistic or social-semiotic features to particular speakers and meanings (Silverstein, 1979). "Diversity" itself is a term which obviously has a complex web of ideological associations and competing interpretations (Urciuoli 2010). Although other forms of social organization such as gender certainly play a significant role in the categorization and experiences of South Asians, the discussion below will primarily focus on ethnic/racial/national diversity, and the way that these categories are linked to language use.

3 The Problem of Integration

A common explanation for the problems facing working-class minorities in Hong Kong is that they have not successfully "integrated" into Hong Kong life. Language, specifically a perceived lack of Cantonese abilities among minority groups, is frequently cited both as a key factor preventing integration and the most important feature needed in order for successful integration to occur. Pinning this problem to language is a prominent feature of much discussion in the media and by NGOs working with ethnic minorities (Carvalho 2017; Ngo 2013; Novianti 2007; SCMP editors 2015). Thus while the government is also blamed for failing to provide adequate Chinese as a Second Language support, Hong Kong South Asians are under significant pressure to learn Cantonese.

Some of these ideologies can be identified in the text of the 2014 policy address given by Hong Kong's Chief Executive:

> There are more than 60,000 South Asian ethnic minority people living in Hong Kong, an increase of 50% over the past decade. **They have much difficulty integrating fully into the community due to differences in culture, language and ethnic background.** The Government will strengthen education support and employment services for them. Most South Asian ethnic minority residents call Hong Kong home. **To integrate into the community and develop their careers, they must improve their ability to listen to, speak, read and write Chinese.** We will strengthen the Chinese learning support for ethnic minorities from early childhood education through to primary and secondary levels. (Hong Kong Information Services Department 2014, emphasis mine)

Here diversity is cast as a problem that must be solved, and a vision of integration as assimilation, especially through the means of Cantonese language learning, is set up as the necessary solution.

It is notable that the discourse of integration is targeted specifically at South Asian ethnic minority groups. Although upper and middle class "expatriates" are similarly not considered to be assimilated into Hong Kong's mainstream, the suggestion that they too need to integrate is virtually never raised. Instead they are positioned as desirable tokens of transnationalism, as Lo (2007, p. 438) writes: "Also considered as the alien others, white minorities are far more respected by the local Chinese than dark-skinned people from South and Southeast Asia. The Caucasian element is always seen as the most significant facade to make Hong Kong look global; it is also the most important constitutive factor that helps define the cosmopolitan nature of Hong Kong identity." Similar uneven valuations of diversity based on class and racial factors have been described in contexts such as South Korea and the United States (Hill 2008; Lippi-Green 2012; Lo and Kim 2011, 2012). Elite "non-locals" are welcomed as desirable links to the world, while non-elite non-locals are disorderly, threatening, and problematic – and thus in need of integration.

Yet because the actual meaning of "integration" is left underspecified, it becomes difficult to determine when a minority group or individual has actually succeeded in integrating. Benchmarks can perpetually be shifted so that even if South Asians are acknowledged as having learnt to speak Cantonese, the problem can then be pinned to a perceived lack of Chinese literacy, and so on. South Asian students in Hong Kong are officially classified as "non-Chinese speaking" regardless of linguistic skill, raising the question of when students could ever escape this category, no matter how well they master Cantonese (further discussion of "integration" issues in Fleming 2015).

Discourses which position minority group members as both in need of integration and unassimilable have been described in other contexts, including Belgium, Canada, and Spain (Blommaert and Verschueren 1998; Jaspers 2005; Li 2003; Martín Rojo 2010), though these issues of boundary-making and hierarchization take on their own unique resonances in Hong Kong's postcolonial context. Educating citizens about diversity seems to be a possible counterpoint to these assimilationist ideologies. In recent years a number of initiatives – by media outlets, NGOs, government bodies, and other organizations as well as individual schools and teachers – have sought to educate Hong Kongers about ethnic diversity in their city. However, the next section will demonstrate some of the ways in which, instead of disrupting stereotypes, discourses around diversity can instead homogenize ethnic categories and reinforce intergroup boundaries. When "diversity" is understood in this way, it becomes clear that such discourses are coherent with and contribute to the maintenance of the integration "problem."

4 Diversity as Homogenization

Rather than uncritically celebrating all activities which claim to advance the goal of diversity education/promotion, it is important to examine what exactly such activities achieve and what kind of understanding of "diversity" underpins them, as scholars of critical multiculturalism and pedagogy have pointed out (May 1999; Kubota 2001, 2004). I will argue that in many cases, "diversity" is understood in a limited and homogenizing way and accordingly that such discussions of diversity, even when well-intentioned, serve not to break down intergroup barriers but rather reinforce and legitimize them.

At MSC Secondary, one of the ways in which the school was responding to its changing structure was through the introduction of a number of activities designed to encourage students from different ethnic groups to interact with each other and to educate students about diversity, multiculturalism, and other nations. However, these activities and lessons often relied on an image of a "diverse" society as composed of a number of distinct, mutually exclusive and internally homogenous population blocks. This underpinning made such activities potentially counterproductive, as it covertly emphasized a portrayal of South Asians as exotic and unassimilable.

During such activities at MSC, South Asian students were often called upon to share their perspectives; yet in many cases it seems students were expected not to share based on their own personal experiences but rather to act as idealized representatives of "their" countries. Some students enjoyed and played up to their attributed role as national experts, but for others this positioning was more troubling, as seen in Excerpt 1. This excerpt comes from an activity called the "Immersion Scheme." This was a specially dedicated class period during which all the students in all three streams (Chinese, English, and bilingual) of Form 1 joined together to work on semester-long projects, in order to give students an opportunity for cross-ethnic cooperation and to practice speaking both English and Cantonese. During the semester of my fieldwork, students were working in groups to prepare for a "Multicultural Day." Each group had been assigned a country from which MSC students' families originated (either Nepal, India, Pakistan, China, or the Philippines) and were tasked with designing a booth introducing a festival from this country. During the planning periods, groups that found themselves without a member from the country they had been assigned would sometimes call over a student with the relevant background to ask questions. In the following excerpt, the group in question has been assigned Nepal and is considering designing their booth around Holi and calls over Keshav,[1] a Nepali-background student, to consult.

Excerpt 1. Immersion Scheme (from field notes)

1. Teacher: Keshav! Are you Nepalean?
2. [Keshav does not respond]
3. Teacher: Are you Nepalean?
4. Keshav: Am I Napoleon? I'm not Napoleon. I'm Nepali.
5. Teacher: Keshav, you're Nepalean. Do you celebrate Holi?
6. Keshav: No.
7. Teacher: [gesturing to computer] Ah! It's a lie!
8. [A girl in the group asks Keshav if Holi is celebrated in Nepal; he says that it is.
9. The teacher chides him, he responds that it is celebrated in Nepal but he has never gone.]
10. Boy: We don't care about you, we just want to know about your people.

In this excerpt, Keshav's account of his own experience – that he has never personally celebrated Holi – is rejected as inappropriate. What is needed is for him to act as a representative of an idealized, depersonalized version of Nepali identity. Here Keshav seems to express discomfort with this role, and in a later interview, Keshav commented on the Multicultural Day as follows:

Excerpt 2.

1. Keshav: We had a multicultural day but then it's just weird because I never
2. experienced anything, so those cultures seem weird - maybe a bit stupid
3. sometimes, like - my country celebrating a festival for cows[2] I have no idea
4. why

[1] All student names are pseudonyms.

[2] Keshav is referring here to the Nepali Hindu festival Gaijatra, which was the subject of another group's booth.

Keshav describes the Multicultural Day as detached from his own experiences – here he seems to position himself no closer to "those cultures" than any other non-Nepali classmate might be. Indeed, many students had complex, sometimes ambivalent attitudes toward their ethnic backgrounds and the way these were discussed by the school and in public. Like the British South Asian students described by Harris (2006), many students at MSC expressed pride in their backgrounds but at times also distanced themselves from their families' nations of origin. To varying extents many students also expressed a positive sense of identification with Hong Kong, and yet they often seemed to display an awareness that such ties might not be taken seriously by other interlocutors. In Excerpt 3, Tariq, a Pakistani background boy, expresses affective ties and a sense of identity attached to three nations but says that if asked he would simply explain himself as Pakistani to make his identity easier for others to understand:

Excerpt 3.

1. Kara: Where would you say you're from if someone asked you?
2. Tariq: I would rather say I'm from Pakistan. Because, I but- because I am born in
3. Hong Kong, and I'm British. hhh And I'm three of them! So I would just say that
4. I'm a Pakistani. It will not be confused. As easy

Tariq was born and had lived his whole life in Hong Kong and also expresses his transnational affiliations with both Pakistan and the UK (he said that his grandfather was from the UK and that his sister currently lived there). Yet his ultimate choice of Pakistani as an identifier is not based on his own feelings of personal identification but an awareness that this is the explanation most likely to be accepted by others.

Similarly, Priti, a Nepali background girl, said that she enjoyed her participation in Multicultural Day precisely because it gave her an opportunity to engage with elements of being "Nepali" that she did not usually encounter:

Excerpt 4.

1 Kara: What do you think about the, the festival that went on, with like -
2 Priti: Yeah it was fun
3 Kara: the billboards and stuff?
4 Priti: I got to taste the – you know, one of the mm, some of them got to choose
5 Nepal, right? And they – and I got after a long time, I got to eat a traditional food of
6 Nepal. Cause in our home, we usually eat light food, like Hong – like a bowl dim
7 sums or like that right? After a long time I got to eat an Indian food also, so it was
8 nice.

Priti here represents her daily life as much more "local" than her positioning as a representative of an idealized "Nepal" would predict, but there is little opportunity for her to get these practices officially ratified as evidence for any "local" status she might wish to claim.

In other cases, discussions of diversity did focus on ethnic diversity within Hong Kong itself rather than linking South Asians to their "homelands." However, such discussions at MSC and on wider scales of circulation were frequently centered on the difficulties faced by ethnic minority people. While it is good to acknowledge the real effects of racial discrimination and inequality, this focus risks a dominant image of South Asians as having and complaining about problems, and indeed Erni and

Leung note that South Asians are frequently positioned in the media as problem-prone, victims, and potential burdens to the taxpayer (2014, pp. 55–56).

At MSC, students discussed issues facing ethnic minorities during a unit on racial diversity in a class called Life and Society. During one of these lessons, students were asked to form groups and list problems that ethnic minorities might experience in Hong Kong. The teacher's expectation in this case seemed to be that the students would offer examples from their own experiences; yet while presenting their lists, students often seemed to describe the problems they cited as something experienced by a group of people they themselves did not belong to.

Excerpt 5. Life and Society class (from field notes)

1. Suraj: Food problems – can't get their own country food.
2. Ms Mak: You cannot buy suitable food for you to eat?
3. Suraj: Yes.

As some other students did in their presentations, Suraj uses third-person pronouns to suggest that the nonavailability of particular foods could be a problem for some people, but not necessarily for him. Ms. Mak, the Life and Society teacher, reframes this by replacing the third person pronouns with second person pronouns, attributing the complaint to Suraj himself. In contrast, during another group's discussion of the problem of "social inclusion," Faryal used first person pronouns to comment, "They don't think of us as equals." Language was very frequently brought up as a potential source of difficulty, but here again some students seemed to resist the implication that they themselves were insufficient Cantonese speakers, as seen in Excerpt 6.

Excerpt 6. Life and Society class (from field notes)

1. Rebecca: Some of the ethnic minorities don't know Chinese.
2. Hasan (from audience): I know Chinese!

Here, Hasan challenges the portrayal of all minorities as unsuccessful Cantonese learners by offering his own Cantonese skills as a counterexample, which indeed builds on Rebecca's initial framing of not knowing Cantonese as a problem faced by only *some* ethnic minority people – in contrast to dominant narratives that attribute a lack of Cantonese to *all* Hong Kong South Asians. Yet his response was not taken up by the teacher or other students. This discursive erasure (Irvine and Gal 2000) takes place simultaneously on broader institutional levels – as noted above, all South Asian students are classed as "non-Chinese speaking" by the Education Bureau. "Non-Chinese speaking" is clearly an ethnic label rather than a linguistic one, as it applied regardless of Cantonese language ability. Given this underpinning, it is not clear how South Asian students could ever get themselves recategorized as "Chinese-speaking." Repeatedly in the course of discussions around diversity, students seemed to be asked to inhabit experiences and categories that did not match their own understanding of their daily realities. The constant emphasis on an attributed lack of success in Hong Kong and on the way their homogenized national origins are different helps present South Asian students as maximally and problematically foreign.

During the same series of lessons, students at MSC took issue with their course textbook's presentation of the topic of Hong Kong's diversity. One page included the caption "Can you recognize a Hindu temple in Hong Kong?" underneath a photo of a Hong Kong religious building. The photograph actually depicted the Sikh temple in Wan Chai, as several students pointed out with indignation.

Photos of two other Hong Kong textbooks on the topic of diversity education went viral on Hong Kong social media in 2014 after being posted on the blog HongWrong and were picked up by the international press (Grundy 2014a, b; Strauss 2014; Al Jazeera 2014). Both textbooks were criticized for reinforcing racist stereotypes. The first came from a primary three textbook which, under the heading "Racial Harmony," asked students to match ethnicities to pictures of people accompanied by statements such as "I am a Filipino. I am a domestic helper in Hong Kong," "I am British. I am an English teacher," and "I am Indian. I study in an international school."

The second was from a primary four textbook. This textbook asks students to match photographs of people to their "race" (the choices are white, black, brown, and yellow). It then provides some "common characteristics" of these races, from which students should select the correct answers. The list is reproduced here; the parentheses contain the options which students were supposed to choose between.

> White: Light skin, tall, (flat/narrow) nose, (thin/thick) lips
> Black: Very dark skin, tall, flat and wide nose, (thin/thick) lips, curly hair
> Brown: Dark skin, (big/small) nose, (thin/thick) lips
> Yellow: Yellow skin, (blue/dark brown) eyes, high cheek bones

The drawings next to each box represent the "white" person with a T-shirt and baseball cap, the "black" person with a T-shirt, the "yellow" person in a kimono, and the "brown" person shirtless and with tribal-looking tattoos.

It is clear from these examples that diversity education cannot be uncritically accepted as positive. Diversity education can rely on simplistic stereotypes about the groups in question, homogenizing, delegitimizing, and misrepresenting the experiences of individuals. Repeated references to diversity emphasize indexical links with foreignness – in a sense it does not matter for these ideologies if the building in the photo is a Hindu or Sikh temple; they have been lumped together in the realm of "non-Chinese." "Diversity" becomes a quality which only applies to individuals outside the unmarked norm; only "they" are "diverse" (Urciuoli 2010).

Where discourses of diversity in Hong Kong are celebratory, they tend only to involve superficial forms of diversity such as food, dress, and festivals – other more "serious" aspects are still presented as in need of integration. Thus one can dress up and eat "diverse" foods at Multicultural Day while still maintaining that South Asians' lack of assimilation is problematic. As Blommaert and Verscheuren (1998, p. 99) write in their analysis of similar discourses in Europe:

> Although the presence of these foreign elements in Belgian society is officially declared to be a form of 'cultural enrichment'..., a detailed analysis... reveals that Belgian society wants to be 'enriched' only in domains such as exotic cuisine, exotic music, and dance – in sum, folklore. Socially, culturally, and linguistically, if not religiously, immigrants should

> 'integrate' or de-ethnicize themselves, to the point where, as one government party's policy document on immigrants states, 'Migrants should become Flemish.'

The burden of this assimilation is placed with minority group members themselves, who are expected to shed any marked cultural or linguistic practices, even while racialized definitions of the "local" simultaneously ensure they are not recognized for any "local" practices they do adopt. Note, for instance, the examples of Priti and Tariq above, as well as the difficulty for students of moving out of the "non-Chinese speaking" category. The perceived failure to assimilate and exotified cultural qualities are then used as further explanations for any problems South Asians might face in Hong Kong, as in the following quote from an editorial in the South China Morning Post.

> Perhaps we also need to examine ethnic minorities, tolerance of Hongkongers. Do they attempt to integrate themselves into society? So far, this has been a one-sided argument. It should be remembered that Hong Kong is more diverse and democratic than any other city. (Young, 2013)

Here, as in many discussions of diversity and integration, in Hong Kong, there is a token acknowledgement that the Hong Kong "mainstream" could perhaps do more to accommodate minorities, yet the underlying assumption is that the opportunities for engagement and socioeconomic mobility are already there if the South Asians would merely take them. Though students at MSC were often critical of how they were treated and perceived by the Chinese majority, some of them also seemed to have internalized a sense of this personal responsibility, as Naeem, a Pakistani background boy who spoke very good Cantonese, put it when asked why he had chosen to attend MSC:

Excerpt 7.

1. Naeem: In this school we can learn many different subjects and we can also
2. communicate with those Chinese student – which maybe we can tell them about our
3. culture so that maybe they won't discriminate us.

Discrimination here is framed as a function of a lack of knowledge about minority groups and their cultural practices (instead of a general awareness of the problems of discrimination), and it is up to South Asians to redress this deficit. Similarly, critiques of corporate "diversity management" and discourses of success, failure, and "appropriateness" in second language/heritage language education have argued that "diversity" is often defined through the gaze of those in power, who espouse the value of multiculturalism while still retaining the ability to evaluate whether or not minority group members are appropriately "diverse" (Park 2013; Rosa and Flores 2017).

Thus the true collusion of diversity education and assimilationist ideologies becomes clear – a few superficial and nonthreatening forms of diversity are targeted for celebration while emphasizing minorities' indexical links with "foreign," exoticized practices. This helps to homogenize the differences among South Asian students, including any of their claims to being "local" – South Asians that speak Cantonese or have assimilated culturally are semiotically erased (Irvine and Gal

2000). Instead South Asians become "forever foreigners" (Lo and Reyes 2009) who are portrayed simplistically. Their individual histories, affiliations, and linguistic abilities are not recognized, and yet they are also held personally responsible as individuals for assimilating themselves into "local" practices. Hong Kong can give itself credit for open-mindedness and tolerance while maintaining the ideological boundaries that keep South Asians outside the cultural mainstream.

5 Conclusion

This analysis has outlined some ways in which discussion of "diversity" and multiculturalism can subtly and ironically help maintain an image of minority groups as permanent others who can never really integrate into the mainstream or shed the marked quality of being "diverse." Materials and efforts toward diversity education are often overly simplified or simply mistaken and cast South Asians as exotic tokens of homogenized cultures. From this it is clear that recognizing some form of linguistic or cultural diversity does not mean embracing heterogeneity – it can in fact constrain heterogeneity (Piller 2016; Stroud 2004). In other words, a "naive, static and undifferentiated conception of cultural identity… end[s] up being not that dissimilar from the new racisms of the Right" (May 1999, p. 13).

Although this chapter has focused on how "diversity" discourses construct homogenized images of South Asians, they are not the only essentialized, racialized group in Hong Kong – the category of "Chinese," for instance, is similarly taken for granted. The "Chinese" are, like the "South Asians," a much more complex and heterogenous group than diversity discourses make them out to be, with a wide variety of migration histories, cultural practices, linguistic resources (including Sinitic varieties such as Mandarin, Hakka, Fukien, Chiu Chau, etc.), and socioeconomic situations. Indeed, imagining a unified "South Asian" block helps to construct an essentialized "Chineseness" by way of contrast.

With such discourses of diversity keeping South Asians indexed as perpetually foreign, it seems to be impossible at present for South Asians to actually be recognized as having integrated or for them to get credit for any "local" linguistic and cultural practices they have adopted. However, given the assimilationist underpinnings of local understandings of integration, it is also important to ask whether integration should be seen as a worthwhile or desirable goal. In other words, even if South Asians *could* culturally and linguistically assimilate and be acknowledged as having done so, would they want to? The contrast in portrayals of and expectations concerning "expatriates" and South Asians is again notable here. Although both expatriates and working-class South Asians are seen as ethnic outsiders, the pressure to integrate is applied unevenly and overwhelmingly to the South Asians. Expatriates are constructed by dominant discourses of diversity as enriching transnational links, enhancing Hong Kong's status as a global cosmopolitan city; thus there is no need for them to integrate. Working-class South Asians, on the other hand, do not get the same kind of social credit for their transnational links. In any

case, it is clear that minorities' learning of Cantonese on its own would not be sufficient to resolve underlying racial- and class-based barriers.

This is all not to say that there is no role for education to play or that all efforts in Hong Kong have been counterproductive. There is a widespread lack of awareness among ethnic Chinese that many South Asian families have been in Hong Kong for generations and a sense that Hong Kong is a fundamentally Chinese society in which a certain amount of racism is unproblematic, which education might usefully address – a commenter on a recent article on the situation of Hong Kong's ethnic minorities wrote, "If minorities feel neglected in HK, they have the choice by not coming to HK, or go to an inclusive country like America. HK does not force minorities to stay in HK where they find social inequality" (comment on Blundy and Leung, 2016). At MSC itself, activities like the Immersion Scheme were still being negotiated, and many teachers and administrators were deeply concerned with and thinking hard about minority education issues. On a follow-up visit in 2015, I attended a set of presentations during the Immersion Scheme by form 1 students about diversity and different cultures, but this time the presentations focused on the history of minority communities in Hong Kong and their contributions to Hong Kong society. Posters on the school walls asked critical questions about why wealthy white businessmen like Allan Zeman had successfully applied for naturalization as Chinese citizens, while other naturalization applications by successful South Asians, such as Chinese University of Hong Kong professor Shekhar Kumta, had been rejected (Leung 2008; Cheung 2012; see Fleming 2015 for further discussion of these cases).

That is to say that there are educators who are working hard to get students and the public thinking carefully about issues of race and equality, but clearly we cannot assume that anything which places itself under the heading of diversity education is necessarily a positive. Instead this chapter demonstrates some ways in which a great deal of what falls under this label in Hong Kong reinforces the marginalization of South Asians. If this is how "diversity" is portrayed, is the oft-cited goal of increased "awareness" really beneficial? A critical examination of diversity discourse is necessary in order to establish paths toward a more inclusive social reality.

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