Being and Belonging in America: 
Second-Generation Asian American Teachers’ Stories of Negotiating Identity & Culture

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Abstract

In the last quarter century, the United States has seen the highest levels of immigration since the turn of the 19th century (Frey, 2020; Massey, 2013). Unlike migrations of the past, this one has brought Brown and Black folks from across the Global South to the United States, forever changing the demographics of the nation (Frey, 2020; Foner, 2000; Massey 2013). This boom is largely a result of post-colonial conditions, neoliberal policy, and U.S. military incursions that have destabilized the globe. These factors, along with the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, have ushered in a large-scale shift in U.S. demographics, that while geographically uneven, continues to change the notion and nature of American identity (Alba, 2018).

As the United States continues to experience large-scale immigration, primarily from Asia and Central and South America, we must confront the ways in which this reality is impacting our schools, teachers, and students. This dissertation is concerned with the implications of this ongoing transformation in demographics within the United States on the nature and notion of American identity, of what and who count as American, and the impacts of this shift on the realities for schools and the lives of teachers and students who labor and learn within them. In attending to this concern, this study focuses on Asian Americans, a population that significantly contributes to this demographic shift and who are increasingly the target of White anxiety and rage. In addition to socio-culturally situated contestations of belonging, this population has historically faced legal and formalized exclusion which has compounded Asian Americans’ relationship to the social imaginary of America. This contestation is even
more pronounced for Second-Generation Asian Americans, whose belonging is additionally complicated by their status as American-born.

This critical narrative study presents the stories of four Second-Generation Asian American elementary school teachers currently working at public elementary schools in the Twin Cities, alongside the researcher’s own story as U.S. student, teacher, and teacher-educator. These stories reveal fraught negotiations of identity and culture and the ways in which these teachers mobilize their Second-Generation Asian American identity in the service of their students.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

“Where are you from?”

I turn slightly to see Churchill, who should be making his way into line, standing uncomfortably close.

“I grew up near Boston, Churchill. Remember? Where Charlie\(^1\) is from.” I gently guide him towards the door.

I had known Churchill since kindergarten when he would introduce himself as Choo-Choo. It took him until the end of 1st grade to fit his whole name on one line. He is a hard kid to forget. Particularly when you see this on the class list:

Winston, Churchill

“No, no, no,” he continued, his head and hands shaking with disapproval. “Where are you from...like where is your home...You know, your country.”

I grin. Of course, I know what he is asking. It’s a question that benignly haunts you in New York, from bodegas to cabs to classrooms. Well, not everyone. Only those with a sort of foreignness about them. Those who exist in the space between White and African American.

\(^1\) *M.T.A.* (Steiner & Hawes, 1949) was one of my students’ favorite songs. Written as a campaign song in 1949, and then rerecorded by the Kingston Trio ten years later, the song tells the wild story of Charlie, stuck on the T in Boston because he could not pay the 5-cent fare increase.
“My family is from India, Churchill. Time to go.” I’ve almost got him out the door. He stops and glares at me. “India like…” and without pausing, he gracefully slides his hands to his chest in prayer, his head gliding side to side with bright eyes.

“Just like that,” I laugh. “You need to catch up,” I say, pushing him towards his class, now halfway down the hall. Churchill had a talent for chatting that his class and teacher had long lost patience for.

“I love those movies!” he smiled, scampering down the hall.

Churchill, at 8 years old, knew something that far too few of our teachers know. See, there is where you are from and there is where you are from. There is where you grow up, and there is the far away, often imagined land of our family, our culture, our ancestors. And it was not just Churchill who knew this. In a school where over 80% of the students spoke a language other than English at home and where nearly all were U.S. born to foreign-born parents, most of my students knew this truth. The invisible tether to a place few of us will ever visit, nevertheless, understand. To a there we may never know. And yet, it is a part of us. For us, the there is always also here.

**Situating the Study**

Wind tugging at my sleeve
Feet sinking in the sand
I stand at the edge where earth touches ocean
Where the two overlap
A gentle coming together
And other times and places a violent clash.

(Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 23)
I have spent most of my adult life sorting through the multiple and scattered pieces of my autobiography, attempting to heal the fissure induced by my hyphen; to see myself as wholly Indian-American. Much of the rift is the enduring impact of an education and society that place a question mark on the Americanness of those of us unable to melt into White society — that continues to ask that we exist in the White world as exception, rather than in a world that is always already ours.

My father first came to the United States from India in 1969 on a one-year work visa, settling into blustery Bloomington, Minnesota to work on Indian-made manufacturing machines. He would return to the U.S. alone, five years later, as a newly married graduate student, sponsored by my Maushi and Mama. In 1975, he was joined by my mother and eldest sister, just two years old at the time. Years of visa trouble ended in 1979, when all three received their green cards, setting down roots in Marlborough, Massachusetts, the primarily White, middle class suburb of Boston where I grew up. My father once told me that 1979 was the year he became American: *We had to decide, here*

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2 I am making the choice in this paper to capitalize White, Black, and Brown. I do this to distinguish between color and racialization in America. As others have noted, black, white, brown are simply colors – Black, White, and Brown, however, speak to the racialized identities of people from different diasporic communities.

3 Maushi and Mama are the Marathi words for maternal aunt and uncle.

4 While colloquially, we may use America and the U.S. interchangeably, that is not the case in this dissertation. I use the term “America” to reflect a collective, and problematic, social imaginary of the United States as singular, exceptional, and bound by
or there. We chose here. Nearly 15 years later, they would go on to become officially American.

Ours is an unexceptional migration story. One whose sponsorship trail originates in 1966 with a distant family friend, Uncle Lele’s sister’s husband, and pauses for now with the 2010 arrival of my youngest cousin, Rahul, who came to the U.S. as a newly married graduate student, sponsored by my parents.

As the third daughter of Indian immigrants to the United States, I did not have to face the questions and challenges of language immersion or cultural assimilation that my older sisters faced. While they spent their youths shuttled between India and the U.S., by the time I was born, my parents were well adjusted to life in the United States. I was born American. My history was the Pilgrims, Concord and Lexington, Boston Tea Party, Paul Revere. I ate meatloaf and hot dogs. I went to ballet and played the piano. I attended a private, Catholic elementary school – as a good daughter of New England does.

While my parents were well adjusted to public American life, in private, our home was discernibly Indian – Hindu to be certain, Maharashtrian5 to be specific.

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national narratives and mythologies, while “U.S.” is used to indicate bounded territory governed by the State.

5 Maharashtrian refers to the people and culture associated with the state of Maharashtra, the second most populous of India’s 28 states. While the 2011 national census placed the population at about 112 million, today, the number is estimated to be well over 120 million. It is located on the central west coast of India, stretching inland
Evenings were characterized by *chaha*, games of *pach, theen, dhon*, and calls to Pune to check on my grandparents. I ate *bhel puri* and *varan bhaat*. Bedtime stories were the fables of the Ramayana, part recited, part sung. Weekends were spent with other Indian families, at Indian classical concerts, and Hindi school. Those language classes did not stick, though, because my parents spoke Marathi, not Hindi at home. And more often than not they spoke English to me, and I spoke it back. I was and remain monolingual.

I grew up in the overwhelmingly White, middle class, progressive suburbs of Boston. My school district of five thousand students was 93% White and there was not a single Teacher of Color in the system. In fact, I did not have a Teacher of Color until I was in my junior year of college. Until I was 20. My schooling was shaped by the gaze of White teachers; teachers who meant well but knew and learned little about my family and my lived reality. Most often my teachers ignored my cultural heritage, avoiding drawing attention to any difference, in turn erasing my identity. At other times, I was made the token representative of all things South Asian, asked to teach everything from polytheism to Diwali.

I left my hometown to study amidst the true melting pot that is New York City. Yet, White, middle class women dominated my degree program. Again, I served as a sort of multicultural token. “Could you share a Hindu song?” my friends would ask, in a benign attempt to acknowledge my cultural heritage and also leverage their relationship in order to add a multicultural song to their catalog. The easy answer was “no,” but the

from the Arabian Sea and Konkan Coast to the northern region of the vast Deccan Plateau, and is home to the 7<sup>th</sup> most populous city in the world, Mumbai (Bombay).
more complicated one was that Hindu is not a language, my family does not even speak Hindi, and even if I did share a Marathi song, I would probably butcher the pronunciation.

These experiences span the breadth of my education, from elementary school to college, and even my graduate studies. I once brought a plate of sweets I had made for Diwali to a doctoral seminar focused on critically-oriented teacher education. The professor, whose work is in critical gender and race studies, stood stunned, asking me three times to repeat the word “Diwali” while standing in front of the class. He had never heard of it. There I was, back in the 3rd grade. I know first-hand the power of teachers, at every level, to reinforce the boundaries of belonging.

My father would likely tell me that I should be proud to teach others about my heritage. To this day, he will take any opportunity to share the Indian origins of everything from chess to helicopters. Yet, when I would ask my father where we came from as a child, he would regale me with mythologies of a lost homeland: “from the Caucus mountains through Greece and over the Himalayas, down the subcontinent to the Deccan Plateau,” he would say. Just two years ago, an Uncle told me that our people arrived in India by boat from Greece, stranded on the Konkan coast after a storm. “It’s been proven,” he argued, summoning all the confidence of every Indian Uncle. Even as a child, I thought these stories crazy. Now as an adult, I see the attempt to whiten our ancestry; to imagine a non-Brown origin; to be not of the subcontinent – but of Europe.

Growing up in the White suburbs, everything is measured against its congruence with Whiteness. It is the unspoken norm, and discourses of color evasiveness sustain its reality. See everyone as the same. Do not draw attention to difference. The framework of
Whiteness is maintained as normal. I went to New York, and then Minneapolis, to realize that I will forever be asked to navigate the White world; to explain myself to it, to make sense of myself on its terms. A world that when it bothers to see me, evaluates me through my proximity to Whiteness, and distance from Blackness, and then derives value from the depth in the rift of identity it has forged.

I recently conducted a study with colleagues that aimed to lead preservice teachers towards a more intersectional understanding of identity. What emerged from the work, in addition to a more nuanced imagining of identity, was the way the White women in the study deployed diversity as an object to be desired; as something to be traded and consumed; as an advantage they were deprived. The neoliberal project has made a commodity out of the experiences produced through and within the bodies of those who identify as Black, Indigenous or People of Color.

This study is about those bodies and the experiences that reverberate in and through them. It is about how experiences of exclusion, erasure, and ache contribute to the ways people like me – Second-Generation Asian Americans6 – understand our responsibility to students and schooling. As a woman of color and daughter of immigrants, my understanding of nation, migration, and schooling is inextricably

6 In current discourse, Asian American Pacific Islander is often the preferred term for this pan-racial identity category, in part because of shared experiences of foreignness and unmeltability within American society. In this dissertation, however, my participants trace their ancestry to continental Asia, and so I will use Asian American to describe their ethnoracial identity.
intertwined with my own experiences of growing up, learning, and living in the United States. It is a lifetime of confused teachers scanning White faces for Meghan, only to land on me when they have exhausted other options. My parents thought they were doing me a favor. “Did you want to spend your whole life having to spell your name to strangers?” my mom once asked. It is alive in my thinking, my work, and in my body. It lives in the friction generated through my everyday experiences of living within my hyphen.

**Statement of the Problem**

I worked and lived abroad for three years prior to beginning my PhD. During that time, I would often encounter the question that began this chapter: *Where are you from?* My answer was always the same. I am from the United States. This reply, however, was most often met with a look quite different from Churchill’s. Instead, I was often denied this claim and told that I was not American and then met with a barrage of questions, unsatisfied until I returned a more plausible answer. India. Yes, of course that makes sense. Indian, not American.

What is it about the social imaginary of America that excludes me? That says I don’t belong? This study begins from these questions.

The answer is a mostly obvious one. Brown skin. Brown eyes. Black hair. I do not fit the image that is conjured when you say “American.” Blue eyes, blond hair, white skin. That is the image the U.S. has long presented to the globe as American. In fact, very few Americans fit that image, and demographic data tells us that the number of blue-eyed, blond haired Americans is in decline (Frey, 2020; Sáenz & Johnson, 2018). Though, looking out at the faces in my Midwestern teacher education classes, you would not know it.
Before neoliberal multiculturalism co-opted racial and ethnic difference as strategic, as advantageous to global competitiveness, we were taught not to see difference. It was polite and respectful to see everyone as the same, same abilities, same capacities. But when you see everyone as the same, the social imaginary does not change. Color evasion continues to maintain the blond hair, blue eyed, White body as representative of America, both domestically and abroad.

Across this past year, America has been confronted with this long denial of the diverse lives that make up the nation. The lesson is everywhere. It is in racial and ethnic disparities in coronavirus health outcomes and vaccine distribution, in the inequitable access to broadband and the resulting impact on the ability to work and learn remotely, in George Floyd’s public murder and the police and governing leadership response to the resulting uprising and renewed racial justice movement. And maybe most palpably, in the January 6th White nationalist attack on the U.S. Capitol and the inadequate response both on that day and in holding the White mob accountable since.

At its heart, this contestation speaks to the diverging national imaginaries that constitute America, and the way this imaginary is constructed, surveilled, and reproduced. In the last quarter century, the United States has seen the highest levels of immigration since the turn of the 19th century (Frey, 2020; Massey, 2013). Unlike migrations of the past, this one has brought Brown and Black folks from across the Global South7 to the United States, forever changing the demographics of the nation.

7 While often nebulous, imprecise, and reductive, the term Global South can provide a productive framework for understanding regions and networks that exist
(Frey, 2020; Foner, 2000; Massey 2013). This boom is largely a result of post-colonial conditions, neoliberal policy, and U.S. military incursions that have destabilized the globe. These factors, along with the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, have ushered in a large-scale shift in U.S. demographics, that while geographically uneven, continues to change the notion and nature of American identity (Alba, 2018).

The year 2016 was the first year when the majority of babies born in the United States were babies of color (Yoshinaga, 2016) and according to the U.S. Census Bureau, this year over half of all children born in the U.S. will identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color, a trend that foreshadows overall population shifts as these children become adults (Colby & Ortman, 2015). In fact, 2044 is projected to be the year when the majority of people in the United States will identify as Black, Indigenous or People of Color (Colby & Ortman, 2015).

This critical narrative study is concerned with the implications of this ongoing demographic shift on the realities for schools and the lives of teachers and students who labor and learn within them. In attending to this concern, this study focuses on Asian Americans, a population that significantly contributes to this demographic shift and who are increasingly the target of White anxiety and rage. In addition to socio-culturally situated contestations of belonging, this population has historically faced legal and formalized exclusion which has compounded Asian Americans’ relationship to the social beyond and across the borders of nation, many of which were formerly colonized, and describes the geography of those negatively impacted by global capital accumulation (Guerrero, 2017; Nawyn, 2016a, 2016b).
imaginary of America. This contestation is even more pronounced for Second-Generation Asian Americans, whose belonging is additionally complicated by their status as American-born.

**Overview of Study**

This study examines how Second-Generation Asian American elementary school teachers negotiate their identity and culture in relation to their role in schools and responsibility to students. Second-Generation refers to the U.S.-born children of foreign-born U.S. residents or naturalized citizens (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Language around immigration and citizenship can be complex. For example, while everyone in my immediate family is a U.S. citizen, our status within and belonging to the nation occurred in different ways. My parents are naturalized U.S. citizens. They were born in India and migrated to the U.S. in the 1970s. They were designated as U.S. Residents with green cards indicating this status until 2006 when they went through the steps to become naturalized U.S. citizens. My eldest sister was born abroad and moved here as a small child, with more connection to America than to her home country of India. She underwent the naturalization process in 2008 and is now a U.S. citizen. She is considered a First-Generation American. My other sister and I are Second-Generation American, born and raised in the U.S. to parents who were, at the time, U.S. residents.

Drawing on bell hooks’ (1990) understanding of the margin as a site of resistance that offers the possibility for imagining new worlds, my research is centered on the stories of Second-Generation Asian American teachers. Currently, there are no official statistics or reports available that can tell us who and where these Second-Generation Asian American teachers are. In this dissertation, I explore the stories of four Second-
Generation Asian American elementary school teachers currently working at public elementary schools in the Twin Cities, alongside my own story as U.S. student, teacher, and teacher-educator. Together we examine the experiences of growing up, going to school, and teaching in the U.S. as Second-Generation Asian Americans. I hope that exploring their stories, stories from the margins, can shine a light into some dark corners in schools and schooling.

The Evolution of the Study

The study represented in this dissertation has evolved significantly since it was first conceived. Initially, this study was imagined as a dual-sited one, with the first-ring Twin Cities suburb of Roseville serving as one site, and my hometown, Marlborough, in suburban Massachusetts serving as the second. Both districts have seen a significant demographic shift in the past 30 years, with the White student population in each dropping around 25 points (87% White to 71% in Roseville and 93% White to 73% in Marlborough). Unfortunately, neither of these sites worked out.

State-level reporting indicated that 7% of the teachers in my hometown, meaning over 25 BIPOC teachers, worked in the district. I visited my hometown of Marlborough in September of 2019 to meet with administrators and begin initial outreach. I reached out to the teacher’s union leader and quickly discovered that I babysat for her children.

BIPOC is an acronym for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color that has emerged as a more accurately representative term to refer to those with specific racial identities, rather than generic language like minority and non-White that define one’s racial identity in relation to Whiteness.
when I was in high school. She joyfully showed me around the largest elementary school in the district introducing me as “a Marlborough Girl”. When we sat down to talk through the project, she was able to identify only two Teachers of Color in the entire district, both of whom worked in the high school. The numbers reported did not reflect the reality. This was later corroborated by the superintendent’s office which after months of outreach finally returned a two-sentence email which read in full: “We are unable to identify any staff that meet your needs. We will not be able to help you with this” (M. Murphy, personal communication, September 19th, 2019). The leader of the teacher’s union, and my former under the table employer, explained that the numbers were likely inflated by including teacher aides and paraprofessionals in the demographic count, most of whom were People of Color.

I later interviewed the previous superintendent, who had toggled between official, unofficial, and interim superintendent for the better part of 12 years and was now retired and much more amenable to speaking with me than the current superintendent. It did not hurt that she was my high school Latin teacher and the mother of a childhood friend. She, too, agreed that the statistics I had seen were inflated, likely to paint a better picture of Marlborough. “It’s a problem,” she said candidly, recounting the variety of partnerships she made and “minority job fairs” she attended to recruit Teachers of Color. She went on to share the behind closed door fights she had with, what she described as, the very conservative school board and city leadership as she attempted to meet the needs of Marlborough’s changing population. “I tried,” she said in earnest.

After this disappointing and frustrating visit to Marlborough, I set to work reorienting my study to be singularly sited in Roseville, Minnesota. I met with principals,
sent inquiries to the teacher’s union, and met with the Director of Teaching and Learning for the district who expressed great interest in my project. I was off and running.

Two months later, just as I was scheduling initial meetings with interested educators, COVID-19 brought my study, and quite literally the globe, to a full stop. I waited through March and April of 2020, hoping, like the rest of the world, that things would soon return to normal. In May, I began a third revision of my study. I removed site-visits and classroom observations from my data collection, pivoting to an entirely virtual study based on interviews. And as interested educators quickly pulled out of my study as they tried to figure out how to teach during a pandemic, I opened up the geography of the study to the whole of the Twin Cities region. Then, at the end of the month, like many others, I watched the police murder of George Floyd on my phone, from my bed, just five miles away.

I finally picked back up my study in July of 2020, nearly five months later than I had intended to begin. The study I conducted, the methods, analysis, and findings presented in this dissertation reflect a very different reality than the one in which this study was initially conceived.

**Methodology**

This study is a critical narrative inquiry wherein story serves as the central unit of study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The project is guided by the following three questions:

1) What do the stories of Second-Generation Asian American elementary school teachers reveal about their experiences growing up and going to school in America?
2) How do Second-Generation Asian American elementary school teachers negotiate their identities and culture within their teaching contexts? What successes, tensions and grappling emerge?

3) In what ways does the experience of growing up in an immigrant family shape the ways Second-Generation Asian American elementary school teachers take up their work in the schools and in their classrooms?

Over the course of multiple in-depth interviews, four Second-Generation Asian American elementary school teachers shared their stories of growing up, going to school, and teaching in the United States. The teachers also completed demographic questionnaires which provided additional context for their storytelling. The stories that emerged from this data collection explored themes of belonging and exclusion, trust and authority, and the loss of cultural heritage.

Once the data collection was concluded, I engaged in a dual process of thinking with stories. I began by analyzing the stories shared in the interviews using the Listening Guide method, a protocol for engaging in multiple and successive ‘readings’ of interview transcripts (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008; Gilligan & Eddy, 2017; Gilligan et al., 2003). Guided by the “trail of underlinings, notes, and summaries” (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 266) that emerged from this process, I then re-storied (Barone, 2007) the text through a process narrative construction (Polkinghorne, 1995). Through this process new narratives are constructed by the researcher based on the initial interview texts. These new texts, however, are more explicitly understood as interpretations on the part of the researcher, rather than “literal representations” (Britzman, 1995).
In this narrative construction, the words of the participants as told in the interviews are reorganized and re-presented in new storied formations, rather than presented in block quotation. In this dissertation, the re-storied narratives take on three formations: I-Poems, narrative profiles, and a narrative story chain. Together, these three types of stories re-present the experiences shared by my participants in the interviews. Since narrative inquiry considers narrative construction to be both process and product, both analysis and findings, there is no formal findings chapter outside of the narratives presented in chapter 4. Chapter 5, however, does discuss the strands that emerged from the stories presented in chapter 4.

**Significance of the Study**

As the United States continues to undergo massive demographic shifts there is an urgency to unseat the White, Eurocentric, normative framework of schooling and reimagine a more inclusive and just education system. This study aims to contribute to the ongoing scholarship on Teachers of Color, Asian American teachers, and immigrant teachers that is concerned with imagining this future. More specifically, this study contributes to emerging scholarship on the largely unexamined experiences of U.S.-born, Asian American teachers, whose intersecting identities as People of Color and children of immigrants, as well as their perceived identity as perpetually foreigner, uniquely situate them within educational research settings.

While the United States continues to experience large-scale immigration from the Global South, and primarily from Asia and Central and South America, we must confront the ways in which this reality is impacting our schools, teachers, and students. Today’s student population is the most diverse in U.S. history. They speak more languages than
ever before. They are tied to the everyday realities of more nations than the students of any previous generation. When these students become adults, our workforce, political sphere, social and cultural worlds will be forever transformed. As the children of fourth wave immigrants enter the teaching profession, they bring with them unique experiences and understandings of America that can provide insight into the shifting nature of American identity as the U.S. continues to “brown”.

Many scholars from many disciplines are concerned with this future. My study zooms in on first exploring the worlds of those who have experienced this transformation from a student learning in school to an adult working in schools. These teachers become a powerful symbol for their students, a representation of possible futures, and a resource for their community. While Asian teachers make up less than 2% of the U.S. teacher workforce, they represent the fastest growing population in the U.S. and increasingly are the target of teacher education programs designed to diversify the teacher pipeline. Asian Americans will be a significant share of the teacher population in the coming decades.

Yet, our data collection and reporting systems often render this population invisible. In teacher statistics, Asian Americans are often termed “other” and in teacher studies, more often than not, Asian Americans are subsumed into the collective Teacher of Color category. While scholarship on Teachers of Color is necessary and important, attending to racialization does not speak to the significant ways that Asian American teachers’ experiences are shaped by their ethnicity and by growing up in immigrant families. Asian American teachers’ experiences in schools, and more broadly, experiences living in the U.S., are significantly different from their White, African American, and Indigenous colleagues.
Additionally, much of the research on the demographic gap between teachers and students focuses on status as Person of Color or member within a specific ethnic group, without considering the ways these ethnic and racial identities intersect with generational status. Thus, Second-Generation Americans of Color are also obscured within teacher data and aggregated into generalized statistics, which does not address the contours of their identities that are shaped by their ties to transnational networks. This study aims to bridge this disjuncture by looking at the intersection of racial, ethnic, and national identities, by seeing the Second-Generation Asian American teacher at their unique intersection, as opposed to at their individual subjectivities.

The purpose of this dissertation is not to discuss the contestations and trials experienced by Asian Americans, which has been widely theorized by scholars from across the social sciences (Bhattacharya, 2016; Chin et al, 1974; Lee, 2015; Liu, 1998; Lowe, 1996; Ngai, 2004; Said, 1978; Takaki, 1993, 1998; Trinh, 1989; Zia, 2000). Rather, I am interested in how this experience of contestation and hybridity, of their uniquely intersecting identities, shapes their orientation to the profession and their commitments to and desires for students. Contending with the worlds of these teachers, whose stories are often untold and whose experiences are often rendered invisible, may reveal possibilities for imagining a more accurately representative Americanness that can take up the multiple, dynamic, and layered identities that students bring into the classroom. Key insights for preparing teachers to work with the increasingly transnational student population of the United States can emerge by deepening our knowledge of these understandings and experiences of America.
Theoretical Frameworks

This study draws on socio-cultural, post-structural, postcolonial, and critical race scholarship on world-making and identity construction to theorize the ways the social imaginary of America, and in turn the identities that collectively forge this imaginary, are shifting in response to the transformation in U.S. demographics. In the 1983 text *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson examines nationalism and nations as cultural constructs bound together by a largely unexamined tether to an imagined community. Rather than natural and inevitable, Anderson suggests that belonging to the nation is socioculturally constructed through the imaginings of the people themselves. Similar to Said’s (1978) conceptualization of imagined geographies, the somewhat arbitrary imagined boundaries of what constitutes “ours” versus “theirs,” such imaginings enable containment and boundary maintenance defining who is included in the imagining and who is excluded. Imagined, however, does not imply these belongings do not exist, but rather, that they exist through collective perception and reiterative processes of negotiation and contestation.

I understand identity to be uniquely positioned at multiple distinct intersections. Asher (2002) reminds us, “All identities are located at the intersections of race, class, gender/sexuality, culture, history, and geography. All identities, cultures, representations are hybrid, dynamic, context-specific and negotiated” (p. 90). While socio-culturally situated, our identity is further produced and located within “specific historic and social contexts and power relations” (Ngo, 2010, p. 11).

I draw on Bourdieu’s theorizations of habitus and field to understand what guides the performance of identity across various social worlds. Bourdieu described habitus as
generative “systems of durable, transposable dispositions” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 53) produced by, in, and through a larger social context and repeated material engagements in the social world. Habitus is not “a natural or merely individual trait” but a socialized way of being that varies across “time, place, and across power distributions” (Navarro, 2006, p. 16) and in different fields. Bourdieu describes fields as the distinct arenas that comprise the social world each with their own set of rules, norms, and forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, one’s identity is socially mediated and negotiated, actively constructed, culturally constituted, and dynamically performed in relation to structures and forces of power.

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) theorized intersectionality as one way to consider how our multiply situated identities work relationally. Crenshaw began this work troubled by the employment discrimination case of a black woman whose experience did not exist within the legal system’s boundaries of race or gender, but rather at its intersection (Crenshaw, 2016). Crenshaw suggested that we must broaden the frame for understanding these categories of oppression and used an analogy of an intersection to demonstrate how oppressions are often overlapping, creating multiple levels of social injustice. She argued that minoritized women often face multiple subordinations and that

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9 I use the term minoritized, rather than minority, to call attention to the socially constructed, temporally and geographically situated, and systemically produced processes through which certain racial, ethnic, and gendered groups, amongst others, are rendered to the margins in a society.
an approach that interrogates only one of these oppressions serves as a “denial of a fundamental dimension of our subordination” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1252).

Vivian May (2015) extended the work Crenshaw in Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries. She argued for a move towards matrix thinking, an approach that “considers how inequalities intermingle” and “attends to within-group differences” (p. 22), revealing enmeshments and multiplicities. May argued that intersectionality is not simply a way to conceive of identity, but rather an epistemological and ontological approach. She describes intersectionality as an orientation that attempts:

to dismantle epistemic distortions and structural power asymmetries, because it intervenes in intermeshed inequalities and traces patterns of systematic, asymmetrical harm. It contests the epistemic distortions and the material consequences that result from partitioned social ontologies…and categorical thinking. Intersectionality has also long demonstrated the need to actively resist the violence and fragmentation sustained by single-axis logics. (May, 2015, p. 189)

Charles Mills (1997) in his seminal work, The Racial Contract, discussed how normative logics that underlie the modern era are predicated on misinterpreting and misrepresenting the reality in which all people live. He described this as an “inverted epistemology, an epistemology of ignorance…and global cognitive dysfunction” (Mills, 1997, p. 18). Singular construct or single-axis approaches that privilege one construct (race, gender, class, etc.) perpetuate this epistemology of ignorance. Approaching research through a singular lens serves to obscure and erase “subjectivities, knowledges, bodies, cosmologies, memories, histories, or worldviews” (May, 2015, p. 200) that could
offer more nuanced understandings. This complicity in not-knowing reinforces and legitimizes ignorance for some in the service of the oppression of others. May (2015) invokes Mills’ (1997) notion in defining intersectionality as a “heuristic for exposing and challenging epistemologies of ignorance” (May, 2015, p. 186).

May goes on to argue that “intersectionality highlights how lived identities, structural systems, sites of marginalization, forms of power, and modes of resistance ‘intersect’ in dynamic, shifting way” (p. 21). She defines intersectionality as a “justice-oriented approach” (p. 228) with roots in Black feminisms that is “open-ended, dynamic, and ‘biased’ toward realizing collective justice” (p. 251). It “understands oppression and resistance to be ongoing-relational processes” (p. 237) and is working towards “radical justice and crafting a world in which all can flourish” (p. 226-7).

In thinking through the ways that race and ethnicity are constructed, produced, and performed, I draw on Goldberg (1992) theorization of ethnorace which conceptualizes intersectionality in terms of the co-constituting and intertwined identities of ethnicity and race. Alcoff (2009) expands on Goldberg’s theorization, arguing that “the distinctiveness of race and ethnicity is shallow at best” (p. 119), citing the ways in which racial meanings are often implied in ethnic identities, such as Italian or Mexican. Rather than suggesting ethnorace as a replacement to the frameworks of race or ethnicity, Alcoff argues that it can provide an additional, and perhaps more appropriate, framework for “develop[ing] better descriptive tools to characterize and understand current realities” (2009, p.121). She, therefore, describes ethnorace as “an identity that is the product of self-creation, at the same time that it acknowledges the uncontrolled racializing aspects associated with the visible body” (2006, p. 246). As such, ethnorace provides a valuable
framework for making sense of the experiences of Second-Generation People of Color, and in particular for Latinx and Asian Americans, in relation to their belonging to the nation.

Many scholars have theorized the experiences of those living at the intersections of the racial binary and ethnic Otherness, understanding this in-betweenness through concepts such as, mestiza consciousness (Anzaldúa, 1987), interstitiality (Asher, 2005), hybrid consciousness (Asher, 2002), hybridity (Bhabha, 1994), working the hyphen (Fine, 1994) and unfixed liminality (Lowe, 1996). Joshi (2006) describes the ethnoracialized contours of this experience through the concept of unmeltability, referencing Suzuki’s (1979) concept of the unmeltables whom he describes as immigrants of color unable to racially melt, to disappear, into American society. It is the confluence of unmeltability and the unique experience of being children of immigrants that I intend to unpack in this study.

**Overview of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is presented in five chapters. The first introduces the study, situating myself as researcher and previewing the dissertation. Chapter 2 discusses literature on U.S. immigration, impacts of globalization and neoliberalism, dimensions of citizenship including new ways of imagining belonging to the nation, and scholarship on the ways schools contribute to and undermine belonging to the nation as well as the resulting impacts on teacher education. Chapter 3 introduces narrative inquiry as the methodology utilized in this study and includes a detailed outline of the project including research contexts, participant recruitment, and processes of data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 represents the narrative heart of the dissertation. In this chapter, I present
stories of and from my four participants in three ways: I-Poems generated from the words of the participants; narrative profiles drawn on the details shared in the interviews; and finally, through a story chain in which I look across the stories told by the participants, stringing together their narratives to make manifest the nuanced and subtle understandings that their stories allow entry into. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation by first illuminating and further examining the larger contexts and concepts drawn from the narratives presented in chapter 4. It closes the dissertation by then highlighting the significance and contributions of the project as well as offering implications for future research.
Chapter 2: Tracing the History, Considering the Literature

This dissertation is concerned with the ways that Second-Generation Asian American teachers experience growing up and going to school in the U.S. and how these experiences impact how they understand their responsibilities to students and schooling. In this chapter, I explore existing scholarship that addresses the global, historic, and contemporary factors impacting migration, schooling, and teaching to offer a contextualization of the experiences and stories shared by the participants in my study. All my participants identify as Asian American, meaning that while they are “officially” American, their families migrated to the U.S. from Asia. Additionally, all my participants are Second-Generation Americans, meaning they are the U.S. born children of immigrants. This chapter aims to situate the intersecting Second-Generation American and Asian American identities within larger discourses of immigration, globalization, citizenship, and multiculturalism.

This chapter begins by exploring the long, complex, and highly contested story of immigration in the United States. The opening section of this chapter offers a brief tracing of the various laws and policies that have gatekept immigration in the U.S., including the landmark and last significant immigration reform, the 1965 Hart-Celler Act, which radically transformed the immigration and naturalization process for Asian Americans. I consider how this Act has contributed to the demographic shift we are currently experiencing in the United States, and in particular, the explosion of immigration from South, East, and Southeast Asia. Once I situate my participants within this Asian American diasporic community, I then consider the contours of their identities shaped by their Second-Generation American status.
I continue by exploring the implications of the ongoing U.S. demographic shift, that my participants and I are actively contributing to, on the nature and stability of the Nation-State and on the social imaginary of America. I begin by discussing how contemporary manifestations of globalization and neoliberalism have reconfigured networks and allegiances around the globe, thereby contributing to an undermining of the Nation-State. This discussion introduces diaspora and transnationalism as two ways of conceptualizing this reconfiguration. I, then, discuss how this demographic shift is increasingly revealing contestations over who can claim “American” without citation; without the hyphen; over who counts as American. I then consider how one becomes “officially American” through a discussion of historical and contemporary scholarship and theorizations of citizenship. In tracing different formations of citizenship, I arrive at cultural citizenship as an expression of belonging that is relational and rooted in communities rather than the Nation-State. I explore the ways schooling functions as a mechanism for surveilling and maintaining the boundaries of who and what constitutes America. In this section I discuss how schools have historically utilized processes of assimilation and differential exclusion in service of this work, and how the promise of multiculturalism as an inclusive and diversity honoring framework has been co-opted by the neoliberal project. This section also introduces transnationalism as an emerging and possibility more accurately representative approach to honoring the multiply culturally situated and globally contextualized lives of both students and teachers.

Finally, this chapter explores the contemporary challenges facing teacher education as it attempts to contend with realities of today’s increasing transnational
students. This section introduces the demographic imperative, the term scholars use to describe the shifting demographics of students in relation to the stagnation of the teacher workforce, as an enduring dilemma for teacher education. While this chapter is expansive, I argue that it provides a necessary framework to fully take in the complexity and nuance demonstrated by the stories shared in this study by Second-Generation Asian American teachers.

The Changing U.S. Demographic Profile: Fourth Wave Immigration

The United States is in the midst of its greatest migration since the turn of the 20th century (Foner, 2000; Pew 2015). Today’s migration boom is largely a result of post-colonial conditions, neoliberal policy, and U.S. military incursions that have destabilized and restructured the globe. This, and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that replaced a European-focused origin quota system, have ushered in a large-scale shift in demographics throughout the United States. Described by social scientists as 4th wave immigration, the post-1965 immigration flows are unlike those before with the largest share of new Americans identified as People of Color arriving from the Global South (Foner, 2000; Frey, 2020). Over 50 years later, the U.S. is in the final stages of a shift from a majority White population whose ancestry is traced to Northern and Western Europe to one in which the majority of U.S. residents identify as Indigenous or as Black or Brown with descent traced to the Global South. Though this shift is geographically uneven, it is changing the notion and nature of American identity (Alba, 2018).

Immigration before 1965

Immigration policy has played a large part in “drawing lines of inclusion and exclusion that articulate a desired composition - imagined if not necessarily realized - of
the nation” (Ngai, 2004, p. 5). Prior to the 1880s, immigration was largely a free-for-all. If you could get to the shores of the United States, you could enter. While the overwhelming share of migration was from Europe, there was also migration from Central and Latin America as well as from Asia during this time. Southeast China, in particular, was heavily targeted to recruit laborers to serve the growing mining, factory, railroad, and farming industries on the West Coast of the United States. In fact, by 1870, while Asian immigrants only constituted 0.002% of the U.S. population, they represented 20% of California’s growing labor force and provided 90% of the labor for the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad (Pew Research Center, 2013).

Though they provided a significant share of the labor that made western expansion and development possible, Chinese migrants faced significant racial violence and discrimination. This animosity culminated in the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act which restricted further migration from China and the barred naturalization of those Chinese who were already residing in the United States (Lowe, 1996). When Japanese migrants began to fill the void in the labor market created by this loss of Chinese migrants, they, too, were barred from migration in the 1907 Gentleman’s Agreement (Pew Research Center, 2013). When Koreans and Sikhs, who were originally from the Punjab region of then colonial India but had been recruited by the Canadian Railroad Company to construct railroads in Canada, migrated to the U.S. to fill the labor void, they, too, were banned (Sohi, 2017). The Immigration Act of 1917 prohibited the immigration of anyone from the “Barred Zone,” a geographic region encompassing all of Asia apart from Japan, which was already banned, and the Philippines, which at that time was a U.S. colony (Sohi, 2017).
The first comprehensive immigrant law in the United States was the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924 which operated in conjunction with the Asian exclusion acts already in existence, ushering in a 40-year period of exclusionary and racist restrictions (Ngai, 2004; Lowe, 1996). Under this law, Europeans were classified by nation and assigned a quota based on representation in past U.S. census figures and their desirability. This quota system in effect restricted new immigrants to those whose identities matched immigration trends of the past, thereby maintaining Northern and Western Europeans as the primary beneficiaries of the immigration act (Ngai, 2004).

The law also defined the borders of Whiteness, rationalizing the exclusion of Chinese, Japanese, Indians, and other Asian ethnicities from immigration “on the grounds that they were racially ineligible for naturalized citizenship” (Ngai, 2004, p. 7). This racialization, the defining of who counted as White, was formally authorized by the Supreme Court in the early 1920s. Thus, the policy secured the boundaries of the “white race” and ensured that nearly all migrants to the U.S. would resemble the existing predominantly White, Western European settler population. The act succeeded in “establish[ing] for the first-time numerical limits on immigration and a global racial and national hierarchy that favored some immigrants over others” (Ngai, 2004, p. 3). Immigration policy, thus, was used to safeguard American as synonymous with White.

**The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965**

In the aftermath of the Jim Crow Era, the U.S. needed to demonstrate a global commitment to human rights and democratic values, particularly as it engaged in a proxy war with the Soviet Union in Southeast Asia. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Celler Act, amended a 1952 immigration act and emerged
as the international arm of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It served to repeal the quota system of the previous era while rebooting the reputation of the United States. As Vice President Hubert Humphrey decried at the time, “We have removed all elements of second-class citizenship from our laws by the [1964] Civil Rights Act…We must in 1965 remove all elements in our immigration law which suggest there are second-class people” (Gjelten, 2015).

This new policy allotted entries per nation, with priority to migrants who were relatives of U.S. citizens or permanent residents, had skills that the U.S. desired, or were refugees from violence and unrest. While it did retain global limits on immigration per nation-state and capped the total number of immigrants accepted into the U.S., the policy also privileged family reunification. The policy, therefore, enabled entire families to uproot themselves and become established in the United States. Unlike earlier waves of immigration at the turn of the 19th century from Eastern Europe, Ireland, Italy and Greece, this post-repeal fourth wave has brought immigrants of color to the U.S. shores, heralding the demographic shifts with which the U.S. continues to grapple (Lowe, 1996).

**Asian Immigrants**

In 1965, immigrants made up just 5% of the population and 84% of the U.S. population identified as White (Pew Research Center, 2015). Today, immigrants make up 14% of the population and 62% of the population identifies as White (Pew Research Center, 2015). The impact of the immigration act is even more pronounced for the U.S. Asian population, which has seen a 98% increase since the 1965 legislation. Asians account for a quarter of all new immigrants since 1965, 25% of all four wave arrivals (Lopez, Ruiz, & Patten, 2017). From 1965 to 2015, the first 50 years of the Act, the
Asian population in the U.S. grew from just under 1 million in 1965, under 1% of the total U.S. population, to 20.4 million in 2015 (Pew Research Center, 2015). Since 2010, Asian immigrants have represented the largest share of U.S. arrivals each year, representing the fastest growing rate (72%) of any majority racial or ethnic group (Lopez, Ruiz, & Patten, 2017).

Immigrants from just six countries account for more than 80% of the U.S. Asian population: China, India, Philippines, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan (Pew Research Center, 2013a). The Asian immigrant profile is wide-ranging, including highly educated and skilled workers arriving in the U.S. via H-1B visas and refugees with varied levels of educational attainment and work skills (Lee & Zhou, 2015; Tamura, 2003). The resettlement of refugees was primarily the result of U.S. intervention in Southeast Asia in the proxy war with the Soviet Union (Kula & Paik, 2016; Lee, 2015; Lee & Zhou, 2015; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Refugees from the region included Burmese, Cambodians, ethnic Chinese, Hmong, Karen, Khmer, Lao, and Vietnamese subgroups. The initial wave of refugee resettlement from this conflict occurred between 1975 and 1978 and largely consisted of those who worked with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), were primarily from the urban area of Vietnam, and had some English proficiency as well as professional work experience (Kula & Paik, 2016). A second wave of refugees arrived in the U.S. between 1979 and 1982 through family reunification policies, sponsored by many of the first wave immigrants, and included many refugees from Laos and Cambodia (Kula & Paik, 2016). A third wave of Southeast Asian refugees began resettlement in 1982 and was largely composed of those living in refugee camps, with an influx of
Hmong refugees resettled after the closing of the Wat Tham Krabok refugee camp in Thailand (Kula & Paik, 2016).

American citizens with ancestry in Asia, whether U.S. born or naturalized, take on the hyphenated identity of Asian American. The origins of this identity category can be traced to the Civil Rights Era when many activists sought to reject the use of “Oriental” (Tamura, 2003). Yet, this solidarity Asian American identity is a dynamic and heterogeneous group whose history in and relationship to the U.S. is distinct and uneven, and whose gendered, classed, linguistic, and racialized particularities of life in the U.S. are vast (Lowe, 1996; Takaki 1993, 1998). In discussing the challenges of this broad category, Liu (1998) states:

Asian Americans belong not to a race so much as to a confederation, a big yellow-and-brown tent that covers a panoply of interests. And while those interests converge usefully on some points—antidis rimination, open immigration—they diverge on many others. This is a ‘community,’ after all, that consists of ten million people of a few dozen ethnicities, who have all roots across America and around the globe, whose political beliefs run the ideological gamut, who are welfare mothers and multimillionaires, soldiers and doctors, believers and pagans. It would take an act of selective deafness to hear, in this cacophony, a unitary voice. (p. 73-74)

While the category has homogenized and essentialized the very real differences and diversities within it, it has also served as a solidarity category that has facilitated significant political and economic gains (Tamura, 2003).
Second-Generation Americans

As the demographics of the United States continue to shift in response to current migrations, globalization and technologies are enabling a new formation of horizontal rootedness, particularly amongst the children of these immigrants. Rather than assimilating to a normative notion of America, these U.S.-born, Second-Generation Americans are experiencing a distinctive identity characterized by transnational linkages and identities. The term Second-Generation American applies to those born in the U.S. to foreign-born parents (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). These parents may be naturalized U.S. citizens, permanent residents, or undocumented, and the particularities of this nationality status reflect very different everyday realities.

The U.S. census provides the most significant data on the demographics, income levels, and educational attainment of Second-Generation Americans. From this 2010 data, we know nearly 20 million adults and 16 million children, nearly a quarter of all American youth, are the children of immigrants (Nibbs & Brettell, 2016). Additionally, these 36 million Americans comprise a heterogeneous group that includes babies and adults born of modern-era immigrants as well as older adults who are the children of European immigrants who migrated nearly a century ago and are long deceased (Pew Research Center, 2013b). This group, while increasingly composed of People of Color, includes a significant number of White Americans, and is expected to grow to over 80 million by 2050 (Pew Research Center, 2013b). Though significant unknowns accompany this population, the data does reveal that both in aggregate and across racial and ethnicity lines, Second-Generation Americans are more economically stable, socially
integrated, and educated than those considered First-Generation (Pew Research Center, 2013b).

Unlike large data aggregating reports that rely on U.S. census data, ethnographic studies of Second-Generation Americans offer a more nuanced approach and highlight the complex identities and belongings of the children of migrants as they navigate multiple worlds (Brocket, 2018; Nibbs & Brettell, 2016; Wessendorf, 2013). Portes and Zhou (1993) argue that when we look closer, we see a segmented assimilation. This segmented assimilation is marked by upward assimilation into the dominant White middle-class by some, downward assimilation into low-income, highly insecure socioeconomic status for others, or a selective acculturation by “rapid economic advancement with deliberate preservation of the immigrant community’s values and tight solidarity” (p. 82). While this notion of segmented assimilation is in itself problematic and reductive, it does speak to the variety of experiences of growing up in the U.S. as a Second-Generation Asian American.

I have briefly traced the historical and contemporary contours of immigration to contextualize my participants, and my own, everyday realities as Second-Generation Asian Americans. The legacy of exclusion conferred by these laws and policies is carried in our bodies and has material consequences on our lives. It is an enduring reminder that our claim to America has more often than not been denied. In the next section, I will further contextualize the ongoing U.S. demographic shift by considering the global conditions that have populations on the move.
Redefining Borders: Reconfiguring Global Networks, Alliances, and Belongings

*The Impacts of Globalization*

Globalization, referring here to the interconnected networks that shape all political, social, environmental, financial worlds we inhabit, is not a new phenomenon. Spices, religions, and the people who deliver them have traveled across the globe for centuries. Today’s global flows, however, move across and beyond borders at an unprecedented scale and scope, reducing past notions of distance between one and the “Other” (Appadurai, 1996). Appadurai describes globalization as having “shrunk the distance between elites, shifted key relationships between producers and consumers, broken many links between labor and family life, obscured the lines between temporary locales and imaginary national attachments” (1996, p. 10). Rizvi (2009) goes on to describe the conditions and implications of globalization, stating that:

> globalization is a highly contested concept…used to describe almost any and every aspect of contemporary life, from the complex contours of contemporary capitalism, to the declining power of the nation-state system, the rise of transnational organizations and corporations, the emergence of a global culture challenge local traditions, and the information and communications revolution enabling rapid circulation of ideas, money, and people. (p. 46)

This “time-space compression” (Harvey, 1989) has led to a global reorganization as individuals are “detroitialized, flexible, and highly mobile” (Ong & Nonini, 1997, p. 10).

Appadurai (1996) proposed five typologies for understanding these distinct global flows: ethnoscapes, the flow of peoples; mediascapes, the flow of images; technoscapes,
the flow of technology both mechanical and informational; financescapes, the flow of global capital; and ideoscapes, the flow of ideologies (p. 33-36). He argues that these manifestations characterize and shape the landscape of our imagined worlds (p. 33). It is this notion of ethnoscapes, and its complement migration, that are complicating the social imaginary of the nation-state.

**Neoliberalism**

Neoliberalism is the current iteration of capitalist logics that saturates the economic, political, and social worlds of the majority of the globe and describes “a world-historical configuration of economy, governance, and biological and social life” (Melamed, 2011, p. 147). Harvey (2007) chronicled the shift in “political-economic practices and thinking” (p.2) towards neoliberalism during the 1970s, arguing that it has now become “hegemonic as a mode of discourse…to the point where it has become incorporated into the commonsense way we … understand the world” (p. 23). Unlike other forms of capitalism, neoliberal ethics of individualism, competition, and privatization pervade society, remaking social institutions and communities.

Economic tenets of neoliberalism include financial and market liberalization, privatization, deregulation, and global governance through international institutions. Marxist conceptions of material wealth as the sole form of capital, neoliberalism is more accurately framed through Bourdieu’s theorization which describes economic, social, cultural, symbolic, linguistic, and educational dimensions of capital (1986). Such manifestations of capital are the resources that construct one’s location, trajectory, and entanglements within and amongst dimensions of power.
Expressions of neoliberalism do, however, vary across the globe as its core tenets and policies come into contact with local histories and traditions. Ong asserts that “as an array of techniques centered on the optimization of life, neoliberalism migrates from site to site, interacting with various assemblages that cannot be analytically reduced to cases of a uniform global condition of ‘Neoliberalism’ writ large” (2006b, p. 14). These manifestations produce “constellations of mutually constitutive and contingent relationships” (Ong, 2006b. p. 13) rather than predictable and stable formations. As Harvey (2005) reminds us, the neoliberal project intensifies accumulation by dispossession, allowing the nation-state, guided by these economic logics, to destabilize and regulate land more efficiently thereby enabling private entities to take control. This “reconfiguring [of] relationships between governing and the governed, power and knowledge, sovereignty and territoriality” (Ong, 2006b, p. 3) has transformed the ways people live and labor globally.

**Erosion of the Nation-State**

The nation-states’ inability to cope with the impacts of today’s global flows, including ideologies and practices of globalization and neoliberalism, has led to a breakdown in traditional notions of citizenship that formed the basis for national imaginaries. Where citizenship once bound individuals to the land, and then to each other, neoliberalism now binds the individual to the market. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) theorize deterritorialization and reterritorialization as the rearranging and restructuring of signs and the resulting production of lines of flight. Gordillo (2011), drawing on this conceptualization, contends that deterritorialization is the “decoding of flows, a breakdown of the codes of control that regulate the flows of
human action, setting them free [while reterritorialization is] a re-coding or over-coding, conducted primarily by the state, of what was previously decoded and deterritorialized” (p. 858).

While such terms compel us to consider physical dispossession and spatial reorganizations, deterritorialization as a facet of migration does not necessarily involve actual movement. It can also be used to describe the transformations, the decoding and recoding, that people and places experience as their social worlds are reshaped. Such de-anchoring or de-bordering of human spatial interactions reflects a fleeing from territory as bounded, spatial containers of the nation-state; as the location of power and arbiter of identity. Yet, while this delinking frees (deterritorializes) materiality and experience from ties to the nation-state, it concurrently binds (reterritorializes) to the neoliberal market. This process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization has populations on the move around the globe, reproducing and reconstructing identities as tethers to the State become unmoored.

Dagnino (2007) argues that “integration of individuals into the market” is occurring “while at the same time previously acquired rights, in particular labour rights, are being progressively eroded” (p. 549). Neoliberalism’s ongoing accumulation of capital through dispossession (Harvey, 2007) ensures that “societal disparities will continue to widen because we have abdicated our responsibilities as citizens to address them” (Arend & Cuenca, 2016, p. 194). Such processes have initiated a massive migration, in which “statelessness is raised to an entirely new level by the non-existence of a state authority to which their statehood could be referred” (Bauman, 2004, p. 76).
Bauman (2004) raised concerns over those considered stateless, the migrants, asylum seekers and immigrants, whom he argues are by-products of globalization. He states that, “We witness today the process of world-wide restratification, in the course of which a new sociocultural hierarchy on a world-wide scale is put together” (p. 70). “Globalization has accelerated and deepened” (Parker, 2004, p. 450) already tenuous positions of marginalized and excluded peoples across the globe. For those individuals, be they the intellectual elite or the migrant laborer, who live across and beyond static jurisdictions and borders, new forms of overlapping and multiple ways of belonging are being produced that are not bound by territory (Holston & Appadurai, 1999).

**Theorizing Diaspora & Transnationalism**

While migration, the global flow of peoples, is not new, the flows take on new formations as globalization and the neoliberal project pull and push people simultaneously across the globe at unprecedented scales. Ethnoscape describes the “landscape of person who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33). Appadurai reminds us, however, that “these moving groups can never afford to let their imaginations rest too long, even if they wish to” (p. 34), for their movements are always in service to the desires of the market.

Academic studies of migration are often framed through teleological accounts of there to here and pushes and pulls. Studies often rely on large data sets based on territorially bound population counts. Much is being done today to unseat these simplistic and reductive narratives of migration and capture the complicated, incremental, and contradictory ways in which migrations occur and the ways in which belongings are
subsequently marked by multiplicity and hybridity of cultural identities. Two ways of conceptualizing this more nuanced understanding of migration are through diaspora studies and transnationalism.

Early scholarship on diaspora described the experiences of people who were expelled from their homelands and was meant to describe the dispersion of Jewish peoples from their conceptual homeland of Israel (Brubaker, 2005; Chu, 2006; Levitt, 2001). Definitions have since been broadened to mean “individuals who have been exiled or displaced to a number of different nation states by a variety of economic, political, and social forces” (Levitt, 2001, p. 202) and “maintain (to some degree) emotional and social ties with a homeland” (Brubaker, 2005, p. 2). Scholars of diaspora (Brubaker, 2005; Chu, 2006; Levitt, 2001) point to collective memory, communal consciousness, homeland, and alienation as the primary features of diasporic communities. Brubaker (2005) additionally argues that boundary maintenance is a key quality of diaspora, stating that communities deliberately resist assimilation through self-segregation.

Scholars, however, increasingly argue that this framework does not account for the ways that globalization and the neoliberal project have worked to rearticulate and horizontally ground global networks and allegiances. They argue for transnationalism as a framework for understanding those whose identity is not tied to a specific territory and addresses “increasing cross border mobility; growth of temporary, cyclical, and recurring migrations; cheap and easy travel; and constant communication through new information technologies” (Castles, 2004, p. 27). While discussions of diaspora typically describe displacement from a homeland, transnationalism understands that the relationship between homeland and destination is recursively constituted. Rather
than a more linear trajectory assumed in diaspora studies (from the homeland to a
destination), transnationalism describes an emplacement in multiple localities that
reach beyond the borders of the sending and receiving states (Chu, 2006). It is
temporally, spatially, symbolically, and affectively dynamic (Brettell, 2006).

Transnationalism can more appropriately encompass contemporary migration
because it recognizes the ways that globalization and the neoliberal project together
have reconfigured networks and material realities for contemporary diasporic
communities. It attends to the ways that late-stage capitalism continues to mobilize
communities and the ways resulting mechanisms like remittances function to form
new linkages between people and places. For Second-Generation Asian Americans,
transnationalism helps to explain both the horizontal rootedness in a faraway
homeland while at the same time an everyday grounding within a local community.

The U.S. demographic shift and the resulting transnational experiences of
diasporic communities have destabilized old notions of who and what count as
American. So much of the Second-Generation Asian American experience has been
shaped by exclusion from the nation and also a deep desire for belonging. In the
following section, I will discuss the ways citizenship has been defined, claimed, and
expanded over time and in response to global factors.

**Citizenship: Imaginaries, Contestations, and Possibilities**

The United States has many particularities in regard to citizenship, but most
significant is the long and complex struggle for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color to
attain full citizenship, meaning civil, political, and social citizenship as defined by
Marshall (1950). Rather than the inclusion and universalizing assumptions embedded in
liberal notions of citizenship, the United States deploys a differentiated citizenship, where access to rights is contingent on your location within society. As the United States moves towards a more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse future (Villegas & Lucas, 2002), when a majority of the population will not identify as White, the uneven deployment of citizenship is no longer tenable.

Defining Citizenship

Citizenship, as opposed to kinship or subjectship, defines belonging to the nation-state as well as “the prerogatives and encumbrances of that membership” (Holston & Appadurai, 1999, p.1). Traditionally, citizenship is defined by native or naturalized membership to a sovereign state or nation that carries with it a promise of allegiance to the nation and entitles the member to protection by its government. Hindess (2002) goes on to define citizens as “individuals who have certain rights, and a corresponding set of obligations, in relation to the government of the state to which they belong” (p. 128). This more passive conception of citizenship implies that attainment and benefits of citizenship are equally distributed within the borders of the nation-state, and that the individual citizen needs simply to exist within this territory in order to be counted as a member. Castles (2004) defined six characteristics that constitute an ideal notion of nation-state citizenship: state sovereignty, state autonomy, state control over its borders, democratic rule of law, membership to a nation typically through birth (jus soli) or descent (jus sanguinis), and the presence of a welfare state (p. 20-21). A good citizen is often described as one who passively and with docility obeys the rule of law, naively assisting in the maintenance of the status quo (Barr, 2005).
In his seminal work, *Citizenship and Social Class*, Marshall (1950) defined three dimensions of citizenship: civil, political, and social. The civil element describes the right to individual freedom; the political, the right to participate in governance; and the social as the right to live and labor. These rights are defined and conferred through the nation-state’s legal structures. Membership to the nation is most traditionally granted through birth within the borders of the nation-state (*jus soli*) or through blood lines, meaning descent from a citizen (*jus sanguinis*). In the United States, those born within the borders of the nation-state or born to U.S. citizens are automatically (in most cases) granted citizenship. Another pathway towards this membership is that of “*ius domicili* (law of residence)” (Castles & Davidson, 2000, p. 85), which affords residents of a territory the right to gain citizenship.

Naturalization is the process by which those not bestowed citizenship at birth can become citizens. This process, however, is a “*discretionary act* by the state” (Castles & Davidson, 2000, p. 86), not a universal right for which immigrants are entitled, and is highly variant across the globe. It is often guided by established legal residency for anywhere from 2 to 12 years, almost always by language proficiency, and sometimes by knowledge of the customs and histories of the dominant groups in the nation (Castles & Davidson, 2000). In addition, many nations demand that those seeking naturalization are “of good character,” a subjective determination that can allow the State to exclude those it deems undesirable.

Simply being a legal citizen, however, does not mean that one will gain inclusion into mainstream society. Castles (2004) argues that citizenship is often described through aspirational and ideal notions that are highly contested, particularly given the repressive,
exploitative, and racist legacies of nation building. Dominant groups make the rules of inclusion, and a citizen’s racial, cultural, language, and religious characteristics are often what determine membership (Banks, 2004).

**Civil Citizenship**

Civil citizenship describes the legally secured right to “individual freedom from unlawful infringement on private property, personal liberty, and justice by the state” (Castles & Davidson, 2000, p. 104). While in principle, these rights are bestowed on anyone living, laboring, or even visiting the territory, in reality access to civil citizenship, even to those with U.S. passports, is out of reach for many marginalized populations.

The United States was founded on criteria for citizenship based on race, gender, and class, where only those deemed White, male, and propertied were counted as legal citizens. Many policies and compromises were made to maintain this system for counting who was worthy of receiving rights. Amongst these decisions was the “Three-Fifths Compromise,” which stated that enslaved peoples were to be counted only as partial beings by the State for census figures, though certainly not counted as citizens. Black Americans only won citizenship with the passage of the 14th amendment in 1868, and Native peoples in 1924 with passage of the Indian Citizenship Act (Lowe, 1996). The last remnants of exclusion to naturalization for Asian Americans was only repealed in 1952 (Lowe, 1996; Ngai, 1994). While this horrific racist, imperialist history has largely been tempered by progressive movements over time, the material trace remains and is evident in the everyday experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color throughout the United States.
Political Citizenship

Political citizenship describes the “rights required to participate actively in democratic processes of government” (Castles & Davidson, 2000, p. 108). These rights often include the right to vote, freedom of assembly and information. While often defined by the legal status of citizen versus non-citizen, such borders are eroding as a result of global migrations. In the United States, however, access to these rights is often uneven as social inclusion and exclusion define access.

The right to vote, which is fundamental to democratic governance, is an ongoing struggle for those whose jobs and work schedules do not allow them to cast their vote. Because the United States does not compulsorily register all Americans when they reach voting age, those who are unregistered to vote are denied access to this right. The process of registering to vote is a highly discriminatory and exclusionary system. Some states require “official identification” or proof of residence to register, items that those citizens who are highly mobile, without stable housing, or at the bottom of the income scale do not have (Bassetti, 2016). In addition, those who are incarcerated are not allowed to vote, and in most states the right to vote is permanently stripped from those whom the State defines as “felons” (Bassetti, 2016). While some nations afford long-term or permanent residence with voting rights, this is not the case in the United States.

The settler colonial state wields its powers of subjugation both domestically on Indigenous peoples and internationally in sites like Puerto Rico, Guam, and American Samoa. Voting continues to be denied to millions of Americans under U.S. Colonial rule. While Native peoples were officially deemed worthy of citizenship to the United States in 1924, their right to vote in each state was not guaranteed until 1962 (Dunphy, 2019).
Even with this right, however, barriers to voting not only remain, but are, in fact, increasing. Because voter registration requires a physical street address, those residing on reservations that do not have traditional street addresses often see their registrations rejected. New voter ID laws often do not accept tribal identification cards as valid and official forms of identification. Additionally, many Native people are unable to vote because their designated polling locations and/or dropboxes for absentee ballots are hours from their homes (Bassetti, 2016).

While residents of the U.S. Territories locations are considered Americans, their right to vote is undermined by racist and eugenic logics associated with colonialism. Natives of all territories are deemed American citizens, with the exception of American Samoans who are instead deemed “nationals.” Yet, none can vote for President while on their respective islands (Savage, 2016). Additionally, while they are able to vote in primaries and for Congressional representation, each island is only allowed one representative to the House legislative body, and that representative is excluded from Congressional voting (Steckelberg & Esteban, 2017). Why are these Americans denied their political rights? The Supreme Court stated in the 1901 Insular Cases that inhabitants of the islands are “alien races…differing from us in…customs…and modes of thought” unable to understand “Anglo-Saxon principles” (Torruella, 2013, p. 71). The U.S. Government continues to cite the Insular Cases as acceptable precedent even as recently as 2016 in contending that American Samoans should continue to be denied citizenship rights (Brady, 2018).
Social Citizenship

Social citizenship is described as the “basic standard of economic and social wellbeing” (Castles & Davidson, 2000, p. 104) guaranteed by the State. These rights are described by Marshall (1950) as

from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society. (p. 11)

Societal aspects of citizenship include the right to “society’s resources and capacities that allow for social mobility and comfort,” encompassing health care services, education, employment, and housing (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 101). Such rights, like welfare provisions and public education, are administered by divisions of the federal government and through law, such as the Civil Rights Act. Social justice projects and movements continue to push forward these rights, particularly in labor organizing, with the aim of holding the state to account and extending social citizenship rights.

Neoliberalism, however, is constantly eroding these social rights as guaranteed by the State. The social state is meant to defend and secure its citizens “against redundancy, exclusion and rejection and against random blows of fate…the contemporary state cannot deliver on the social state’s promise” (Bauman, 2004, p. 90). This erosion is accomplished “by either rolling back or privatizing social services. Resulting shifts in social welfare, marketization, administration, and political franchise are reconfiguring the field of biopolitics” (Collier & Ong, 2005, p. 16). The ongoing dismantling of the welfare state, which historically has supported capacities of social citizenship, has undermined the stability of nation-state bounded citizenship.
As neoliberalism dictates the retreat of the State, the market must take up the work of acting as the guarantor of rights. Social services are increasingly ascribed market value, transformed into commodities available for purchase by those who can afford them. As Arend and Cuenca (2016) contend, “The behavior of the consumer is confounded with the behavior of the citizen” (p. 194). It follows then that only those who are integrated, as consumer and/or producer, into the market have access to social citizenship (Dagnino, 2007).

Reimagining Citizenship

The conceptualization of citizenship that today’s world requires does not abide by the *jus soli* (birthright citizenship) or *jus sanguinis* (citizenship through descent) laws of the past. Scholars like Gupta and Ferguson (1992) and Nyamnjoh (2007) increasingly contest the assertion that the nation-state is the primary marker of belonging. In *Beyond Culture*, Gupta and Ferguson (1992) challenged traditional notions of belonging that ascribe cultural and social homogeneity to discrete nation-state bounded territories. They examine the complexity of postcolonial identities by looking at those residing in borderlands, arguing that notions of belonging do not necessarily map to the borders of nations. Instead, they contend that space has become “reterritorialized in a way that does not conform to experience of space that characterized the era of high modernity” (p. 9). For those individuals, be they the intellectual elite or the migrant laborer, who live across and beyond static jurisdictions and borders, new forms of overlapping and multiple citizenships are being produced that are not bound by territory (Holston & Appadurai, 1999).
Flexible Citizenship. In the face of this deterritorialization and worldwide reconfiguration, new formations of citizenship are being forged. Ong (2006a) argues that flexible citizenship is one such formation:

We used to think of different dimensions of citizenship – rights, entitlements, a state, territoriality, etc. – as more or less tied together. Increasingly, some of these components are becoming disarticulated from each other, and articulated with diverse universalizing norms defined by markets, neoliberal values, or human rights. At the same time, diverse mobile populations (expatriates, refugees, migrant workers) can claim rights and benefits associated with citizenship, even as many citizens come to have limited or contingent protections within their own countries. (p. 500)

As citizens work to negotiate time-space compression and the scale and pace of the -scapes Appadurai theorized, they form strategic linkages that allow them to belong to multiple geographies. This erosion of the bounds of the nation-state articulates the essence of transnational migrations. The vertical rootedness in and allegiance to one territory is supplanted by a horizontal rootedness that offers belonging and allegiance to many territories. Families, neighbors, and friends “forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch, Schiller & Blanc, 1994, p. 7).

Francis Nyamnjoh (2007), extending this scholarship, considers the context of migrant laborers. He similarly contests narrow, nation-state bounded, singularly constituted conceptions of citizenship given the great “dislocation, mobility, cosmopolitanism, integration and interdependence” (p. 78) that has accompanied
globalization. Arguing that “essentialist and rigid articulations of belonging makes of everyone a slave of the past in a world pregnant with mobility” (p. 79), he suggests that flexible citizenship can offer new possibilities of belonging. Such possibilities can serve as an inclusive framework that is “unbounded by race, ethnicity, class, gender, or geography, and that is conscious and critical of hierarchies” (p. 80).

**Cultural Citizenship.** While legal citizenship is defined as a prescribed, state-regulated pathway, cultural citizenship is a process that is “fluid and changing…focused on local projects and global concerns” (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 117). First theorized by Rosaldo (1994), cultural citizenship describes the ways cultural elements, like language and customs, constitute one’s belonging and access to rights. Scholars argue that Marshall’s triad does not address how citizenship deploys cultural and identity-based differences as a means of exclusion. Cultural citizenship, thus, moves beyond the more narrow and rigid understandings of what it means to be a citizen, beyond the problematic dimensions of civil, political, and social.

Cultural citizenship relies on the nuances and knowledges of localized geographies, “the concrete local details involving class lifestyle, state formations, neighborhood histories, and conceptions of race and ethnicity” (Mitchell, 2003, p. 229), to forge belonging. This new citizenship defines:

Allegiances and self-interests along a variety of axes – racial, ethnic, international, regional, religious, and political…both a result of the limits and constraints the society has imposed on People of Color and the creative imaginings of people who want to remake their world into a more just and equitable one. (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 117)
As social and cultural networks are made and remade and processes of displacement and
emplacement converge, aspects of culture like religion, language, dress, food, ways of
thinking, and customs, are constantly transforming.

The new mechanisms for solidarities and collective action forged as a result of
this cultural citizenship have moved beyond notions of the right to have rights (Arendt,
1951) and the conception of citizen power (Arnstein, 1969) that previously characterized
active citizenship. The assertion of cultural rights allows one to claim, “the right to
maintain linguistic, cultural, and group affiliation” (Abu El-Haj, 2007). As citizen-
making is often characterized by a struggle for the expansion of democracy, the act of
making this claim serves as a “crucial weapon in the struggle against social and economic
exclusion and inequality” (Dagnino, 2007, p. 550). Holston’s notion of insurgent
citizenship and Earle’s extension of this in transgressive citizenship address this call for
citizens to actively organize to claim and demand the rights that traditional notions of
citizenship coupled with globalization and neoliberalism have dispossessed them of
(Holston, 2009; Earle, 2012). Such frameworks for reimagining citizenship require a
collective imaginary that is rooted in a cultural and social belonging to each other, rather
than the nation-state.

It is this collective imaginary that schooling so efficiently constructs, maintains,
and surveils the boundaries of. Schools and education function as extensions of the State,
long tasked with socializing the youth of the nation into mainstream American values —
the values of White normative, settler colonial society. Schooling works to maintain
social order, in service of the State, teaching us young our societal worth and position
within the social hierarchy. Thus, schooling helps to define the norms of our society and in turn teaches us who belongs and who does not; who counts as American.

**Schools as Sites of Enculturation: Stripping, Supplanting, Dislocating the Self**

*The Violence of Becoming American*

Since public schools first came into being in 19th century America, they have been a primary pathway for producing American citizens. The current formation of schools in the United States is the legacy of the reshaping of society that began in the late 19th century. From 1860-1920, the U.S. saw the emancipation of millions of enslaved peoples while unrest and drought in eastern and southern Europe simultaneously brought millions more to the shores of the Americas each day. In addition, centuries of dispossession, removal, and genocide, and the imposition of Western logics on Native peoples came to a head with the formal end to the American Indian Wars in 1924. As the United States consolidated its sovereignty and borders and formalized its settler colonial occupation, the folding of these Native peoples into society became a primary task of the schools.

The common school movement (Kliebard, 2004), design and development of Black Education (Watkins, 2001) and establishment of Indian Boarding Schools (Grande, 2004) during this period aimed to capture these undesirable bodies into mainstream society and the industrial capitalist labor economy of post-Civil War America. Engaging in a project of deculturalization (Noriega, 1992), educational institutions stripped these groups of their languages, customs, and social norms in order to civilize, modernize, and socialize them into White, western European, Christian, middle class cultural norms. The schools also solved the market’s desire for “cheap semiskilled and skilled laborers”
(Watkins, 2001, p. 22) as they enabled the production of docile bodies able to be efficiently sorted into the new economy.

Just over 100 years later, we continue to contend with the U.S. public schools system’s compulsion for deculturalization. Schools continue to act as a vehicle for the transmission of the core values and logics associated with membership to the nation, with what it means to be American (Barr, 2005; El-Haj, 2007). This transmission of citizenship, however, is particularly violent for those who are a threat to the homogeneity and adherence to dominant White norms that passive citizenship requires. Castles (2004) described four approaches to the work of transmitting citizenship values: assimilation, differential exclusion, multiculturalism, and the emerging concept of transnationalism. Each framework offers a distinct orientation to the construction of the national imaginary, to the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion.

**Assimilation and Differential Exclusion.** For much of America’s history, those new to the nation and those here long before the nation, were asked to assimilate to the mainstream norms of the nation, which largely represent “imperialist, White supremacist, capitalist, patriarchy” (hooks, 1994, p. xiii). America practiced an assimilative pluralism, which recognized the vast diversity of social groups within the State, yet established the supremacy of White, Anglo-Saxon, Christian norms and values. Under this framework, those who do not fit this dominant ontology are required to adapt in order to become absorbed into the nation. Those who do not assimilate are excluded, expelled, or incarcerated through processes of differential exclusion based on the desires of the States. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) describe this subtractive process as one in which:
a minority person who learns successfully in school or who follows the standard practices of the school is perceived as becoming acculturated into the white American cultural frame of reference at the expense of the minorities’ cultural frame of reference and collective welfare. (p. 183)

Mechanisms of deculturation include social mobility, intermarriage, spatial integration, linguistic assimilation, and subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999). This one-way process requires that the migrant lose cultural and social aspects of their identity that tie back to their homeland in order to become indistinguishable from members of their new society.

Milton Gordon (1964) argued that the aim of these mechanisms was identificational assimilation, the understanding of the self as unhyphenated American. This self-image is the culmination of a process that “begins with acculturation, proceeds through structural assimilation and intermarriage, and is accompanied by an absence of prejudice and discrimination in the core society” (Rumbaut, 1994, p. 755). Gordon argued that this process was overwhelmingly successful for the children of White European immigrants through the turn of the 19th century.

Many scholars argue, however, that such processes are unlikely to be so successful in the contemporary era, as the pace of global flows has transformed individuals’ relationship to their homelands. Factors such as the degree of racial discrimination, proximity to urban centers, and strength of the receiving community’s economic viability as key factors that determine the extent to which newcomers will successfully become Americans. Frameworks that decry “legal equality, possessive individualism, and multiracial U.S. nationalism” (Melamed, 2011, p. 26) are incapable
of reconciling the hypersegregation, economic and social inequality, and mass imprisonment, particularly of Black men. This “racialized urban poverty and...denial of self-determination to economically immobile communities of color” (p. 94), all in the face of America’s increasingly multiracial population, requires a new schema.

**Multiculturalism.** Castles (2004) defined multiculturalism as the third approach to transmitting values. Born out of the frustrations and struggles that emerged during the Civil Rights Movement, multiculturalism aims to accept the distinct identities of a diverse population by centering “ideas of integration, representation and recognition in culture” (Melamed, 2011, p. 97). Through this positive pluralism stance, it celebrates the vast diversity and coexistence of different social groups within the nation-state but stops short of defining one group as better and molding the others to fit this ideal.

Yet, multiculturalism is not without its limitations. Castle (2004) argues that while this form of transmitting values and logics accepts the distinct identities of new immigrants and contests myths of homogeneous and monocultural nation-states, it does not take into account contemporary questions about deterritorialization. Additionally, multiculturalism acts in the service of a “benign and inclusive multiracial” (Melamed, 2011, p. 97) American social imaginary and in adherence to centrist Democratic tenets, which do not seek to radically disrupt normative practices and understandings.

Scholars, including James Banks (1993, 1994, 2004) and Geneva Gay (2003), have contributed much to the framework of multiculturalism in the education sphere, seeing it as a path designed to reimagine both schools and instruction so that all students might be prepared to work towards making our democratic society more just (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Banks (1994) identifies five strands that characterize multicultural
education. *Content integration* considers the aspects of teaching most associated with multicultural education. It speaks to the “extent to which teachers use examples, data, and information from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principals, generalizations, and theories in their subject area or discipline” (Banks, 1993, p. 5). The *knowledge construction process* describes the extent to which students are asked to interrogate the assumptions and biases that are held within “common sense” knowledges. *Prejudice reduction* describes the “lessons and activities used by teachers to help students to cultivate positive dispositions and attitudes toward different ethnic and cultural groups by cross-cultural interactions under favorable conditions” (Agirdag, Merry, & Van Houtte, 2016, p. 561). *Equity pedagogy* describes the procedures and strategies that teachers employ to improve the academic performance of minoritized students. The last strand, *empowering school culture and social structure*, moves the analysis beyond the individual to the school structures and systems that contribute to positive outcomes for marginalized students.

Banks (1994) describes four approaches (contributions, additive, transformative, and social action) that capture the extent to which the above dimensions are integrated into the classroom. This typology places contributions as the easiest and most common way such curricular content is integrated and social action as the most rare and profound integration within a classroom. A typical example of a contributions approach is the requisite celebration of heroes and holidays considered important for minoritized populations. This is a shallow engagement with cultural content, and unfortunately often results in the trivialization of ethnic identities and can reinforce the non-Americanness, the non-belonging, of these minoritized groups.
In an additive approach there is some integration of themes and examples from ethnic minoritized groups in the curriculum, though without making substantial changes to the norms of instruction and learning. While this is a deeper engagement than contributions approaches, it remains limited as it still gazes at these Othered minoritized populations without helping shift perspectives. The transformative approach goes further than both contributions and additive approaches as it fundamentally alters the structure of the curriculum. Students are asked to “imagine alternatives to, and even critique, the ‘facts’ as they are presented in the canonical view and found in most school textbooks” (Agirdag et al., 2016, p. 561).

Finally, a social action approach works within transformed curricula but goes still a step farther, enabling students to actively organize to address racism and ethnic inequality within their schools and communities. Sleeter (2004), in support of such approaches, argued that the “ideals of social justice” are not enough; and that instead, students must “name and actively challenge forms of injustice, not just recognize and celebrate differences” (p. 123).

**Multiculturalism in the face of neoliberalism.** In the face of an increasing global capital and the emergence of neoliberalism, multiculturalism, like all aspects of society, has remolded and remade itself into a technology of neoliberalism. In neoliberal multiculturalism (Case & Ngo, 2017; Darder, 2012; Hale, 2005; Melamed, 2011; Mitchell, 2003), the vast diversity of social groups is seen as positive only in that it “produces a multiracial, multilingual, and multicultural elite” (Melamed, 2011, p. 153) able to maximize participation in globalization. The components of the “multi-” are less important than the proximity to the market it allows. Such differences are erased as post-
racial and color evasive rhetoric reshape multiculturalism to flatten diversity discourses, minimizing barriers to both capital and exploitation. As Darder (2012) argues in her essay, *Neoliberalism in the Academic Borderlands*:

In the efficient, cost-effective, and competitive neoliberal world, questions of difference have been neatly conflated and diffused by a hypocrisy fueled by racism, elitism and a tenacious disbelief in the equality of those who exist outside the narrow rationality of its profit logic. (p. 413)

In the education sphere, neoliberal multiculturalism and its demand for cosmopolitanism has ushered in a restructuring of educational priorities based on attending to the needs of the 21st century neoliberal economy. Students are sorted with more efficiency and at a larger scale through increasingly privately developed processes and protocols of standardization and accountability. Those at the bottom are sifted into exploitable service positions, those in the middle into the professional-managerial class, with only the very few skimmed off the top to serve as the elite and given access to the full capacity of the neoliberal economy.

Mitchell (2003) argues that multicultural education has moved from a focus on producing a more tolerant democratic national citizen “who was able to work with and through difference, and conditioned to believe in the positive advantages of diversity in constructing and unifying the nation” (p. 387-388). Instead, neoliberal multiculturalism calls for a “more individuated, mobile and highly tracked, skills-based education or the creation of the ‘strategic cosmopolitan’” (p. 388) who is not motivated by the positive impacts of diversity but by global competition and the need to “strategically adapt as an individual to rapidly shifting personal and national contexts” (p. 388). This change in the
orientation of multiculturalism is a direct result of the entrenchment of neoliberalism within the educational space.

In the classroom, neoliberal multiculturalism has reinforced the production of cultural products and consumption of culture as a means of attending to the vast diversity of social groups within the nation-state. As Ladson-Billings (1998) argues, such multicultural education:

is but a shadow of its conceptual self. Rather than engage students in provocative thinking about the contradictions of US ideals and lived realities, teachers often find themselves encouraging students to sing ‘ethnic’ songs, eat ethnic foods, and do ethnic dances…manifestations [that] are superficial and trivial ‘celebrations of diversity.’. (p. 22)

These pedagogical moves shepherd students into their positions as consumers for a global economy, teaching them early to consume the foods, media, artifacts, and of the “Other” in a benign and neutral way. They are not, though, taught the histories and violences that have been perpetuated in order to create and sustain this system. And so, a dislocation within the self continues to be perpetuated, as the whole self, the self that also contains these histories and violences, is again denied.

**Transnationalism.** Castles’ final pathway for transmitting values of citizenship and belonging in the schools is transnationalism. Drawing from conceptions of transnationalism in relation to migration and mobility, transnationalism emphasizes human agency in constructing communities and networks that can both respond to and constitute multiple citizenships (Castles, 2004). Here, Castles is more imagining than
analyzing a path beyond nation-bounded and culturally-fixed conceptions of multiculturalism.

Theorizations of transnationalism in an educational context are emerging. Some studies that aim to discuss transnationalism are in fact discussing assimilative strategies employed by immigrant families (Sánchez & Kasun, 2012). What is considered transnational education is primarily concerned with student and scholar mobility and is typically focused on higher education and college-bound student-migrants (Knight & McNamara, 2017). Notions of translanguaging (García & Wei, 2018) certainly pull on this thread, but deal primarily with newcomers and language study. Other scholars (DeWitt, 2016; Sánchez & Kasun, 2012) have described the lives of young people whose families exist across borders and who are often travelling abroad at unpredictable times. While these stories engage questions of identity and belonging, they do not discuss curricular or pedagogical considerations for engaging the global contexts of their students. Currently, there is no clear pathway for what a teacher, classroom, or school that embodies this ontoepistemology might look like.

The Challenge for Teacher Education

As the United States becomes more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse, schools, in turn, must address this shift in the student population. While schooling has traditionally been the vehicle for transmitting core values and logics (Barr, 2005) that largely represent “imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchy” (hooks, 1994), today’s ongoing demographic shifts demand an urgency to unseat these assumptions and reimagine a more inclusive and just education system.
Across teacher education scholarship, there is a call to cultivate teachers better able to serve this increasingly diverse student population. This call is foregrounded by two overarching claims. First, that while the student population is becoming increasingly culturally pluralistic and composed of students who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, the teaching force remains primarily monolingual and monocultural (Sleeter, Torres, & Laughlin, 2004). Furthermore, teacher education scholarship indicates that while most of these White pre-service teachers anticipate working with children from other cultural backgrounds, these soon-to-be teachers neither seek out nor receive cross-cultural knowledges and/or experiences and have little awareness or understanding of discrimination, particularly racism (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Picower, 2009; Pollock, Deckman, Mira, & Shalaby, 2010). Secondly, Black, Indigenous, low-income, LGBTQ+, and highly mobile students, as well as English language learners and students of color have been, and continue to be, underserved by our schools (Ladson-Billings, 2008).

In fact, rather than move towards innovative and inclusive programming, many districts have responded by instead narrowing practices and implementing conservative, reactionary policies (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005). Additionally, studies have shown that a discrepancy between “student performance on standardized tests, college going rates, and retention exists between middle and high income, White, native English-speaking students and lower income culturally and linguistically diverse (primarily Latino and African American) students” (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012, p. 2). Scholarship on this gap identifies a discontinuity between “racial and ethnic minority students' home culture and the mainstream, White middle-class culture that pervades most schools” (Gutstein, Lipman, Hernandez & de los Reyes, 1997, p. 713). Schools increasingly serve
as sites of exclusion, where students’ diverse home cultures are seen as detrimental, rather than beneficial, to student performance.

Rather than a singular institution, schools and education are culturally and socially constructed extensions of the State, responsible for socializing young people into the White normative, settler colonial society. As Villegas (2007) argues, schools, and teachers in turn, “perform a sorting function” in our society, using academic performance to “allocat[e] individuals to particular locations in the socioeconomic hierarchy” (p. 371) and are instrumental to the continued functioning of the settler colonial state. In addition to reading, writing, and arithmetic, through schooling we also learn the importance of obtaining and caretaking our property, the process for turning the world and experiences into objects to be bought and sold and are taught to recognize our place in the social hierarchy. This function has significant impacts on what possibilities are available to students and requires that we disrupt the status quo functioning of the schools, centering the lived realities and desires of these students. We must recognize that the origins of inequity exist outside of the schools – and also recognize that the realities of inequity are perpetuated and exacerbated in and by our schools.

**Confronting the Demographic Imperative**

While the field of teacher education has demonstrated “conceptual confusion” (Grant, Elsebree, Fondrei, 2004, p. 200) in regard to how teacher education programs should accomplish this work, a variety of scholars have offered “attitudes, knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to work effectively with a diverse student population” (Zeichner, 1992, p.1). Villegas (2007) describes how specific pedagogical and conceptual frameworks guide this teaching for social justice, citing various approaches including:
culturally responsive teaching (Gay & Kirkland, 2003), culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994), teaching for diversity (Zeichner, 1992), and multicultural education (Banks, 1993). While each of these frameworks is distinct in their conceptual strands and points of emphasis, there is some agreement amongst them that beyond academic content and instructional conventions, teachers, particularly White teachers, must cultivate an understanding around issues of race, privilege, power, and oppression that is outside of their own experiences in order to successfully teach their students (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Picower, 2009; Pollock, Deckman, Mira, & Shalaby, 2010; Sleeter et al., 2004). Gloria Ladson-Billings, discussing the challenges of enacting culturally relevant pedagogy, argues that we must approach this teacher work as a challenge of how we think, rather than as a what to do problem (2008, p. 34).

Yet, a change in thinking is not enough given the demographic imperative (Cochran-Smith, 2004) facing the nation, as well as the stagnation in our teaching force. The National Center for Education Statistics marked 2014 as the first year when a majority of students in U.S. public schools were not White, while the percentage of White teachers across the system has remained nearly unmoved over the past 30 years sitting at 82% (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Furthermore, while recruitment of teacher candidates of color is on the rise, the vast majority (over 80%) of the teacher education pipeline is White, and these students are taught by a primarily White teacher educator force (Lindsay, Blom & Tilsley, 2017; Picower, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Given this, Ladson-Billings (2001) contends that impacts of Whiteness on our education system must be critically examined with an eye on privilege and power:
Typically, White, middle-class prospective teachers have little to no understanding of their own culture. Notions of Whiteness are taken for granted. They rarely are interrogated. But being White is not merely about biology. It is about choosing a system of privilege and power. (p. 81)

Sleeter (2004) argues that grand ideals are not enough, and that today’s teachers must be able to “name and actively challenge forms of injustice, not just recognize and celebrate differences” (p.123). Such educational leaders, particularly in the field of urban education, contend that White teachers must “be able to critically examine [their] social positionality as it intersects with those of their students” (Picower, 2009, p. 199). In order to develop not only an individual orientation but a structural one, teachers must see beyond the self, situating themselves within the larger social and political context of their classrooms, schools, and contemporary life.

Unfortunately, for our primarily White and female teacher population, this understanding is far from both their own experiences in schooling and their lived realities in society (Sleeter et al., 2004). Additionally challenging is the lack of knowledge these teachers have around the stories and histories of BIPOC and otherly marginalized students (Picower, 2009, p. 202). Scholars have shown, through the ways preservice teachers explain their life experiences, that heteronormativity, classism, and racism are deeply ingrained in American life (Picower, 2009).

Summary

In this chapter, I have explored the historic, global, and contemporary factors that impact the migration, schooling, and teaching to theoretically ground and contextualize the identities and everyday experiences of the Second-Generation Asian Americans in
this study. This chapter began by briefly tracing the U.S. history of exclusionary immigration policy and considering the implications of immigration and nationality reform in the 1960s on the Asian American population. I turned to consider how global factors have contributed to fourth wave migration and the demographic shift in the U.S., specifically addressing how globalization and neoliberalism has reconfigured relationships and networks across the globe and introducing transnationalism as a more appropriate framework for understanding the everyday experiences of diasporic communities. I then engaged with scholarship on citizenship in order to illuminate the dimensions that define belonging within the United States. I additionally explored how schooling has historically and contemporaneously contended with its societal role of surveilling, maintaining, and at times, expanding the boundaries of what it means to be American. Lastly, I considered the challenges facing teacher education in the ongoing struggle to make schools and teaching places that recognize the full humanity of all students and work towards a more just future. The following chapter introduces narrative inquiry as a methodology that can illuminate the ways the histories, contexts, and theorizations explored in this chapter are made manifest in the everyday experiences and material realities of Second-Generation Asian American teachers.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The story never stops beginning or ending. It appears headless and bottomless for it is built on differences. Its (in)finitude subverts every notion of completeness and its frame remains a non-totalizable one.

(Trinh, 1989, p. 2)

This chapter introduces narrative inquiry as the methodology employed in this study and provides details about the research design. The purpose of this study is to examine how Second-Generation Asian American elementary school teachers negotiate their ethnoracial identity (Alcoff, 2009; Brown & Jones, 2015; Goldberg, 1992) in relation to their role in schools and responsibility to students. In order to best understand these experiences, this dissertation utilizes narrative inquiry, a methodology that centers story as the central unit of study and allows for a nuanced and complex understanding of experience. In this chapter, I begin with a broad overview of narrative inquiry as a qualitative methodology and discuss my orientation to this broad field of inquiry. I introduce the Listening Guide as the method of analysis and discuss the narrative construction process which guides the representation of storied data in this dissertation. I close the chapter by detailing the design of this project including the research context and data collection tools. The narratives that resulted from the narrative construction process are then presented in the following chapter.

Centering Story

This study examines the experiences of Second-Generation Asian American elementary school teachers through the tools of narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodology that centers story as the unit of study and storytelling as
a mechanism for sense-making. Stories provide holistic insight into lived experiences through rich descriptions of observations, contexts, and people. For as Clandinin (2017) tells, our stories are inextricably connected to the lives we lead: “We live storied lives within storied landscapes... We are the stories that we live out and we are the stories that we tell about our living.” Through story the research subject is humanized, and the object of study comes to life in nuanced, specific, and compelling ways.

Stories are as varied and dynamic as the people that tell them. They can be grand narratives of exceptionality or stories about the everyday and mundane. They can offer entry in worlds that are unfamiliar and provide alternative perspectives into worlds that are familiar. Lugones (1987) argues that through story “we inhabit ‘worlds’ and travel across them and keep all the memories” (p. 14) in turn, constructing new imaginings of who we are and who others are. Additionally, as Trinh (1989) reminds us, stories, once told, take on their own lives as they change the realities of those who hear them and wind their way into other stories. She writes, “The story is beautiful, because or therefore it unwinds like a thread. A long thread, for there is no end in sight. Or the end she reaches leads actually to another end, another opening, another ‘residual deposit of duration’” (p. 149).

Stories are at both times unique and universal; they “transcend temporal, contextual, cultural, and social boundaries” (Huber, Caine, Huber, & Steeves, 2013, p. 216). In listening to stories, we become connected to and invested in the experiences of those who we may never actually cross paths with; those whose lived realities would otherwise be foreign and inaccessible. Thus, it is important that storytelling offers narratives from beyond the center and, as Elbaz-Luwisch (2010) argues “provide[s] a
hearing for the stories of people on the margins, whose experience is generally not heard” (p. 274). Understanding personal stories within larger social constructs contributes to the project of interrogating and transforming the world within which we all live. Narratives not only explain an individual’s experience, but also construct and shape that reality. Richard Delgado (1989) argues that “stories, parables, chronicles, and narratives are powerful means for destroying mindset” (p. 2413). Centering story as a knowledge product, rather than byproduct, affords us a path towards disrupting hegemonic narratives. As Okri stated in his 1997 text,

One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or—knowingly or unknowingly—in ourselves. We live stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaningless. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives. (p. 46)

Stories have the power to change our reality. They can provide important counternarratives that disrupt normative understandings and lead us towards a more just and equitable future.

**Narrative Inquiry as Method**

Clandinin and Connelly first coined the term narrative inquiry in their 1990 article, “Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry” to describe the study of experience through story. Later, in their seminal text, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (2000), they went on to develop the method, arguing that lives are lived as stories and that our identities are formed both from our experiences themselves as well as the stories we tell of those experiences. This is, of course, not a new or novel concept. We have been telling stories to make meaning of our experiences for
generations. Huber, Caine, Huber, and Steeves (2013) remind us that “human beings have and continue to draw on stories as a way to share, and to understand, who we are, who we have been, and who we are becoming” (p. 213-214).

Narrative inquiry as a methodology for social science research, however, emerged as a pathway for inquiry in the late 20th century, largely in response to the perceived shortcomings of positivist research paradigms and calls to expand the bounds of what counts as academic knowledge (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Riessman (2008) argues that the method has gained traction particularly due to the desires of researchers seeking more expansive methods for conducting interdisciplinary study.

While narrative inquiry comprises a vast and dynamic repertoire of approaches, strategies, and methods, certain ways of thinking and inquiring denote the narrative approach. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) discuss four “turns” that reflect the move from more traditional methods of study towards narrative inquiry. These “turns” include: 1) A change in the relationship between the researched and the researcher from bounded, static and atemporal to relational, dynamic, and contextualized; 2) The move from representing data and findings as number to words as representation; 3) A focus on the local and particular rather than the general and universal; and 4) An epistemological broadening that accepts multiple ways of knowing and understanding. Together, these dynamics articulate a move towards a more postmodern approach, which can unsettle the objectivity, gaze, certainty, and generalizability that characterize Modernity’s scientific project.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that narrative inquiry begins with the researcher’s own experiences and story and how they are linked to the research topic.
Unlike other inquiry pursuits that aim to bound and categorize the object of study and then distance it from the researcher, narrative inquiry “has the compelling, sometimes confounding, quality of merging overall life experiences with specific research experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 115). The research is a dual inquiry process with “always the inquirer experiencing the experience and also being a part of the experience itself” (p. 83). The method begins and remains intertwined with the researcher's own story. Thus, as Huber et al. (2013) argue, “our very identities as human beings are inextricably linked to the stories we tell of ourselves, both to ourselves and with one another” (p. 214). Stories are an expression of who we are and how we move through the world; they are stories of identity.

Clandinin (2006) suggests that narrative inquiry pursuits begin “through telling stories or through coming alongside participants in the living out of stories” (p. 47). She argues that all formations of story, whether they be those of participants, inquirers, or institutional narratives, are already ongoing as the inquiry begins and therefore our experiences with them will always be incomplete and partial. Rather than search for grand theories or arrive at generalizable findings, narrative inquiry embraces the specificity, multiplicity, and contradiction within which lives are lived and stories are told.

**Defining the Narrative Approach**

Narrative scholars (e.g., Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013; Mischler, 1995; Riessman, 2005) describe a range of analytical orientations to narrative research. Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou (2013) organize these approaches in three typologies: event-centered, experience-centered, and socioculturally-oriented. Event-centered
approaches are drawn from the work of sociolinguist William Labov (1967), whose method of structural analysis focused primarily on the analysis of transcripts as monologues of a retold event that provided a direct translation of the event and represent the essential core of an objective reality (Patterson, 2013). Similar to other positivist methodological approaches, event-centered narrative research discards elements of the story not directly connected to the event being retold and the presence of the researcher is bracketed away (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013).

Experience-centered approaches move away from a focus solely on the fixed textual retelling of past events, instead centering the narrated experience. Squire (2013) describes the experience-centered approach as one that understands narratives to be: 1) sequential and meaningful, 2) a means for human sense-making, 3) reconstituted, co-constructed and re-presentative performances, and 4) displaying transformation or change (p. 48). In this approach, narratives are socially and temporally situated productions of individualized subjectivities that mediate meaning-making.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) take up this experience-centered approach in their orientation to narrative research. Drawing on Dewey’s theory of experience (1938), they describe the narrative inquiry field as a three-dimensional space centered as the crossroads of continuity, situation, and interaction. Each dimension itself lives at an intersection of internal elements. Temporality is one dimension describing the continuity of past, present, and innumerable futures. The location and time within which the experience is situated provides a second dimension of place. The interaction between the inward looking personal and outward looking social offers a third dimension, which Clandinin and Connelly term sociality.
Temporality describes the fleeting nature of experience, as well as the attempt to capture experience in research. Rather than see an experience as a static and fixed moment, narrative inquiry calls on the researcher to see the experience in time, with a past, present, and implied future. Experiences occur on a continuum and thus any inquiry must investigate the histories that together assemble the present, as well as consider the multiple futures that are made possible by the experience. As Clandinin and Connelly argue, “We tell remembered stories of ourselves from earlier times as well as more current stories. All of these stories offer possible plotlines for our futures” (2000, p. 60). Storytelling can reveal shifts in temporality as narratives bring us backwards and forwards in time.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) go on to discuss the significance of where the inquiry is situated; the time and place that locates the study. Just as with temporarily, the spatiality may shift geographically as stories transcend regions and borders. Yet, experiences can also remain rooted in the same location — for example, experiences situated in classrooms. Time is necessarily intertwined with our understanding of place and often can complicate understandings of an experience. For example, we can assume that a story taking place in a classroom in 1980 is significantly different from one taking place in a classroom in 2021 during pandemic-related remote instruction. Therefore, narrative must consider both the place of the story as well as the time in which it takes place.

The third dimension discussed by Clandinin and Connelly is that of sociality, or the interaction between the personal and the social environment. Here, we can look inward at the “feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions” (2000,
p. 50) of the storyteller or inquirer, while also looking outward at the environment in which the narrative occurs. This interplay between the inward and outward reveals the specificity of dynamics that contextualize the experience. Together, these three dimensions create research texts that demonstrate the multilayered and nuanced nature of experience. Evaluating the stories along these dimensions allows for a scaffolding of analysis and interpretation so that the stories can be seen from a range of perspectives (Dwyer & Emerald, 2017).

The final typology defined by Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou (2013) is a socioculturally-oriented approach, which they described as an expansion of the experience-centered approach that is concerned with the histories, social and cultural worlds of the narratives. In taking up the sociocultural context of the narratives, narrative research is made “less prescriptive, less controlled by temporal progression, less focused on coherence, more aware of language, more likely to understand selves in non-essentialist ways and more able to break out of hermeneutic reflexivity with its social referents” (Squire, 2013, p. 65). Additionally, this attention to the particularities and subjectivities embedded within the narratives makes visible the role of the audience in co-constructing the narrative and allows for greater multiplicity and incompleteness in the storying (Squire, 2013). In this typology, narratives are treated as performance and all aspects of the telling are specific to the moment and the audience, rather than as sequentially ordered and fixed text (Riessman, 2002). As a performance, these narratives reveal the way the subject positions themselves in relation to the characters that inhabit the stories, and the audience to whom the story is being told.


**Defining the Narrated Subject**

Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou (2013) argue that situating the narrative in the socioculturally-situated world while also centering experience produces a fissure in the conceptualization of the subject. Experience-centered approaches argue for a singular agentic and authorial storytelling subject (Squire, 2013). In this orientation, the story is temporally ordered as the subject retells an experience. An importance is placed on the coherence of the narrative and the story and the subject is viewed as unified and whole (Loots, Coppens, & Semijn, 2013; Polkinghorne, 1995; Squire, 2013).

Socioculturally-situated approaches, however, theorize a fragmented and culturally produced “postmodern” subject (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008). Rather than a coherent, unified subject, this approach draws on Bakhtin's conception of the polyphony of voices (Loots et al., 2013). In this theorization, the situated self takes up a range of “I” positions as it negotiates particular times and spaces (Herman, 2001). At times, the voices demonstrate consonance while at other times they exist as a dissonant chorus, with the timbre and tenor of the polyphony always socioculturally-situated. As Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, and Bertsch (2003) describe:

> the collectivity of different voices that compose the voice of any given person—its range, its harmonies and dissonances, its distinctive tonality, key signatures, pitches, and rhythm—is always embodied, in culture, and in relationship with oneself and with others. (p. 253)

In attempting to theorize beyond this duality, Doucet and Mauthner (2008) offer the concept of a narrated subject as one able to bridge this disjuncture. Drawing on the work of feminist scholars McNay (2000) and Stanley (1993), Doucet and Mauthner
(2008) describe the narrated subject as the self that is constituted and made known through story; the self made manifest through the telling. Through the act of storytelling, the subject engages in a performance, calling upon the discourses and subjectivities available to them in that moment (Davies, 2000). Thus, the narrated subject is dynamic, layered, and relational, and whatever may exist beneath the narrative, behind the narrated subject, is ultimately unknowable (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008). The study of narratives will never allow us to understand an essential, core, or fixed self. It can only ever allow a glimpse into the life the subject narrates; into the life it constitutes through the telling. As Plummer (1995, p. 168) articulates:

Whatever else a story is, it is not simply the lived life. It speaks all around the life: it provides routes into a life, lays down maps for lives to follow, suggests links between a life and a culture. It may indeed be one of the most important tools we have for understanding lives and the wider cultures they are part of. But it is not the life, which is in principle unknown and unknowable.

**Defining the Narrative Inquiry Process**

Narrative inquiry encompasses a wide range of actions and products. Stories can make up the data of a study, the method of analysis, and/or the form in which the data is represented (Polkinghorne, 1995). As stated by Jehanne Beaton (2014), “by using narrative, writing is simultaneously the process and product, data and analysis, findings, and representation” (p. 1034). Approaches to analysis can take many forms across narrative inquiry. Polkinghorne (1995) describes two broad formations in which stories provide the heart of the analytical approach: analysis of narratives and narrative analysis. Describing this distinction, James (2017) states, “the former is
research which uses stories as data and the latter is the use of storytelling to analyse data and present findings” (p. 3102). In this dissertation, narrative inquiry is taken up in two ways, through the analysis of narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995) and narrative construction (Barone, 2007).

**Analyzing the Narratives: The Listening Guide.** The analysis of narratives describes the ways stories are examined and meaning is made. The stories in this dissertation were first analyzed using the Listening Guide method, a qualitative, multivocal, relational and feminist analysis tool (Chmielewski, 2017; Gilligan, 2015; Gilligan & Eddy, 2017; Johnstone, 2016; Mauthner, 2017; Woodcock, 2016). This “multi-layered interpretative approach” provides a flexible and relational guide to examining interview transcripts (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008, p. 404). Drawn from Gilligan’s (1982) work on identity and moral development, the guide was developed to provide an alternative to the thematic coding process for analyzing transcripts (Gilligan et al., 2003). The Listening Guide Method was further developed by Brown and Gilligan in their 1992 longitudinal study of girlhood where they described it as a voice-centered relational method (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). The method has since been utilized to “access and understand marginalized and understudied experiences” (Gilligan, 2015, p. 70). Sorsoli and Tolman (2008) describe the power of this method in the following way:

> Although every person’s voice contains multiple melodic lines that can be explored qualitatively, it is often in regard to experiences that are the most complicated, taboo, or awkward to share with others that this method’s goal of tuning into the rhythms, harmonies, and disjunctures present in research interviews can be most illuminating. (p. 498)
The Listening Guide is an analysis protocol whereby the researcher engages in three successive “listenings” to the transcripts. The three listenings entail: 1) listening for the plot, 2) listening for the I, and 3) listing for contrapuntal voices (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017, p. 79). Each listening is meant to “offer a way of tuning into the polyphonic voice of another person” (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 254). Doucet and Mauthner’s (2008) later expanded on the Listening Guide providing an intervention meant to place the analytical guide in relation to the narrated subject. As such, the Listening Guide offers an ideal fit for making meaning of experience-centered stories while also attending to the situatedness of the narrated subject.

The first step in the Listening Guide is to conduct a reflexive reading of the interview transcripts (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017). In this step, the researcher listens for plot while also listening reflexively to their own response to the narratives shared. The goal of this listening is to “get a sense of what is happening, to follow the unfolding of the events to listen to the drama” (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 27). This step asks the researcher to consider “who is there, who or what is missing…salient themes, striking metaphors or symbols, gaps, or ruptures (Gilligan, 2015, p. 71). Additionally, the researcher is asked to locate themselves within this data and consider their own power as audience (Mauthner, 2017).

The second listening focuses on the first-person voice of the speaker (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017, p. 78). In this step, the listener attends to the “particular subject or narrator in the interview transcripts, and to how this person speaks about her/himself and the parameters of their social world” (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008, p. 405). This listening focuses on the “I” position of the narrated subject, tuning into the first-person
voice throughout the transcript (Gilligan et al., 2003). This step calls for the reconfiguration of the transcript into “I poems” wherein the “I” statements made by the subject are extracted from the transcript and remade into a poem as stanzas take shape (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017, p. 78). This step tunes into the harmonies and dissonances within the narrated subject as they call upon their experiences and subjectivities.

Step three in the Listening Guide zooms back out, asking the researcher to take in all the layers of the narrated experience and place the listening in relation to the research questions (Gilligan et al., 2003; Woodcock, 2017). This step is drawn from the musical form counterpoint, in which multiple melodic lines exist as independent motives that move in and out of each other throughout a composition. This listening allows for hearing and following the multiple storylines within the larger narrative, and for attending to the interplay, harmonies, and dissonances within and amongst the storylines. Listening for contrapuntal voices, Gilligan (2015) argues “underscores the musical aspect of listening where the goal is to listen for nuance, for modulations and silences…to resist binary categories, and to hear complexity rather than flatten the data” (p. 72).

In this study, the Listening Guide method was utilized for each participant, meaning that each transcript for each participant underwent at least three listenings as prescribed by the method. When the three steps of the Listening Guide were completed, a “trail of underlinings, notes, and summaries” (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 266) emerged. This trail then informed the narrative construction process, which is outlined in the following section.

**Narrative Construction: Re-storying the Data.** Barone (2007) describes narrative construction as the process by which data is recast into storied form. In this
process, “researchers collect descriptions of events and happenings and synthesize or configure them by means of a plot into a story or stories” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 12). Instead of looking for commonalities, this construction centers the “particularities of the experience; the temporal development and unique histories” (Dwyer & emerald, 2017, p. 17). Through this recasting, narrative construction can result in a range of representations including novella, life story, portraiture, and ethnodrama. While the representations may take many forms, what remains central in these narrative constructions is the power to, as Barone (2007) poetically offers,

…lift the veil of conventionality from [the] eyes as they subtly raise disturbing questions about the necessity and desirability of comfortable, familiar educational discourses and practices. These are the products of an educational research that refuses closure to redirect an ongoing conversation. (p. 465)

In Troubling Education (2002), Kevin Kumashiro describes his decision to represent the voices of his participants through narrative poetry. In choosing this explicitly interpretative narrative construction, he states that “poetry, more than prose, makes explicit, through its unconventionality, many ways in which the story is constructed” (p. 21). He goes on to say that with poetry, “readers cannot read stories as mere recordings of the participant speaking to the researcher, but they can read stories as events where the participant and the researcher are speaking to the reader” (p. 21). Drawing on the work of poststructuralist scholars, his use of poetry troubles the ways in which researchers often use quotations from interviews to present voices as if they are static truths – full, literal, representation of reality. Through this choice of recasting his interview data into poetry,
Kumashiro “makes explicit the ways in which the participants’ voices are contextualized, the researcher’s interpretations are partial, and the reader’s reading is situated” (p. 20).

Through presenting the stories and experiences told in interviews as poetry, Kumashiro moves “objective” interviewing towards interpretative arts. The interview is positioned in a realm that not only allows one to explicitly interpret, but asks others to re-interpret, calling into question any assertion of truth or singular way of knowing. As Kumashiro stated, “I do not purport to say, ‘this is the story,’ or even, ‘this is my participant’s story.’ Rather, I claim only a partial interpretation” (p. 22). Morris (2002) also takes up this troubling of traditional research wherein stories are presented as stable objects. He makes a distinction between narrative inquiry that thinks about stories and ones that think with stories. He argues that thinking about stories positions the narrative as an object while thinking with stories positions the narrative as “a process in which we as thinkers do not so much work on narrative . . . [but allow] narrative to work on us” (p. 196). After this process is completed, the analyses are examined in relation to each other, illuminating contradictions, similarities, and questions.

In this study, the narratives collected through the interview process and analyzed according to the Listening Guide method were then re-storied through this narrative construction process. The stories were constructed along the three types of listenings outlined in the Listening Guide method. The first set of stories attends to plot, paralleling the process for the first listening. These narrative profiles tell a linear and cohesive story of the participant, detailing as Brown and Gilligan say, “the who, what, where, when and why of the narratives” (1992, p. 27). The second set of stories
constructed in this study attend to the first-person voice. Data are re-storied and presented as I-Poems which speak directly to the narrated self. Lastly, the third form of narrative construction re-stories the data into a story chain which echoes the contrapuntal movement attended to in the third listening. In these narratives, stories of individual participants weave in and out conversation with each other, and with me, demonstrating the interplay, harmony, and dissonances across each participant’s narratives.

The Study

This study examines the experiences of Second-Generation Asian American elementary school teachers through the tools of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Four teachers shared stories of growing up, going to school, and teaching as Second-Generation Americans of Color. These stories serve as the primary data source for this study, explored alongside my own autoethnographic narratives and theoretical frameworks meant to provide insight into the nuances of belonging in America. Participants shared these stories through in-depth virtual interviews. An analysis of these interviews then involved the multi-step Listening Guide approach (Gilligan et al., 2003) as detailed above, after which the narratives were re-storied through a process of narrative construction (Barone, 2007) into the stories presented in chapter 4 of this dissertation. The following sections detail the specifics of this methodological process.

Research Questions

This study aims to address the following research questions:
1) What do the stories of Second-Generation Asian American elementary school teachers reveal about their experiences growing up and going to school in America?

2) How do Second-Generation Asian American elementary school teachers negotiate their identities and culture within their teaching contexts? What successes, tensions and grappling emerge?

3) In what ways does the experience of growing up in an immigrant family shape the ways Second-Generation Asian American elementary school teachers take up their work in the schools and in their classrooms?

**Situating the Study: Tracing the Past to Understand the Present**

This study takes place in the Twin Cities of Minnesota, a metropolitan region of 1.8 million in the Upper Midwest, encompassing Hennepin and Ramsey counties. In order to better contextualize the experiences and stories shared by the Second-Generation Asian Americans in this study, I will situate this study in the specific settlement and immigration histories of this specific region. The following sections detail the histories and impacts of Native dispossession and White occupation of the region, from the desires of westward expansion, industrialization, migrant labor and refugee resettlement in the Twin Cities region of Minnesota. This contextualization is important for understanding the current demographic profile of the region as well as the demographics of the teacher and student population.

**Native Dispossession and White Occupation.** While the Twin Cities region is considered Dakota land, the Ojibwe also lay claim to the region. European colonial presence and land dispossession east of the Great Lakes, beginning the 17th century,
pushed the Ojibwe, an Algonquian tribe, west into Dakota land, leading to hundreds of years of territorial disputes and alliances between the Ojibwe and Dakota (Anfinson, 2003). The Dakota and Ojibwe remain stewards of this land. Encounters with White people began in the 1500s when French fur traders established outposts throughout the region. It was not until the early 19th century American project of westward expansion, however, that White settlers arrived in the region in large numbers (Bdote Memory Map). Enticed by the promise of vast farmland and the ease of railroad and steamboat transit to the region, White people established their settlements along the banks of the Mississippi river around the area, the Dakota and Ojibwe sacred site where the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers converge near what is now Pike Island.

White settlers arrived occupying native land to engage in fur trading, logging, and small-scale farming (Anfinson, 2003). By 1862, this incursion and the violation of treaties by the White settlers left the Dakota confined to a small strip of land along the banks of the Mississippi River and without consistent access to food (Bdote Memory Map). In that same year, the Dakota War brought the White settlers into violent conflict with Dakota as they attempted to further remove and dispossess the Dakota of their land. This led to the internment of the Dakota at Fort Snelling and on the sacred site of Pike Island, and many massacres and hangings of Dakota men, women, elders, and children (Bdote Memory Map). The following year, the remaining Dakota were exiled from Minnesota and confined to Reservations primarily in South Dakota, while the Ojibwe were confined to Reservations primarily within Minnesota (Ratsabout, 2019). This final dispossession opened the region to further White settler occupation, and the subsequent growth of Minneapolis and Saint Paul as twin urban centers.
**Industrialization and Migrant Labor.** In the mid 1800s, the region grew as White settlers used the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul as a home-base for their expansion down the Mississippi River and through the Northwest Territory. Later, the region became a westward railroad hub as the strategic location along the Mississippi River and the hydro-power available at Saint Anthony Falls allowed for large-scale grain milling operations. During the post-Civil War period, Minnesota saw an influx of White British, Irish, Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian, and German people desiring to work in timber, mining, and grain industries, in addition to those engaging in small-scale farming (Ratsabout, 2019). Additionally, during this time, a relatively small number of newly emancipated African Americans arrived in Minnesota from the South, establishing the first Black communities in the area. The population of Black Minnesotans remained under 1% until the Second Great Migration, when it rose by 149% (Burnside, 2020).

Also, during this post-Civil War period, Minnesota became home to a small but growing Chinese population. Chinese migrants arrived in the U.S. in the mid 1800’s to provide the labor needed to do the dangerous work of building the Transcontinental Railroad. Many stayed on the West Coast after this, but experienced significant terror and violence at the hands of White people there (Bieber, Gong, Young, Fifer, Tsien, Tajima-Pena, & Chung, 2020). In the late 1800s, many chose to leave the hostility of the West Coast to settle in the Midwest, opening small businesses serving their communities (Ratsabout, 2019).

In the early 1900s, Minnesota had a booming sugar beet industry that required labor-intensive harvesting each year. In order to meet this labor need, beet growers recruited Mexican workers to cultivate and harvest the crop (Ratsabout, 2019). These
Mexican migrants settled into the Red River and Minnesota River valleys during the warm months of the year and returned south during off season primarily because of the lack of work in winter and the discrimination they faced in Minnesota (Kolnick, 2019). After decades of seasonal migration, beet growers encouraged the workers to settle in Minnesota to have more continuity of labor. These workers subsequently put down roots in St. Paul and Minneapolis (Kolnick, 2019). While the tumultuous immigration history of the 1900s led to ebbs and flows in Mexican migration, this ongoing need for industrial farm labor has left Minnesota with a large Mexican American population (Ratsabout, 2019). Over the decades, this original Mexican American community has grown to welcome newer immigrants from Puerto Rico, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Today, 60% of the nearly 270,000 Minnesotans of Latinx descent are U.S. born (Kolnick, 2019).

Refugee Settlement. During the 1970s, Minnesota began to receive Hmong and Lao people as part of the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975 (Ratsabout, 2019). This legislation conferred special status to those who had fought in the Secret War in Southeast Asia on behalf of the U.S. government and CIA. Because of their alliance with America, the Hmong were subject to violent reprisals once communist governments took power. The Hmong first settled in Minnesota by way of refugee camps in Thailand in 1976 (Lee, 2019). Over the next decades the Hmong community in the Twin Cities grew, largely sponsored by local Church groups who knew little about the Secret War. While the Hmong in the Twin Cities make up just under 4% of the population, St. Paul is home to the largest Hmong population in the U.S. (Lee, 2019).
Beginning in the early 1990s, the U.S. began receiving Somali refugees who had been displaced due to war (Ratsabout, 2019). While many arrived by way of refugee camps in Kenya and Ethiopia through refugee resettlement agencies and sponsorship by church groups, others were sponsored by relatives already living in the U.S. (Wilhide, 2018). In the nearly 30 years since Somali refugees began settling in Minnesota, the Somali population has grown to over 50,000, with the majority residing in the Twin Cities (Ratsabout, 2019). Today, Minneapolis is home to more Somalis than any other city in the nation.

**The Twin Cities Today.** While Minnesota remains an overwhelmingly White state, today, one in ten Minnesotans are foreign born and 7% of Minnesotans are U.S. born with at least one immigrant parent (Immigrants in Minnesota, 2020). The Twin Cities are the urban core of the state and where the majority Black, Indigenous, and People of Color live. In 2019, about 40% of the population in Saint Paul and Minneapolis identified as BIPOC (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019), while 71% of public school students in Saint Paul and Minneapolis identified as BIPOC. In 2019, Ilhan Omar became the first Somali American and naturalized citizen of African birth to serve in the United States Congress and the first woman of color to represent Minnesota.

In 2020, the Twin Cities were forever changed by the police murder of George Floyd. The uprising in Saint Paul and Minneapolis that followed sparked a national, and even global, reckoning with White Supremacy, White terror, and anti-Blackness. In the Twin Cities, community activists have successfully pushed to reexamine the region’s relationship to policing and implement city-wide anti-racist policies. While for now, a measure of justice has been served in George Floyd’s case (Wamsley, 2021), the impacts
of the police murder of Daunte Wright (Sullivan, 2021) and ongoing federal investigation into the Minneapolis Police Department (Johnson, 2021) continue to ripple through the region.

**Recruiting Educators: Finding my Footing**

This study focuses on the experiences of Second-Generation Asian Americans who teach in elementary schools within the Twin Cities region of Minnesota. While the target population of this study is certainly not the norm in elementary schools, my own experiences in the Twin Cities schools and in the teacher education program at my University provided me with enough context to know that Second-Generation Asian Americans were working in the schools. I was additionally able to make initial outreach to districts with pipeline programs and existing initiatives meant to diversify their teacher population to ensure that there were teachers who fit this profile that might be interested in participating.

Initial outreach to school districts took place in December 2019 through February of 2020 with the hope to begin meeting educators in their schools in March and April of 2020. Unfortunately, my timeline paralleled COVID-19’s emergence in the U.S. and school closures brought my plan to a halt in March of 2020. When I was able to reconfigure my study in May of 2020, many of the administrators, districts, and educators who had initially expressed interest were unable to take on this additional responsibility.

I launched a second outreach period in late May of 2020, however, the public murder of George Floyd and organizing around Black lives pushed everyone beyond their capacities. Teachers with whom I was able to connect were apologetic but replied that they were unable to take on an additional task. Participation in my study certainly was not
the priority as teachers tried to balance childcare, online teaching, and public activism, amidst physical, mental, and Zoom exhaustion. In late June, outreach efforts within my own social networks connected me to four elementary school teachers in the Twin Cities who fit my profile and were amenable to participation.

These four Twin Cities area Second-Generation Asian American elementary school teachers were invited to share stories from their experiences growing up and going to school in America and being and becoming teachers. Each educator shared these stories during multiple virtual interviews that ranged from 1-2 hours. Figure I provides a brief sketch of all four participating educators. Identifiers presented here and referenced in this text are pseudonyms that have been selected by the educators. Demographic information was self-reported by the educators through an initial demographic survey and confirmed at the close of the study. While, looking at the demographics of my participants, this study could be read as an exploration of Hmong-American teacher stories that was not the intended focus of this project.

Figure I: Participant Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pronouns</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Race &amp; Ethnicity</th>
<th>Nation of Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maya</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>Preschool teacher + Coach</td>
<td>Indian-American</td>
<td>India/Uganda/UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ying</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>2nd grade teacher</td>
<td>Hmong-American</td>
<td>Laos/Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kao</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>Kindergarten Teacher</td>
<td>Hmong-American</td>
<td>Laos/Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corvus</td>
<td>he/him</td>
<td>4th grade teacher</td>
<td>Hmong-American</td>
<td>Laos/Thailand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection

Story is the unit of study in narrative inquiry, and thus data collection tools included methods in which stories could be shared. Given the nature of the pandemic, data was collected through virtual interviews. Additionally, all participants completed a demographic questionnaire that asked them to reflect and self-identify along racial, ethnic, class, familial history, gender, and sexuality lines, amongst others (See Appendix C). I used the data collected through this questionnaire to construct the narrative profiles shared in chapter 4, as well as to provide additional insight into each participant’s storytelling.

The Interviews. Interviews are a common tool of narrative inquiry that allow for intimate, oral storytelling. Bounded by temporalities of the day, interviews are shaped by the contexts surrounding the moment in which they take place; the political and social environment are inevitably lenses through which stories are selected and told. Positivist approaches to research utilize interviews as a tool to retrieve answers and extract meaning from within participants. Narrative inquiry, however, draws on postmodern orientations that take up interviews as socially-situated and negotiated texts (Fontana & Frey, 2005), to which both researcher and participant bring their identities, experiences, and understandings. Interviews, then, are co-constructed spaces where meaning is situated, negotiated, and collaboratively distilled. In this study, the multiple and simultaneous crises produced by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting economic devastation, chaotic 2020 presidential election, and racial justice uprising provided the forever backdrop for every story told.
Corbin and Strauss (2008) state that “the most data dense interviews are those that are unstructured” (p. 27). As such, the individual interviews conducted for this study were primarily guided by the participants’ storytelling. While an interview protocol was utilized to provide a thematic framework from which to work, the path of the participants' stories, more than fixed questions, determined the trajectory of the interviews. Each of the educators participated in at least two in-depth interviews that encouraged storytelling around four themes: 1) family migration stories; 2) stories of growing up in America; 3) stories of becoming a teacher; 4) stories from the classroom. Two of the participants had limited availability and were only able to participate in shorter meetings which necessitated a third interview session. Sometimes the participants came into the interview with stories they wanted to tell, other times the stories that emerged were surprising and unexpected. At times the stories resonated with ones I might also tell, while at other times, the stories provided a counterpoint to my own experiences.

Each interview took place virtually, as was necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with me at my computer in my bedroom, kitchen, or living room and the participants on their computers in their kitchens, living rooms, and in one case, an attic closet. Interviews lasted between 30-90 minutes and were video and audio recorded through Zoom. Given the nature of virtual teaching and the numerous stressors involved in daily life during 2020, each session began with a casual check-in on the wellbeing of family, friends, students, and colleagues. At times stories related to the study were interwoven with updates on the status of the school district, policies related to in-person or virtual teaching, and general morale of the teaching community. In other moments, conversations weaved between anger towards the political climate, worries about students
and their families, and general frustrations about the neglect of Black and Brown bodies in America.

After each interview, I wrote field notes summarizing the content of the interview and noting any insights and wonderings that emerged from the interview. The interviews were then transcribed including utterances, pauses, silences, and laughter and then reviewed against the video recordings for accuracy. After this initial transcription and review, the interviews were again re-read and re-watched, and casual aspects of the interview including opening hellos and moments when a participant called out to a child or dog were removed from the transcripts. These first drafts of the narratives were then sent back to each participant for member checking.

After transcripts were returned, the analysis of the narratives through the Listening Guide approach was completed. I listened to each video recording while reading through the corresponding transcript attending to each of the three steps in the Listening Guide Method. Once the Listening Guide Method was completed, I began the narrative construction process, recasting the interview data into the storied form presented in the following chapter. For example, while Kao’s struggles with her teacher education program are presented in the narrative profile as one moment, the text that informed this cohesive narrative was drawn from across three interviews. I reordered the texts for coherence within Kao’s profile. Similarly, the narrative poem titled “Playing the Game” includes text from across two interviews with Maya. I, as researcher and narrative inquirer, wove together her shorter stories about credentialing and “playing the game” as I constructed the poem.
Summary

This chapter discussed narrative inquiry as the method guiding the study design, data collection, and data analysis of this project. As a methodological approach centering story and storytelling, narrative inquiry allows me the tools needed to examine the stories of growing up, going to school, and becoming and being a teacher that the four participants in this study share. In this study, I engage in a dual process of thinking with stories. First, the stories are analyzed by means of Doucet and Mauthner’s (2008) Listening Guide which involves multiple and successive ‘readings’ of the interview transcripts. Next, the stories are re-storied through a narrative construction process to reveal these narratives more explicitly as interpretations on the part of the researcher, rather than “literal representations” (Britzman, 1995). This narrative construction takes the words of the participants as told in the interviews, which would more typically be presented in block quotation, and presents them in new storied formations.

In the following chapter, I present three types of narrative constructions. First, I share I-poems to represent the voices of self emerging from the stories (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008). Next, I present narrative profiles which tell a more linear and coherent, though always incomplete and certainly abridged, life story of each participant. The I-Poems and narrative profiles are presented together in the first section of chapter 4, organized by participant. Lastly, I present a narrative story chain, weaving together the dialogic moments from the initial interviews.
Chapter 4: Stories from the Lives of Second-Generation Asian American Teachers

This chapter provides the narrative heart of my study and presents three types of narratives that illuminate the experiences of the Second-Generation Asian American teachers in my study. Interview transcripts and video recordings were reviewed and then analyzed based on the Listening Guide method developed by Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, and Bertsch (2003). Their method provides a protocol for sequential and focused listenings meant to illuminate the multivocal, complex, and even contradictory sharing of experience that can emerge through story. After the initial analysis was completed, I re-storied (Barone, 2007) the interview data through a process of narrative construction as outlined by Polkinghorne (1995).

In this chapter, I present the re-storied narratives of my participants in three ways: I-Poems, narrative profiles, and a narrative story chain. The first section of the chapter is organized by participant and presents the I-Poems and narrative profiles. The second section of the chapter presents the story chain in which stories told by individual participants and in conversation with me are woven together, linked by theme. Any quotations or dialogue presented in these narratives or attributed to the participant are drawn directly from the first-person accounts shared in their interviews.

The I-Poems were composed directly from the first-person statements made by each participant during the interview process. Attending to the protocol outlined in the Listening Guide Method (Gilligan et al, 2003), I re-read and re-listened to each transcript with attention to the multivocal and layered ways each participant narrated themselves during the interview and storytelling process. I then re-organized the statements into stanzas, thereby shaping each into an I-Poem.
I composed the narrative profiles from the details of each participant outlined in the interviews and demographic questionnaires. I reordered and re-storied the events and experiences from each participant’s life, as shared in the interviews and questionnaire, to construct a more cohesive life story. I shaped the narratives in relation to the research questions, taking into consideration their family stories of migration, experiences growing up and going to school in the U.S. as well as becoming an elementary school teacher. The result is a recursively cohesive, yet brief and inherently incomplete, account of each participant’s story of self.

The story chain presented in the second section of the chapter draws each participant’s interview as well as my own autoethnographic narratives of growing up, going to school, and teaching as a Second-Generation Asian American elementary school teacher. The story chain depicts conversation between me and the participant and amongst the participants as well as narrative poetry to showcase monologue and interspersed by my own autoethnographic accounts. I composed the story chain by placing these elements in relationship to each other and linking them loosely by theme. The text attributed to my participants is drawn directly from their interviews, though mine is, at times, imagined. What results is a contrapuntal and dialogical narrative in which the participants weave in and out of story with each other and me.
Ying

I grew up with a big family.  
I’m the second oldest of 13.  
I liked being in that role.  
I liked helping others and telling others what to do.

I had a very hard time all through school.  
I went to school in White central.

I noticed that I looked different.  
    I had dark hair.  
    I had dark eyes.  
    I had darker skin.

I knew I was Hmong.  
    But they don’t like me.  
    They call me a twinkie.

I speak Hmong to my grandparents.  
I speak Hmong to my dad  
I speak Hmong to people who don’t really speak English.  
I’m not Hmong enough to teach my kids more than simple words.

I have two aunts in Thailand who I’ve never met.  
I have not been there.  
I would like to go.  
I’m not getting any younger.  
I’ve got to get on it.

I love doing new things and creating new things.  
I created a croquet unit; a smart tank unit; a coding unit.  
I have high expectations.  
I’m not warm, fuzzy.

I’m not that teacher.
“I’m sorry,” Ying says as a blur streaks behind her for the fifth time. “He loves running up here,” she explains while continuing to plead with her four-year-old. After a few moments of negotiation, he heads downstairs with the promise of iPad time. “This battling technology thing,” she says with a heavy sigh, “It’s like a drug.”

Ying is a 15-year veteran elementary school teacher coming off an exhausting four months of online teaching paired with caring for three kids under 8 with her husband, also a teacher. Squirreled away in her attic loft, our video calls are a taste of online teaching life – bad lighting, glitchy tech, and the occasional kid interruption. Our conversations oscillate between her experiences growing up, desires for her students, struggles in online teaching, frustrations about the current political and health crisis, and stories from her classroom.

Ying’s family came to the U.S. in the late 1970s. “They crossed the Mekong River. My mom, my dad, and my older brother,” she shared, recalling her family’s migration story. The details are a bit fuzzy, but from Ying’s understanding her family spent about a year in a Thai refugee camp before being sponsored by Mount Saint Olive Lutheran Evangelical Church and moving to Minnesota. “I’ve come full circle,” Ying said with a smile, “my daughter’s name is Olive.” While her parents initially settled in the Twin Cities, they shortly moved to Mankato to accompany her mother’s younger brother who wanted to attend a local university there. “So, they moved down there and then my cousins moved down there too. And then my dad’s parents,” Ying explained. “There weren’t a lot of Hmong families. Pretty much White kids and our family.”

Ying is the second oldest of 13. “My dad was working so my mom had to pass on the baton and I had to do a lot of things on my own.” She attributes this sense of care and
responsibility to her decision to become a teacher. “I like telling others what to do,” she said with a laugh. She shared a story from her early school memories, “We must have lived about a half mile from schools or something. I remember one time when I was in half-day kindergarten, I just walked home after. And when I got home my mom said, ‘Where did you come from?’ and I told her that I walked, and she was like, ‘Oh my gosh, I can’t believe you walked home.’ But I remember that event and thinking that my mom was probably busy with the kids and didn’t have time to pick me up,” she shared with a grin. That was the only time Ying ever walked home.

After a decade or so, the family relocated to the Milwaukee area to be closer to a larger and more active Hmong community. That move was especially hard on Ying. While Mankato was nearly entirely White, Ying shared that she didn’t really notice things like race: “I knew we had different cultural things at home, but it never really occurred to me that we were that different from them.” The move to Milwaukee led Ying to confront her relationship to and location in the Hmong community. “I hadn’t really thought about it until all of a sudden there were a lot of other Hmong people. There were people that looked like me. It was huge. To go from Mankato where we were the only Hmong people and we thought we were just like everyone else, to Milwaukee realizing we were not like everyone else and we were more like these people who looked like us,” she recalled. “I had a hard time all through middle school, high school...even in college with some Hmong people,” she shared. “My dad was always like, ‘Why aren’t you friends with Hmong people?’ and I’m like, ‘They don’t like me dad! They call me a twinkie!’ And he’s like, ‘What does that mean?’ Yellow on the outside, White on the inside.”
While education was highly valued in Ying’s home, she also reflected that her parents think it is why she is not “more Hmong.” Her mom did not have the opportunity to go to school and was eager for her children to succeed in school, “She felt like if you were educated you could get further in life.” Her father was formally educated and placed importance on academic success and getting good grades. “They expected us to go to school and they were always pushing us to do well. They came to every conference, to important events. They didn’t necessarily understand everything we did, but they came to everything and were supportive.”

When Ying made the decision to go to college at an institution nearly 5 hours from home, her mother had worries. “She yelled at my dad, ‘Why would you let her go so far away!’” In Hmong culture, she shared, girls usually stay close to home until they are married. Ying’s father, though, pushed her to go to where she would be happy and successful. When she returned from school, she was surprised to find a proposal waiting for her. “When I graduated from college and got home the house was full of people I didn’t know. And I was like, ‘Who are these people?’ And my mom says, ‘I don’t want you to get mad, but maybe you want to go put on something a little nicer.’ And then she explained that these parents saw me at a party doing dishes and they thought I’d make a good wife for their son. And I was like ‘What!? Where are we?! What the F is going on! Does this still exist? I can’t believe that people actually do this!’ There were negotiators. Everyone in my family knew about it, but no one told me. And in the Hmong culture, there is a dowry for the bride and the more education you have, the more you’re worth. And so my mom and dad were like ‘Ying, you just graduated from college and so you'll
be worth more money.’ And I was like, ‘Great.’ That’s what every girl wants to hear. Right?’

Ying did not end up accepting the proposal that day. She ended up marrying a White Minnesotan. “My dad was just flabbergasted. Why would you want to marry this White guy when you had the opportunity to marry a Hmong guy? This Hmong guy who came from a family that we knew and was part of our clan.” She reasons that had she not been able to go off to college and meet so many people outside of the Hmong community, maybe she would have been more open to that future. “He is really proud of how educated his children are. Out of 13 children, 10 have graduated from college and two of us have master’s degrees. But like many immigrants that have come to the U.S., you lose some culture, lose language in trying to acclimate to American culture. And you slowly regret as you get older that you didn’t raise your kids in a certain way so that they wouldn’t have lost those things.”

Today, Ying teaches 4th grade in the Twin Cities. Over the years, she has developed strong relationships with her colleagues and taken on leadership positions in her school. She prides herself on creating innovative, hands-on learning experiences for her students, from crocheting to app design. This year continues to be the most challenging of her career, “I love using technology. I love creating new things. But that is not what we are doing. We are just surviving.” She recounts endless stories of hours spent helping her students, particularly families with limited English proficiency, navigating access issues, sharing screens, troubleshooting connectivity and bandwidth. “Am I really teaching at this point?” she says with a shrug.
Maya

I grew up in a middle-class area.
   We lived cheaply and frugally.
I was naïve.
I was sheltered.

I had to grow up with a lot of barriers.
I was treated so strictly.
I wasn’t allowed to do a lot of things.
I couldn’t go out and be social.
I never got salty with my brother.
I never got jealous.
I understand why my parents did that because they didn’t know any better.

I kept to myself.
I was really shy.
I felt like I didn’t really fit in.
I loved Bollywood movies.
I loved hanging out with my Indian girlfriends.
I pushed my boundaries as I got older.
I realized that I probably shouldn’t mess up what my dad worked so hard for.

I was very ignorant when I first started out.
I come with biases and stereotypes all the time.
I learned the hard way.
I have to check myself.

I never had a teacher of color until I went to graduate school.
I was told, “You’ll get hired because you’re Brown.”
I noticed people above me, they’re all White.

I’ve learned you can’t push the cart before the horse.
I think seeing success in someone who is an immigrant
   versus someone whose family has been here for
   centuries…
I know how to play the game.
I know how to be smart about it.
I know how to nudge a little bit and
   challenge a little bit and
   lead a little bit
   enough that you look good,
   but back off when they want you to back off.

I can’t help but think, we do what the White people want.
Maya’s face is backlit from the warm mid-summer afternoon light streaming through her kitchen. She motions to the floor and a wide wooden bowl containing a bounty of ripe tomatoes. “My new love is gardening,” she tells me. “It’s been really fun.” Maya is a 35-year-old Indian-American, living and working in the Twin Cities. She grew up just 20 minutes east, in a Twin Cities suburb, with her parents and older brother. “I was really naive and sheltered. My brother was treated with way more independence because he was male and they thought he could handle himself. I couldn’t really go out and be social the way he did.”

Maya’s family spans multiple continents with aunts and uncles in India, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States. Both sides of her family trace their ancestry to the state of Gujarat in northwest India. Maya’s dad grew up in Nagpur, India, the son of a roadside tobacco seller. He left India at 17, travelling to West Virginia on a one-way ticket and with just a few hundred dollars in his pocket to pursue a Ph.D. in chemistry. Maya’s mother, on the other hand, lived in Uganda until Idi Amin’s brutal reign led her family to flee the region. While Maya’s grandparents and younger siblings ended up in the U.K., Maya’s mom, the eldest daughter, was sent to her family’s gaon10 in rural Gujarat, where she lived in the village’s ashram. She finally joined her family in the U.K. at 18.

While Maya’s dad adjusted to life in West Virginia, her mother adjusted to life in the United Kingdom. Their marriage was arranged just a few years later and after some time, the couple met in London. When a dispute about the dowry put a wrench in the marriage plans, Maya’s grandmother, on her mom’s side, snuck the couple away and got

10 Gaon means village in Hindi.
them married in a small ceremony in India. Shortly after, Maya’s mother joined her father in the U.S. and after a few years in West Virginia, they settled in Minnesota, where her father had relocated for work.

Maya and her brother had, what she called, an idyllic childhood. “It was like the best childhood ever,” she recalled. “We lived in a neighborhood where all the neighborhood kids played together. We used to bike ride to the library, miles away and play outside from yard to yard to yard. My mom literally had to ring a bell in the backyard and call us back and find us. I remember having so much freedom to play, play, play. We didn't have nice toys, but we played forts and ice sculptures outside until our feet felt like they were gonna fall off.”

Maya’s summers, however, were a bit different from her mostly White neighborhood friends’. Each summer she would travel with her brother and mother back to India to stay in the village ashram where her mother lived out her adolescence. “We hated it. We would miss softball, baseball, being with our friends. We would just have to spend the day at the ashram, helping make food or serving the elders. We couldn’t bring anything with us.” While she might not have enjoyed those summers then, she understands how impactful and formative the experience was, teaching her life lessons on “what not to be petty about, what you have and what you don’t have.” She attributes those summers to helping gain a deeper perspective on her privileges and building and sustaining her language skills.

While Maya’s childhood was spent with her mostly White neighborhood friends, as she got older, she had a hard time maintaining those relationships. “It felt very White. And I didn’t get to do what the other girls got to do. You don’t feel connected and like
part of a group of girls when you can’t do what they get to do.” While Maya’s brother was able to go to parties and prom, Maya was not. “It didn’t feel like the normal high school experience.” Instead, Maya spent her time at home, watching Bollywood movies and on the occasion, hanging out with Indian friends from neighboring towns. “I understand why my parents did that. They didn’t know any better. They didn’t know what American things were.” Maya did get to push those boundaries eventually. She went away to college, though just 30 minutes away, and then later lived abroad. She was, though, and remains very driven. She explained, “my brother and I realized youngish that we shouldn’t mess up what my dad worked so hard for.”

Maya’s journey to the classroom began with a high school internship which allowed her to spend part of her day helping her 1st grade teacher. “I was hooked,” she shared with a smile. After graduating, she began working in the Twin Cities first in early childhood, then special education. After a few years, she took a big leap and taught abroad in Switzerland. “That was a 180 from what I had been doing. The kids were all typical three year olds and they came from a lot of money. I actually had many diverse families in my class, but in my school, I was the first person of color hired. It was very old school. Very White centered teaching. I realized, I’m not really for the private school game.”

When she returned to the United States, she went back to work in the Twin Cities, teaching preschool, which she continued doing until two years ago when she had to step away from classroom teaching due to health reasons. Since then, she’s served as a coach to other early elementary teachers.
I’m the second of eight children.  
I feel like it was easier for me.  
I didn’t have to struggle as much as they did.

I would speak English at school, but at home I would speak Hmong.  
I can speak both languages fluently.  
I just got used to it.  
I am bilingual.

I always knew that I was different.  
I had to be cautious – quiet.  
I was always worried what my White teachers would think about me.  
I didn’t want them to judge us for not being Americanized.  
I felt like I was forgotten.

I can be something.  
I was the first person to go to college.  
I struggled a lot. I was depressed.  
I couldn’t pass those tests. 
I couldn’t become a teacher.  
I’m not qualified.

I don’t know how many times I took it – same passages, same test.  
I never let anyone prove me wrong.

I still can’t really be who I am.  
I’m not White enough for my administrators.  
I don’t meet their expectations.  
I have to act a certain way in order to be accepted.  
I get really nervous.  
I can’t really say anything.  
I just need to be quiet and do whatever they want.

I’m still in the process of losing my identity.  
I understand it now.  
I’d rather eat in my room and be alone.  
I just have to endure it.

I just want to teach.  
I just want to do what’s best for my students.  
I don’t want my students to ever think they don’t belong.  
I’m securing myself for my students.
The sun is so bright, Kao is nearly invisible. Her face is completely washed out by the extraordinarily sunny day. “Oh no, let me move,” she apologizes, picking up her laptop to get reoriented. “It’s like this when I’m teaching, too.” Kao has just begun an unpredictable and uncertain year virtually teaching from her Twin Cities apartment. She shares that it has actually been a pretty good start to the year, “They’re consistently coming. And they’re doing their work, not all the time, but I’m happy.” This is Kao’s third year teaching.

Kao’s family is originally from Laos, “Well, actually, according to my parents, we're from China and migrated to Laos,” Kao clarifies. Kao learned the story of her maternal side’s migration when she was in college. “My mother’s not the type that will tell her story, but I had a class in college where we had to interview our parents about how they got to America,” she explained. “It's a lot worse than they used to tell us. They had to flee their own home and sleep in the jungles for safety and cross the Mekong River. My mom said they were going to leave that night, but they decided not to leave, even though they knew that the Vietnamese Army was coming. They decided to stay for one more night. And then early that morning, before they were going to leave, the Army ambushed my mom's family. They ran into the jungle to stay in a cave, but the Vietnamese people found them. And they killed my grandpa in front of my mom. I couldn’t believe that I had to learn this at 20+ years old. My mom just didn't want to tell us about how gruesome it was and all the sacrifices they had to make to come to America.” After making their way across the Mekong River, her mother’s family arrived in Thailand as refugees. Kao’s maternal grandmother was the first to arrive in the U.S., bringing her children stateside once she was settled.
Their immigration to the U.S. was sponsored by a church. “My mother said there was this specific family, church members, that helped them adjust. How to turn on the stove, how to turn on the water, the heat. Because in Minnesota we have all four seasons. We don't have those back in Laos and Thailand. my mom just said that it was such a big adjustment, to drive and to shovel the snow and salt the sidewalks. But with the church helping little by little they were able to settle in the U.S. The lady taught my mom to make soup. Growing up, my mom always made it every winter. And soup is not something Hmong people really eat. Like that's the only American food that my mom eats.”

Kao’s father arrived to the U.S. as a teenager. After both of his parents died, an uncle sponsored his immigration. Kao’s parents met in the Twin Cities and were married, though her mom was nearly 10 years his senior. Kao attributes her ability to do extracurriculars and have more freedom than some of her cousins to her father’s teenage years in the U.S. “My dad was more Americanized than my mom. He went to high school in America and knew English. My mom was more traditional. She did not know any English.” Kao is the second youngest of eight children. “Growing up,” she says, “I didn't have to struggle as much because I had older siblings. They taught me English, taught me how to read and write.”

Kao had actually gone to college seeking a degree in business. After studying abroad in South Korea, though, she changed trajectories. “Being far away made me really think about what I really wanted to do with my life. And being in Korea, Koreans have their own country, their own language. And it's sad that us Hmong people do not have our own country and land. I decided why not become a teacher and help give back to the
Kao’s desires to be this for her students are a direct result of a school experience where she often felt invisible. “My teachers didn’t push me. They only saw the surface of me. I felt forgotten.”

Her experience in teacher education, unfortunately, was anything but pleasant. Kao attended a primarily White public college, “I was always the only student of color.” Her program required that she pass her teacher exams before student teaching. The exams, which are notorious for gatekeeping Teachers of Color, were difficult for Kao. “I passed my pedagogy and content, and math the first time, but I had a hard time passing the reading and writing exam. I’m bilingual. I speak two languages. Of course, when people ask which I’m more fluent in, I say English. But sometimes, I’m thinking of what to say, but I think of it in Hmong. And so, I didn’t pass. And I didn’t get a lot of support from my professors, either.” The department would not let Kao student teach until she passed her exams, but did not provide any coaching, guidance, or mentoring to get her past this barrier. “There was one professor who said that I probably should just think about not becoming a teacher because I’m not qualified. It made me really mad, but at the same time, it gave me so much passion and motivation to prove them wrong.” That wasn’t the first time Kao had gotten that message in college. She was also discouraged from taking summer courses because they said they thought she would not be able to pass them. “I took a year off and worked at Target and a gym. I was really depressed. It made me realize that I really couldn’t do that for the rest of my life. Finally, I passed the test and I walked into the office and said, ‘Find me a placement’. And then it was difficult
because they wanted me to student teach up there, but I wanted to teach in the Twin Cities. I felt like an angry Hmong woman, but finally they just said forget it, and let me do it.”

Kao’s persistence paid off. She student taught with a Teacher of Color in the Twin Cities and gained valuable experience teaching Brown and Black students — something she would not have been able to do had she student taught near her institution. Funny enough, Kao was then hired by the same elementary school she had gone to as a child, only this time, by a Hmong principal who was committed to diversifying the teacher population at the school.
I was born and grew up in the States. I’m definitely not White. I’m very Asian.

I was really fluent in Hmong. I lost a lot of my Hmong language skills. I can still read and write. I have a lot of insecurities with it.

I went to public school from kindergarten to fourth grade. I had Hmong friends, Cambodian friends, Black friends, Latinx friends.

I transferred to this parochial school – 99% White kids. I was one of the first legit students of color.

I was hyper-conscious – was my English fluent enough? I don’t want to go to this school. I don’t want to be pitied.

I’m just trying to fit in.

I wasn’t bullied. I was on display – like at a zoo.

I would always have this really tight knot in my stomach. I had anxiety attacks.

I just never had the same connection that I had when I was in public school.

I moved abroad to South Korea to teach English for 5 years. I came back to pursue my master’s in education. I wanted to change the system. I didn’t want my students to experience what I did growing up.
“My dad was a teacher in Laos before the war broke out, before they were recruited.” Corvus is a 35-year-old Hmong-American, born and raised in the Twin Cities. In a lot of ways, our lives could not be more different. And yet, our stories have a sort of symmetry. While they are shared in the vacuum of Zoom, there is a warmth and joy in their telling. Our conversations were easy and filled with laughter.

“When they were recruited, they were turned into farmers. After a couple of years of working as farmers under the Laos government, my dad got tired and asked if he could go back to teach in some capacity. But he was turned down. And he kept asking, and they kept saying no. Eventually, he decided to take the family and hide in the jungles of Laos. My mom always says that was how important education was for him. He was willing to sacrifice and risk the whole family life, just to be a teacher,” he smiles. Corvus’s father died when he was in the 4th grade.

Corvus’s parents spent a few years hiding in the jungles of Laos before crossing the Mekong River and arriving at a Thai refugee camp. Three of his older sisters were born in the camps before the family immigrated to the U.S. in the summer of 1986. His father’s brother had already settled in Minnesota and helped sponsor the remaining family, including Corvus’s grandmother. “He always told this story about how one month after they arrived, it was the 4th of July. When the fireworks went off, my dad thought it was bombs going off. He panicked, telling the family to pack their luggage, pack up the kids,” Corvus’s laughs become somber. “He probably had PTSD.”

Soon after arriving a local church “recruited” their family and after some time, Corvus’s father became a pastor and split off to form a Hmong church. “He was the first Hmong pastor in that denomination. Everything was performed in Hmong, the sermons
and whatnot.” Corvus attributes much of his Hmong literacy to his many hours spent in church, even if some of his ability to write and read Hmong has been lost as he has gotten older. “I can still read and write Hmong, but that productive skill was so out of use for so long. When I was a kid, I was really fluent, but now when I speak Hmong with my mom or elderly Hmong people, it's very fragmented and fractured. I have like a lot of insecurities with it.”

Corvus’s early years were spent living amongst a large community of Hmong refugees in a public housing project. After some time, the family moved into a house in another region of the city where Corvus and his siblings attended the local neighborhood elementary school, just across the street from his house. “It was pretty diverse. I had Hmong friends, Cambodian friends, Black friends, Latinx friends, a few White classmates. That was normal.”

This elementary school also had a robust ELL program, though Corvus didn’t quite know why he needed to be in it. “I was confused. Even if they tried to explain it to me, we weren't sure because at that age, language is so fluid. You're like, what is Hmong? What is English?” He explained. “I think it was in second grade when I first had the realization of like, Oh, so what I'm speaking at home is different from what I'm speaking at school. Because if I spoke Hmong with my friends, our ELL teacher would yell at us and say, ‘only English, only English.’ You could get in trouble.” Corvus was able to exit out of the ELL program in 3rd grade, just before transferring to a school with no language services.

When Corvus’s father died, the trajectory of his life changed significantly. The church where his father was Pastor pulled together funds to send all 8 kids to a private,
parochial school. “There was this fear that we don’t have a father figure and so we are going to join gangs and be failures,” he recounts shaking his head. “Valid, because we grew up in the Projects and gangs were rampant, but if we hadn’t joined gangs before, why would we start now? After dad has died?”

Rather than the diverse, neighborhood peers Corvus had grown up with, his school world was now immersed in Whiteness. “It was definitely a culture shock. It was like 99% White kids and the only other student of color was one other Asian girl. But she was a South Korean adoptee. She identified more as White. I was one of the first legit students of color there. Everyone was fascinated by that. And so, I felt like I was also on display, like at a zoo. And everything was different, everything was smaller. We ate in our classrooms. I was like, this school is crap.”

While Corvus’s school life was entirely subject to the gaze of White teachers and peers, his home life was very different. He spent his evenings and weekends at his Hmong Church. “I made most of my friends through church.” While his paternal side of the family was largely absent once his father died, they became closer to his maternal side. Corvus’ entire extended family immigrated to the U.S. with the exception of one aunt, his mother’s sister. When Corvus was a kid, they would often get packages of cassette tapes with messages from his aunt. “She lives in the mountains in Thailand,” Corvus shared. “My mom offered to sponsor her, but she is more comfortable living there.”

After growing up in the Church and a few years of doing youth organizing work, he left the U.S. to teach English in South Korea. While in South Korea, he was able to travel across Southeast Asia. “It just felt natural there for me. I’m planning to retire in
Thailand.” he shared. Five years later, he returned to Minnesota with the desire to become a teacher. “When I came back from Korea, I actually wanted to move out West because I felt like California was more progressive. I mean, it is a lot more progressive compared to Minnesota. But Minnesota has a really strong support of the teachers and unions.” He explains and in Minnesota, “there are families and communities most likely going through what my family went through. I want to pass on those skills, to help them grow and cultivate those skills so that they can have, if not the same opportunities that I had, more opportunities than if they didn't have someone in the community looking out for them.” Returning to Minnesota to become a teacher was his responsibility to his community. “It makes more sense to be here in Minnesota, where my community can benefit from my skills.”

He entered a teacher education program for non-traditional students. “I really did enjoy my program. They were very understanding, very flexible scheduling. They were very supportive of people’s adult lives. And very accommodating for placements. I was very specific in requesting that my cooperating teacher was a Teacher of Color, so I could have those conversations and navigate that side of education.” Serendipitously, the teacher Corvus student taught with took a leave the following year, and Corvus was able to take over the position. Today, he lives with his partner in the Twin Cities, still teaching at that same local elementary school.
**Narrative Story Chain**

*Introducing America*

“I have this memory. It’s my first memory of White culture, White people. Going to Bible camp over the summer. I must have been two or three? The fact that I still have these flash memories of it…” Corvus tells, shaking his head in disbelief. “And we are singing songs and we're clapping. I don't understand what's going on. It's kind of fun, but it's also kind of weird because like...why are there candles? It's the daytime?” We both laugh out loud in response to the absurdity. “So, they give us these little manila envelopes. And they give us a penny each and we would put the penny into the envelope and then put it in a basket.” His face is in awe of the story he is telling.

“What?!” I reply, in full disbelief.

“I think it was a way to get us in the habit of offering money each week, like on Sundays,” he explains.

“So, you - a very little kid - were practicing giving them money?” I can’t quite get my head around the reality of this.

“Yes!” Corvus retorts. “That's indoctrination! And they were targeting us, our community.” He says, his voice rising in agitation. He grew up in a very dense, low-income housing project. “They were targeting the Project, you know?”

“Well, that is certainly an accurate introduction to White America,” I reply. “We promise we are helping you. Now you give us your money.”
American Independence

“I still struggle to think about what it means to be American. It's so different compared to what my family would say. What my dad, what my mom, would say,” Kao starts, her glance skips back from the corner window to me. “Being American is having a job. Right? Speaking English well. Having an education. But what is culture?” Kao asks. Great question, I think. “Even now with my own family, there is a cultural clash. Growing up with my family, it was always: You're a daughter. You go to school and then you come back and get married. But when I graduated college, I didn't go back to live with my mom. And it really hurt my mom.”

Kao’s glance moves back to the window. “My mom would say, Miskas people (White people), once their kids are 18, it's like ‘Bye. See you. You’re an adult now.’ But for my family, they always want us to stay in the nest. They don't want us to leave. Culturally, a Hmong daughter would come back and stay at home with their mom.”

“And in the Hmong culture it's expected that when you marry someone, you stay with that family for a while. And even though I lived with my in-laws for one year.” Her posture straightens as she recalls that year, “It was one year! Then my husband and I moved out. But that's a bad thing because you're moving away from your family. I was, of course, thankful, but our parents always hovered over us and we just wanted to grow up more. But I feel like my family and my husband's family see it as being Americanized. Pulling away from your family.”

“Sure. It is the autonomy, right? That you exist on your own outside of your family. I get it,” I reply.

“Right. Being American is being on your own. It is that independence,” Kao nods.
“I don’t know. There’s something about wanting to escape America,” Corvus says, recalling his motivation to spend five years teaching English in South Korea.

“Growing up you understand that if you aren’t White, you are pretty much like a second-class citizen in America. Despite being a citizen, you know? I needed a break from it.”

“I hear you. I spent a good portion of my adult life running around the globe for the same reason. I call it my best life,” I reply. We laugh together.

“I plan to retire in Thailand, actually,” he proclaims, almost discovering this dream for himself while sharing it with me. “It just felt…it just felt natural there for me.” We share a nod.

“It’s kind of amazing to go to a place where everyone looks like you and that’s the norm, right? Every time I go back to India, I’m like, yes. It feels different in my body. Like you can take the mask off and just be.”

“Yes, as soon as I stepped off the plane in South Korea. I didn’t have to think about how I appeared because everyone else was Asian. Everyone had the black hair. I’m a bit taller,” he says with a mischievous smile, “but whatever, that’s life.” His smile turns more solemn, “I think for the first time, I felt at home.”

I nod in affirmation, “And like this is what White folks feel in America. And they have no idea what it feels like to not feel that.”

“It’s a privilege – not needing to be aware of how you look,” Corvus concludes.
That Asian Lady

“I took on a student teacher this year,” Ying says with a chuckle. “I’ve been asked for the last three years in a row. And so I was like, fine, I’ll take one on not even thinking about the fact that we’re in COVID. But I think they are always trying to find Teachers of Color to mentor candidates of color. And I don’t think there are that many of us. It’s so hard to find.”

I have experienced this desperate search for Teachers of Color myself, working in the teacher education program at my institution. “I’m so glad you are doing it,” I respond. We do need more cooperating Teachers of Color and they are very hard to find. “I’m glad for our students that they’ll have you. There are some things that are different. There is a certain sort of negotiation that you have to learn and you’re not going to learn that working with a White teacher.”

“No,” Ying responds with a head nod. “I had an older White woman who was TA in my classroom. And a lot of times parents and college students would come in and they would defer to her and say, ‘What do you want me to do?’ And she would motion across the room and say, ‘Well, I’m not the teacher, she’s the teacher’ Like that Asian lady, over there. That’s the teacher.”

“Right. It’s those everyday experiences, everyday deferments, that, I think are so in our body. You can’t learn how to negotiate those experiences from a White cooperating teacher.”
Three Words Wrong

“In my first year, there was another teacher that was supposed to teach my class.”
Kao’s journey to her classroom has been pretty unbelievable. She inherited the classroom of her first-grade student teacher, the first Asian teacher she had. “But she moved grades, so I was given her Kindergarten class. They had already sent out a note telling parents that this other lady was going to be the teacher, though.”

“Oh boy,” I sigh. I can already tell this is not going to be a good story.

“Right.” She says, sensing my worry. “One of the moms was really mad. She was White, but her child was half-Hmong and half-White. And she blankly told me that she didn’t want her kid to be in my room because I’m Hmong. She said I wasn’t going to be able to teach her kid well.”

“What?” I can’t imagine someone saying that to her face, but also, I can definitely imagine someone saying this to her face. “Did she provide any evidence? Say why she thought that?”

Kao shook her head. “I just said, ‘I'm sorry you feel that way.’ And she went straight to the principal and demanded to have her kid switch classrooms. And my principal said no. I'm still so thankful that she stood up for me. Just hearing that made me really feel so supported. It’s been hard since she left.” Kao’s first Principal, the one that hired her and stood up for her with this parent, was also Hmong. When she transitioned to a new position at the end of Kao’s second year, there was a sea change in the school. The new administration wasn’t as adept at supporting the cohort of Teachers of Color that the previous principal had recruited.
“Last year, the administration was doing a parent tour and a group of Pre-K parents came in to watch my class,” Kao recalls. Her gaze is reflective, but her tone is anxious. “I was doing a sound spelling lesson.” I nod my head in recognition. Sound spelling is when you spell things how they sound, instead of how they are actually spelled. “So of course, I'm going to write some words wrong. And there is this one parent who is laughing the whole time. And I was teaching, and I decided, I’m just going to ignore her. And then this parent just gave me that look:

And I just knew.

This was not going to be good.

So then later in the day,

my literacy coach comes to me and says,

‘Did you know that you wrote words wrong in your lesson?’

And I'm like, ‘Yes. Why are you asking me that?’

And of course, the parents said that I had written three words wrong.

Why would you have to come all the way down to me to ask me that?

If they knew kindergarten,

they should know that we sound spell.

Of course I'm going to write ‘hospital’ wrong.

Why do I need to justify myself?

And they say,

It's not because I’m Asian.
They just wanted to check.

And this was the literacy coach!

They didn’t need to come and ask me.

They could have just told the parents,

‘Ms. Yang is sound spelling. It's normal in kindergarten.’

That made me really upset.

I know that there's always going to be that heavy weight in me.

That I have to always protect myself,

Just to keep my job.

I feel like I'm always going to have to give them answers,

to explain why I do it a certain way.

And you know,

it's funny because my coworker,

she was teaching the same unit and

she was sound spelling in her class, too.

And they went to observe her right after me.

She said to me, ‘I was sound spelling too,

I wrote a bunch of words wrong.’

She was White. They didn't care.

They didn’t see it.
My mom always said,
we will have to always work harder than the Miskas people.
And I feel like even now that's true.
I have to act a certain way,
to be American, to be accepted.
Am I American enough to even be able to even teach about America?

I know a lot of friends that want to become teachers.
They do want to become teachers,
but it's hard.
I feel like I can't really be who I am.
Sometimes, I feel like I’m not White enough.
I don’t meet their expectations.

I'm still in the process of losing my identity.
Again.
Just so I can get tenure.
I just need to be quiet and do what they want.

They say they want Teachers of Color,
But they don’t support Teachers of Color.
And when we get new hires,
you see them all stand up,
they’re all White women.
Do they really want us?

Me being myself, the way I look,
it's always going to be hard.
But then that's why I became a teacher.
Why it's so important.
I just have to endure it,
To have someone like me for my students,
Reminding them that they can be whatever they want to be.”

**Playing the Game**

“When you're in the classroom,
you're kind of your own boss. Right?
You have enough respect in the classroom,
you do well with the students,
your principal leaves you alone.
They respect you and they let you take charge.

When you leave that role,
try to move up in a district,
you're the bottom of the damn totem pole.
It's so evident now.
I noticed people above me,

they're all White.

When I got my admin license,

I was told, you know,
you'll get hired because you're Brown.

And I'm like, Oh really?

I won't just get hired because of the credentials?

That I'm qualified for the job?

It's gotta be because of the color of my skin.

I have to earn that respect all over again.

But I know how to play the game.

I know how to be smart about it.

I've learned that from my dad a little bit.

how to nudge a little bit,

challenge a little bit,

lead a little bit,

enough that you look good,

but backing off when they want you to back off.

You just can't mess up the game,

you have to play it just right.
"That’s a Terrible Accent"

“I had this student who was adopted. She was Indian, but was adopted by a Hmong parents, so she spoke Hmong.” Corvus explains as I try to follow the story. “But the other kids didn't realize that she was Hmong. They thought she was Hispanic because, you know, Brown skin. And so, this one student says, ‘Oh Mr. Van, you can speak Spanish with Stephanie?’” Corvus is laughing while recounting this story of a student admiring his language proficiency. “And I'm like, ‘No, we're speaking Hmong.’”

We are both laughing now. An Indian girl who everyone thinks is Latinx, but who actually is culturally Hmong. Talk about multicultural. “Even at that young age, they have boundaries around who and what you have to look like to fit to a language,” I reply, still laughing.

“Yeah. Exactly.” Corvus’s laugh turns reflective “My dad and my mom, I think they were trilingual or quadrilingual because they spoke Hmong and then they learned English when they came here, and then they also spoke and wrote and read in Thai and Laos during their time there. But I didn't. They didn't pass those language skills on to me when we came to America.” Corvus shared. “I remember growing up watching a lot of Thai videos. I'm like, I don't understand what's going on. My sisters and my mom did, but they just never used it with me.”

“Same. My mom speaks, reads, and writes in Marathi, Hindi, Gujarati, and Kannada, which is a totally different alphabet. Plus, English, another totally different alphabet. And she’s obsessed with Bengali movies – So I guess she understands that too? All I’ve got is English. It’s a bit embarrassing!”
“When I was a kid, I was really fluent in Hmong. I used to be really proud of those skills. But now when I speak Hmong with my mom or elderly Hmong people, it's very fragmented and fractured.” Corvus’s disappointment about his proficiency falls on deaf ears. Being monolingual is more than a bit embarrassing for me, it is an ongoing regret. I couldn’t string together a sentence in Marathi if you paid me. As a child, I could understand some colloquial commands and questions from my parents, but as I grew up, moved away, and spent less time with them, even that limited language proficiency is gone now.

“I told my dad that I wanted to learn how to speak and write in Hmong,” Kao shares. “He didn't want to teach me because he said he didn't want to get me confused with the English alphabet. That is one thing that growing up I was really sad about. Because coming to America and being Americanized by having to learn the American alphabet, and the language that I lost, that written piece of my language, you know? I can speak it. But I can barely read and write in Hmong. But that was because my parents decided not to teach it to me because they wanted me to do well. My mom was more traditional, but she wanted us to learn English,” Kao explains.

“Same thing in my family. My parents only spoke English to all of us because they wanted us to do well. And I mean, my name is Meghan - so they even gave me an American name.” I reply, reminded again about the contestation alive in my name. The loss of culture, loss of language that my name implies. To this day, my Indian relatives call me Meghana. I still get an occasional card addressed to Meghana. A neat trick of my parents, but definitely not my name. No, my name is in fact just Meghan. Just like the five other White girls I went to school with.
“Families, they come and ask me as their teacher, ‘I don't know if I should continue teaching my child our native language’ and it's hard because that just reminds me of my parents having to sacrifice that, teaching us how to read and write.” There is an ache in Kao’s voice.

“Right. And not much has changed in that struggle since we were kids. Immigrant families continue to have to grapple with those decisions. I mean, God forbid we teach Hmong and Somali to White kids in school instead of German and French.” I reply, mostly sarcastically.

“And within a White society, we value French accents. We are okay with these European accents. But if you are a Singaporean or Korean or Japanese, if you speak five languages, but happen to have an accent when you speak English, then Americans think, ‘Oh, they are not as educated.’ And I'm like, ‘Hello?!’” Corvus asks figuratively. “So I want to normalize and validate that. An accent is a mark or indication of you being multilingual, you know? But there's some of that societal stereotype, especially within the Asian community, that if you have an accent, you will never be an American. You are a perpetual foreigner. Despite having citizenship and living in the U.S. for decades. Especially with my kids who are sometimes embarrassed by their parents for having an accent. I went through that as well. My mom has an accent, but she was able to survive and thrive and put all of us through school. You should really respect your parents and grandparents and like pretty much anyone who has an accent. A lot of monolingual White Americans don't have the same struggles, and so they will never understand. But it doesn't mean that you have to also be condescending to your own family members.”
“It's part of that deficit cultural framework, right? That we were internalized to think that it's inferior to not have the qualities of like an upper middle class, White person in America.” I reply.

“Exactly,” He confirms.

Well almost exactly. I was 19 before I realized that my parents had accents. I remember the moment vividly; viscerally. Sitting on the gold, chenille loveseat in the bay window of my parents’ living room with my closest childhood friends, three White women, quietly sharing stories and laughs from college. I don’t remember how the conversation turned to my mother or what story we were telling, but I do remember my dearest friend say, *That is very bad, Meghan* in her worst Indian accent. I looked at her confused – that is not something I’d ever heard her do before.

“My mom doesn’t sound like that,” I said in a lilting voice. “That is a terrible accent.” We laughed. “Okay…but I mean sometimes her accent is hard to understand,” Liz explained.

“What?” I said, incredulously. “Does my mom have an accent?” I knew lots of Indians with accents. Some of my parents’ friends had accents. But my parents? My mind searched through a catalog of memories as my friends stared at me in disbelief. “Umm, yessss!” Kate said with a laugh after a moment. “Did you really not know that?” No, I really did not.
Brown Like Us

When you're naïve,
and a Person of Color,

You think,

Oh, I get it.

You're Brown,

And I'm Brown.

We are going through the same shit.

No. We're not.

I learned the hard way.

My second year teaching.

This Somali dad had to straight up tell me:

You and me.

We are not the same.

You did not have to grow up struggling,

to get food on the table,

to be respected,

to deal with trauma,

Society has afforded you opportunities.

To be who you want to be.

I was not given those opportunities.
I remember crying to my principal:

*Nancy, what is he talking about?*

*I get it.*

Maya, *No.*

It's not the same.

You had the opportunity to go to school.

Someone paid for your college.

Someone gave you the opportunity.

When you’re Brown like us,

I don't know.

None of my friends had to pay for their school.

I don’t know one Brown kid who ever had to pay for their school.

*Little Pockets of Trauma*

“You know, from head start all the way to fourth grade, before we were transferred to private school, it was pretty diverse. I had Hmong friends, Cambodian friends, Black friends, Latinx friends. That was never out of the norm for me. Then when my dad passed away — he was the pastor of our church as well, and so a lot of the members pulled money together for scholarships and then sent my siblings and I to this parochial school. And that was a culture shock because then it was 99% White kids. The
only other Asian kids or any student of color other than us, was one other South Korean adoptee. She identified more as White.

We did a school visit first and I popped in to visit my class. I just remember thinking, everyone is White? And the school had also heard about our family situation that we had lost our father. I don't want to be pitied, but I want to make friends. So, I will do what I can to make friends. But after I left that class, one of the kids came out and she was like really weird and overly friendly. I'm like, I don't like this either because that's not what cool kids do.” We both laugh.

“So, we all piled back into my mom's minivan. My mom asked us how it went, and I was like, I don't want to go to this school. What's wrong with where we are now? I don't want to leave all these friends I have. But it wasn't a choice that I could make and then the following week when we did enroll, I just remember being super depressed. I would watch the clock. When is this done? When is this over? Kids were being friendly, but I think it was because the teachers were trying to get them to be a friend. I was one of the first legit students, students of color there. Everyone was fascinated by that. And I felt like I was also on display. Like at a zoo. I remember not being happy. I was like, this school is crap,” he said with a laugh.

“So funny, because I had almost the opposite experience,” I said, matching his laugh. “I went to a parochial school for my elementary school. I was the youngest of three and by the time I was born, my parents had a little bit more money and they thought they should send me to private school. Because in India, that was better than public school. And they had both gone to some “Saint Something”. And so, they sent me to this neighborhood parochial school that my sisters didn't go to. So that was my whole
elementary school experience. And as I got older, I wanted to go to the public middle school. I want to be in a choir. I wanted to do more things. There's nothing there, you know. Just 30 kids in my class. And so, I started at the public middle school. And I remember I had a locker for the first time, and they did the lockers alphabetically, and I was a P. Of the 300 kids in my grade, 3 were also Indian. And they were all Patels. And I remember standing at my locker and seeing this row of three Indian kids, who I had never seen before. And I was so confused. Like, is this where the lockers for the Brown kids are?"

Corvus laughed out loud. “Like it’s segregated”. We both smile.

“Right. So crazy. I had never been to school with other Indian people. That was definitely my private, home life. Lots of evenings and weekends with other Indian families, but not in school.”

“It’s jarring, right?” Corvus asks, already knowing the answer.

“Yes, jarring. I had no way to make sense of it. It's amazing how much those memories, even though you're young at those ages, they stick with you.”

“Yeah. I think those are little pockets of trauma. I don't remember a lot of home life memories, but a lot of school related memories are crystal clear still. I didn't realize that I had anxiety attacks from fourth grade all the way until my thirties now. I look back and I’m like, hmm it was kind of strange that every morning when mom would drive us to school and drop us off, I would always have this really tight knot in my stomach. My throat felt dry. I didn't know what it was. But it was anxiety because I dreaded going to school. Not having anyone who looked like me. Dreaded having to be asked so many questions. What is Asian culture? What is Hmong culture? Why do you eat what you eat?”
I wasn't bullied, per se, because the class sizes were small enough that the teachers could keep an eye on everyone. But I just never felt the same way, never had the same connections that I had when I was in public school with fellow Hmong kids or fellow students of color.”

**That’s Very Asian!**

“I think high school was when I was a lot more aware that I'm definitely not White. I'm very Asian. As much as I wanted it to be White to fit in, I also really still valued Hmong culture and the Hmong foods that I was eating. The food was something that I definitely didn't want to give up. I would say sophomore year was when I hit this plateau of not fitting in with my Hmong friends, cause I'm too White for them. But I definitely don't fit in with my White friends because I'm still too exotic for them. You know? It wasn't until college that I felt a lot more at peace with being bilingual, bi-cultural.

I never had any friends over at my house. Never. When I went to private school, I would go over classmates’ houses and do sleepovers and parties. I didn’t want to go, but I would because the class sizes were so small that you couldn't not go. But I never had anyone over just because I didn't feel secure. I didn't want them to judge me for the way we ate differently. Differently for them, for me, it was completely normal. I guess it was like a lot of embarrassment that I didn't want to go through.”

“Food is one of those things. It is such a through-line in every immigrant kid story. Love of food, but also embarrassment about food. I was always so hyper aware. Did my clothes smell like food? Did my jacket smell like masala? I was so, so hypersensitive about it. And yet, I would ask my mom to pack me Indian food for lunch.”
“Yeah. And kids can be so mean about a different smell from what they're familiar with, but yeah, I wouldn't give up that food.” Corvus shakes his head and his eyes widen with a memory. “But then I see my nephews. They are so much more comfortable in their skin. I watch my sister pack their food for their lunches and I’m like, ‘That's very Asian!’ and she told me that they love it. I asked them if they get teased at school, and they don’t,” he says incredulously. “They trade their lunches with their White friends.”

We share a look of awe. “I never got that experience. Once in 4th or 5th grade, I brought pickled bamboo for snack and when my classmate asked about it, I offered some. They said, “No. It smells funky.” And I was like, ‘Well, I love it. So back off.’ Corvus chuckles.

“I remember once I had brought chicken curry in a thermos for lunch. I was probably in 9th grade? I was sitting at my table and this friend of mine was like…Well, it was a peripheral friend who now as an adult, I can look back and say was terrible. She looked at it and she goes, ‘that's gross’ and before I could even respond, another friend stuck her hand into the thermos and pulled out a piece of chicken and said, ‘It’s delicious. More for us.’ And stuffed it in her mouth. I remember that so clearly. The realization that, actually, it's okay. That was one rare moment. My friends loved my mom's chicken curry.” I say with a grin. I, a purported vegetarian, still love my mom’s chicken curry.

“I loved hearing that story. It’s really great when a classmate advocates for you,” Corvus replies, eyes wide, “I’m jealous.”
Putting on Your Costume

“I remember having an icebreaker experience with this White girl and I was telling her that I’m Hmong and people often mistaken me for Chinese. And she’s like ‘Oh yeah. I understand cause I'm from New York, but people always think that I'm from Minnesota.’” Corvus says in his best Minnesota-nice, White girl voice. “Not the same thing, but thanks for trying.” We are both laughing now. If only trying was enough.

I’m reminded of my classroom, my colleagues. “We used to have this multicultural night at my school each year. Families would come and they would represent their home country and bring in dishes to share and wear something special.”

“Sure,” Kao responds with a nod of recognition.

“It always bothered me that, you know, those of us Teachers of Color, we were expected to be there. We always brought a dish and wore a traditional outfit or something. And the White teachers, they just came as themselves. They didn't have to think about it. To change clothes in the bathroom or carry in a whole Pyrex that morning.” I felt my body grow tense with the memory of carrying an extra bag for my kurta and odni and glass Pyrex dishes on two trains and across four avenues.

“I remember there was like a teacher that was like, ‘Oh, are you wearing your costume tonight?’” Kao shared. Two multicultural nights, thousands of miles away from each other, and yet also the same.

“They did not call it that…” I said, with a snicker.

“They did! First of all, it is not a costume. Like, why do you call it a costume?” Kao’s expression turned from playful to agitated. “I got so offended. It’s not a costume.
It's called traditional clothing. Like, what is going through your mind?” She is acutely aware of the answer.

“It’s just such a different way of understanding the world,” I reply, sharing her frustration and ache.

“I know,” her agitation turns solemn, “But also, you teach our kids.”
Chapter 5: A Gentle Coming Together, A Violent Clash

*We carry the weight,*

*The little pockets of trauma.*

*We play the game,*

*So that we secure ourselves for our students.*

A poem composed from across the I-Poems

I began this dissertation by situating this study in my own experiences as a Second-Generation Asian American teacher. The subsequent chapters aimed to provide a big picture overview and rich, in-depth storying of how Second-Generation Asian American experiences of growing up and going to school in the U.S. impacted the ways these teachers took up their everyday work in the classroom. More specifically, my participants' storied experiences revealed their fraught negotiation of identity and culture and the ways in which they mobilize their Second-Generation Asian American identity in the service of their students.

The narratives shared in chapter 4 revealed resonances, dissonances, and contestations in the experiences of the four Second-Generation Asian American teachers whose stories make up the heart of this dissertation. These narratives represent the vastness of the Asian American experience, from migration stories and family structures to childhood experiences in the United States. Yet, there is also a sort of symmetry in their stories from school, their motivations for becoming teachers, experiences in the classroom, and their reasons for remaining in the profession. While how and why their families arrived in the U.S. are distinct, their experiences of ethnoracialization and as Second-Generation Asian Americans in the classroom are in fact quite similar.
My participants’ experiences of growing up and going to school in the U.S. were marked by a desire to belong and also an understanding of their Otherness. Their stories described the ways they contend with and negotiate their unmeltability, a legacy of Asian exclusion in the social and legal fabric of the United States. Their stories spoke to contradictions embedded in their roles as educators, in their societal function as arbiters of Americanness. It is the incongruence of cultivating their students to be active, thoughtful, and compassionate citizens of the nation, while also grappling with the enduring question of their own belonging to the nation. It is the daily embodiment of Kao’s question: “Am I even American enough to teach about America?”

For the past four years I have taught elementary school teachers-to-be. I have supervised them in their practicums. I have introduced them to lesson planning. My students have been predominantly White women, many blond haired and blue eyed, from small to mid-sized towns who enjoyed their schooling. Yes, many of my students had struggles – learning challenges, peer relationships, mental health battles, but by and large schools were safe places for them. That is not to say that the participants in my study, too, do not have good memories of school. In fact, all of my participants recalled their elementary experiences with fondness and at times joy.

Yet, my participants also were quick to share with me the many small moments where they were made to feel different. Not because of their academic performance or their negotiation of social hierarchies and perceptions, but because of their identities as Second-Generation Asian American. All of my participants noted moments in their schooling where the boundaries of being American, boundaries of language, food, family,
or everyday experiences, were deployed by teachers and peers to exclude, to name them as different. While schools may be battlefields of belonging for everyone, my White students were never called on to negotiate their place, their belonging, to the social imaginary of America.

In what follows, I will share two emerging strands that offer possible pathways for making meaning of the narratives presented in chapter 4. The first strand discusses the affordances of utilizing the framework of ethnoracialization (Brown & Jones, 2015) to understand the co-constituted and dynamically situated experience of being a Second-Generation Asian American. Additionally, it presents the school, whether it be elementary or university, as the most significant site in which my participants came to know their unmeltability. Schools were the site of their ethnoracialization.

The second strand argues for expanding the theorization of transnational teachers to include those U.S. born teachers engaging in everyday transnational experiences. Each of the participants in my study discussed the ways that their internal contestations of belonging to the nation, their perpetual foreignness and unmeltability, informed their relationship to students, colleagues, parents, and administrators. I close the chapter by then discussing the contributions and implications of this study and offering possible lines of inquiry for future study.

**Schools as Sites of Ethnoracialization**

I began this dissertation by arguing that current scholarship on Teachers of Color has largely neglected the intersection of generational status, of growing up in an immigrant family, and the unique process of racialization that occurs in the United States. I suggested that taking up the study of teachers at this intersection could offer new
insights for the capacities needed to teach our increasingly transnational student population. Across the interviews, the four participants narrated experiences from growing up, going to school, and becoming and being teachers that drew on their multiple identities as People of Color, as children of immigrants, as members of ethnic communities, as English language learners, as racialized and ethnicized bodies.

Scholars have long documented that the traumatic and fraught experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color are positioned as Other in relation to the dominant to the experiences of the White people. In America, Whiteness is the norm, and we – those without access to this racialized power are, thus, seen as outsiders, Others. Each participant shared stories about coming to understand themselves as Other in relation to their White classmates, neighbors, teachers, and colleagues. They described the ways they negotiated authority, trust, and microaggressions in their everyday teaching. Each described subtle moves they made with administrators and colleagues in order to strategically position themselves to best serve their students.

Existing along two adjacent and even, at times, parallel axes, Second-Generation Asian Americans are situated within the racial binary of White and Black and also between that of American and foreign. The process by which they come to locate themselves along these axes can be defined as a process of ethnoracialization. Brown and Jones (2015) theorize ethnoracialization as a dynamic, recursive, and discursive process able to bridge race and immigration scholarship. Presented as an outgrowth of notions of panethnicity, Brown and Jones’ (2015) theorization is meant to challenge the distinct and discrete treatment of ethnic and racial categories in data reporting and scholarship. Ethnoracialization aims to “underscore the simultaneous and dialectical relationship of
external ascription and self-identification in the process of constructing ethnoracial understanding and categories” (Reyes, 2017, p. 448). Ethnoracialization attends to the ways identity development and group formation extends across time and space and occurs in relationship to both macro and micro-level institutions and world-making.

Rather than a twin process or even compounded processes, ethnoracialization explains identity formation as shaped and configured through co-constituting processes that engage one’s racialized body and ethnic identity. Brown & Jones (2015) argue that ethnoracialization takes place through: 1) ascriptive processes affect self-identification by creating common experiences among similarly situated individuals; 2) ascriptive processes change over time, resulting in different identities; and 3) the interpretation of everyday encounters with discrimination, the state and other social institutions can solidify or weaken group attachments (p. 187).

As children, all four participants defined their ethnoracial identities in relation to their peers, marking their own identity through the moments in which they recognized their experiences to be different from their peers. For both Corvus and Ying, transitions in schooling led them to understand their ethnoracial situatedness. For Corvus, the move from his more diverse elementary school to the primarily White parochial school brought with it a reckoning with Whiteness. For Ying, her move to Milwaukee led her to better understand herself in relation to the Hmong community. Both Ying and Corvus described feelings of not being enough of either side of their hyphen and described the ways they struggled to find their place amongst their peers. Both Maya and Kao described their childhoods as ones spent primarily with White friends. Kao described the relationships she made through her extracurricular school activities while Maya described her days
playing with neighborhood friends. Both, however, grew apart from these friends as the differences in their worlds became sharper. As a result, both drifted towards peers with similar ethnoracial identities and shared experiences.

College provided an opportunity for each participant to reconcile their ethnoracial identity on their own terms. Kao, Maya, and Ying’s college experiences involved a significant geographic shift. While each came from very tight-knit families, they each “moved away” to college which broadened their worlds. Maya described how she was on her own for the first time, able to try new things and meet new people. Similarly, Ying spoke about how her experiences in college opened her mind and widened her social networks. Kao described how moving to a primarily White institution, while isolating and at times frustrating, also helped her to clarify her desire to return to her community to make an impact. While Corvus did not move away for college, he shared that he became more comfortable with his multicultural self when he found a Students of Color organizing group in college. He described that finding students who were experiencing similar challenges of negotiating the contours of their identity helped him to reconcile his Hmong-American identity.

All four participants shared the everyday encounters, during their teacher education and as fully credentialed teachers, with microaggressions and discrimination. Kao and Corvus shared stories from their teacher education programs describing how White peers often invoked color evasive rhetoric to marginalize the significance of their own and their students’ ethnoracial identities. Kao described the ways the richness of her bilingualism was punished in the credentialing process. Additionally, she shared stories from her classroom, moments where she experienced discrimination by her colleagues.
and parents sometimes openly, and other times more covertly. Maya shared the microaggressions she has faced as she attempts to move up in district administration and Ying shared the ways her presence in the classroom and her authority as teacher is often undermined and overlooked in favor of White colleagues and even guests.

This framework of ethnoracialization makes clear the ways that racialization and ethnicization processes are inextricably entangled. Located forever between Black and White, and American and Foreign, Asian Americans exist in a multiply defined plane of in-betweenness. Any study that attempts to engage these processes as discrete and individual will fail to uncover what is produced through the dialectic and mutually constitutive identity formations processes that many of us who cannot separate our racial and ethnic identities experiences. Additionally, schools must be examined as not only a site of ethnoracialization for students, but as an ongoing site of ethnoracialization for the teachers who work within them. There is much left to be understood about living in the U.S. and working in the schools with both a visibly racialized and perpetually foreign body.

**Theorizing the Transnational Teacher**

My participants’ stories were filled with moments of joy and ache from their lives as the children of immigrants. Their stories offered nuanced glimpses into the contestations, desires, and loss that we, Second-Generation Americans, experience negotiating being here in the U.S. while also remaining tied to “there,” where our families have come from. It shows up in our stories about language, food, geography, and in the ways we talk about our parents, cousins, and elders. Corvus’s desire to work abroad and Kao’s desire to study abroad in Southeast Asia were an expression of their
desire to reconcile their ancestry with their identities. Ying expressed struggles in maintaining language skills for her children. Maya spoke about how her summers spent in India as a child forged a deep connection to India and to her grandmother.

Transnational teacher identity is an emerging subject in teacher education. Most research in this area centers the experiences of language teachers and is concerned with how these teachers negotiate their professional identities in culturally White and English-speaking educational institutions (Lee & Tucker, 2018). A growing area of interest focuses on teachers who come from abroad to teach children born in country, for example, Americans teaching abroad, or Chinese teachers working in U.S. immersion schools (Liao & Maddamsetti, 2019). Little attention has been paid to the ways the life experiences of U.S. born teachers who are from immigrant families may also contribute to the conceptualization of a transnational teacher identity. I argue that the experiences shared by the four participants in my students, as well as those offered by my own experiences, support an expansion of this conceptualization beyond the experiences of foreign-born teachers and those working predominately in language instruction.

While this study was not designed to provide generalized trends or characteristics of the transnational teacher, it can offer some important lines of inquiry towards this end. For the Second-Generation Asian Americans in this study, the transnational teacher identity is a messy and dynamic one that is arrived at through a lifetime of embodied contestations and deferments. It is the fragmentation and fracture of one’s self image as they discover, through the process of ethnoracialization, that they are Other. It is the weaponization of language, food, clothing, accents to bifurcate the self; to insert the hyphen. It is a network of horizontal ties that transect the borders of nation. Many of us
will not travel across the physical borders, and yet, our transnational teacher identities are invisibly tethered to these faraway lands. It is the negotiation and reconciliation of one’s multiply situated selves that allows us to finally bridge the hyphen.

In her seminal text, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, Sandoval (2000) speaks about the strategic and fluid ways that People of Color, particularly Women of Color, make micro-calculations every day, all the time, to securely position themselves for their futures. The ways we move, words we speak, behaviors we embody are selected for an audience in relation to the manifestations of power that are visible and the ones we know are invisible. It is a skill cultivated through everyday experiences of alterity, through the daily negotiation of our hyphenated identities. Each participant narrated experiences of contested belonging to the nation, yet, also the ability to “play the game” as Maya said. To know when and where to push, to make moves. And when to acquiesce to power. To be constantly in flux, tethered to communities across the globe, yet unmoored in this one. This strategic adaptability, generated through the friction in the process of ethnoracialization, is what it means to be embody a transnational teacher identity.

**Implications**

In addition to the contributions discussed previously, this study has important practical implications for school administrators, teacher educators, and teachers who all must contend with changing U.S. demographics and its resulting shifts in the boundaries of American identity. While these implications are not directly related to the storying and ethnoracialization of the participants in my study, they do offer important considerations for addressing the contestations of cultural competence and belonging that emerged from the study.
**Diversifying the Profession**

While this study was not aimed at exploring the ongoing work to diversify the teacher workforce, it does support those working towards that end. The stories presented in my dissertation reveal that there is additional work needed in order to make schools and teaching a profession that is welcoming and inclusive of People of Color. There is no question that my participants’ experiences as students and teachers would have been better had they had more teachers and colleagues who shared their ethnoracial identity, or at least had teachers and colleagues who had some first-hand insights into their experiences.

Working towards a teacher workforce that is representative of its students has been the project of scholars, activists, and teacher educators and administrators for decades. While progress is being made, the majority of today’s teachers and the teacher education pipeline, particularly in elementary school, remain overwhelmingly White. We know these teachers are coming. Of today’s public school students, 57 million are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. While the demographic profile of the teaching profession will change as these students reach adulthood, this future is 15 or 20 years away and there is considerable concern that our school structures, and the U.S. teacher credentialing process, are not capable of hiring and retaining these teachers. This study contributes to ongoing literature that calls on teacher education to embrace innovative and alternative pathways to becoming a teacher. In the past, alternative pathways were promoted for mid-career changers or those returning to the workforce after years away caring for children. They are increasingly, however, being imagined to address the significant impediments Students of Color face in simply gaining entry to college.
Today’s most common pathway to teaching remains a four-year undergraduate degree that then requires a quick turnaround to obtain a relevant master’s degree. Much research has been done on the barriers to entry for first-generation college-going students who may not have the resources in their communities to support them in understanding how to make college happen, whether financially, geographically, or logistically. Navigating the testing and application requirements and associated fees can be a particularly overwhelming experience. Additionally, these students are more likely to be targeted by predatory lenders which places them in even more financial precarity.

At the minimum this is a 5-year financial and time commitment that is out of reach for many BIPOC students. Additionally, many scholars point to the student teaching period, which is almost universally practiced, as a significant barrier for students who must work to fund their education. While the demographics of our students may be changing, the racial wealth gap is only growing. If we truly want to see a more diverse teacher population, we will need to address the economic implications of the teacher education system we have built.

*Cultivating Culturally Responsive Educators: Ethnic Studies in Teacher Education*

All the participants in the study noted the explicit efforts in their district to attend to the cultural incongruence between teachers and students. They spoke about ongoing, largely effective professional development opportunities that the district and union had offered to support teachers in cultivating culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies. While these initiatives did not preclude the teachers in the study from experiencing microaggressions and triggers in their school lives, it did provide a shared framework that enabled more productive collaborations and encouraged meaningful conversations within
their school buildings. In short, such trainings are not a singular solution, but they did make the everyday experience in schools better for the teachers in my study.

One such way of cultivating and sustaining this practice is through the renewed calls for ethnic studies programs in K-12 schooling, and the complementary call on teacher education programs to require ethnic studies coursework for all of their teacher candidates. Ethnic studies is a course of study or program that centers the knowledges and perspectives of a specific ethnic or racial group, reflecting their lived experiences and intellectual contributions. While at times divergent and certainly dynamic, these programs are legible in schools and university settings as Black studies, African American studies, Native American studies, Indigenous studies, Chicano/a studies, Asian American studies, Latino/a studies, Arab American studies, Women of Color feminisms, and Queer of Color critiques amongst others.

Scholars continue to note the ways in which ethnic studies is a more productive and just framework for teaching and learning. Scholars argue that students show positive outcomes in areas such as academic achievement, literacy, engagement, and socioemotional well-being (Sleeter, 2011). Such outcomes are attributed to learning through relevant and meaningful curriculum that affirms their identities, draws on their experiences, and develops their critical intellectualism (Banks, 2012).

Sleeter (2011) argues that ethnic studies knowledge is distinct from normative White, Euro-American knowledges in that it accomplishes the following:

1) an explicit identification of the point of view from which knowledge emanates, and the relationship between social location and perspective;

2) an examination of U.S. colonialism historically, as well as how relations of
colonialism continue to play out;

3) an examination of the historical construction of race and institutional racism, how people navigate racism, and struggles for liberation;

4) probing meanings of collective or communal identities that people hold;

5) studying one’s community’s creative and intellectual products, both historic and contemporary. (p. 3)

While nationalist voices often deem ethnic studies programs un-American and even treasonous, arguing that such programs teach ethnic pride instead of American patriotism, they are, by all accounts, thriving. In the past two decades, we have seen the establishment of an annual meeting of ethnic studies scholars, journals devoted to proliferating the work of these scholars, and, most importantly, the trickling down of this curricular work to the K-12 public school system. To date, ethnic studies curricula requirements have been taken up in urban K-12 school districts in cities like Boston, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, as well as statewide in Oregon and Indiana. Just this year, Saint Paul, Minnesota announced its plan to make ethnic studies coursework a graduation requirement.

What might be transformed in the lives of teachers and students if all of our teacher candidates were required to complete coursework in ethnic studies? What might it mean for BIPOC teachers to not only have the opportunity to learn about themselves, but to know that their colleagues are also learning? What frameworks might be gained? What commitments might be arrived at? What conversations might teachers be more prepared to have with their students?
Contributions to the Field

As I stated in the opening of this dissertation, my research interests are concerned with the implications of the ongoing transformation in demographics within the United States on the nature and notion of American identity; of what and who count as American. The social imaginary that forges and sustains what it means to be American is collectively co-constituted in and through contestations and negotiations. This process, however, is not guaranteed to produce a more inclusive and more just Americaness.

The structures and systems in our society, including the education system, have been designed to obscure and erase the “subjectivities, knowledges, bodies, cosmologies, memories, histories, or worldviews” (May, 2015, p. 200) that represent the lived experiences of marginalized peoples. Aggregating data and subsuming Asian Americans into larger People of Color statistics, reports, and generalizations contributes to this project by obscuring the material realities of Asian Americans, and in particular the unique experiences of those who are U.S. born, Second-Generation Asian American. This, thus, serves to cultivate and maintain what Mills (1997) described as an epistemology of ignorance, the “evasion and denial of the realities” (p. 109) that allows White, Eurocentric, Christian, heteropatriarchal norms and values to remain the status quo.

Part of the work of countering this epistemology of ignorance is rendering visible the material realities of those whose experiences have been relegated to the margins. My study contributes to research and scholarship that are attempting to decenter the White, Eurocentric frame that so often defines what is typical and normal. My study aims to center stories from the margins, stories from teachers whose identities are largely
rendered invisible in the literature, reports, and statistics. My project is one meant to render these experiences visible and encourage further focus and study within teacher education scholarship.

Future Lines of Inquiry

In my own work, I hope to continue examining the contours of this new American identity, the multiple, contradictory, and layered Americanness that emerges as the nation becomes minority White and as complex transnational networks reposition global interests. As a Second-Generation Asian American teacher, myself, I am committed to continuing to center stories of teaching from the margins, rather than the center. I am committed to ensuring that the experiences of Second-Generation Teachers of Color and specifically, Asian American teachers, in schools are valued as important indicators for changing practices, rather than exceptions that are largely ignored.

I am interested in pursuing the pedagogical and practice-oriented ways in which Second-Generation Asian American teachers do the work of defining America in their classrooms. I hope to deepen my understanding of these teachers’ roles as nation-builders and citizen-makers as they assist students in understanding their own responsibilities and relationships to the nation and their communities. I am curious about how particular projects, learning activities, and storying that take place in these teachers’ classrooms might reveal the nuances in the ways they tell the story of America.

Through this project, I have become increasingly interested in the performance of “Teacher”. My participants often shared moments of enacting an acceptable performance of Teacher for their White administrators, colleagues, and parents. These were, however, narrated experiences of performance. I am interested in engaging in a site-based
observational study that would allow me deeper insight into the embodiment and nuance of this performance.

This study allowed me a first entry into a large-scale research project. My questions were small and exploratory and my methods fairly simplistic. Much of this was determined by the context surrounding the study. COVID-19 related restrictions and school closures limited the pathways of inquiry and provided an added layer of complexity and uncertainty to an already complex and uncertain task. I am eager to take up future research projects in site-based ways that were not possible at this juncture.

Gazing Back, Hoping Forward

I write this dissertation during the most significant world-disrupting event in over 100 years, the Coronavirus pandemic. I began writing this dissertation as restaurants, schools, and borders closed worldwide. Time was no longer marked by coffee shop check-ins and yoga classes, but instead by updated case counts, the number of masks made, and daily coronavirus briefings. Uncertainty, frustration, and anxiety overwhelmed any semblance of productivity or progress.

As I finish writing, over a year later, life in the U.S. is beginning to return to a new normal. Our cultural, social, and professional worlds have become nearly entirely mediated by screens. Many students are back to in-person schooling, though, at least here in Minnesota, nearly one-third are opting to remain home. The collaborative, active, and project-based pedagogies and practices we have worked towards have been replaced by rows of desks, individualized learning via screens, anxious teachers, and quiet and still classrooms. Projections warn that racial disparities in the labor market have been exacerbated by the pandemic, resulting in a deepening and widening of the racial wealth
gap. Data released in February of 2021 revealed that 2.5 million women have left the workforce, devastating decades of gender equity work (Martin, 2021).

I also write this dissertation just five miles from the place of George Floyd’s public murder. From the city whose uprising in the summer of 2020 re-energized the Movement for Black Lives and set the nation on a renewed reckoning with generations of White terror. It is also a city reeling from some of the worst racial wealth and student performance gaps in the nation. Months of a President and then social media mobilizing xenophobic and anti-Asian rhetoric has led to a dramatic increase in Anti-Asian violence. What has been permanently transformed by these ongoing crises has yet to be seen.

The study I presented in this dissertation was not the one I had hoped to do. For months I waited out the pandemic, living in a sort of research purgatory. As the precarity of life and work became more real in the opening months of the pandemic, my possibilities for who and what my study might be narrowed. I pivoted to remake my study. Rather than casual stories told in conversation at the back of a classroom and in the hall on the way to lunch, I resorted to semi-structured video interviews. Rather than observations and field notes from days spent with teachers and students in schools, I made do with stories about classroom life. Instead of gathering with teachers at local coffee shops, we met each other through the screen, a physical reminder of the limitations, the incompleteness, inherent in any attempt to peer into another’s world.

My study has been shaped by this moment. The stories my participants shared were haunted by the isolation, the delayed justice, and the loss we all experienced in 2020. Would my participants have told so many stories about the traumas and aches of their racialization had we not been in the wake of George Floyd’s murder? I am haunted
by unanswerable questions. Would they have talked more about their classrooms, had they actually been in them? What else would they have shared had they not been overwhelmed by the realities of teaching in the pandemic? What else could this have been, could I have asked, read, thought, had I not been so paralyzed by the moment?

Unanswerable questions, yes. When I can look up, look out, however, there are moments when I can let these hauntings lie, and see towards some hopeful futures. The visibility and violence of the January 6, 2021 White terrorist coup at the Capital has forced open the nation’s eyes to realities it often chooses not to see. With the renewed movement for racial justice come innumerable initiatives and programs aimed at centering BIPOC voices and confronting White Supremacy. The fear and rage of the Trump Presidency, of the first and formative years of my doctoral program, have been replaced, at least for now, by the hope and determination of the most diverse Administration in U.S. history. The Vice President, herself, identifies as both Black and Second-Generation Asian American. I am hopeful by the futures now made possible by these current and ongoing conversations, and by what, in turn, these futures might mean. A more inclusive Americanness, I hope. One that might disperse the weight and make lighter the burden of the little pockets of trauma that we, Second-Generation Asian American teachers, carry with us into the classroom and that propel us into our teaching. I am eager for that future.
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Appendix A: Recruitment Email

Subject: UMN Research Study Participation

Hello,

It was suggested to me that you might be interested in participating in a study I am conducting. Thanks so much for considering it.

My study explores how elementary school teachers of color, who are also the children of immigrants to the U.S. (like me!), bring their experiences of growing up in America with these intersecting identities into their classrooms.

Participation would involve the following, and take place between May and July of this year:

• 2-3 topic-specific virtual interviews
• 1 demographic survey

We would work together to determine a schedule for these interviews as well as decide on a method of compensation for participation. Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

I am looking for elementary school teachers who are U.S.-born with foreign-born parents and who identify as people of color. If this isn't you, thanks so much for taking the time to read this and sorry for cluttering your inbox! If this is you and you are interested in participating, please reply back and we can set up a time to chat!

Thanks again for considering taking this on in the midst of all of this.

Meghan
MPhadke@umn.edu
Appendix B: Information Sheet

You are invited to be in a research study of how second-generation American teachers, who identify as people of color and who are children of immigrants from the Global South, experienced growing up, going to school, becoming teachers, and working in U.S. schools.

You were selected as a possible participant because you are an elementary school teacher who is the child of immigrants to the United States and identifies as a person of color. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Meghan Phadke, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

Procedures:
If you agree to participate in this study, you can expect the following:

Four in-depth individual interviews around four themes: 1) family migration stories; 2) stories of growing up in America; 3) stories of becoming a teacher; 4) stories from the classroom.

• Each interview will be conducted online between June and August of 2020.
• Interviews will be recorded and stored on a password protected device.
• Transcripts of the interviews will be anonymized, and any identifying features will be removed, where this is not possible pseudonyms will be used.
• Interviews will be scheduled at a mutually beneficial dates and times.

Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept private. Any reports or papers published as part of this study will not include information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota.

Investigator Team Contact Information:

For questions about research appointments, the research study, research results, or other concerns, you are encouraged to contact:

Faculty Research Adviser:
Nina Asher, nasher@umn.edu
Student Researcher:
Meghan Phadke, MPhadke@umn.edu

This research has been reviewed and approved by an IRB within the Human Research Protections Program (HRPP). To share feedback privately with the HRPP about your research experience, call the Research Participants’ Advocate Line at 612-625-1650 (Toll Free: 1-888-224-8636) or go to z.umn.edu/participants. You are encouraged to contact the HRPP if:

● Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
● You cannot reach the research team.
● You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
● You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
● You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Please keep this document for your records.
Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire

Online Platform: Google Forms

Description Box:

This form asks for personal demographic information about you and your family. All information requested will remain private and will only be reported out in aggregate (not individual). Completing the form should take no more than 10 minutes.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about the questions included below. You may email me at: MPhadke@umn.edu.

1. Name
2. How many total years have you work in schools?
3. What district and school do you work in currently?
4. What is your role at your school?
5. What is your zip code?
6. How old are you?
7. How would you describe your gender identity?
8. How would you describe your racial identity?
9. How would you describe your ethnic identity?

10. How would you describe your class status growing up?
   a. Lower Class
   b. Working Poor
   c. Working Class
   d. Lower Middle Class
   e. Middle Class
   f. Upper Middle Class
   g. Upper Class

11. How would you describe your class status currently?
   a. Lower Class
   b. Working Poor
   c. Working Class
   d. Lower Middle Class
   e. Middle Class
   f. Upper Middle Class
   g. Upper Class
12. What is your highest level of education?
   a. No formal schooling
   b. Some formal schooling
   c. High School
   d. Some College/Associate’s Degree
   e. Bachelor’s degree
   f. Graduate or Professional Degree

13. What is the highest level of education for each of your parents?

14. What is your families’ country(ies) of origin?

15. In what year did your immediate family first arrive in the U.S.?

16. What languages were spoken in your home growing up?

17. What languages do you speak, read, or write?

18. What else about yourself would you like to tell me?
Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Interview I: Growing Up in America

1. Where did you “grow-up”? What was it like?
   
   a. Describe your neighborhood.
   
   b. Tell me a story about growing up in that neighborhood.
   
   c. Describe childhood home?
   
   d. Tell me a story about growing up in that home.

2. Who was part of your growing-up? Share a memory about your:
   
   a. Siblings
   
   b. Parents
   
   c. Cousins/grandparents

3. Describe your childhood friends.

   a. Share a memory of them.

4. Describe the schools you attended.

   a. Share a memory of going to school as a child.

5. Do you return to the place you grew up? In what ways, if any, has it changed?
Interview II: Understanding Your Family’s Migration Story

1. When and how did your family arrive in America?

2. What do you know about that experience for your parents?

3. What do you know about the trail that led to your birth in America? (Who came before you?)
   What do you know about those individuals?

4. What is your family’s place of origin?
   a. Do you still have family there?
   b. Have you traveled to your family’s place of origin? If so, what was/is that like?
   c. How familiar/knowledgeable are you feel with this place or origin?
      i. How did you gain this familiarity/knowledge?
      ii. What are you glad to know?
      iii. What do you wish you knew?
      iv. What do you not want to know?

5. What was life in for your parents before arriving in America?
   a. What did the older generations do for work?
   b. Did they go to school? If so, what was school like?
Interview III: Becoming a Teacher

1. When did you know you wanted to be a teacher?

2. Describe your teacher education program (where, how long, size, what courses, license type, etc.)

3. Describe your peers in that program.
   a. Share a memory of your peers.

4. Describe your instructors in program.
   a. Share a memory of your instructors.

5. Describe your student teaching experience.
   a. Share a memory of your cooperating teacher.

6. What struggles did you encounter during your teacher education program? What was rewarding about the experience?

7. What did your program support you well on? Where do you wish they had supported you more on?
Interview IV: Everyday Teaching

1. How did you come to teach here?
   
   a. How long have you been teaching here?
   
   b. What grades?

2. How would you describe:
   
   a. The school?
   
   b. District?
   
   c. Your colleagues?
   
   d. Your administrators?
   
   e. Support staff?
   
   f. Students?
   
   g. Families?

3. Which relationship are the strongest? Which are more difficult to build and maintain?


5. What has been difficult about teaching here? Share a memory to illustrate this.
Appendix E: Growing Up Meghan

1969: My father at work in MN

1973: My mother and newborn sister in Bombay

1975: My father’s welcome party at Boston’s Logan Airport

1979: Family photo

1980: First home in Marlborough

1986: My sisters and I at Faneuil Hall

1991: Family photo

1996: My sister’s wedding

2005: My childhood friends

2013: My sister’s wedding

2019: Family trip to Mumbai, India
Appendix F: Map of India
Appendix G: Map of Southeast Asia
Appendix H: Map of Laos & Thailand