

(UN)MAKING IDENTITY:
ASIAN AMERICAN TEACHERS' IDENTITY PERFORMANCES

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Candace J. Chow

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The Asian American population has experienced unprecedented growth in the last decade. However, despite this increase, the experiences of Asian American students and teachers remain untold and irrelevant to mainstream educational policies, practices, and scholarship. This dissertation centers the educational experiences of Asian Americans by asking how racial discourses orchestrate the interaction of race and power in the identities and experiences of Asian American teachers. It explores how Asian American teachers understand and perform identities. In addition, it examines how these understandings and performances of identity influence pedagogy. Using a mixed-methods approach, this study combines analyses of restricted-use data from the 2007-08 *Schools and Staffing Survey* and interviews from a multiple case study of Asian American teachers. Findings reveal that Asian American teachers are roughly 1.5 times as likely as teachers of any other race to report having control in their classrooms, suggesting that Asian American teachers may be unique in their approaches to the classroom or the ways they are perceived by colleagues and students. In addition, findings indicate that identity performance is contradictory, intersectional, and agentic. This study's findings reveal that although Asian American teachers are subject to race-based assumptions, they actively resist being cast in stereotypical ways, and instead (un)make new identities, thereby contesting the power dynamics that uphold existing racial discourses.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Candace J. Chow has been an educator for over 10 years and has worked in both P-12 and higher education settings. Candace's interdisciplinary work examines the intersections of race and education and the ways that Asian Americans respond to the discourses that are imposed on them. She is passionate about teaching and integrating her expertise in teachers' identities into her own teaching practice. Her interest in multicultural education began while serving as lead teacher at a summer enrichment program for elementary school immigrant students in New York City's Chinatown. She has taught high school English in the South Bronx, New York, and Ann Arbor, Michigan. Candace has also worked with Cornell undergraduates through her roles in student services: as an Academic Support Assistant for Cornell's Learning Strategies Center and as Assistant Director of the Cornell Alumni-Student Mentoring Program. Candace earned a B.S. in Human Development from Cornell University and an M.A. in the Teaching of English from Teachers College, Columbia University.

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PART ONE
INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1

Introduction

Many Americans believe we live in a post-racial era because we have elected a Black president (Leonardo, 2009). This emphasis on colorblindness has obscured the ongoing struggles of Asian Americans and other communities of color. Specifically, it masks the racially hegemonic discourses that are sustained by schools and the educational system.

Asian Americans are the fastest-growing racial group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), and yet educational policies, practices, and scholarship have largely neglected the experiences of Asian Americans (Lee, 2009), rendering Asian American students and teachers invisible. Although the Asian American student population is growing, Asian American educators are sorely underrepresented. They only comprise 1.5% of the teaching population, are most likely to leave teaching within three years, and are least likely to accept administrative positions (National Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2010). Understanding racial discourse is central to understanding school dynamics and spaces in which Asian American students are perceived as model minorities and where Asian Americans teachers *are* a minority.

In this introductory chapter, I recall memorable moments from my own teaching experience in order to foreground the significance of this dissertation project. I briefly explain my dissertation questions. I also provide a theoretical understanding of identity and agency and conceptualize how Asian Americans understand and make sense of their identities. Next I briefly review Asian American history and the literature on teacher identities and Asian American teachers to provide some background for my study. I conclude by providing an overview of my dissertation chapters.

Counter-stories of an Asian American Teacher

It is September 2005. I am a second-year teacher but in some ways, I feel like a first-year teacher all over again. I have just moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan from New York City and I am feeling very out of place. Gone are the familiar streets, scents, and sights of the city I had called home for more than 22 years. I cannot get used to calling soda “pop” or driving. And why is everyone so friendly? I already miss my students from the Bronx, who endearingly called me “Miss” as if I was the only female teacher at the school. Despite many people’s assumptions about what it’s like to teach in the Bronx because many Bronx residents are low-income people of color, my first year of teaching was wonderful.

The school in Ann Arbor is large and I have difficulty navigating its confusing layout. I am teaching 9th grade for the first time and I am having a hard time. I am having difficulty relating to the freshmen, who seem more like middle school students than high school students to me. I feel as lost as they look as they roam the halls the first week.

One day the hall monitor, an African American gentleman, approaches me and asks what my name is. We have been waving “hi” to each other but have not yet been formally introduced. I tell him my name is Candace Lee. He pauses for a second, confusion on his face, and then continues: “Oh, so you’re not married to the math teacher.” This time it is my turn to be confused. Suddenly, it dawns on me—he thinks I am married to Mr. Kim, the young Asian American male math teacher—the only Asian American male teacher at the school! “No, no,” I reply with a smile, trying to laugh off what he thinks is an innocent mistake. He walks away while I continue to reflect on our conversation: “Wait, he thinks I am married to him? Because he’s Asian American too? So all Asian Americans belong together? But he’s Black! Doesn’t he

know not all Black people know each other? Why would he assume this about Asians? I can't believe he thought I was married to Mr. Kim!!" These thoughts continue to swirl around in my head for the rest of the day and for weeks, months, and years to come.

Winter 2005. I am relieved that the fall semester is coming to a close. It has been a rough few months. Instead of giving a final exam to my students, I am inspired by a colleague to assign a portfolio project. I have asked my students to choose all of their best pieces of writing from the semester and reflect on how they have improved as writers. I also ask my students to reflect on their semester and assess their student performance and my teacher performance. Jenny, one of my Asian American students, writes in her portfolio reflection that when she first saw my name on her class schedule, she had visions of a middle-aged Chinese woman trying to teach students in broken, accented English. She says she found this visualization hilarious and ridiculous. How could someone teach English when they could not even speak it "correctly?" I'm guessing Jenny's fears were relieved when she stepped into my classroom and met me. While I appreciate Jenny's honesty, her reflection leaves me aghast. If this is what an Asian American student thought about me, what do the rest of my students think?

Summer 2006. The school year has come to a close and my second year of teaching is finally over. People scoff at the fact that teachers get summers off but I know that after this long year, my summer vacation is well-deserved. I am at my colleague Katie's 30th birthday party. I strike up a conversation with one of Katie's high school friends.

"So how do you know Katie?"

"Oh, we teach in the same department," I reply.

"Oh, so she teaches...math?"

"No,"

“Science?”

I am getting frustrated. Is it possible that this guy doesn't even know what Katie teaches? Is his stereotype of Asian Americans so strong that he thinks Katie teaches math or science?

“She teaches history and English,” I reply. “I teach English.”

“Ah”.

Again I think to myself, “is this how people really see me? What is going on here?”

Significance of Study

Whenever people learn that I taught in the South Bronx and in Ann Arbor, they assume Ann Arbor was the nicer gig. I'm quick to point out, however, that as an educator who is committed to embracing diversity in ways that go beyond the mantra of “food, festival, and fun,” Ann Arbor was actually the harder place to teach.

When I graduated from Teachers College, I thought I was an English teacher who was Asian American. I soon learned that others saw me as the Asian American teacher who taught English. My Latino/a and Black students in the Bronx embraced me because they saw me as a fellow person of color. There, my racial identity afforded me solidarity with students and staff. In that classroom, it was easy to talk about issues of inequality in conjunction with *Othello* and *Things Fall Apart* because it was something all of my students had experienced or witnessed.

In Ann Arbor, however, I was frequently stereotyped. Colleagues made assumptions about me based on my skin color. Students questioned my ability to speak unaccented English. Strangers assumed that I taught math, not English. I pondered whether my identity, particularly my racial and ethnic identities, could still fit into the classroom and curriculum. Could I challenge students' notions of what Asian Americans were? Could I use literature to address

issues of race, gender, and class, and could I share my personal experiences? I decided that these issues and my cultural identity belonged in the classroom. Although it was more difficult to address diversity, particularly in an anti-racist, -sexist, and -classist manner in a setting where some students believed inequalities no longer existed, I could not be an effective teacher if I checked my identity at the door.

I have embarked on this dissertation journey to better understand how other Asian American teachers experience the classroom. It is a journey that serves to center my experience and the experiences of my Asian American teacher colleagues. My study contributes to an emergent but important branch of the fields of education and Asian American studies. Too often, Asian Americans are still dismissed in the realm of education because of the discourses around the model minority myth (Lee, 2009). In addition, the prevalence of the Black/White paradigm (Okimoto, 1994; Wu, 2003) overshadows experiences of non-Black communities of color. My study investigates the intersections of race and education and the ways that Asian American teachers respond to the discourses that are imposed on them.

I do not assume that all Asian American teachers bring the same thing to the classroom, or that they share the same views concerning their identities, agency, or teaching. But, knowing that many Asian Americans' experiences involve marginalization, invisibility, and stereotypes (Okimoto, 1994; Tuan, 1998; Wu, 2003; Lee, 2005; Ngo, 2010), I am interested in how these early personal experiences translate into teacher identities and teacher agency. I seek to understand how Asian American teachers, because of and in spite of these shared racializing experiences, make decisions about curriculum and pedagogy. I have been especially attentive to commonalities across the Asian American experience while leaving room for unique and personal stories, and multiple identities. My study's findings further the understanding of how

Asian Americans understand and negotiate race-based and teacher identities within a society that claims to be post-racial but continues to perpetuate racial hierarchies and inequalities.

Research Questions

My mixed-methods study, which will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 2, highlights the often-marginalized Asian American experience by asking how racial identity affects the experiences of Asian American teachers. Bridging the gap between race and education in order to understand how race might influence teaching practice requires an interdisciplinary approach. My dissertation draws on theories of race-based and socio-cultural identity formation to understand teachers' approaches to educational pedagogy. In order to understand how Asian American teachers embody identities and appreciate the roles they play in the educational system, I interviewed 25 Asian American teachers from across the United States to learn about their personal experiences. Broadly, I used the following three questions to guide my inquiry:

- (1) How do Asian American teachers perceive of agency (the ability to be purposeful and reflective) in classroom spaces which function to simultaneously oppress and liberate identities?
- (2) How do Asian American teachers negotiate the multiple aspects of their identities within a larger framework of racial discourse?
- (3) How do these identities influence curricular and pedagogical decisions?

The goal of my research has been to understand how Asian Americans navigate race and ethnicity within the context of education, thereby adding to the literature on Asian Americans in education. Understanding the role of racial identity in the lives of Asian American teachers in

light of their sense of agency and how it affects their curricular and pedagogical decisions will provide a more complex understanding of how race continues to function in schools and in the field of education.

Theoretical Framework

Discourse and Identity

This study draws from post-structural and socio-cultural perspectives on identity construction and identity enactments. I understand identity as produced and located within “specific historical and social contexts and power relations” (Ngo, 2010, p. 11). At the same time, I understand that individuals are actors as well as subjects. And thus, while individuals’ identities are influenced by their historical and social positions, individuals are not without agency nor are their identities inert and immutably bound. In order to understand the concept of identity, it is useful to consider how discourses operate to construct, limit, and further identity production.

Discourses are historically situated and contextual. And yet, the way they are used is not fixed, but instead dynamic. In addition, rather than merely being produced by discourses, individuals engage with and use discourses to perform identities. In addition, one’s positionality (their social position according to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) largely affects which discourses are available to call on, to reify, and to resist. In the following paragraphs, I discuss how different scholars make use of the term discourse in order to explain how I have arrived at my understanding that discourse is dynamic and that individuals make use of discourses to construct their identities.

Discourse, in a Foucauldian sense, refers to discrete “bodies of knowledge” (McHoul & Grace, 1993, p. 26) that exist within limited historical contexts. McHoul & Grace (1993) explain, “‘A discourse’ would then be *whatever* constrains—but also enables—writing, speaking and thinking within such specific historical limits” (p. 31). In other words, the individual is constructed within the constraints of time and space and subject position that s/he is located within. Thus, a Foucauldian understanding of discourse presumes that identity is confined to the site that produced it and is merely a product of its discourse. “The subject is produced as ‘an effect’ through and within discourse, within specific discursive formations, and has no existence, and certainly no transcendental continuity or identity from one subject position to another” (Hall, 1996, p. 10). Hall’s (1996) review of Foucault’s work traces the evolution of Foucault’s thinking. Hall (1996) explains that although Foucault’s early works emphasize how “discourses construct subject positions” (p. 10), his later writings recognize that individuals also make use of “self-regulation” and “self-production” within discursive regimes (p. 13). At the same time, Hall (1996) argues that what was missing from Foucault’s work was “think[ing] [of] this relation of subject to discursive formations *as an articulation*” (p. 14, emphasis in original). In other words, according to Foucault, individuals are unable to identify with and take up the positions that they are relegated to by discourses.

Key to Foucault’s (1995) work is the concept of power, which is produced via discourses. That is, discourses are used to determine social norms. What fits in with social norms becomes privileged, and is attributed power. Uniquely, this notion of power reframes how power is understood. It is no longer wholly negative, but instead productive and positive:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact

power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production (Foucault, 1995, 194).

Power produces. It's useful to keep in mind that when individuals resist discourses, they are also resisting the power that has produced the discourse.

Gee (2008) articulates discourse differently. He acknowledges that discourses are influenced by history; yet, he writes: "It is sometimes helpful to say that it is not individuals who speak and act, but rather that historically and socially defined Discourses speak to each other through individuals. The individual instantiates, gives body to a Discourse every time he or she act or speaks, and thus carries it, and ultimately changes it, through time" (p. 162). And thus, Gee redefines thinking about discourse and the production of identity. Instead of conceptualizing identity as an entity that is fixed and absolute, Gee proposes that identity shifts and that discourses enable the shifting of identity. Discourses in this sense are still contextually bound, but they are multiple and individuals can move in and out of and among multiple discourses.

In this sense, discourses are "composed of distinctive ways of speaking/listening and often, too, writing/reading *coupled* with distinctive ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, believing, with other people and with various objects, tools, and technologies, so as to enact specific socially recognizable identities engaged in specific socially recognizable activities" (Gee, 2008, p. 155). Discourses are varied and each produces certain values and rules. As people engage in discourses, they are identified and recognized in certain ways. Sometimes engaging in discourse is voluntary; sometimes it is involuntary. As we take on new discourses, our identities shift. Gee (2008) explains that we all begin with "primary Discourses" (p. 156) which we are exposed to as young children. As we age and become exposed to different

discourses, we integrate what Gee calls “secondary Discourses” (p. 157) into our primary discourses. We use these combinations of discourses as ways to interact with others and understand ourselves. Gee (2008) asserts that we have multiple identities, each associated with its own discourse. Part of constructing our identities involves negotiating how those multiple identities overlap and coexist with each other.

In contrast to the Foucauldian tradition, Holland, Skinner, Lachiotte Jr., and Cain (1998) do not include discourse in their explanation of identity. Instead, drawing from Bourdieuan (1993) concepts of “habitus” and “field”, they posit that identity is learned, socially mediated and actively constructed and produced by interacting in “figured worlds” which are “socially produced, culturally constructed activities” (p. 7) in which people learn how to be themselves and interact with others. Similar to Gee’s (2008) concept of Discourse, it is within various “figured worlds” that people learn how to perform identities—different worlds may call for different identities. The theory proposed by Holland et. al is both culturalist and constructivist. They argue that one or the other is not powerful enough to explain behavior and identity-making choices. Instead, while individuals are influenced by cultural norms and mores, they also respond to and call upon various discourses in deciding how to construct reactions to each new situation.

As mentioned earlier, individuals engage with and use discourses to perform identities. In addition, although the way individuals act within “figured worlds” may be constrained by their positionality, individuals are never confined by their positionality. Gee (2008) mentions that the negotiation of one’s identity involves the interactions that take place between members of different subject positions (e.g., interactions between White people and people of color). These interactions are important because it is only at these borders, this point of contested terrain, this “Third Space” where identities are negotiated (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha (1994) also emphasizes

how our various subject positions affect how we conceive of our world and ourselves. He insists that it is important to examine how those located in different subject positions meet to negotiate their identities in these “in-between spaces” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 1). Lastly, Ngo (2010) highlights:

Identity thus involves a double action, where in one movement we are *put* in subject positions by others who draw on available, powerful discourses to identify us; and in another movement we take up subject positions by drawing on available discourses ourselves...Identity can be constituted in two ways (p. 11).

Not only do we make sense of ourselves by ourselves, but our identities are also based on others’ perceptions of us. As Bhabha (1994) says, the way we identify is “always in relation to the place of the Other” (p. 44).

I am interested in how Asian American teachers make sense of their own figured worlds and discourses, given that they inhabit a distinct subject position as racialized individuals. I seek to understand what discourses Asian American teachers use and/or reject to create their identities and what discourses others impose on them.

Agency, Performance, and Performativity

In my understanding of identity, individuals play an active role in identity formation. Therefore, it is helpful to review the concepts of agency, performance, and performativity and their roles in identity construction. In his writing, Levinson (2011) revisits Foucault’s understanding of discourse and describes how society consists of various structures, or “a shifting and dynamic set of social forces and arrangements, anchored in institutional practice and memory” (p. 116). Society is comprised of historically and socially constructed discourses. However, Levinson explains that individuals are not merely subject to these structures; instead,

they “both fashion, and are fashioned by” these social forces (Levinson, 2011, p.116). In other words, individuals have the agency to determine how they will respond to structures imposed on them. Holland et. al (1998) borrow from Inden (1990) to aid in providing a thorough definition of agency:

“...the realized capacity of people to act upon their world and not only to know about or give personal or intersubjective significance to it. That capacity is the power of people to act purposively and reflectively, in more or less complex relationships with one another, to reiterate and remake the world in which they live, in circumstances where they may consider different courses of action possible and desirable, though not necessarily from the same point of view” (Inden, 1990, p. 23 as cited in Holland et. al, 1998, p.42).

To reiterate, individuals are not bound by the structural confines of discourses or subject positions. Instead, they have the ability to act in purposeful ways, making, un-making, and re-making their identities while doing so. Holland et. al (1998) borrow from Vygotsky and Bakhtin to further explain why individuals have the agency to “author” themselves. Vygotsky’s concept of semiotic mediation provides individuals with a means of “modifying one’s environment with the aim, but not the certainty, of affecting one’s own behavior” (Holland et. al, 1998, p. 38).

Semiotic mediating devices are objects or behaviors to which meaning is assigned. Examples include words that serve as mnemonic devices or a knot in a handkerchief that reminds one to do something. At first, individuals tend to rely on such tangible devices in order to change their behavior. However, in time, the behavior becomes internalized and sub-conscious. In short, semiotic mediation is a way of learning to act in certain ways which consequently provides opportunities for individuals to make choices about how to respond and act, or opportunities for individuals to employ their agency (Holland et. al, 1998).

While Vygotsky devoted much work to understanding the process of learning and the regulation of one's behavior, he barely wrote about understanding the self (Holland et. al, 1998). Holland et. al (1998) turn to Bakhtin's work to better understand the self and self-understanding. According to Holland et. al (1998), Bakhtin was especially interested in how heteroglossia confines and also opens up possibilities for meaning-making. Heteroglossia refers to the various languages (or discourses) and genres of speech and how individuals employ combinations of these languages to communicate with others while also representing themselves. Also important to Bakhtin's work is the concept of dialogism, which is "a world...in which sentient beings always exist in a state of being 'addressed' and in the process of 'answering'" (Holland et. al, 1998, p. 169). Dialogism is a process of "incorporate[ing] the words and voices of others" into one's own speech (Skinner & Valsiner, 2001, p. 7). Through dialogism, individuals "author" themselves by simultaneously listening to others, to the heteroglossia, and responding. The individual's response is not predetermined. It is through the "orchestration" of these voices that individuals "author" themselves (Holland et. al, 1998, p. 178). Holland et. al (1998) insist that identity making and construction are distinctly active processes.

Related to the concept of agency is that of performance. Bettie's (2003) work on working-class White and Mexican-American high school girls focuses heavily on identity as performance. Bettie's (2003) understanding of how the women in her study perceived and conceptualized class and racial identity required attention to their performances and performativities. Her work draws on the work of Foley (1990) and Butler (1990). Butler (1993) explains how the concepts of performance and performativity should not be confused:

...the former refers to agency and a conscious attempt at passing. Applied to class this might mean consciously imitating middle-class expressions of cultural capital in an

attempt at mobility. Performativity, on the other hand, refers to the fact that class subjects are the effects of the social structure and class inequality... (p. 52)

In other words, while performance is the product of a voluntary actor who possesses agency, performativity is an effect of structural discourses. In the case of performativity, individuals do not have the ability to act voluntarily: "...gender is not a performance that a prior subject elects to do, but gender is performative in the sense that it constitutes as an *effect* the very subject it appears to express" (Butler, 1996, p. 380 as cited in Jackson and Mazzei, 2012, p. 68). Instead, agency in a poststructuralist sense refers merely to representation.

Since my understanding of identity draws heavily on agency, I am more interested in the performances of my participants than in their performativities. And yet, Bettie (2003) stresses that holding performance and performativity in tension can be useful:

I can have it both ways because, indeed, it is both ways. I find a poststructuralist focus on repeating structures but with historical contingency a useful tool here and an improvement on reproduction theory. Categories of identity and structures of inequality are not automatic but must be constantly reproduced in practice, and so there is a moment of possibility for social change. The reproduction of structure is not automatic, but contingent on its repetition or iteration (p. 55).

Individuals are shaped and affected by discursive frameworks, and these discourses are largely structural. Yet, individuals have an ability to resist being defined and confined by these discourses because they have the agency to orchestrate new meanings and identities for themselves. Thus, I am interested in how Asian American teachers utilize and conceptualize their agency in deciding to reify or resist common Discourses that are assigned to Asian Americans.

Moreover, I am interested in both the performance and performativity of Asian American teachers' identities.

Conceptualizing Asian American Identity

Asian American identity, like all identities, can be complex and unwieldy. I resist the idea that Asian American identity can be essentialized. My intent in this section is not to conceptualize a single Asian American identity, but rather to highlight common racial discourses and review some theories of racial identity formation in order to better understand the discourses Asian American teachers might confront. I want to understand how Asian American teachers exercise agency to incorporate or contest these discourses in the formation of their identities. Moreover, I am interested in how the incorporation or contestation of discourses results in performance and performativity.

Racial discourses

The discourse of Whiteness

The concept of Whiteness extends beyond skin color. Whiteness is a discourse that has evolved over time and is best understood today as a racial identity that is associated with privilege and power (Roediger, 2005). The development of a White racial identity has gone through many iterations of social understanding and from the beginning, has been intrinsically tied to economic privileges. Lipsitz (2006) aptly observes: "Once we remember that whiteness is also an identity, one with a long political history, contemporary attacks on "identity" politics come into clear relief as a defense of the traditional privileges and priorities of whiteness..." (p. 67). Understanding that Whiteness developed as a response to non-Northern European

immigration and has been used to uphold racially unjust systems such as anti-immigration laws, redlining, and Jim Crow practices is the key to understanding the discourses around this nation's racial landscape (Roediger, 2005). Only by understanding the power of Whiteness and its nuances can we begin to understand how and why the racial politics of racial minority groups emerged.

Discourses that circulate within Asian America

Although there is no single way to identify as an Asian American, Asian Americans are collectively subject to common forms of discrimination and prejudice, which are largely shaped by racial discourses including that of Whiteness. While I discuss these discourses one by one, I should emphasize that they are not mutually exclusive from one another. Instead, these discourses are merely variations of how Asian Americans have been Othered (Said, 1979). In addition, I should stress that the ways Asian Americans are framed within these discourses produces the *illusion* of choice: while it appears that Asian Americans have the power to choose their subject positions in society, they are really subject to a particular racial position. Rhee (2013) writes:

The goal of the NRP [neoliberal racial project] is not to exterminate racial minorities as the absolute Other and object of white biopower. Instead, it recruits some of the formerly colonized for managed incorporation and acceptance through biopolitics. Therefore, some subjects of color are now interpellated into a neoliberal subject position and 'understand their actions as based in autonomous choice and freedom to act,' rather than seeing themselves as the objects of white biopower (p. 566).

I maintain that Asian Americans are actors with agency. Asian Americans have the ability to resist and contest discourses that are imposed on them. However, the reality is that they must still contend with the discourses, and in this way are still “objects”.

One such discourse that Asian Americans must contend with is that of assimilation. Assimilation was believed to be a way for newly arrived European immigrants to blend into American culture (Waters, 1990). Each new wave of immigrants was dubbed the lowest of the low, and they learned that the way to escape their reputation as “scum” was to learn English, shed their native customs, and become White and American. The driving forces behind wanting to be White were power, recognition, better treatment, and citizenship (Roediger, 2005). Although assimilation was supposed to apply to all immigrants, in reality, it only applied to White Europeans. While Europeans can leave their home country identity behind and blend in with White Americans, Asian Americans cannot, despite how long they have been in this country. As a result, Asian Americans are perceived as “forever foreigners” (Tuan, 1998) or “perpetual foreigners” (Wu, 2003; Roediger, 2005) because their skin is not White. Since the term American is strongly synonymous with being White, Asian Americans are deemed un-American based on their appearance.

The flipside to this coin of being unassimilable is the racial paradigm that stresses Black-White relations (Okimoto, 1994; Wu, 2003) and renders Asian Americans invisible (Lee, 2005). When Asian Americans *are* included, they are typically framed in one of two ways. The first is within an historically situated discourse, that of “yellow peril”—as dangerous and untrustworthy foreigners (Wu, 2003). This image is hardly flattering. More frequently, Asian Americans are placed along a hierarchical racial continuum that frames them as better-than Blacks but not-as-good as Whites (Kim, 1999). They are located in a third space (Kim, 1999), triangulated between

Blacks and Whites. Instead of attributing Asian American financial and academic success to immigration patterns, it has been attributed to hard work and inherent intelligence (Prashad, 2000). By heralding Asian Americans as the model minority (Tuan, 1998; Kim, 1999), other minority groups are framed as less-than. While some argue that this positive stereotype is flattering especially when compared to being a yellow peril, because Asian Americans are only given “honorary White” status through this myth, they do not actually benefit from White privilege. Instead, Asian Americans are located in between Blacks and Whites in their access to power and privilege.

In addition, by framing Asian Americans as successful achievers, their differing needs are overlooked. For example, even when students are not high-achieving, they are expected to do well in school (Wong, 1980). The essentializing power of the model minority myth has played the biggest role in the racialization and racial lumping of Asians in the United States, and has made it difficult for many struggling Asian American students to actually get the help they need from teachers (Nance, 2007). Teachers do not see past students’ Asian appearances and do not recognize that they each have different learning abilities; instead their individual needs remain invisible.

A third discourse within which Asian Americans make sense of identity is that of diversity. Here Asian Americans are made visible but only in relation to White Americans. Diversity emphasizes composition and tokenism rather than emphasizing how racism reinforces White dominance and perpetuates stereotypes. Diversity works to “individuate differences and conceal the continuation of systematic inequalities...” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 53). Within the implementation of diversity, Asian Americans and other non-White racial groups are recognized for their exotic food and holiday celebrations. The focus is on how people of color are equal even

though they are different, rather than acknowledging that the history of people of color is wrought with inequalities and discrimination. Intertwined with the discourse of diversity is Orientalism, the West's commodification of the East as a foil for itself. Orientalism marks Asians as exotic, dangerous, and mysterious—as an Other in order to center the West and justify its civility (Said, 1979). Diversity celebrates the mysteriousness of Asian culture while simultaneously discounting its history of othering Asian Americans.

The discourses of assimilation, the model minority myth, and diversity are often experienced as microaggressions. Microaggressions tend to be covert displays of racism and can occur as

- (1) microassaults, or intentionally and explicitly derogatory verbal or nonverbal attacks;
- (2) microinsults, or rude and insensitive subtle put-downs of someone's racial heritage or identity; and
- (3) microinvalidations, or remarks that diminish, dismiss, or negate the realities and histories of People of Color (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007, p. 274 as cited in Yosso et. al, 2009, p. 662)

Microaggressions are insidious because of the way they subtly undermine individuals' self-confidence and self-image (Pierce, 1969 as cited in Yosso et. al, 2009) and because of the way they negatively influence campus racial climate (Solorzano, et. al, 2000; Yosso et. al, 2009). Examples of how the discourses discussed above might manifest themselves as microaggressions include statements such as: "But Asian Americans are supposed to get good grades. Why don't you?" (model minority myth); "Where are you *really* from?" (assimilation); and "I love the Asian culture. Asians have such great food and holidays" (diversity). In these instances, Asian Americans are reduced to stereotypes and superficialities and are subtly othered.

The discourses of assimilation, the model minority myth, and diversity privilege Whiteness and it is against and within these discourses that Asian Americans construct identities. These are the constructs that shape educational spaces and influence Asian American teachers' understandings of self and how they are perceived by their students, colleagues, and administrators. Race operates to exclude Asian Americans from the mainstream, which in turn results in marginalization. It is useful to keep in mind, then, that Asian American identities are formed despite and because of these marginalizing effects. In fact, as Hall (1996) writes,

...identities are constructed through, not outside, difference. This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its *constitutive outside* that the 'positive' meaning of any term – and thus its 'identity' – can be constructed (p. 4-5).

Although racializing discourses are negative, we must recognize that it is within and against these negative influences and perceptions that Asian American identity is formed. Asian American identity would not have meaning if it were not juxtaposed against other racial identities. I will be examining how the teachers I have interviewed contest and reinforce these discourses.

Racial Identity Formation

Race is central to our understandings of each other in the United States. Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, we use race to form perceptions about others just as others see us through a racialized lens. According to Omi and Winant (1994), “the concept of race continues to play a fundamental role in structuring and representing the social world” (p. 55). Similarly, Jacobson (1998) says: “race is not just conception; it is also perception. The problem

is not merely how races are comprehended, but how they are seen” (p. 9). He also writes that “...to write about race in American culture is to exclude virtually nothing” (p. 11). Race is a sociohistorical construct that is reified through laws, classroom curricula, and through our interactions with each other.

Various scholars have theorized specifically about how the socio-political Asian American identity is formed and embodied. Psychological theories tend to focus on more linear patterns of development where individuals move from one stage to the next throughout the course of their lifetime. For example, Kim (1981, 2001) proposes that there are five stages of development to achieve. She argues that Asian Americans begin with a sense of *ethnic awareness* that can be positive or neutral depending on the extent of family involvement in ethnic activities. Next, Asian Americans move to the *White identification* stage, where they understand that they are different. This may lead to an internalization of White values and distancing oneself from Asian American values. Third, individuals experience an *Awakening to social and political consciousness* during which their self-concept is centered on the awareness of being a minority. Fourth, Asian Americans have a *Redirection to Asian American consciousness*, which involves embracing their Asian American identity and a desire to immerse themselves in their Asian American heritage. It is during this stage that individuals work through their anger towards Whites. Lastly, Asian Americans reach the stage of *Incorporation*, where they achieve a balance between being comfortable with their Asian American identity while simultaneously being comfortable with other racial groups, including Whites. Although this is a stage theory, not everyone may reach the final stage.

Other scholars take a more sociocultural and critical approach to theorizing Asian American identity. Rather than focusing on how individuals achieve different stages of

understanding in a linear fashion, these theories emphasize how a history of exclusion and marginalization has resulted in the formation of an Asian American identity and how Asian American identity is fluid rather than fixed. For example, Takaki (1989) highlights the struggles that various Asian ethnic groups have faced in the United States and how racism has prevented Asian Americans from reaching the upper echelons of leadership. Because Takaki (1989) highlights the differences among various ethnic groups, his theory is useful for understanding the variability in Asian American identity. Similarly, in her theory of Asian American Panethnicity, Espiritu (1992) discusses how difficult it has been for Asian Americans to form a pan-ethnic identity because of the many differences in culture and language that exist among various Asian ethnic communities. And yet, because White Americans insist on grouping Asian ethnic groups together under the term Asian American, Asian Americans are subject to “racial lumping”, or being recognized as one conglomerate whole. Racial lumping has resulted in the marginalization of ethnic minorities within the Asian American community. Espiritu argues that Asian Americans should embrace their pan-ethnic identity and work together to raise awareness about the inequalities that exist within and among the Asian American community.

Still other scholars emphasize that Asian American identity might mean different things to different people. Lisa Lowe’s (1991) work is useful for highlighting the heterogeneity of Asian America and the various ways that individuals come to identify as Asian American: as immigrant, native-born, working-class, middle-class, East Asian, South Asian, etc. In other words, Lowe’s (1991) understanding of Asian American identity is that it is *not* fixed, but unstable, changing, and intersectional. There is no one way to define Asian American. Lowe (1991) believes that it is important to work against an essentialist understanding of Asian America in order to counter the hegemony of the dominant White discourse which has sought to

homogenize Asian Americans into a model minority and yellow peril. Ngo's (2010) work on Lao student identities also highlights the multiplicity of Asian American student identities. She asserts that even though the teachers of Lao students perceive them as simply being either "American" or "Lao" or "Hmong" (many teachers confused Lao students with Hmong students), that these Lao students can choose between more than just an either or bicultural type of identity. Ngo argues that these students understand that although being Lao is central to part of their identities, it is not their only identifying factor. Moreover, these students show that Asian Americans don't need to place the multiple parts of their selves into discrete categories, but instead that these identities can consist of multiple layers.

Takaki (1989), Espiritu (1992), Lowe (1991), and Ngo (2010) demonstrate how dynamic and nuanced racial identity formation is and how it is largely up to the individual to determine how he/she will embody that identity. Ultimately, it is up to individuals to be agentic about how to perform being Asian American. I am interested in understanding how Asian American teachers understand being Asian American in light of competing theories on Asian American identity. I am particularly interested in how they wrestle with these different understandings of Asian American identity in order to form their own understandings of self and identity.

Asians in the United States: A Brief History

The first Asians to settle in the United States were from the Philippines. They were sailors who arrived in present-day Louisiana around 1750 (Le, 2013). In the early to mid-1800s, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and lastly Filipinos were brought to Hawaii to be employed as laborers on sugar plantations. By the 1930s, over 400,000 Chinese had immigrated to Hawaii and California to work on plantations, on the railroads, and find their fortune in the Gold Rush

(Takaki, 1989). The treatment of Asian Americans during these early years was harsh and discriminatory and was based on fears of the “yellow peril” (Wu, 2003; Kim, 1999). Plantation owners strategically hired workers from different ethnic groups in order to place them in opposition to each other, to keep wages down, and to prevent coalition-building. Asians were subject to discriminatory immigration policies including the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act, both of which restricted Asians from immigrating to the United States (Takaki, 1989). The Asian Americans who were in the United States were unable to obtain citizenship and were also denied property ownership (Takaki, 1989). Additionally, the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II and the treatment of other Asian ethnic groups are reflective of the anti-Asian sentiment that circulated during that era (Wu, 2003).

By 1965, immigration policies had relaxed which enabled Asians to immigrate to the United States in much larger numbers. And yet, despite the more prominent presence of Asian Americans, prejudices remained, though the yellow peril took a backseat to the model minority myth. The model minority myth arose at a time that strategically placed Asian Americans in opposition to Blacks and Latinos. The model minority myth framed the Civil Rights movement as a result of the failure of Blacks in the United States, rather than as liberation from White privilege and dominance. Asian Americans were placed in the middle of this racial hierarchy, triangulated as better-than-Blacks but not-as-good-as-Whites (Kim, 1999).

Today, there are more than 17.3 million Asian Americans living in the United States, which comprises 5.6% of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census, 2010). Between the 2000 and 2010 census years, the Asian American population grew by 46%, which represents the greatest growth among any major racial group in the United States. Assumptions about Asian Americans which are based on the model minority myth still remain. Although it is assumed that elite

universities are overrun by Asian Americans, in 2000, only 12.4% of Asian Americans attended 4-year private universities or colleges, while 87.6% were enrolled in public 2- or 4-year institutions. Asian Americans represent a variety of ethnic groups and economic classes. Most importantly to this study is the fact that the number of Asian American teachers is not on par with the number of Asian American students. Even in California, where 11% of students enrolled in public schools are Asian, only 5% to 7% of teachers are Asian American. I seek to highlight the experiences of this small teaching population.

Literature Review

Teacher Identities

Connelly & Clandinin (1999) propose that understanding teachers' narratives is essential to understanding how teachers' identities are connected to their work. That is, if we want to understand teachers' pedagogical and curricular decisions, it is essential to understand teachers' identities and perspectives because the identity a teacher embodies in the classroom affects how and what they will teach. According to Knowles (1992), biography and the school environment work together to inform pre-service teachers' identities, which also evolve over time as beginning teachers confront different classroom situations.

Alsop (2006) explains that learning to be a teacher involves "doing borderland discourse", a process by which pre-service and beginning teachers learn how to move from one discursive space to another, such as that from a student to a teacher. Importantly, Alsop argues that adopting a teacher identity is harder for some teachers than others because a teacher's identity is comprised of multiple components. Specifically, she says: "If a new teacher is not a member of the middle class, White, female, and heterosexual, the difficulty of the transition is

exaggerated” (p. 7). Thus, when a beginning teacher is not already part of the discursive spaces that are normalized in teaching—that is, middle-class, White, female, and heterosexual, they have more borderlands to negotiate and may encounter more struggles in the process of becoming a teacher. While White teachers struggle to understand how to incorporate different aspects of themselves and others’ perceptions of them into a cohesive teacher identity, non-White teachers must also contend with how to negotiate how others perceive them because of their race. In this case, Asian American teachers must negotiate the borderlands of being in-between Blacks and Whites, and of being American but perceived as foreigner. At the same time, Asian American teachers need to negotiate between how they view themselves and how others view them.

Drawing on work by Galindo and Olguin (1996), Clark and Flores (2001) have concluded that because race and ethnicity tend to be salient identifiers for teachers of color, it is important to examine how they live out their cultural identities in the classroom. Yet, as Takaki (1989), Espiritu (1992), Lowe (1991), and Ngo (2010) have suggested, not all teachers of color identify with their race or ethnicity in the same way, or to the same degree. Some teachers are not conscious of how their ethnic and racial identities affect their role in the classroom and instead must learn how to embrace, negotiate, and incorporate these identities into their teaching (Clark & Flores, 2001; Nyugen, 2009; Miller, 2008; Cozart, 2010). Other studies have shown that teachers of color who are aware of their racial and ethnic identities bring something unique to the classroom because they can serve as “agents of change” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, as cited in Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011). For example, teachers of color may use personal experience to connect to their students (Mensah, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Other teachers tailor their teaching to be relevant to students’ prior experience (Brown, 2009; Gomez, Rodriguez, &

Agosto, 2008; Wong, 2008). Still other teachers engage in subversive education in order to challenge the notion that students of color are lacking in ability (Arce, 2004; Farrugio, 2009; Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011; Foster, 1997; Frederick & View, 2009). Interestingly, while some scholars posit that students prefer race-matched teaching, which is when a teacher's race matches the student's race (Ochoa, 2007; Dickar, 2008), other studies find that students of color deem teachers of color as culturally suspect (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008). In all of these cases, a teacher's identity and his/her understanding of that identity is important and relevant to the happenings of the classroom.

Asian American Teachers

In their work, Sheets and Chew (2002), Newton (2003), Goodwin, Genishi, Asher, and Woo (2006), Nguyen (2009), Suzuki (1998), and Philip (2012) highlight the struggles of Asian American teachers. These studies are indicative of how racial and ethnic identity influence how teachers are perceived, and how teachers perceive the classroom. The studies lay the groundwork for my own research, which further examines Asian American teachers' experiences.

Nearly 40 percent of public school students are students of color; yet, only 10 percent of today's teachers are teachers of color (Ochoa, 2007). Asian American teachers comprise only 2% of the teaching force (NCES, 1999-2000). Rong and Preissle (1997) and Gordon (2000), conclude that the lack of Asian American teachers is largely due to personal choice. According to these scholars, Asian Americans do not go into teaching because they feel inadequate to work with "other people's children" (Delpit, 1995), they have trouble reconciling their Asian American culture with the mainstream White culture of the classroom, they fear discrimination from students, colleagues, and parents, and they face parental pressure to secure a high-status

and high-paying career. Moreover, Gordon (2000) and Rong and Preissle (1997) have found that unlike African American and Latino teachers, Asian American teachers do not see their ethnicity as playing an important role in their teaching careers, and, in fact, they feel that teaching Asian American students could be problematic because they might subconsciously favor them or treat them differently (Gordon, 2000). These scholars conclude that Asian American teachers choose not to enter the teaching profession, implying that it is their own fault that they are under-represented in the field. This is one conclusion that can be drawn from this data. Yet, it might also be possible that Asian Americans do not become teachers because racial discourse sends implicit and explicit messages to Asian Americans that they do not belong in such a role.

Sheets and Chew (2002) demonstrate how the cultural (in)competence of a teacher education program, which is supposed to prepare students to teach, can discourage Asian Americans from even entering the profession. The authors found that when Chinese American teachers were in a class with many minority teachers, such as in their multicultural education and ethnic studies courses, they were able to benefit from discussions of shared experiences and felt safe. However, in their content classes, where inclusion of multicultural or diversity issues was not mandatory and where the Chinese American teachers were in the minority, they did not find their experiences validated: they were called on to be the “Chinese/Asian voice” when other students and professors needed help understanding the Chinese population, but when they voluntarily spoke up to share their different, non-White experiences, they were ignored. More troubling was the finding that although these students were being trained to work with bilingual Chinese American students, they were not given any strategies for working with Chinese students, or any material on Chinese American children’s literature. This study shows how a

racial discourse, which reinforces that minorities' voices are unimportant, can serve to silence voices from the margins.

Asian Americans who do become teachers enter the profession because they want to make a difference, they love children, love the subjects they teach, and because of the influence of their own teachers (Goodwin et. al, 2006; Chong, 2009). Goodwin et. al also found that some parents of color, particularly Asian American parents, especially embraced Asian American teachers. However, many experience bias and racism which prompts them to (re)evaluate how their Asian American identities play a role in their teaching identities.

In a study of pre-service teachers, Newton (2003) found that both the cooperating teacher and children in the classrooms played a role in enacting racism toward the pre-service teachers by acting on and perpetuating stereotypes about Asian Americans. Goodwin et. al (2006) found that Asian American teachers felt that their abilities and knowledge were doubted by most parents and colleagues. Asian American teachers also felt silenced by students who made racist comments and by non-Asian colleagues who stereotyped them by failing to understand that Asians are not all the same. Similarly, Nguyen (2009), who studied five Vietnamese American pre-service teachers, found that one student teacher felt invisible to her fellow staff members, and another student teacher felt she had less authority with the parents because of her accented English and Asian appearance. Moreover, Rong and Preissle (1997) found that Asian American teachers believed they were too invisible and marginalized to make a curricular impact. Newton (2003), Goodwin et. al (2006), Nguyen (2009), and Rong and Preissle (1997) all demonstrate how students, parents, and colleagues of Asian American teachers have the ability to utilize racial discourse in a way that turns classrooms into unfriendly and even hostile environments for Asian Americans.

According to Suzuki (1998), whose in-depth case study of five Asian American teachers, only some Asian American teachers feel safe enough to address race in the classroom. All of the participants in his study found their Asian American identities marginalizing because of the way parents, students, or colleagues perceived them. Some teachers, for whom ethnicity and race was a very salient factor, sought to make the classroom a place that was inclusive for students of all backgrounds despite how they were treated because of their own race. Others, who were not as comfortable with the concept of race, chose not to discuss it very much in the classroom. Suzuki's study is important because it highlights the variation in how teachers identify racially and ethnically. Just because a teacher was Asian American did not mean that he/she would necessarily want to embody this identity in the classroom, or even know how to. Moreover, not all Asian American teachers in this study saw their racial/ethnic background as contributing factors to how they made curricular decisions. Suzuki's study highlights how racial discourse can influence Asian American teachers' willingness to even talk about race, and how, despite experiencing racism themselves, some choose to remain silent when it comes to working on changing the racial landscape of classroom curriculum.

Philip's (2012) findings from an instrumental case study focus on how Asian American teachers vary in their racial identifications, particularly around a "political-racial identity" (p. 1). This work affirms Suzuki's (1998) finding that only some Asian American teachers are comfortable speaking about race in the classroom. In addition, Philip's (2012) findings reveal that most Asian American teachers do not see their racial identities as having political implications; instead, for most teachers in the study, racial identity is about culture only.

Collectively, these studies show how Asian American teachers are silenced by teacher education programs and by interactions with peers, their students, and their students' parents.

These studies begin to hint at how such interactions influence teachers' identities and practices, providing a foundation for my research. My project builds on this scholarship by interrogating how identity is specifically connected to classroom practice and agency, and how Asian American teachers' identities are ambivalent, multiple, and intersecting. I seek to highlight the nuances in Asian American teachers' identities that previous studies have not.

More importantly, I will use my participants' narratives to demonstrate how Asian American teachers resist and contest the discourses and assumptions that are thrust upon them. These narratives highlight how performances and enactments of identity agentially disrupt the power dynamics of existing racial discourses. In these small yet powerful acts of resistance, Asian American teachers produce new realities for themselves—ones that do not confine them to being mere subjects of neoliberal racial projects (Rhee, 2013) that subject them to being model minorities, forever foreigners (Tuan, 1998), or markers of diversity—but realities that enable them to define what it means to be Asian American and what it means to be a teacher.

An Overview

The first part of my dissertation is comprised of two chapters, the introduction and the methodology section. In this introductory chapter, I have introduced my study, the impetus behind pursuing this research, and the study's main research questions. I have also provided a theoretical and conceptual framework for approaching this project through my discussion of discourse and identity, power, agency, performance, and performativity, Asian American discourses and theories of identity formation. Lastly, I provided a review of literature relevant to my research.

Chapter 2 provides an outline of my methodology. I discuss why I chose to use a mixed-methods approach and I also explain the details of my quantitative and qualitative studies, including sampling and recruitment of participants, my research instruments, validity, and data analysis. In addition, I explain how I use narrative analysis as methodology for interpreting my qualitative data.

The second part of the dissertation focuses on how teachers make sense of their personal identities—their racial, ethnic, gender, class, and faith identities. Chapter 3, titled “Performing Asian American Identity: Tensions and Contradictions” explores how the participants in my qualitative sample have experienced Asian American identity in the classroom, both as students and as teachers. The chapter also discusses how three Asian American teachers understand and perform their Asian American identities, particularly in light of Critical Race Theory. Integral to these performances are tensions and contradictions and I explore how the three teachers navigate these tensions. I employ thematic and performance narrative analysis in order to highlight how various aspects of these teachers’ identities are conflicting. I focus on how these conflicting aspects of identity provide a richer picture of how identity is contradictory and ambivalent (Ngo, 2010), and how this richer understanding of identity disrupts the power dynamics that suggest that Asian Americans’ identities are binary.

In Chapter 4, “Identity and Pedagogy: Intersectionality, Multiplicity, and Fluidity”, I examine how the participants in my qualitative study engage with a myriad of identities. I use intersectionality as a framework to discuss the multiplicity of identity. I also explore how three teachers’ multiple identities intersect and how their identities affect pedagogical and curricular decisions. I examine how their multiple identities are used together to orchestrate a performance

of a greater identity, and how this greater identity is reflected in their decisions concerning pedagogy and curriculum.

Part Three of my dissertation discusses how teachers view their professional identities—their identities as teachers. In Chapter 5, “Attitudes Toward Teaching: A Quantitative Analysis,” I discuss how quantitative data is used to examine how teachers view teaching. I explore how teacher characteristics, including race, and school characteristics influence teachers’ perceptions of control, support, problems, satisfaction, and their likelihood of teaching again. Chapter 5 underscores the value of using large quantitative data sets to explore teaching attitudes.

Chapter 6, titled “Attitudes Toward Teaching: A Qualitative Analysis” examines three participants’ narratives to understand how teachers perform teaching identities. I use a combination of thematic, performance, and structural narrative analysis to show how these teachers view teaching and how they embody their teaching personas. Chapters 5 and 6 focus on how teachers’ perceptions and performances of control in the classroom disrupt existing power dynamics and engage with discourses of race.

Lastly, Part Four and Chapter 7 provides concluding analyses and remarks about my study. I return to my dissertation questions and discuss how my study has enhanced my understanding of each of these topics. I also discuss limitations of my study and provide suggestions for further work.

Chapter 2

Numbers and narratives:

A mixed methods approach to studying teachers

Study Design

Although education research has historically been situated between two philosophical camps and the relationship between these camps has been contentious, there has been a move in more recent years towards combining these two worldviews and approaches through mixed-methods studies. Generally, quantitative methods have been used by postpositivist researchers, who approach research by identifying the causes of problems or phenomena. Experimental studies follow a postpositivist philosophy and are called such because postpositivism “challeng[es] the traditional notion of the absolute truth of knowledge and recognizes that we cannot be ‘positive’ about our claims of knowledge when studying the behavior and actions of humans” (Creswell, 2009, pp. 6-7). On the other hand, qualitative approaches are used by researchers who adopt a social constructivist worldview. Social constructivists believe “research [is] constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting” (Crotty, 1998, as cited in Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research is not experimental but open-ended and centers on studying participants in their natural context. The focus is less on cause and effect and more on how and why things occur.

There is also a pragmatic approach which focuses on finding solutions to problems, rather than focusing on which approach to use. This pragmatist worldview has its origins in the pragmatist philosophy espoused by John Dewey and others (Creswell, 2009). In other words, researchers such as myself, who adopt a pragmatic worldview, are concerned with finding the

best methods to understand a situation, and engage in quantitative and qualitative research as necessary to understand a given situation. While quantitative methods are useful for understanding relationships between objectively measured variables, qualitative methods are useful for understanding “the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 4, Creswell, 2009). Each methodology has its own strengths and weaknesses. By using both approaches in my study, I have been able to arrive at a better, more complete understanding of my research questions.

My study makes use of mixed-methods in order to better understand Asian American teachers’ attitudes towards teaching, the intersection of their identities, and the relationship between their identities and pedagogical and curricular decisions. More specifically, I have employed a sequential (Creswell, 2009) complementarity mixed-methods design (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989) to study my research questions. The study is sequential in nature because the qualitative data was collected after the quantitative data had already been collected. Although I did not collect both sets of data within a single study, the study is complementarity in design because the findings from the two studies examine overlapping phenomena (Greene et. al, 1989). For example, Halvorsen, Lee, & Andrade’s (2009) study analyzes data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS-K), a study sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics, and data from an ethnographic study of eight teachers and four students. Their study, which uses data from two separate studies to learn about teacher attitudes, sets the precedent for my similar approach: using findings from a secondary analysis of a large, nationally representative data set and a smaller, qualitative study to inform each other.

Combined together, quantitative and qualitative methods can be especially useful in identifying both a relationship and a mechanism behind a research problem (Lin, 1998). In this

case, using mixed-methods has helped me understand the relationships among teaching, identity, and pedagogical choices as well as the mechanism behind how identity is tied to teacher performances and pedagogical choices. Table 2.1 shows how I have used quantitative and qualitative data and methods to answer my research questions.

Table 2.1: Data collection and analysis

What do I want to know?	What kind of data will answer this question?	What kind of analysis will be used to answer this question?	What question does this answer?
Do teachers feel agentic in their classrooms?	SASS data, interview data	Regression, narrative analysis	How do Asian American teachers perceive of agency (the ability to be purposeful and reflective) in classroom spaces which function to simultaneously oppress and liberate identities?
What were student experiences like for teachers?	Interview data	Narrative analysis	How do Asian American teachers negotiate the multiple aspects of their identities within the larger framework of racial Discourse?
How do teachers self-identify?	SASS data, demographic interview data	Descriptive statistical methods, coding	
How do teachers negotiate different identities?	Interview data	Narrative analysis	
What do teachers enjoy teaching?	Interview data	Coding	How do these identities influence curricular and pedagogical decisions?
How do teachers view themselves in the classroom?	Interview data	Narrative analysis	
How do teachers relate to students?	Interview data	Narrative analysis	

Quantitative Study: What Do The Numbers Tell Us?

Methodology

My quantitative study provides a basis for understanding Asian American teachers' attitudes toward teaching. I have used survey questions from the National Center for Educational Statistics' 2007-08 *Schools and Staffing Survey* (SASS) to assess how teachers view teaching. This data set was the most recent data available when I began my analysis. This nationally representative data set, which uses a stratified probability sample design, provides a fairly

comprehensive view of teacher attitudes toward decision making and teaching and provides generalizable findings on teacher attitudes.

Sampling and Recruitment of Participants

The SASS is designed to capture a wide range of data on public and private schools. It consists of data from and on school districts, principals, teachers, and school library media centers. I will only be using data from the public school teacher questionnaires. The sampling frame for the public school SASS is based on the Common Core of Data school survey. SASS uses a stratified probability sample design in order to ensure that the samples contain sufficient numbers for estimates. Certain types of public schools were oversampled in order to be able to make national-, regional-, and state-level elementary, secondary, and combined public school estimates (Keigher, 2009). This oversampling ensured that the survey results would have generalizability (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The sampling frame for teachers was based on the lists of teachers provided by the sampled schools. Each survey year, at least one but no more than 20 teachers per school were sampled, with an average of 3 to 8 teachers per school. The survey data was collected using a mailed survey. Because a high response rate was necessary for this study (the response rate was 84% for public school teachers), follow-up procedures included phone calls and also in-person follow-up.

Research Instrument and Validity

Although data was collected on school districts, schools, principals, teachers, and librarians, I am only analyzing responses to the public school teacher questionnaires for 2007-08. The SASS data has been validated by its own team of researchers. Each survey collected for the

SASS was individually checked by a computer program before being deemed eligible for analysis as part of the study.

Over the years of study, the teacher questionnaires have remained fairly similar, though some items have been added, others deleted, and some reworded (nces.ed.gov). Topics on the 2007-08 questionnaire cover teachers' education and training, certification, field assignments, experience, workload, perceptions and attitudes about teaching, job mobility, and working conditions. The questionnaire also covers "grade range of teaching certification, use of electronic communications with parents, and out-of-pocket expenses for school supplies" (nces.ed.gov). Though the questionnaire is quite comprehensive, my analysis focuses on how teachers assess their perceptions and attitudes about teaching.

Data Analysis

I used Stata for my analysis. I began by editing the syntax in the do file that was provided by the NCES. After getting the syntax to run properly so I could import the data into Stata, I recoded all variables to account for missing data and generated indicator variables for my independent variables. My independent variables are based on demographic data from the 2007-08 Public School Teacher section of the SASS. Specifically, I look at teacher race; other teacher characteristics which include gender, degree, subject/grade level, and years of teaching experience; and school characteristics which include urbanicity, region, class size, percent of minority students, and percent of minority teachers. In the early stages of analysis, I included Title 1 eligibility as a school characteristic but found that it did not have a significant or substantive effect on the models' outcomes. Thus, it is not included in the analysis which I present here.

I use items that measure teachers' perceptions toward decision making and teaching as my dependent variables (see Table 2.2). These items are grouped on the 2007-08 SASS questionnaire into categories that focus on (1) sense of control; (2) sense of support; (3) perception of problems; (4) feelings of satisfaction; and (5) attitude toward teaching again. Since the first four categories include multiple variables, I created one variable for each of these categories by using factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha. First, I used factor analysis to see how the various questions hang together. I created a factor based on all of the variables with Eigenvalues > 4. I also used Cronbach's alpha to examine the internal consistency of these variables whose Eigenvalues were > 4. The reliability coefficient was quite high (> .7), confirming that these newly created variables for control, support, perception of problems, and feelings of satisfaction were reliable.

Table 2.2: Definitions of variables

Variable Name	Description	Questions from 2007-2008 Survey
Control	The degree to which a teacher believes they have control in their classroom. (1= no control; 4=a great deal of control)	54. a-f
Support	The degree to which a teacher agrees feeling supported by the administration, parents, and other staff and faculty (1=strongly agree; 4=strongly disagree)	55. a-q
Problem	The degree to which a teacher believes factors are problems in their school (1=serious problem; 4=not a problem)	56. a-j
Satisfied	The degree to which a teacher agrees they are satisfied with their school (1=strongly agree; 4=strongly disagree)	57. a-f
Teach Again	Teacher reports whether they would become a teacher if given a second chance (1=certainly would become a teacher; 5=certainly would not become a teacher)	58

Once I created a factor out of these separate variables, I was able to begin my analysis. I began by running descriptive statistics in order to see how teaching is perceived of broadly. Next, I used multiple and logistic regression to examine the relationship between my independent and dependent variables. I present these findings from my descriptive and regression analysis in chapter 5. While my quantitative analysis has helped me determine that certain teacher characteristics predict certain teacher attitudes, my qualitative inquiry has helped me uncover how these components are related. In addition, my qualitative work aids in understanding how Asian American teachers negotiate the tensions and intersections in performing identities within the larger framework of racial discourse.

Qualitative Study: What Do Teachers Show Us?

Methodology

This multiple case study builds on the findings in my quantitative section and is designed to explore the nuances of Asian American teachers' experiences in a way that a quantitative study cannot. The study is comprised of semi-structured, one-on-one interviews (Creswell, 2009; Lofland, Snow, Anderson & Lofland, 2006) with Asian American teachers. I recognize that my participants' experiences are grounded within their individual classrooms and schools. At the same time, because I am interested in their own schooling experiences as well as their current teaching experiences and because I am concerned with how these experiences are linked to racial discourses, I assume that my participants' stories are not bound to one location. And thus, I have chosen to use interviewing as my qualitative methodological tool because it is the best way to study "those aspects of everyday experience that are transinstitutional" (p. 19, Lofland et. al, 2006).

I employed narrative inquiry to *invite* Asian American teachers to tell their stories (Chase, 2005). According to Berger and Quinney (2005), "...lived experience can be understood through the stories people tell about it. Stories are ways not merely of telling others about ourselves but of constructing our identities, of finding purpose and meaning in our lives" (p. 5). Thus, my interviews are not meant to merely elicit reports and facts about teaching; instead, I used the interviews to learn about how teachers think about and engage in identity formation and production through their teaching. The interviews have yielded "rich, thick description[s]" (p. 191, Creswell, 2009) about my participants' worlds and how they understand and make meaning of their lives and their teaching.

Sampling and Recruitment of Participants

One of the benefits of quantitative analysis is that if the survey and data collection are designed in a way to minimize coverage error, sampling error, measurement error, and nonresponse error, we can generalize the results of the survey to the larger population (Salant & Dillman, 1994; Braverman, 1996; and Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Qualitative analysis does not work the same way. Instead of sampling for generalizability with my interviews, my goal was to yield results that were contextual (Creswell, 2009) and detailed (Patton, 2001). It was unlikely that any type of random sampling would yield the number of Asian American teachers that would be useful for my study (just as random sampling was not useful for the purposes of the SASS because the study sought to make representative claims based on certain school characteristics).

Thus, instead of using random sampling, I have used purposive sampling (Patton, 2002) to sample for a range of characteristics (Weiss, 1994; Small, 2009) among my participants. The

SASS does not prescribe parameters for how to define Asian American (instead, teachers are asked to self-identify as White, Black, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or American Indian/Alaska Native). For the purposes of my qualitative study, I use the U.S. Census definition to define Asian American as someone who is of Asian ancestry: “A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam” (U.S. Census). In addition, because I wanted to focus on teachers who had a lot experience with the American educational system, I limited my participants to those who were either born in the U.S. or had immigrated to the U.S. by the time they were 10 years old. My sampling range includes sex, ethnicity, location, personal schooling experience, school urbanicity, grade level, subject taught, school type, and proportion of Asian Americans teachers and students at the school. As Edin and Lein (1997) write, “although [my] sample [is] neither random nor representative, it [is] heterogeneous.” In speaking with a variety of teachers, and in turn sequentially adding more cases to my study (Small, 2009), my goal was to reach saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Small, 2009) and capture enough different experiences to tell a rich story about Asian American teacher experiences concerning identity and teaching attitudes.

In recruiting participants, I first identified an initial group of teachers based on my own personal contacts in various Asian American communities (Lofland et. al, 2006). Then, I used snowball sampling (Small, 2009, Weiss, 1994) in order to identify more participants. Weiss (1994) encourages researchers to use comparison groups for studies. Using comparison groups is something I would consider for future studies, but because so few studies have been done on the experiences of Asian American teachers, I view this research study as an opportunity to gather initial data. My quantitative analysis has included teachers from different races in order

compare attitudes among teachers from different racial groups, but my intention for my qualitative study was to focus on the attitudes and experiences of Asian American teachers only in order to present focused and in-depth data on one group (Patton, 2001).

The Participants

My target sample size for my qualitative study was originally 20 teachers. I ended up interviewing 25 teachers and following up with 15 of them. My initial interviews lasted between 90 minutes and two hours. After speaking to all 25 teachers and reviewing the interviews, I noticed that some of them spoke very little about race while others presented very nuanced narratives of race. I decided that I wanted to speak further with these 15 participants who spoke about race in a nuanced way because I wanted to further understand how their understandings of race were contradictory and intersectional. These follow-up interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. Tables 2.3 and 2.4 provide an overview of my participants' demographic information. In summary, I interviewed 6 male and 19 female teachers; 7 suburban teachers and 18 urban teachers; 17 teachers from the Northeast, 2 teachers from the South, 2 teachers from California, and 2 teachers from the South.

Table 2.3: Case-study participants by school characteristics

***Note: school characteristics are self-reported**

Name	Gender	Follow-up Interview	School location	Urbanicity	SES of students	High prop. of AA students	High prop. of AA teachers
Christy	F	yes	Queens, New York	Urban	middle	yes	no
Mary	F	yes	Northern New Jersey/Manhattan, New York	Suburban/Urban	high/mixed	no	no
Ruby	F	yes	Boston, Massachusetts	Urban	low	yes	yes
Bounmy	F	yes	Minneapolis, Minnesota	Urban	low	no	no
Jessi	F	yes	New Orleans, Louisiana	Urban	low	yes	no
Ming	M		Manhattan, New York	Urban	middle to high	yes	yes
Lily	F	yes	Manhattan, New York	Urban	middle to high	no	no
Joanna	F	yes	Brooklyn, New York	Urban	low	no	no
Jordan	M		Manhattan, New York	Urban	low	yes	no
Nicole	F	yes	San Jose, California	Urban	low	no	no
Erika	F	yes	Manhattan, New York	Urban	low	yes	yes
Anna	F	yes	Manhattan, New York	Urban	low	yes	yes
Angela	F		Albany, New York	Urban	low to middle	no	no
Mai-Li	F	yes	Manhattan, New York	Urban	low	yes	yes
John	M		Manhattan, New York	Urban	low	yes	yes
Betty	F	yes	San Jose, California	Suburban	low to high	no	no
Stephanie	F	yes	Rockland County, New York	Suburban	middle	no	no
Jae	M		Manhattan, New York	Urban	low	yes	yes
Heather	F		Central New Jersey	Suburban	middle	no	no
Vanessa	F		Queens, New York	Urban	low	no	no
Simon	M	yes	Chicago, Illinois	Urban	low	yes	yes
Susan	F		Manhattan, New York	Urban	low	yes	yes
Gabriella	F		Long Island, New York	Suburban	middle to high	no	no
Joseph	M	yes	Rockland County, New York	Suburban	middle to high	no	no
Nikhita	F		Raleigh, North Carolina	Suburban		no	no

Table 2.4: Case-study participants by personal characteristics

Name	Born in U.S.	Age of arrival to U.S. (if not born here)	Ethnicity	Self-identifies as	Grade level/subject taught
Christy	no	< 1	Chinese	Chinese	elementary/special ed
Mary	no	< 1	Chinese	Chinese from Taiwan	high school/English
Ruby	yes	born in U.S.	Taiwanese/ Chinese	Asian American	middle school/Humanities
Bounmy	no	2	Laotian	Asian American	high school/math
Jessi	yes	born in U.S.	Chinese	Chinese	middle school/math
Ming	no	3	Taiwanese	Taiwanese American or Asian American	pre-school
Lily	yes	born in U.S.	Chinese	Chinese American	elementary
Joanna	no	6	Chinese	Asian	middle school/science
Jordan	yes	born in U.S.	Chinese	Chinese	middle school/science
Nicole	no	7	Chinese	Chinese	high school/science
Erika	yes	born in U.S.	Chinese	Chinese American or Asian American	elementary/special ed
Anna	yes	born in U.S.	Chinese	Chinese American	elementary/special ed
Angela	no	7	Chinese	Asian American	high school/science
Mai-Li	no	4	Vietnamese	Vietnamese American	elementary/special ed
John	no	2	Chinese	Asian American/Chinese American	elementary
Betty	no	10	Vietnamese	Vietnamese	high school/English
Stephanie	yes	born in U.S.	Chinese	Asian or Chinese	middle school/Spanish and ESL
Jae	no	3	Korean	Asian	elementary school/science
Heather	yes	born in U.S.	Chinese	Chinese or Asian American	middle school/math
Vanessa	yes	born in U.S.	Filipino	Asian or Filipino	elementary
Simon	no	2	Chinese	Chinese	elementary/ESL
Susan	yes	born in U.S.	Chinese	Chinese but American born	elementary/phys ed
Gabriella	yes	born in U.S.	Chinese	Chinese	elementary
Joseph	yes	born in U.S.	Chinese	Asian American or Chinese American	elementary
Nikhita	no	5	Indian	Indian American	middle/Communications, Social Studies, Science, Advisory

Research Instruments

As Patton (2001) says, “in qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the instrument.” Thus, in this study, I was one of the research instruments. The “credibility” (Patton, 2001) of my study is largely dependent on my research and analysis skills. Guba and Lincoln (1981) note that the variability in skill of the researcher can result in a “loss in rigor” but at the same time, “the flexibility, insight, and ability to build on tacit knowledge” are strengths of the “human instrument” (p. 113 as cited in Patton, 2001). Thus, although human research instruments have their downfalls, they are also unparalleled in their ability to produce sound research.

I used a semi-structured interview protocol to guide my interviews. During the course of the interview, I asked teachers to share some demographic information with me. In addition, we spoke about their experiences with schooling when they were students, their current classroom experiences as teachers, their relationships with students, administrators, and fellow teachers, how they think about lesson planning, and what they have learned as teachers. I also used a semi-structured interview protocol to conduct my follow-up interviews. Both interview guides served as prompts and helped to ensure that all interviews covered the same topics. At the same time, the semi-structured format allowed me to use prompts to follow up with participants about each of their individual experiences (Lechuga, 2012).

My participants lived in various cities across the United States. I was also pregnant during the time of my data collection. Because of these two circumstances, I decided that the best and most efficient way to interview them given their varying geographic locations was to conduct my interviews via phone (Novik, 2008), Skype, Google video chat, and Facetime, depending on what my participants had available to them. When possible, I conducted the interviews via a video platform so that my participant and I could have a face-to-face

conversation and I could pay attention to visual cues. Being able to conduct the interviews in person would have been ideal for this reason. At the same time, I wondered whether there could be advantages to *not* conducting an interview in person. For example, there were times when I had questions for my participants and they were able to look up something online and send me a link with information through the chat box that was included with our video chat platform. This immediate access to information and integrated written/visual/audio platform was reflective of the dynamic web-based relationships that technology affords us these days. I have also wondered whether the phone interviews (the ones where my participant and I could not see each other) allowed my participants to change their performances of identity by opening up more because not seeing me made the interview less confrontational. In other words, it may have allowed those participants who are usually more reticent in person to speak more freely because the conventions of a typical conversation (e.g., having to think about body language) were removed. In fact, Lechuga (2011) makes the case that telephone interviews may encourage respondents to share more because of the added layer of anonymity. Nonetheless, while I realize that there is no substitute for in-person interviews, using technology in this way proved useful and enabled me to interview teachers from many different parts of the United States rather than just one location (Hanna, 2012). I am confident that conducting my interviews via Skype, FaceTime, Google video chat and over the phone has provided me with a plethora of rich data, similar to the data I would have been able to gather in person.

Validity and Role of Researcher

My goal in conducting interviews was not to produce data that is generalizable. I cannot measure the validity of my study according to its ability to speak for all Asian American

teachers. What I can do to guarantee that my study is valid is to ensure my data is accurate, examine my positionality as researcher, and make a strong case for my interpretation. To this end, I have asked my participants to help me “member check” my analysis to ensure that I’ve captured their thoughts and words correctly and have used “thick description” in writing up my results in order to contextualize my findings (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Creswell, 2009). The memos that I have written about my codes has helped to ensure that I am coding all the transcripts the same way, which in turn has helped to ensure that my analysis is consistent (Creswell, 2009). It has also been useful to examine how similar my participants’ stories are to each other in order to determine whether my study has what Maxwell (2005) refers to as “internal generalizability”. In fact, there are similarities among the participants’ experiences which I discuss in the coding charts below and also in subsequent analysis chapters.

Addressing my own bias and insider status has helped me understand the lens through which I have interpreted my findings (Creswell, 2009). Wells (2011) mentions the importance of accounting for reflexivity in narrative research. As a fellow Asian American and former teacher, it is true that my experience may have many commonalities with those of my participants. In fact, one of the reasons I engaged with this project was to see whether other Asian American teachers have experiences that resonate with mine. Thus, reflexivity as “introspection” is an element that I have examined carefully in analyzing my data. It has been important to make a conscious effort not to superimpose my own experiences on those of my participants. As Maxwell (2005) points out: “Qualitative research is not primarily concerned with eliminating *variance* between researchers in the values and expectations they bring to the study, with understanding how a *particular* researcher’s values and expectations influence the conduct and conclusions of the study...and avoiding the negative consequences” (p. 108). At the same time,

Riessman (2008) points out that it is important to recognize that narrative inquiry is dialogic in nature, and that this dialogue between interviewer and participant is part of what shapes an interview and the narrative that arises from it. In other words, it is okay for me to insert myself into the research (after all, according to Patton (2001), I am the key research instrument); I simply have to be mindful of my effects on the data collection and interpretation process. In addition, it has been useful to think about how my role has affected my participants' interviews/performances.

Lastly, I ensure validity by making a strong argument for my interpretation and conclusions. Polkinghorne (2007) says that validation in narrative research is an argumentative process whereby the researcher must convince readers that the data is strong enough to support a claim that “can serve as a basis for understanding of and action in the human realm” (476). Thus, in the following chapters, I have taken care to craft a presentation and interpretation of my participants' words in a way that demonstrates the relevance of their experiences.

Data Analysis

The Beginnings: Transcription & Coding

My qualitative data consists of the audio-recorded interviews, the transcriptions from the interviews, and also notes on the interviews and other memos that I have drafted throughout the interviewing and analysis process. My process of analysis has been ongoing (Creswell, 2009) and iterative (Seidel, 1998). I transcribed my interviews as they were conducted which allowed me to review past interviews as I was simultaneously conducting new interviews. Reviewing and transcribing my interviews as they were conducted allowed me to begin my analysis as early as possible (Lofland et. al, 2006). It also aided in my multiple-case study sampling method

because seeing how themes emerged (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 1995) helped me determine who (based on teacher characteristics) to interview next, and what new data I needed collect (Seidel, 1998).

I began the coding process by creating codes based on my research questions and my interview topics (see Table 2.4). Next, I used the “line-by-line coding” that Charmaz (1995) or “open coding” that Lofland et. al (2006) discuss in order to “see the familiar in new light” (Charmaz, 1995). After I used line-by-line coding on several interview transcripts, I found that my original codes could be divided into two categories. I considered the codes that were based on my dissertation questions to be main codes. The categories for my interview questions became codes while the codes based on my interview questions became sub-codes. At this point, I was able to come up with additional appropriate heuristic codes (Seidel, 1998) to summarize and represent my noticings. Some of these codes fell under the categories I had originally created and became sub-codes, while others became new codes. I used all these codes to analyze the remaining transcripts while also leaving room for new codes to emerge (see Table 2.5).

Though my data can be categorized by the themes in Table 2.5, there are so many codes that it is difficult to see the proverbial forest for the trees. I knew that my codes table needed to be simplified. Additionally, after using line-by-line coding, I noticed that many codes co-occurred with other codes. So, as Charmaz (1995) suggests, I made comparisons between “data, incidents, contexts and concepts” in order to understand the “threads and patterns” in my data (Seidel, 1998). Throughout this analysis process, I have used memos to help me create and think about my codes, think about my interview process, and think through what I have noticed: how various parts of a single interview fit together, and also how the themes across different interviews come together (Charmaz, 1995; Lofland et. al., 2006). This led me to create Table 2.6

so I could see the most prominent codes that emerged from the data, their frequencies, and their co-occurring codes. Examining this table helped me realize that by focusing on the four main codes in Table 2.6, I could also talk about many of the other codes in Table 2.5 because they co-occurred with each other. I have decided to organize two of my findings chapters around the main codes in Table 2.6: teacher attitudes and teacher control; and the intersection of identities and their influence on pedagogical and curricular decisions. As I was creating Table 2.6, I noticed that many participants' responses could be coded in multiple ways based on the identity codes. As a result, I have decided to focus a third chapter on the contradictions of identity.

I have created a diagram (Figure 2.1) to aid in describing what my coding process was like. The hourglass diagram describes how I went from thinking about my research broadly, to thinking about it specifically, and then back to thinking about it broadly in order to categorize findings into three chapters. The image of sand moving through an hourglass also reflects how my thinking and data analysis went through various stages before reaching an endpoint.

Figure 2.1: Coding Process

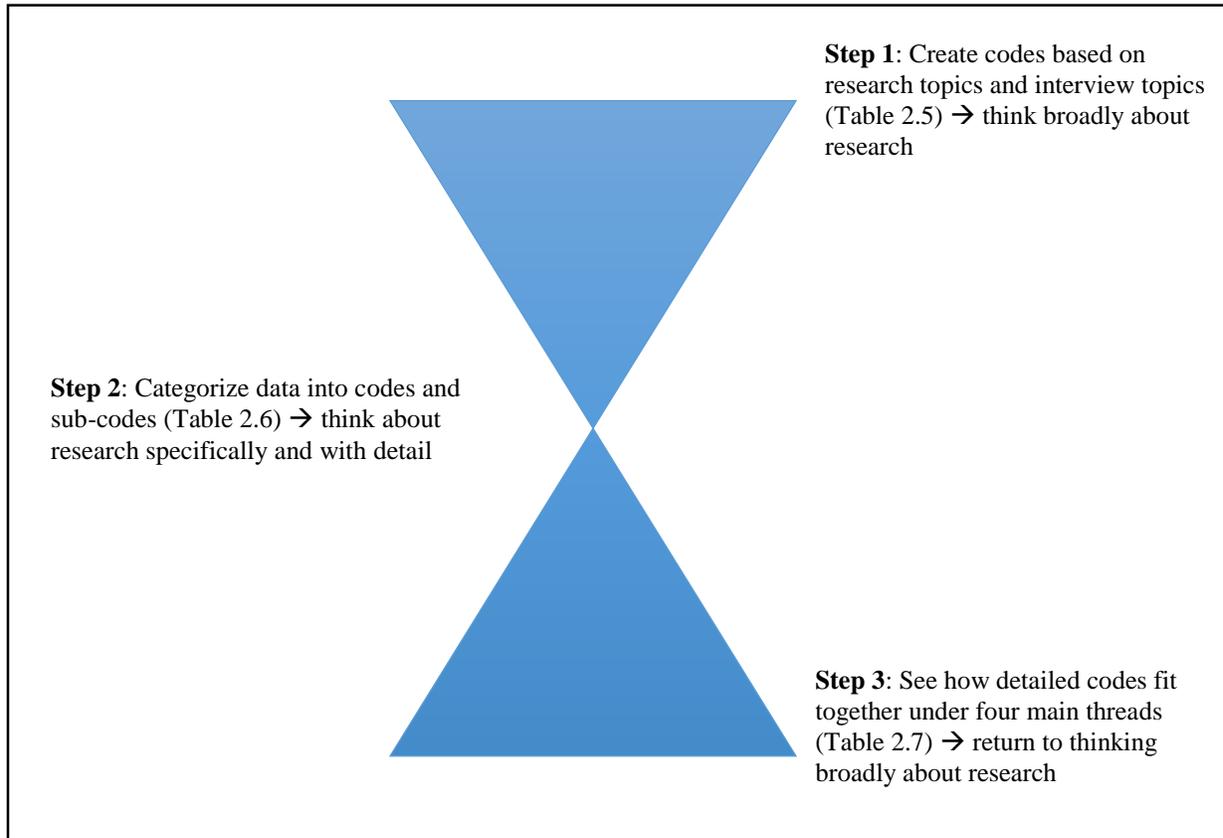


Table 2.5: Beginning Codes

Basis for Code		Code
Codes based on research questions	How do Asian American teachers negotiate the multiple aspects of their identities within the larger framework of racial Discourse?	Agency
	How do Asian American teachers negotiate the multiple aspects of their identities within the larger framework of racial Discourse?	Identity
		Intersection of identities
	How do these identities influence curricular and pedagogical decisions?	Pedagogical choices Curricular choices
Codes based on interview topics		
	Experience with schooling as a student	Positive school memories Negative school memories
	Experience with schooling as a teacher	Worst part of teaching Best part of teaching Motivation to teach Classroom management Standards & testing
	School relationships	Relationship with students Relationship with administrators Relationship with students' parents Relationship with other teachers

Table 2.6: Expanded Codes

Main Code	Sub-codes
Agency	To find another job In relationships with other staff Is affected by standards & testing To reflect on job Is limited by education's agenda For students to make a difference To advocate for students To change or influence curricula Limited by administration To influence students To change the system To assess students
Identity	I feel like I don't belong I've been asked "Where are you from?" I feel like I do belong I'm a cultural broker I have a cultural connection with students I'm a cultural rolemodel I'm not sure I want to identify that way I defy stereotypes I'm a social justice advocate I view myself/have been told that I'm Whitewashed My gender identity is important to me My professional identity is important to me My class identity is important to me My family identity is important to me My religious identity is important to me My age identity influences how I'm seen My racial identity is important to me My ethnic identity is important to me
Intersection of identities	
Pedagogical choices	My focus is on the students I'm firm and I set routines I make learning applicable to life I model what we're learning for the students It's important to me to look out for "minority" students Student-centered learning is important to me

	<p>It's important to have a personal relationship with my students I teach here so I can give back</p>
Curricular choices	<p>I end up planning on a daily basis Lessons should be experiential When students are interested in the material, it's easier to teach I try to teach curriculum that reflects students' backgrounds I want to or I do engage in collaborative planning</p>
Experience with schooling as a student	<p>Positive school memories Negative school memories</p>
Experience with schooling as a teacher	<p>Worst part of teaching Best part of teaching Motivation to teach Classroom management Standards & testing Hesitance to stay in teaching School structure Teaching pressures Perception of students Perception from students Reflections/lessons learned</p>
School relationships	<p>Relationship with students Relationship with administrators Relationship with students' parents Relationship with other teachers</p>
Inequity in school	<p>Inequity Discrimination</p>

Table 2.7: Codes with Frequencies and Co-Occurring Codes

Main Code	Sub-codes	Frequency	Co-Occurring Codes
Agency	To find another job	3	
	In relationships with other staff	2	
	Is affected by standards & testing	4	
	To reflect on job	1	
	Is limited by education's agenda	2	
	For students to make a difference	1	pedagogical choices, reflections, motivation to teach, lessons learned,
	To advocate for students	1	teaching pressures, school structure, age, curricular choices, worst part of
	To change or influence curricula	4	teaching, hesistance to stay in
	Limited by administration	5	teaching, standards and testing, relationship with students,
	To influence students	1	relationship with other teachers,
	To change the system	1	classroom management,
	To assess students	1	discrimination, social justice advocate
Identity	I feel like I don't belong	12	
	I've been asked "Where are you from?"	5	
	I feel like I do belong		
	I'm a cultural broker	11	
	I have a cultural connection with students	16	
	I'm a cultural rolemodel	6	
	I'm not sure I want to identify that way	6	
	I defy stereotypes	7	
	I'm a social justice advocate	8	
	I view myself/have been told that I'm Whitewashed	7	
	My gender identity is important to me	15	motivation to teach, relationship with students, reflections, teacher
	My professional identity is important to me	8	background, discrimination, relationships with students' parents,
	My class identity is important to me	11	inequity, positive memories of school, motivation to teach,
	My family identity is important to me	7	pedagogical choices

	My religious identity is important to me	12	
	My age identity influences how I'm seen	1	
	My racial identity is important to me	10	
	My ethnic identity is important to me	18	
Pedagogical choices	My focus is on the students	7	
	I'm firm and I set routines	6	
	I make learning applicable to life	6	Age, agency, class, classroom management, cultural connection,
	I model what we're learning for the students	3	curricular decision, discrimination, gender, identity, inequity, intersection of identities, lessons learned,
	It's important to me to look out for "minority" students	4	motivation to teach, perception from students, perception of students, race,
	Student-centered learning is important to me	7	reflections, relationship with administrators, relationship with students, relationship with students' parents, religion, social justice
	It's important to have a personal relationship with my students	5	advocate, standards & testing, relationships with other teachers
	I teach here so I can give back	5	
Curricular choices	I end up planning on a daily basis	4	
	Lessons should be experiential	4	
	When students are interested in the material, it's easier to teach	5	Age, agency, class, cultural connection, gender, inequity, pedagogical decision, race, relationship with students, relationship with students' parents,
	I try to teach curriculum that reflects students' backgrounds	4	social justice advocate, standards & testing, relationship with other teachers
	I want to or I do engage in collaborative planning	3	

Seeing the bigger picture: Engaging in Narrative Analysis

As I continued to review these tables and the transcripts, I realized that each participant's story is worthy of more attention than single excerpted quotations. In addition, there are nuances in my participants' stories. For example, there are some participants whose short statements contradict what they have shown me through their longer stories. These discrepancies would go unnoticed unless I examined each story as a whole. In addition, because I am interested in how my participants resist and/or reify racial discourses, it is useful to utilize a method of analysis that focuses on and scrutinizes motive behind language. Thus, although my coding has informed how I am organizing my findings and I draw on coding themes to discuss general findings, I also employ narrative analysis to analyze the interviews.

Narrative analysis is useful in examining detail, uncovering why stories are told in a certain way, and how the telling leads to identity construction. Reismann (2008) explains: "Narrative analysts interrogate intention and language--*how* and *why* incidents are storied, not simply the content to which language refers" (p. 11). Wortham (2001) adds that narratives are used to construct the self. According to Reismann (2008), there are several different ways to approach narrative analysis, including thematic analysis, structural analysis, and dialogic/performance analysis. "Thematic and structural approaches interrogate 'what' is spoken and 'how' [and] the dialogic/performative approach asks 'who' an utterance may be directed to, 'when,' and 'why,' that is, for what purposes" (Reismann, 2008, p. 105). Wortham (2001) emphasizes that the dialogic nature of narrative is especially important to attend to since the telling of a narrative includes both the narrator and an audience and the discourses that the narrator is speaking to.

I make use of thematic, structural, and dialogic/performance analysis in analyzing my interviews. One thing I have also kept in mind is the context in which these interviews were conducted—my participants volunteered to be interviewed as teachers, by a former teacher. It is important to think about their responses within the context of teaching and while considering their classroom identities. This is the “figured world” in which they likely situated themselves during our interview.

In addition to using Reismann (2008) and Wortham’s (2001) work as guides, I also draw on the work of Jackson and Mazzei (2011) to think “with theory” about my participants’ narratives. Jackson and Mazzei argue that coding yields mechanistic and fragmented analysis. Instead, they push for a type of holistic analysis that centers around “thinking with theory” and interrogating how using a theory or theorist can help in conceptualizing what is happening in a narrative. In other words, Jackson and Mazzei’s (2011) work reminds me to keep larger, theoretical frameworks at the forefront of my analysis.

In the next three chapters, I present my quantitative and qualitative findings from my study. Each chapter begins with quantitative findings before moving into a narrative analysis of three teachers’ stories.

PART TWO
TEACHERS' PERSONAL IDENTITIES

Chapter 3

Performing Asian American Identity:

Tensions and Contradictions

What is “Asian American” and what does it mean to be Asian American? As I already noted in chapter 1, notions of identity span beyond simplistic definitions. In this chapter, I examine how teachers identify differently in terms of their Asian American identities. I explore how Asian American teachers negotiate multiple meanings of Asian American identity and take up unique combinations of these identities. In addition, I explore the tensions in embodying racial identity and the (un)conscious decisions to shift identities to suit various situations. Moreover, I examine how identity can be contradictory.

This chapter provides a review and extension of the literature on Asian American identity from Chapter 1. I also show Critical Race Theory (CRT) can be used as a framework for understanding race and identity. I provide a thematic overview of how different teachers conceptualize and perform their Asian American identities. From there, I provide vignettes and narratives of three teachers, Joanna, Erika, Betty, teachers who demonstrate how performing identity involves drawing on contradictory discourses. In this chapter, I focus on using thematic narrative analysis to examine the teachers’ stories. I conclude by examining the teachers’ stories through the lens of Critical Race Theory.

Defining Asian American Identity

Asian American identity is interpreted and defined in a variety of ways. To reiterate from Chapter 1, Takaki (1989) posits that Asian American identity is varied because Asian American

identity is often tied to ethnic identity. Because various Asian ethnic groups identify differently, variations in racial identity also exist.

The term *Asian American* arose in the 1960s as a way to politically unite individuals from various Asian ethnic groups (Philips, 2012). Following the lead of their Black counterparts and the Black power movement, Asian Americans joined the effort to free themselves from racial oppression, and united to form a “Yellow power” movement (Espiritu, 1992). Most of the Asian Americans involved in this movement were college students whose newly awakened political identities stood in stark contrast, and at times, opposition, to older and/or lower-income Asian Americans. Espiritu (1992) has reinforced that uniting under a pan-ethnic umbrella is the only way to form a stronger front for coalition-building. Espiritu’s answer to “racial lumping” is to raise awareness and build political clout.

Although *Asian American* has its origins in politics, recent understandings of *Asian American* tend to focus more on cultural affiliations and common backgrounds and experiences (Philips, 2012). In addition, Lowe (1991) and Ngo (2010) suggest that Asian American identity is more than a political identity. They discuss how Asian Americans resist stereotypes through means other than political action. Lowe (1991) insists Asian American identity is heterogeneous, hybrid, and multiple. She argues that Asian American identity must be conceptualized as unstable in order to resist racism and hegemony. Lowe (1991) believes that an unfixed definition of identity is the only way to counter a dominant White discourse that seeks to essentialize Asian Americans. Ngo (2010) explains that identity need not fall into “either-or” categories that emphasize dualities. Instead, Ngo argues that identity can be multiple and contradictory. Ngo (2010) uses the term “ambivalence” to describe “the continual fluctuations, contradictions, incompleteness, and uncertainty of identity” (p. 12).

It is Ngo's theory of ambivalence that is most helpful in understand the teachers' stories that I tell in the narrative section. Ngo's understanding of identity is useful in comprehending how identity can be unresolved and contradictory without being negative. Ngo (2010) writes: "Ambivalence allows us to emphasize the ways that identity is conflictual, partial, and unresolved" (p. 99).

There is no definitive meaning assigned to *Asian American* as it is multiple and evolving. Because Asian American identity cannot be essentialized, there is wide variation in how individuals decide to perform their Asian American identities. Being Asian American is an identity that is constructed both within and against discourses assigned to Asian Americans and also discourses of Whiteness. In the following section, I discuss how Critical Race Theory can help in further understanding how *Asian American* is constructed within and against Whiteness.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged from legal studies as a method for examining the effects of race, racism, and power on interpretations of the law (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT supports the idea that racism is ordinary, endemic, and normalized. This complicates how Asian Americans experience and interpret race and racialization exactly because it asks us to inquire how the discourses of the model minority, assimilation, and diversity function to normalize and uphold Whiteness. CRT problematizes racial hierarchies and disrupts Whiteness. CRT is especially useful in understanding Asian Americans because it provides a more nuanced understanding of a group that is monolithically perceived as academically and financially

successful and because it dispels the belief that Asian Americans do not experience racism (Buenavista, Jayakumar, & Misa-Escalante, 2009; Newton, 2003).

Furthermore, when CRT adopts an Asian American focus, it can help expose how legal history has sustained the very structures that continue to mark Asian Americans as Others. As previously mentioned in Chapter 1, the discourse of Whiteness has been used to uphold laws that perpetuate racial injustice. While Asian Exclusion no longer exists, Asian Americans continue to be legally discriminated against in other ways. One of these ways is through language. Court decisions that privilege English dominance in classroom instruction, on voting ballots, and on official legal documents (Ancheta, 1998) relegate Asian Americans whose dominant language is not English to second-class citizens. Moreover, Asian Americans have been discriminated against because of their accents. While accent discrimination is recognized as a form of national origin discrimination, it has not stopped employees from being denied jobs which require them to communicate effectively in their jobs, such as in the *Fragante v. City and County of Honolulu* case of 1989 (Ancheta, 1998). Similarly, LatCrit scholars have shown that language and accents are used to discriminate against Latinos/as (Cameron, 1997; Perez Huber 2011). As long as the courts continue to uphold decisions that privilege English in schools, on legal documents and privilege a certain form of spoken English in workplaces, Asian Americans will continue to experience discrimination through legally legitimate means. In arguing for the importance of Critical Asian American Legal Studies Chang (1993; 1999) writes that only by confronting this nativistic racism will Asian Americans be able to overcome the perception that they are perpetual foreigners.

Aside from being used to examine the law, since its origin, CRT has been adopted by other fields including education. In the field of education, CRT is used to expose the persistence racial hegemony persists in the educational system (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT is also acknowledges that the experiences of people of color are authentic. Counter-story telling is the act of telling narratives that reveal how marginalized people experience racial discrimination (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Matias, 2012). Counter-story telling is one way to put CRT into practice (Solorzano & Yoss, 2002; Matias, 2012). In other words, as Solorzano & Yosso (2002) explain: “The counter-story is also a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege. Counter-stories can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform” (p. 32). In telling my participants’ stories and their encounters and understands about race and identity, I am telling their counter-stories and using their narratives to further the understanding of how Asian Americans are subject to but also resist marginalization within the educational system.

Being Asian American: A Thematic Summary

Stories of what it means to be Asian American were woven throughout my interviews—as participants recalled schooling experiences as students, as they related schooling experiences as teachers, and in explanation of how they racially and ethnically identified¹. (Participants also told anecdotes of schooling experiences that did not pertain directly to race, but those answers are beyond the scope of what this dissertation addresses and therefore will not be covered.)

When participants spoke about being Asian American and about their ethnic identities, many of

¹ Although race and ethnicity are defined differently, I use the terms together because my participants used them interchangeably (e.g., one participant, Joanna, switches among referring to herself as Chinese, Asian, and Asian American in her interview).

them recalled incidents of discrimination, which took the form of both overt racism and microaggressions. As discussed in chapter 1, microaggressions tend to be covert displays of racism and can occur as microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations.

Intertwined with these examples and stories of discrimination were the racial discourses of the model minority stereotype, assimilation, and diversity. The participants' descriptions of being racialized as Asian American can be summarized into five themes: (1) White dominance; (2) the forever foreigner myth; (3) the model minority myth; (4) racial lumping; and (5) Asian pride. Participants identified a range of experiences with being Asian American, which highlights the complexity around how individuals can reify and resist racial discourses. These themes are drawn from the codes in Chapter 2's tables 2.5, 2.6, and 2.7. I want to note that these five themes are not mutually exclusive. Instead, one might even think of White dominance as being a product of the forever foreigner myth and the model minority myth, or vice versa. However, I am highlighting each theme separately in order to highlight how each has been experienced by my participants.

(1) White dominance: "I thought I was White-washed"

Several participants discussed how they wanted to be White instead of Asian while growing up. They reflected on feeling different and understanding, even as children, that being White was, according to Joseph, the "norm". In addition, participants recalled feeling less-than because of their Asian appearance and cultural practices. For example, Nicole says of her childhood experience: "...I was really nervous going into elementary school because I didn't want my friends to know I had just moved from the Philippines, have this, maybe still speak English funny, and I didn't think of that as me wanting to be White persay but it totally was!"

Even as a second-grader, Nicole understood and called upon discourses of assimilation, immigration, and citizenship to evaluate her self-worth. Nicole understood that being an Asian immigrant and not having a White American accent could warrant ridicule and relegate her to second-class citizen status. Nicole had already internalized at a very young age the detrimental effects of nativistic racism that privileged English dominant speakers. Bounmy also reflects:

I mean, I think every Asian American at one point if you grew up in a community that's not majority Asian...wanted to be a part of the majority. So I remember as young as grade school that I wanted to be Caucasian, I wanted to be like my Caucasian friends, I wanted to have the blonde hair and the blue eyes, the big eyes but as I got older, I would say, middle school, my group of friends went uh, all changed. So the more I surrounded myself with Asian Americans, it became less of an obvious, you know, thing cause all of us were Asian and female and we had so much in common that it didn't matter anymore.

Although Bounmy initially desired to have physical traits that are associated with White American notions of beauty--blonde hair and blue eyes, the more Bounmy saw herself reflected in her group of peers, the more comfortable she became in her own skin. Erika's experience was similar to Bounmy's. As she grew older, she became less uncomfortable with the fact that she enjoyed her Asian heritage and culture. Yet, as a child, she would hide the fact that she watched Chinese movies and spoke Chinese at home. She sought out White friends at school in order to resist being Asian. Erika's embarrassment over being Chinese resulted in her choosing to interact with White and non-Asian peers, which resulted in what she considered being "White-washed". The commonality of this theme is reflective of the degree to which Asian Americans wrestle with the discourse of assimilation and its emphasis on Whiteness as the norm (Okiihiro, 1994; Lee, 2005). It is also evidence of how the discourse of and emphasis on Whiteness as the

norm can result in internalized oppression. Internalized oppression transpires when individuals adopt and accept the prejudices of their oppressor (Freire, 1974; Osajima, 1991; Sherover-Marcuse, 1986 as cited in Osajima, 1993). Nicole, Bounmy, and Erika accepted that being White was better than being Asian, and in turn, adopted viewpoints or acted in ways that minimized their Asian heritage. Interestingly, while Bounmy positioned herself in order to be surrounded by Asian American peers, which in turned affirmed her racial identity in a positive manner, Erika sought out White peers to hide among so that she could deny her racial identity. In both cases, Bounmy and Erika teachers made conscious decisions as adolescents to perform a particular racial identity.

(2) The forever foreigner myth: “No, no really, where do you come from?”

Participants also provided examples of how their American identities are questioned. As discussed in chapter 1, and in the theme above, the discourse of assimilation so heavily emphasizes Whiteness as the norm and standard that non-Whites, including Asian Americans, are not universally accepted as American. Instead, as Tuan (1998) argues, Asian Americans are “forever foreigners”, despite how many generations they have lived in the United States. Participants noted that their students and students’ parents often assumed that they were foreign, and were surprised to learn that the participants did not fall into stereotypical notions of being foreigners.

The participants had different reactions to their students’ and parents’ comments and questions. Anna recounts conversations with her students:

[When they are] asking me where do I come from and when I say I’m American, they ask me ‘no, no., no, really, where do you come from?’ like those are just, just curious, they

don't understand how can I be American when I look different, that sort of thing.... I don't think it's negative, I don't interpret any of it negatively, I think it's more of a teaching point.

Anna is an elementary school teacher who believes her students' questions are innocent. Anna's assumption is that once she corrects her students' thinking, they will no longer make this mistake. Anna draws on the discourse that children are innocent and teachable in order to understand and respond to these questions. She sees herself as someone who can change their thinking and she welcomes these opportunities as "teaching point[s]". Joseph, another elementary school teacher, tries a different approach to his student's questioning:

...a boy came up to me and said, "if a Chinese person has a baby with an American person, what kind of eyes do they get?" and I said to them, "well, I'm American, so if I married a Chinese person, it would have my eyes" and he's like, "no, that's not what I mean" and I'm like, "but that's what you're saying" so we had like a big conversation about it and he just could not distinguish like how like what the word American really means. Everybody else in the class was trying to talk it through to him, he just couldn't. That was interesting.

Joseph also views his student's question as a teachable moment, but his approach is different from Anna's. Drawing on the discourse that racism is structural (McLaren, 1994), Joseph asks the student to question his language and phrasing by saying "but that's what you're saying". Joseph tries to get his student to interrogate his own assumptions about what it means to be American by challenging his notion that "Chinese" is not American. Joseph also enlists the help of students who understand the difference between ethnicity and nationality to help this student understand that people of Chinese descent can be American too. In our interview, Joseph

mentioned that one of his identities was as a “socially conscious” individual. Joseph’s response to this student’s question is a reflection of this identity and desire to help others become socially conscious as well.

A third teacher has yet another response. Angela’s opinion concerning her students’ parents’ assumptions is more systemic, as she notes that these types of assumptions are likely to occur among a certain group of people. She explains:

Yes [laughter] they were surprised when I called their parents and I, I guess, my Asian accent kind of falls out when I speak too fast. But when I am on the phone I’m a little bit, I slow down so I sound more American, so they were surprised that I sound like a White person...And they are surprised that my husband is not Asian. [laughter] And so, all this you see more in upstate New York than downstate.

Contrary to the parents’ beliefs, Angela can speak English like a “White person”. Those with foreign accents are often alienated and assumed to be foreign citizens. (Olsen, 2008). Angela attributes the parents’ assumptions to where they live, positing that assumptions are systemic rather than linked to individuals. In addition, it is interesting that Angela ends her story by laughing. In discussing her work with Indian American youth, Hansen (forthcoming) draws on work by Lensmire (2011) and suggests that laughter:

disrupt[s] conversations that frame them [the youth] as silent victims of the discourses that frame their identities and that instead highlight how youth and their communities use humor in powerful, transformative ways to resist and talk back to inequities

Perhaps laughter is utilized by Angela as an anti-oppressive tool, to counter the parents’ racist assumptions. The fact that she laughs in her narration of the incident, in the performance of identity is significant. Although the parents’ assumptions may have come as a shock and may

have hurt Angela when they first occurred, she is able to counter the power of their words and actions through her own words and actions, through her re-telling of this story. By laughing, Angela asserts her Asian American identity as belonging in her community.

(3) The model minority myth: “I think it kind of startled the students”

Participants also explained what it was like to be the “model minority” (Lee, 2009) and to be aware that their abilities were judged and confined by a discourse that stereotyped them in this way. Among perceptions associated with the model minority myth are innate intelligence, academic, professional, and financial success (Tuan, 1998), and being “good” (i.e., quiet, polite, and complacent) (Lee, 2009). One teacher, Heather, recounted how her principal perceived her based on this stereotype.

I think when I was first hired, my principal was like basically outright told me that he was really concerned because I was this petite Asian girl who um, maybe seemed a little soft spoken or whatever. And I guess months later after he had seen me in action and had conversations with me, you know, he made clear that that was no longer a concern and I had exceeded his expectations in that way...Um, there was another time when he basically called me in...and he came out and he said, “I want you to recruit more Asian teachers for me” [laughter]. And I said, “what?”

This anecdote is an example of the double-bind Asian American teachers can find themselves in because of the thinking that is dominated by stereotypes and discourses. Despite Heather’s successful attempt to resist being viewed as the stereotypical “soft-spoken” and “petite Asian girl” through her enactment of a competent teacher identity, she finds herself subject to another stereotype. Although Heather counters her principal’s request by questioning him: “what?”, she

is unable to convince him that his assumptions are incorrect and racist. Again, laughter follows the retelling of being subject to oppressive discourses, presumably to resist her principal's racist assumptions (Hansen, forthcoming). Heather's encounter is a reminder that identity involves negotiating between the identity individuals put on themselves and the identities that are cast onto them by others (Ngo, 2010).

Another teacher explains what it is like to be Asian American and teach a non-stereotypical subject. Stephanie describes her students' reactions to the fact that she is Asian American and a Spanish teacher: "I think it kind of startled the students because I was teaching Spanish and they kind of had suspicions that I was Asian or you know, something like that like they definitely knew more or less that I wasn't Spanish." One assumption that comes with the model minority myth is that Asian Americans excel in math and science (Lee, 2009). According to this myth, Asian Americans are not traditionally strong in other subjects. Thus, the fact that Stephanie teaches Spanish is "startling" for her students because they expect experts in Spanish to be of Latino/a or European Spanish descent. It should be noted that were Stephanie White, her expertise in Spanish likely would not be questioned, regardless of whether her White heritage were of Latino/a or Spanish descent. Because White is the norm (Lee, 2005), White teachers' expertise in any subject area generally is not questioned. However, because teaching Spanish, other foreign languages, and any non-STEM subject is not traditionally associated with Asian American expertise, Stephanie's legitimacy as a Spanish teacher is questioned, and her race is regarded as a novelty.

As a result, regardless of whether Stephanie chooses to actively dispel stereotypes, her presence as an Asian American Spanish teacher becomes instrumental in dispelling her students' stereotypes that Asian American teachers are only experts in STEM fields. Stephanie's Asian

American body is marked as Other, but by teaching Spanish, she causes students to question their assumptions.

(4) Racial lumping: “Are you related to Bruce Lee?”

While the model minority myth homogenizes Asian Americans by ascribing, among other qualities, academic success to them (Lee, 2009), racial lumping occurs when “an imposed category ignores subgroup boundaries, lumping together diverse peoples in a single, expanded “ethnic” framework” (Espiritu, 1992, p. 6). In this case, Asian Americans are not viewed as Chinese or Korean, men or women, middle-class, or low-income; they are simply viewed as one entity that lacks variation.

Jae, a Korean American teacher, explains how he has been racially lumped by students. Although Jae currently teaches mostly Chinese American students and thus fits in racially (though not ethnically) at his current school, when he taught non-Asian students, their curiosity about his appearance resulted in (perhaps unintentionally) racist remarks: “I used to teach predominantly African American and Latino students who would touch my hair, do all sorts of interesting things, ‘are you related to Bruce Lee, are you related to Jet Li,’ that sort of thing.” Due to the fact that Asian Americans are seen as a homogenous whole, Jae’s elementary school-aged students believed he must be related to, know, or be like Bruce Lee and Jet Li, two martial arts icons. It doesn’t matter that Jae is Korean, and not Chinese like Bruce Lee or Jet Li. Because he is Asian, his students assumed he was the same as these other Asian figures they had seen on television. It is also interesting to note what Jae says his former students did to his hair—they touched it, presumably because it was different from theirs. African Americans have long been the object of curiosity because of their hair, and questions about an African American person’s

hair are regarded as microaggressions because of the othering nature of such a question (Lester, 2000). Thus, it is fascinating that Asian hair is the object of African American and Latino students' curiosity. When Jae's students touch his hair, they (however unintentionally) reappropriate a racist taboo that is usually thrust upon them by thrusting it on someone else. In addition, when they ask if he is related to Bruce Lee and Jet Li, they call upon the discourse of racial lumping to categorize and make sense of him.

Another teacher explained how being Indian American caused confusion to those who believed South Asian Indians were the same as Native American "Indians." This teacher was also subject to racial lumping, but based on others' perceptions of Native American Indians, rather than South Asian Indians. Nikhita explained how when she was teaching in DC, many of her students and students' parents did not understand her ethnic background and would often refer to Native Americans if the subject of race or background arose. In addition, Nikhita recalls an incident from childhood where she was subject to racism based on the assumption that she was Native American:

So one of the most distinct memories I have from childhood is when we, my sister was also at my school, um, and she's 4 years older than me so it was really early on. And we used to walk home and there were these two brothers, the ___ brothers that used to walk home behind us because they lived like a few blocks from our house. And there would be these days when they decided to bully us. And they would walk home going "haw, haw, haw, haw" and like saying that we were going home to our teepee. And it was horrible, you know, and we would like, we would be like, "we don't live in a teepee! We live in a house! You can come to our house, we're not far away." And they did that for a really long time and um, years later, I was at a party in high school and I saw this kid. Who had

been doing that to me. The brother who was my age _____. And he recognized me right away and he was like, “oh I am so sorry. I was just a kid, like, he remembered what he did.” And he was like, “oh I’m so glad I saw you, I feel awful and like, it was an awful thing to do.” And I was like, “it’s okay”. It was fine but it was amazing to me that for both of us it was such a strong memory.

Nikhita’s encounter is worth exploring for a couple of reasons. First, she and her sister were subject to racism based on racial lumping—her schoolmates believed that all “Indians” lived in teepees and that this is what Nikhita and her sister should be known for—where they “lived” rather than who they were. In addition, it is interesting that when Nikhita’s classmate apologizes to her and she forgives him, she explains her “amazement” that it was such a strong memory. In Nikhita’s recollection of the event, although these boys’ deeds were “horrible” at the time, they are easily forgiven and forgotten years later. Moreover, she is surprised that both of them remember this incident so strongly. Osajima (1993) purports that Asian Americans often ignore racist encounters as a “strategy for survival” (p. 88). Perhaps Nikhita did not realize how strong this memory was for her because of her decision to ignore it in order to survive.

(5) Asian pride: “it was really empowering to the Asian”

Despite the discrimination—overt or subtle—that participants have experienced in the school and classroom, they also reported instances in which they felt proud of their racial and ethnic backgrounds. For these participants, being surrounded by other Asian Americans was the key to being able to embrace their identities. Betty discussed what it was like to attend a university where she was the majority:

I went to UCLA so it was really empowering to the Asian because it was like the predominant group. So I never felt like I never needed to differentiate from the norm right, because it felt nice to walk through campus and know that most of the people there look like you, have your experience, and even if it's not the typical Asian American experience, you can relate stories...whatever the anecdote is.

Betty's experience is telling of how different the racial climate of an educational institution can be for students of color when they are not in the minority. Betty's experience alludes to the fact that the culture around Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) privilege Whiteness and can be emotionally damaging to students of color (Chow, in press; Gusa, 2010). And yet, when students of color are the majority, the institutional culture changes drastically.

Nicole, whose earlier anecdote about moving to the U.S. during elementary school and not wanting her classmates to know she was an immigrant, is contrasted here when she describes being able to surround herself with Asian American classmates and friends:

...my mom was like you started out having all these White friends and in high school and college, suddenly all your friends are Asian. Like, yeah, that was weird. But I was really comfortable. Not that I didn't want to be friends with White people but it just, there was a level of comfort that came with being with people of the same background and um, and so I was just like, okay.

Nicole's choice to spend time with people who looked like her validated and affirmed her identity. Solorzano et. al (2000) and Yosso et. al (2009) discuss how Latino and African American college students seek out other Latino and African American students in order to create positive environments in which to gather. Called "counter-spaces," these environments provide emotional relief from being in the minority by providing students with spaces where they

are in the majority. Both Betty and Nicole's experiences are evidence of how counter-spaces become safe spaces for Asian American students. In addition, in both cases, Betty and Nicole are only able to enact their Asian pride when they feel it is safe to do so.

In addition, participants also utilized their Asian pride to resist the dominance of Whiteness. For example, Jessi recalls:

And some of my White classmates said, "I've tried this bubble tea thing and I don't understand why there's something you have to chew in it so like I don't understand why they're all about bubble tea and I think it's really dumb." And I actually felt really like, that was a microaggression to me because it's so, it's such a part of Asian American culture right? I felt very uncomfortable with that statement and now I know it's because they're inadvertently saying that this part of um, this part of your, I guess your immigrant culture is stupid to me.

For Jessi, this insult to her culture's food transcends mere food preferences. Instead, as Jessi states, she views this statement as an insult to her entire culture. Jessi's defense of bubble tea is an act of standing up for her Asian American pride and against White dominance. It is through adopting Asian pride that participants found ways to resist White notions that Asian Americans were only model minorities, rather than fully integrated citizens of the United States.

Being Asian American: Three teachers' Stories

At this point, I turn to focusing on the narratives of three teachers to gain a better understanding of how Asian American teachers perform Asian American identities. I utilize thematic and performance narrative analysis to understand how teachers are identifying and how they (at times) perform identities in contradictory ways. The narrative excerpts I present are

thematically arranged in order to show how common ideas about identity recur throughout the narratives and also to show the contrast among the discourses used to perform these identities. I use performance narrative analysis because “It interrogates how talk among speakers is interactively (dialogically) produced and performed as narrative” (Reismann, 2008). That is, not only am I concerned with what these three teachers are saying, I am attentive to “who” the teachers are talking to (in this case, me—the interviewer), “when” in time they are saying these things, and “for what purposes” (Reismann, 2008).

Joanna

Joanna teaches middle school science in Brooklyn, New York. She had been at this school for six years by the time we spoke the first time. The students are from low-income and middle-class families. Some of the students live quite close to the school while others are bused in or take the subway from neighborhoods that are farther away. The student population is racially diverse and is almost equally divided among White, Asian American, Latino, and African American groups.

Originally from Hong Kong, Joanna came to the United States at the age of six. She spent the first six years of school in ESL classes. She shares a lot about her ESL experience, which I will highlight through her excerpts. Joanna does not speak a lot about being Asian American and is one of the teachers who says that her racial and ethnic identities do not matter. I argue that her performance of identity not mattering is actually a way to counter some of the negative childhood experiences she had with schooling.

I employ thematic analysis to examine “the what” (Reismann, 2008) of Joanna’s narrative but I also pay close attention to *how* she says things. A textual analysis is important to

understanding the subtleties of what Joanna says. Much of my analysis of Joanna's narrative is exploring how and why she identifies as thinking that her identity doesn't matter, and how this performance of ethnic identity itself is contradictory and filled with tension.

Joanna and I attempted to conduct our first interview via Skype, but our internet connections would not cooperate. After our screens froze a second time, we switched to speaking on the phone. The follow-up interview with Joanna was also conducted on the phone. Joanna's manner of speaking reflected her thoughtful attitude. She did not speak quickly or loudly, but in a steady voice, often pausing to collect her thoughts.

Joanna's narrative is an interesting one because her performance as the teacher whose ethnic identity doesn't matter contradicts the fact that her identity actually does matter. I use highlights from the interview to provide a picture of why she is conflicted in identifying as Asian American.

It doesn't matter

In the following excerpt, Joanna shares her thoughts on identity and being Asian American.

C: Okay. And what identities are important to you?...

J: Umm, I would tell them I'm a teacher, uh, a science teacher, yeah. And I don't know if ethnicity would be the first thing I'd tell them, I don't know why.

C: That's okay, would you mention it at all?

J: Um, I don't think it matters?

During our follow-up interview, I ask Joanna what being Asian American or Chinese American meant to her. She replies: *Um, I'm not sure...I really just think about it as just a geographical sense.* At first glance, it appears that Joanna is drawing on discourses of assimilation or diversity

to perform an identity that “doesn’t matter”. In other words, her statement that being Chinese doesn’t matter could be drawn from the idea that an “American” identity is more important than preserving an ethnic or racial identity. In addition, a diversity-based view of race and ethnicity celebrates equality and sameness rather than difference. Joanna could also be drawing on this discourse in performing an ethnic identity as something that “doesn’t matter”.

However, closer examination of Joanna’s statements reveals that being Chinese might, in fact, be important to her. She says *she does not know* why ethnicity would *not* be the first thing she would tell someone about her identity. This uncertainty hints at the fact that being from Hong Kong and being Chinese are important, and she is puzzled as to why she herself would not mention it. In addition, Joanna says “Um, I don’t think it matters?” in the form of a question rather than a statement, adding to the sense of uncertainty around choosing not to state this more openly. The way Joanna expresses these statements contradict the statements themselves. While she performs an identity that “doesn’t matter” through her words, she performs an identity that *does* matter through how she speaks those words. I argue that Joanna’s performance as a teacher whose ethnic identity does not matter is actually an attempt at performing the identity of an authentic and legitimate teacher. The following excerpts highlight Joanna’s performance of an authentic science teacher.

Performing teacher legitimacy

Joanna discusses how her academic career as a student might have been different if she were born in the United States:

I know like when I was younger, when I first got here, I was put in ESL. I think that if I was BORN here, I wouldn’t be in ESL. So and yeah, I think, I would feel different and I

keep thinking that if I was BORN here I would have had chances to do well in English, um, at least English would be a native language that I wouldn't have to struggle with for the first five years that I was in school. ...And if I was BORN here, I don't know if I would have the same problem.

The word “born” has been capitalized to show how it is repeated three times during this section of the narrative. Joanna’s emphasis on being born in Hong Kong solidifies her performance as a former non-native speaker. It invites me, the interviewer, to empathize with her in her five years of struggling through school. Being in ESL is not solely an Asian American experience, but Joanna’s Asian American experience has been shaped by and defined by her ESL experience. Like other ESL students, Joanna’s school experience has been fraught with struggles with learning how to speak English and proving her academic talents to her teachers (Olsen, 2008).

Joanna’s experience as an ESL student might be the reason she is hesitant to say being Chinese American is important to her—because being Chinese American and being in ESL are what limited her opportunities as a student. In other words, when Joanna says that she does not think it matters that she is Chinese American, it is an opportunity to perform an identity she did not have the freedom to perform as a student. Back then, she could only perform the role of the ESL student, the immigrant. Her limited English proficiency relegated her to this role. Now, however, she has the opportunity to be a fluent English-speaking and a legitimate science teacher. Joanna is not saying that her Chinese American identity does not matter at all. Rather, she is saying that she does not think it matters in this particular context or “figured world” of the classroom. Joanna emphasizes that her identity does not matter because being Chinese American should not matter in her ability to perform the identity of a good student or in this case, a good teacher.

The next excerpt further highlights Joanna's enactment of a teacher who defies students' expectation of Asian Americans:

...because the students don't have a lot of Asian teachers in their lives. And a lot of the students even now, they...they are, I feel they're a little bit prejudiced sometimes, of Asians. And especially for them to be their teacher. I mean, they usually see Asian people in a take-out place, in a supermarket, and in some pictures about scientists or doctors on TV. They don't, they don't really um, come in contact with them on a daily basis. Like at least talking to them, having conversations with them, you, you know, I don't think my students don't do that often enough or see that often enough. So I think the first thing that they see on the first day is like, woah, she's going to be my teacher? Okay....uh, does she know how to speak English? I think that's one of the first things that they might um...

C: *So have they ever asked you that before?*

J: *No, they're afraid to. Because I'm usually the first person to say anything to them, so you know, okay, uh, she's knows English, okay, so let's not make fun of her. I think that's their mentality.*

C: *Why do you think that's what they're thinking?*

J: *Um, it's just because the lack of--they don't, they don't usually uh, like I said, they don't usually have conversations with Asian people unless they're taking their order for something to eat, ---- so, yeah.*

C: *And so that's who they think they're like dealing with in the classroom?*

J: *Right, and uh they usually see Asian people and they're always smiling at them and they always think that they don't understand English. I don't know why, even with adults-*

-I see this in the city whenever a non-Asian person comes up to a Chinese person, they usually raise their voice a little bit, talk a little slower, that's what I see a lot of, I don't know.

Joanna is keenly aware of her ethnic and racial identity and its possible effects on her students' perceptions of her. Significantly, however, Joanna's students have never explicitly told her that they are prejudiced against Asian Americans or assume that she does not speak English. Instead, this is Joanna's interpretation of their perception--that her students view her in stereotypical ways even though they have never said anything like this. Joanna interpretation is drawn from discourses of the Asian American as the "forever foreigner" (Tuan, 1998). Joanna's statements reveal a consciousness of being Asian American and an understanding of its importance, contradictory to the fact that earlier she said her identity did not "matter." Joanna's presence at her school may even help to defy stereotypes and challenge students' assumptions about Asian Americans, which in turn would mean that her ethnic identity does matter very much.

And yet, Joanna's approach toward defying these stereotypes is not to address them directly. She does not confront what she believes to be her students' assumptions. Instead, by speaking first when they begin class on the first day, she proves her legitimacy as a science teacher and her authenticity as an American by uttering unaccented American English. Joanna's performance of teacher legitimacy is enacted simply through how she speaks to her students. By adopting an Americanized English accent, Joanna calls on and ventriloquizes (Bakhtin, as cited in Holland et. al, 1998) the voice of the legitimate, American teacher. Again, it is *how* Joanna speaks that undergirds her performance of a teacher whose ethnic identity does, in fact, matter.

Joanna, the legitimate teacher

Joanna says that her ethnicity doesn't matter. However, the way Joanna speaks to me contradicts her actual words: first through her doubtful, questioning way of saying "I don't think it matters?" and subsequently by ventriloquizing (Bakhtin, as cited in Holland et. al, 1998) the voice of an Americanized teacher. Joanna's speech results in the enactment of an Asian American teacher whose ethnicity matters very much to her identity.

Similarly, Joanna's performance of being a legitimate teacher is reliant on her unmaking of Asian American identity. It is her denial of her ethnic identity that reinforces the importance of this attribute. Joanna downplays the importance of being Chinese, but when she explains how she believes her students perceive her, this unimportance is only highlighted further. This stark contrast is an invitation to Joanna's audience to further investigate why she performs the role of a teacher whose identity does not matter and through a close analysis of Joanna's language and narrative, it becomes apparent that there is a reason Joanna chooses a contradictory identification.

Joanna chooses to discount her ethnic and racial identity for a specific reason. Joanna's decision to reject being classified this way in order to resist being stereotyped by discursive structures reflect her purpose and agency in (un)making her Asian American identity. Joanna de-emphasis of her ethnic and racial identity in the classroom is her way of performing a Chinese and Asian American identity. Understanding Joanna in light of these contradictory identifications sheds light on the complexities around being Asian American.

Finally, examining Joanna's performance through CRT is revealing. One of the tenets of CRT is that racism is ordinary and endemic (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Yosso et. al, 2009; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). However, Joanna does not mention racism at all, despite the fact that she has witnessed racist microaggressions against Asians in New York City and believes she is

subject to these microaggressions as well. Perhaps acknowledging that racism is ordinary would give Joanna a different perspective on performing an identity where ethnicity “does not matter.” It is possible that if Joanna embraced the ordinary nature of what she believes to be her students’ assumptions, she might be able to ignore the assumptions and perform dual roles of legitimate teacher and visible Asian American.

Erika

Erika has taught for two years in New York City. Previous to becoming certified, she taught English for one year in Taiwan and then became an assistant teacher in New York City. She currently teaches in Chinatown, New York, on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Most of Erika’s students are Chinese and low-income. Erika teaches 1st grade and is the special education teacher in an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classroom. An ICT classroom consists of a special education teacher, a general education teacher, and special education and general education students.

Erika was born and raised in New York City. I have known Erika for over ten years. She and I used to go to the same church. During our interview, she shared about growing up as an immigrant child and also what it was like to attend predominantly White schools and be one of a few Asian students. Erika considers herself a cultural role-model for her students. In describing herself, her relationship with her students, and her pedagogy, Erika called on discourses of racial authenticity, class, and teacher expectations to perform her identity. I discuss how Erika draws on competing versions of these discourses to present herself.

Erika takes pride in being Chinese and in being able to relate to her Chinese students and parents because of their common background and experiences. She calls on these commonalities

and her knowledge of the language and cultural practices to perform her identity as the authentically Chinese teacher. She juxtaposes her authentically Chinese identity with that of others who do not possess the same language abilities or knowledge of cultural practices. Erika also draws on competing class identities and discourses of inclusion to story herself as a middle-class teacher and an inclusive teacher.

“It’s really helpful that I’m Chinese”

One of the first things Erika talked about during our interview was how being of the same ethnicity as many of her students helps her relate to her students and helps her students relate to her.

Excerpt 1: Yeah, I think it’s a lot easier for me to, for one thing, I understand my kids um, trouble that the Caucasian or non-Chinese people in our school....I mean even last year, my co-teacher was Chinese but she didn’t seem very Chinese at all. I also relate to kids in a very different way. So when they speak in Chinese, I speak back to them, and they kind of really embrace that because like, oh Miss Erika knows what we’re saying and like they’re like, you know, like ___ in the classroom, we went on a trip on Friday and they were all speaking Chinese because that’s when I let them—I usually don’t let them talk in Chinese in class—but they were like singing Chinese songs and I related to that because I understood and I did that growing up too. And also it really helps with the parents cause most um, most parents are very comfortable talking to me, at least the Chinese parents do because I can speak Chinese and like, at parent-teacher conferences, I don’t need a translator and if anything ever comes up, I can go directly to the parent instead of going

to the parent-coordinator...I think it's really helpful that I'm Chinese and working with a Chinese population.

Erika's additional thoughts on communicating with her students' parents:

Excerpt 2: Because Chinese don't understand unless you specifically tell them like there are certain ways that he [the White principal] tries to explain it but they still don't get it so you have to very like, harsh with them and tell them exactly what they need to do and they get that. And I think it's just because the communication style.

In these excerpts, Erika discusses her relationship with her students, students' parents, and knowledge of cultural practices in order to present herself as someone who is authentically Chinese. Not only is she of Chinese descent, but she also speaks the language, knows children's songs, and understands the need to be direct with Chinese parents. All these attributes are indicators, in her opinion, of what it means to be Chinese and what it takes to be a cultural role-model and cultural broker for her students and their parents. She also explains how her principal, who is White, has trouble communicating with the parents because he doesn't have the same communication style as the parents. As an authentically Chinese teacher, she is able to intervene—unlike some other teachers who may be Chinese but not “authentically” Chinese.

For example, Erika mentions that her co-teacher “[doesn't] seem very Chinese at all”. It is helpful to take a look at another passage from Erika's interview to understand why she might say this:

...well, I thought I was White-washed...I guess I made it a point to only have White friends or like non-Asian friends at school. And that's my idea of being White-washed because I was like, “Oh, I don't want to hang out with Chinese people.”...But I think college changed a lot of that for me a lot. I think I was more comfortable with being

Chinese or being Asian because I just a lot of people at [my college] are like Asian, a lot of Asians, all my friends that I made were Asian and Chinese. And I learned to embrace the fact that it was okay to love my culture. And then I went to China and completely feel in love with China and then I was like, okay. I'm not so ashamed of like speaking Chinese anymore or like telling people that I watch Chinese dramas or that I really want to move to Asia one day, things like that.

For many years, Erika performed what she calls a “White-washed” identity. She stopped spending time with Chinese people and immersing herself in the Chinese culture. It was not until she reached college that she found an environment where she was no longer in the minority, where she “embraced” the Chinese culture by speaking the language and watching Chinese dramas. While some definitions of ethnic and racial identity center on cultural traits and practices, other definitions include political consciousness and affiliations (Philips, 2011; Espiritu, 1992). For Erika, it is the cultural practices—speaking Chinese, watching Chinese shows—that are what make her authentically Chinese, and these practices stand in stark contrast to her co-teacher’s cultural performance, which Erika describes below:

Oh, well she doesn't speak Chinese very well, or well she speaks basic Cantonese, um, but she also married a non-Asian, um, so I think she has more of a Western influence because her, her family, I mean, she comes from a Chinese family but she married into like a, I think they're Italian or Irish family and they're also a very liberal family too so you know they...they don't really celebrate many Chinese traditions and holidays actually so.

Because Erika’s performance of a Chinese identity is reliant upon doing Chinese things, by this definition, her co-teacher, who does not speak Cantonese well, who has married a “non-Asian”

and who does not “celebrate many Chinese traditions and holidays” can only be performing a non-Chinese identity. Erika’s co-teacher is likely enacting her own definition of what it is to be Chinese or Chinese American, but Erika’s definition of Chinese authenticity leaves no room for multiple performances of a Chinese identity. In fact, it is this casting of her co-teacher as an assimilated American as a foil that allows Erika to claim an authentic Chinese identity for herself. Erika only refers to herself as Chinese, Asian, or Asian American. She never refers to herself as American in our interviews. Interestingly, Erika’s enactment of an “authentic” Chinese identity also serves to reify the discourse of assimilation, as she thrusts a non-Chinese, more Americanized identity on her co-teacher. That is, by framing a Chinese person who marries a White man and who does not speak Chinese fluently as non-Chinese or American, Erika reinforces the idea that individuals are only American if they assimilate.

Erika views herself as a cultural role-model for her students and performs this authentic Chinese identity in order to validate this role for them. She also validates this identity for me, a friend who is interviewing her on the basis of her racial and ethnic identity. In addition to performing an ethnic identity, Erika orchestrates competing class identities in constructing her narrative.

Navigating contradictory class identities

Erika grew up in a working-class household and was raised by immigrant parents. However, her college education, master’s degree, and profession as a teacher give her access to a middle-class lifestyle. Erika calls on and identifies with elements of both class identities throughout the interview, and uses her experiences to praise and critique components of both. She shifts between discourses to simultaneously empathize with and distance herself from both

student populations. She describes her current teaching situation and uses it to contrast her former classroom setting.

Yeah, half of them [now] are ELL. Yeah, and they already have a disadvantage because they're ELL. Um, and like I said they're also really poor so they don't have very many life experiences which is why writing for them is particularly hard. Um, because they don't have an imagination for one, and they don't have experiences. So when you tell them to write a short moment, like a small moment story, they're actually blank.

Honestly, I'm like, what do you do after school? They're like, we go home. You know, we watch TV. What do you do on Saturday? We stay home, watch TV. Like they don't do anything. And then like half of these kids don't really know who their parents are because their parents work out of state. And so a lot of them live with grandma and grandpa and they definitely don't do anything you know? And it's really sad that like, we talk about, and that's why their vocabulary is also really low. Because they don't have experience with the language because they have never seen half these things before you know? So it's just sad when we're talking about, we're doing word study and you're like crib, and like all these words and they're like, what's that? What's that? You know? They just don't know. Or like we have to work a lot, extra hard to expose them to these things. Every once in awhile we go on trips and stuff and it helps but money is also an issue. Like a huge issue, parents all the time are like why do I have to pay \$5 for a trip? Yeah.

When asked what it is like to teach this population, Erika responds:

Excerpt #1: Um, it makes you kind of want to love them more. Because they don't have that much. Like I worked on the Upper East Side for 2 ½ years and those kids are completely different. I mean, my kids [there] were so rich that they would take off from

school to go to Disney World. Even one girl whose mom was like, “oh, we’re not going to be in school next week because we’re going to Disney World for her 5th birthday”. I’m like, oh, for her 5th birthday? She’s like, yeah, for her 4th birthday last year, we spent like \$4,000 years on her party and we’re like, oh, this year we’ll just go to Disney World. I was like, okay, it was ridiculous!

Excerpt #2: And these [Upper East Side] kids would come into school with like a bag of like snacks, um, and like crazy gourmet lunches and I remember this one boy who had chips, cookies, donuts, and whatever. And he’d open all of them, take one out and throw them all away. And it was so ridiculous to me, like oh, it’s so wasteful! Like that Chinese side of me. Or like, this was so wasteful so I made him only open one until he finished it, he couldn’t open another one. But then he wouldn’t want any more so I would keep all of his snacks because he would throw them in the garbage. But then this population, like last year, none of these kids celebrate birthdays. We always have to give them a snack for their birthdays and last year, one of the first birthday parties we gave them munchkins on this kid’s birthday. And I remember we gave them one munchkin and these kids were so excited but we didn’t let them eat them until snack time and then at the end of the day, when they saw ___ some of the kids were so happy to eat them. And then other kids were just sitting there and I was like, “why aren’t you eating?” They’re like, I want to save it. And I’m like, Oh, okay. And one of them ___ he bit half of it and then wrapped it up. And I was like, why are you wrapping it up? He said the other half is for my brother. It was just so cute, you know, that they would like, take all these things and really appreciate it. Um, whereas the other population was like, whatever to everything. These kids appreciate everything. So last year, like this school, all teachers in my school, we give the

kids huge Christmas gifts, not huge but you give them like a bagful of goodies and um, snacks and toys and stuff. So last year, our Christmas gift, we bought them three reading booklets each, three picture books with like a pencil set and a board game, like a mini board game and other stuff. And I remember one girl opened up her book and quickly _____ and then open it in class. And she was like, "I have a book!". It was so cute. It was really, really sweet. So that and is very like, yeah. It's kind of heartbreaking but at the same time, you know that these kids really appreciate everything. So yeah.

Erika's description of her current Chinatown students characterizes them as children who do not have anything—money, experiences, or relationships with their parents. She says that because they do not have much, they appreciate everything: a munchkin donut, reading booklets, a pencil set. Erika uses this description to contrast the wastefulness of her wealthy students from the Upper East Side (UES) who throw away uneaten snacks and who take lavish vacations. She positions her Chinatown students on one end of the class spectrum (as low-income) and in doing so, claims a middle-class identity for herself. Her Chinatown students do not have much and therefore it is up to her to compensate for their lack of material wealth by providing them with small treats and gifts. At the same time, Erika positions her UES students on the other end of the spectrum (as upper middle-class) and in doing so, identifies more with her working-class background. By contrasting herself with her extravagant UES students, Erika claims for herself an identity as a hard-working individual who knows how to use her hard-earned money wisely. Thus, Erika performs both working middle-class and middle-class identities as they become appropriate.

Erika's approach to teaching her Chinatown students follows the banking model that Freire (1979) discourages. Erika alludes to her students' strengths as bicultural and bilingual

students by acknowledging that they speak the Chinese language, know Chinese songs, and know about Chinese holidays and traditions. Yet, instead of drawing on her students' funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) in order to explore the intricacies of their Chinatown neighborhood, Erika creates trips to teach them about what lies beyond their local surroundings. Erika's performance as a middle-class teacher is likely what drives her to provide such experiences for her students—she sees a need to build their cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) and prepare them for life outside Chinatown. At the same time, this middle-class mentality results in viewing the students' lives through a deficit framework (Valenzuela, 1999). Erika relies on descriptions of what her students lack, rather than what they have, to portray these students.

Erika's working-class identity is used to contrast the lifestyles of her wealthy UES students. Rather than discussing her students' variety of snacks and trips to Disney World within a framework that views their privilege as an asset, she frames these experiences in a negative light as well: "it was ridiculous!" Erika's portrayal of her UES students is also framed by a deficit approach, except that in this case, the UES students are suffering from too much access because it has made them wasteful and unappreciative.

Erika's exposure to both working class and middle-class identities makes it possible for her to shift between the two, appropriating them as needed. In addition, by positioning her students as low-income and upper middle-class, she performs a middle-class identity for herself. The next set of excerpts highlights how Erika also shifts between competing discourses in discussing race and diversity.

Enacting discourses of inclusion and diversity

The following excerpts portray how Erika talks to her students about difference and inclusion.

Excerpt #1: Last year, um my first year teaching, I had, in the beginning of the school year when we first started out, I only had 2 non-Asian kids in my class. Throughout the year, we get a lot of stragglers. We get um, because there are so many seasons for shelters so we get a breed of new kids every few months. It's like ridiculous. And then they leave. Um, but in November, a new girl, she was a shelter girl but she was absent and she came in and you know, she was very, very Black. All I have to say, she came in and the whole environment changed. And ___ she would say stuff. Like, you know, she was kind of really mean. And she would tease the kids and get angry at them because apparently at like recess and lunch, when we're not there, the kids would speak Chinese to each other and she didn't understand. And anything she doesn't understand, she gets really upset. Like really bad.

Excerpt #2: And so we had conversations about, not so much about having them being ashamed but how you know, that we're Chinese, we had to have a huge talk, I'm Chinese and some are not. And sometimes it's very uncomfortable for them if you only speak in Chinese. I think those were. That's where certain identity things were involved like how...oh, what happened? Like, I don't think they understood that they didn't understand Chinese. It was really funny. They asked a question like, How come she doesn't understand? Like, because she's not Chinese. Some people just didn't understand. So, they didn't quite understand that. But then that girl, that African American girl, she was way too mature for her age. She was like, very ___ and kind of a bad influence [?] on my kids. ___ I mean, all she did was, she bullied them but I don't think they understood that she was bullying them because they were Chinese.

In response to me asking how she specifically supports inclusion in the classroom:

We try, we make sure that, I mean we always talk about how everyone's different but it's okay because we're all still learners and friends and we try to make sure that the Chinese kids actually you know, try their best to use English most of the time. And we made a book about what makes people feel left out and what makes people feel upset. So they do understand it. It's hard for them to remember because you know, for the, especially for the kids who just came to America, their first inclination is to always speak Chinese so it's just you know, just have to constantly remind them that, "oh, some people don't understand" and this is where my partner comes in and she's like "oh, I'm Chinese but I don't understand what you're saying either" so how do you make other people feel. So we do talk about it openly because you know, non-Asian kids do express their frustration when that happens and so we talk about it as a class a lot. And just to always remember to not make other people feel bad, that's pretty much what we focus on whether it's being Asian or being short or anything else, physical or anything we talk about just making sure we don't hurt people.

These excerpts portray how racial dynamics operate in a classroom located in an ethnic enclave. Erika explains that she needs to help her students understand why students who are not Chinese might feel different and singled out and why her Chinese students need to be inclusive of others. Erika also talks about classroom activities (like making a book) that help her facilitate conversations about being different and being inclusive.

Through her discussion with students and the book-making project, Erika enacts the identity of an inclusive teacher and reifies the discourse of diversity discussed in chapter 1—celebrating and flattening out difference without acknowledging inequalities. Erika depicts

herself as a teacher who is understanding of and sensitive towards making her students feel included. Erika portrays her students' ignorance about why her Black student does not understand or speak Chinese as innocent and forgivable. Yet, her description of her Black student is less kind. Earlier she mentioned that this student was "very Black". Below is her explanation of what this means.

Oh, [laughter] um, the way she [laughter] uh....just the way she acts, like her mannerisms, she'd um, she didn't talk very properly. She would roll her head at me a lot, she would roll her eyes at me, just very sassy I guess. And every other word like [pursing lips] "I don't want to do this." And she'd walk like her walk was really obnoxious. And I tried to have her practice walking because it was just so obnoxious like she would go all crazy and stomp, and she. It was just, she would tie up her hair, she got weaves a lot, they had no money...and she spent so much money on clothes and other things, stuff like that. And she looked up to like certain people. Who were Black. I can't recall right now but I remember her like talking about that too. Stuff like that. I don't mean to be racist, but she was just super sassy and ghetto...Yeah, she wore very fitted clothes for like a 7 year-old girl, she was just very outrageous. In everything, her mannerisms, her outfits, the way she acted and stuff.

Erika's portrayal of this student follows a meta-narrative that reinforces images of Black people as "ghetto", poor and wasteful, and over-sexualized (Moynihan, 1967). Erika deems her student's behavior as unacceptable and makes her practice walking in a less "sassy" manner. Erika's perception of this student is that she is using the little money she has in a wasteful manner. Erika also describes this seven-year old student as over-sexualized based on how she dresses. Absent from this portrayal of the student is the understanding that a seven-year old is

probably not making the decision to get weaves or buy clothes, but instead it is the decision of an adult in this student's life. Because Erika's definition of inclusion alludes only to diversity rather than eliminating inequalities, particularly racial inequalities, the discourses she has to draw from to describe this student only highlight the racialized divide between Blacks and Asians (Kim, 1999; Okihiro, 1994). In other words, without an understanding of racial triangulation and the meta-narratives that exist around Blacks, Erika's description of her Black student falls prey to stereotypical and racist assumptions, despite her performance as an inclusive teacher.

Erika, an authentically Chinese teacher

Erika performs the role of the authentically Chinese teacher in order to connect with her students and their parents. By embracing such a definition of "Chinese-ness", her co-teacher, who does not fit into this same definition of being Chinese, is deemed less Chinese or "not really" Chinese. Erika also draws on competing class and inclusion discourses in her performance of identity.

To categorize Erika as classist or racist based on her identity performance, however, is too simplistic. Instead, we must view Erika as an individual who is navigating and enacting competing and conflicting discourses to position herself in ways that suit the situation at hand. Erika distances herself from her low-income Chinatown students when she needs to perform the role of a middle-class teacher, and distances herself from her Upper East Side students in order to perform her working-class identity. In addition, the subtleties around understandings of inclusion and diversity influence Erika's portrayal of herself as an inclusive teacher. Erika is not either/or, one or the other, but both and all. The thematic analysis of her narrative helps to highlight her multiple understandings of race and racial identity while the performance analysis

of her narrative highlights how individuals draw on multiple (and sometimes contentious) discourses to story themselves.

In addition, by again considering CRT and its understanding that that racism is endemic and ordinary, we can better understand how Erika interprets and acts on racial discourse. Erika's mention of racism is much more personal than systemic—she hopes not to be seen as racist based on her description of her Black student. Perhaps an understanding that racism is ordinary would enable Erika to call on different discourses. If Erika were to use discourses that acknowledge racial triangulation to explain the tensions between her Black student and her Chinese students and even her perceptions of her Black student versus the lived realities of the student, her performance of identity and race would look different.

Betty

Betty had been teaching for seven years when I conducted my first interview with her. Although she began her teaching career as an elementary school teacher, she was in her 5th year of teaching high school English when we talked. She was also in the process of earning a Masters Degree in educational administration. By the time we spoke for the follow-up interview, Betty was an administrator at a middle school in the Bay Area. Of all the teachers I spoke with, Betty had the most variety of experiences in education.

Betty immigrated to the United States from Vietnam at the age of 10. She has lived in California since then. It was clear from the very beginning of our first interview that Betty has a passion for fighting social injustice. Much of our conversations focused around this topic. A self-proclaimed social justice advocate and change agent, Betty explained what she did as a teacher and an administrator to effect change in the system. Betty said of herself: “I like to make a lot of

noise when I see something just really immoral”. At the same time, the way Betty performed her identity revealed contradictions around topics of race and privilege.

I skyped with Betty during our first interview. We spoke on the phone for the follow-up interview. Betty was laid-back—during our first interview, she sat on her couch with her dog, holding him up to the screen at one point to give me a better look at him. Once Betty began speaking about justice issues, however, she quickly adopted a take-charge attitude in order to discuss how she dealt with these issues in her classroom and school.

Performing ethnic pride and authenticity

Betty discusses the evolution of identifying as Asian to identifying as Vietnamese:

I used to say Asian because um, so I went to UCLA so it was really empowering to the Asian because it was like the predominant group. So I never felt like I never needed to differentiate from the norm right, ... But when I first started in my school um, my first, my first year as a teacher, they asked me, “do you want to be the Vietnamese Student Association advisor?” and I was like, that’s offensive, like _____. So I took on the National Honors Society and I took on the um Community Service Club and I was like, there’s more to me than that, like please. The second year they asked me to do it and I said no. You know, I don’t want to be known for that...I don’t want to be seen as the Vietnamese person too. The third year I was like, fine. I’m comfortable here, like let’s see what we have going on. So I go in there and I’m just, I notice that some of the kids aren’t Vietnamese. Some of them are White, some of them are Filipino and I was like, “what’s going on?” And they’re like, “oh we just meet and talk and eat Vietnamese food, we do a dance at the end of the year” and um, I said, well, why aren’t the Vietnamese people in

this club? And they didn't even have a strong following. Like they have a little 10 minute particip—like, they could participate for 10 minutes in the International Show and do the Fan Dance but everyone who participated wasn't Vietnamese, only the president, she was the only true—she was the only Vietnamese person and I think she was half Filipino. So I was like, okay, this is really weird. So then my 2nd, my 4th year which was last year, I was like, okay, can we have a conversation about why the only Vietnamese person in this club is me? [laughter] Like, what's going on? So the first meeting like, there was a surprising number of Vietnamese kids there and they would say, "well I don't like being called Vietnamese, it's kind of embarrassing because when people say Asian, they mean Chinese, they mean Korean, they mean Japanese, we're seen as the bottom rung because we don't really go to college" and I was like, "wow, I went to college and I don't think that." So that was part of my, I was a part of a Vietnamese organization in my college, there were a lot of us! So I started like, seeing that they have this internalized self-hatred of the term like they would rather be called "Chen." And I was like, oh my gosh, you guys, I did the same thing when I was first here because I didn't want to ____, it was so long, no. So I changed the edict. You can only be in the club if you're Vietnamese. You can't be in it because you like Vietnamese things, or your girlfriend's Vietnamese, like get out. So it cut down the number from 30 to like 6. [laughter] Which is ____, we meet every Monday, there's only 6 of us, we learn about Vietnamese history, and it's like, it's really nice, they get to talk about how they feel and a whole support group. It's really small. And it's made me realize you know, I need to kind of start that trend and be a model and kind of own that and not have, just be like, "oh, I'd rather be Asian." No, like that's, that's an important identity, identifier and to take pride in it. So. That's why.

Like Erika, Betty's performance of ethnicity also involves the concept of authenticity, though her authenticity is enacted differently. Betty performs a Vietnamese identity in order to model ethnic pride for her students. Although she used to identify as Asian and felt comfortable being Asian at college because she was among many Asian Americans, she acknowledges that when she first moved to the United States from Vietnam, she too wanted to cover (Yoshino, 2006) or hide her Vietnamese identity with an Asian one. Seeing how her students struggle with claiming a Vietnamese identity, Betty chooses to perform the role of a proud Vietnamese teacher in order to affirm their Vietnamese identities.

And yet, this was not always the case. When Betty first became a teacher at her school, she resisted advising the Vietnamese Student Association. Not wanting to be racially lumped or seen only for her ethnic identity, Betty called on discourses of assimilation to perform a more mainstream identity. That is, by disassociating with ethnic specific activities (e.g., being an advisor to an ethnic club), and associating with White mainstream activities (e.g., advising the National Honors Society), Betty sought to enact a more racially neutral identity so she would not be viewed as "the Vietnamese teacher."

Interestingly, when Betty agrees to advise this club, she discourages students from enacting those same performances she had relied upon to construct a more mainstream identity. Students of non-Vietnamese descent are asked to leave and Vietnamese students who want to deny their ethnic identities are chided. In performing a Vietnamese identity of her own, Betty calls on her students to perform that same version of a Vietnamese identity. She relies on their enactments of Vietnamese-ness to substantiate her own—for if she is the adviser of a Vietnamese club that allows members to join because they like Vietnamese things or like Vietnamese people, the authenticity of her own ethnicity is compromised. In this way, Betty's version of ethnic

authenticity is different from Erika's. While Erika's authenticity relies on contrasting her performance with those who are unauthentic, Betty's authenticity relies on associating with others who perform similar identities.

Performing the role of a "noise maker"

As I mentioned earlier, Betty "like[s] to make a lot of noise when [she] see[s] something just really immoral". Betty's narrative is filled with instances in which she enacts the role of the noise maker. Sometimes she plays the role of the loud noisemaker, and other times she performs a quieter noisemaker identity. What remains constant is her commitment to challenge the status quo which protects Whiteness. The following excerpts provide insight into how Betty enacts discourses that confront injustice:

Excerpt #1: Yeah, um I enjoy being stereotyped...So, I'll give you an example, I was in an AVID conference, I taught AVID for three years and I'm like, picking up people's plates from the table because they were finished eating their lunch and I pick them up and take them to the trash. And one of the servers who's White comes up to me and says "you don't have to do that anymore, um, you're an American now." And I said, "do what, be polite?" And he said, "huh?" And I was like, "that was really racist. You don't have to agree with me but that's just what I think." And I walked away. And he was like the whole time, the whole conference, he kept looking at me and he [was] very uncomfortable and I'm like, "good!" You should be uncomfortable. You don't say those things to people and say it's okay. Um, so I enjoy it. I think it, because I think people look at me and think I'm really shy and [speaks very softly] "no" "yes" and I was that way for a really long time um, but...it's like, I need to say something. I don't agree.

Excerpt #2: So I think it's definitely one of those things where um, I can imagine if I were a White teacher that people would be like, why are you talking about this? So it's one advantage of, I think Asian people have an easier time talking about race because there's this perception that we benefit from it. You know? Whereas like a Black teacher it's obviously she cares about that. You know? Or a gay teacher, like obviously you care about homophobia. So there's this, so I recognize my own privilege. I think a lot of times we're seen as neutral...But it's a lot easier for us to bring up those really hot button topics, have those really courageous conversations about things that make you uncomfortable.

In our conversation, Betty asked if I knew what the “Angry Little Asian Girl” was—a series of cartoons and comics that feature an angry little Asian American girl who speaks back to those who discriminate against her. In the first excerpt, Betty calls on this angry Asian discourse to perform the role of the noisemaker. Betty makes herself visible and confrontational. She directly addresses the waiter’s comment that she’s an “American now”—his subtle suggestion that she envisions herself a foreigner. By being direct, she counters the image of the stereotypical quiet Asian persona who is “shy” and “speaks softly”. She also counters the waiter’s assumptions that she had lived her life serving others. In fact, Betty’s performance as the angry Asian is heightened when contrasted with the stereotype of the quiet Asian. In addition, instead of being subject to discomfort by an oppressor, Betty subjects her oppressor, the waiter, to feelings of discomfort during the “whole conference.”

In the second excerpt, Betty performs the identity of the knowledgeable social justice advocate through the role of a neutral facilitator. In this instance, Betty chooses not to perform the role of the angry Asian. Instead, she utilizes neutrality and the race-lessness that is afforded

to Asian Americans to her advantage. She calls on discourses that stereotype Asian Americans as the model minority and honorary White to construct herself to fit the role that others already assume she holds. By enacting these discourses, Betty positions herself as a non-threatening facilitator of “courageous conversations” and is able to address “uncomfortable” topics that a teacher of any other race would have difficulty addressing.

Betty performs and shifts identities as they become situationally appropriate. She is loud, assertive, and angry when she needs to confront stereotypes about quiet, servant-like Asians. She is neutral and less confrontational when she needs to lead students in conversations that they might otherwise be nervous about having. In both situations, Betty calls on discourse of anti-oppression to perform the role of the social justice advocate; she just uses different means of accomplishing the same task depending on the situation. In excerpt #2, Betty explains that the fact that Asian Americans benefit from a racialized society is just a perception and considers this perception a privilege. Asian Americans are subject to racial triangulation (Kim, 1999) and as a result, they are not true beneficiaries of racial privilege, at least not the way Whites are. However, as honorary Whites, Asian Americans are afforded some privileges. Betty has noted one of these privileges—the ability to act as a racially neutral facilitator of conversations around discrimination. The following two excerpts further highlight Betty’s recognition and denial of privilege and how she both challenges and reifies discourses that preserve stereotypes and injustice.

Navigating contradictory discourses of privilege

In the following excerpt, Betty recalls another instance in which she benefitted from privilege:

Yeah, so I have a pretty good story. Um, and this is why I wanted to go into administration. So I was, when I was 12, I had been in the country for 2 years but I was in a bilingual program when I was in Vietnam, like a French missionary, it was run by nuns so we had, spoke English before I got here. So when I got here, the transition was very, very easy. Um, but because I had just come to the country, they put me in ELD and I liked it. I got to you know, ___ and learn grammar, it was great. So I loved middle school and I was put in GATE and all of that, it was great. And then we get to 8th grade and...the high school I was going into, you were allowed to take Honors, even AP classes freshman year. So I said, okay, I want to take Honors English because I'm not going to get better going "I am happy" it's too low for me, I need to—and I recognized that like, you don't learn English by being around people who have accents, like you learn English by being around White people and I knew that. So I went to my English teacher and went to my biology teacher because I loved bio and wanted to take honors bio freshman year and I said, "I want to take honors" and they said no. We're looking at your file and you're ELD and you're EL and it's not okay. And I said, "Okay, that's fine." So I had them fill out the form in pencil, I had a pencil and then I turned the form back into my counselor and I changed the code to honors and I said, "okay I'm gonna do it anyway". So 9th grade happens, I go into honors and my friend had done the same thing, she's Hispanic and she got caught right away. They're like, "what is this? You don't belong" so I realized freshman year that the system sucks. It's unfair and it's racist, you know? There's unconscious bias toward brown people. And because I was Asian, I slipped by. No one questioned why I was there. So I'm reflecting back as an adult, but in high school, the entire time I got through APs really fast and did really well in high school, but I

always felt like I was a fraud. Like I didn't belong there. And I tell this story to my kids and I tell them "the system is set up so that when you try to be successful within it, even though the barrier's in place, it makes you feel like you're doing something wrong. Like it's wrongfully gained." So that's not okay.

Betty's explanation of why she wanted to exit ELD and take Honors courses speaks to the racial discourse of assimilation. Her situation also alludes to discourses around literacy and school-based intelligence. Moll et. al (1992) point out that all students have "funds of knowledge", some of which are acknowledged in school settings and some which are not. It is only the students who perform knowledge in ways deemed acceptable by schools who are recognized as intelligent and as academically capable. Betty sought to perform the role of the academically successful student by enacting discourses of school-based literacy and intelligence. Since her bilingual abilities and bicultural knowledge were not valued, she adopted a school image that was accepted by the mainstream: she assimilated by taking classes with White people so she could learn to speak like them and lose her accent. Betty sought academic success by performing the role of the White student.

This powerful anecdote of "slipping by" while her Hispanic friend was "caught" speaks to the racial discrimination and hegemony that exists in schools and the fact the racial discourses influence teacher and administrator's decisions. Since Betty was Asian and a "model minority", she was assumed to be smart enough to take Honors classes, unlike her Hispanic friend. Betty acknowledges that the system is racist and understands that she was not caught because she was Asian. However, another privilege was at work: no one suspected that Betty had deceived her guidance counselors and beat the system because Asian Americans are perceived as passive and rule-abiding (Wu, 2014). Although Betty often performs the role of the noisemaker, Asian

Americans are not usually perceived as such, and thus, Betty was not suspected of working around the system. Both of these discourses and stereotypes worked to Betty's advantage and enabled her to perform the role of the good student which allowed her to continue taking Honors and AP classes without ever being suspected of being a "fraud." Again, the discourse of the model minority and the "privileges" that come with this type of Asian American identity are what enabled Betty to perform the role of the White, literate student.

However, although Betty acknowledges that being Asian American afforded her the privilege to defy the racially hegemonic school system during her own schooling experience, she calls on different and contradictory discourses to explain her own success to her students and the success of Asian American students.

...when people see my, the degree, they think oh, um I think because I drive a, a nice car in their opinion, a luxury car, there are a lot of rumors that I come from privilege. Um, my husband's White, I drive a very nice car, we live in a pretty pricey area of...of Bay Area, um, and I wear nice suits. So they, the students just assume I was fed with a silver spoon. Um, or even a platinum spoon. I have to always correct them. I came when I was 10, I spent a year of my life in a refugee camp, like, I didn't speak any English when I arrived ... I'm not gonna apologize for my success, you know what I mean? Like, why are we talking about it? But it's because they have this perception because ___ like if you were in Cupertino, or like Torrance or like Irvine in California where it's predominantly Asian, like, you guys all work hard and you went to really good colleges and you're all ___. You're in America, you're Asian, you must be rich. ...because Asians mostly do very "well" in school, they kind of see us as a sub-White group. Right? Like test scores, all that, so they don't have an opinion when it comes to ed policy. And it's that whole thing,

like, it's frustrating and I feel like I have a voice for that and I always say, it's not okay to say well, "this just comes easy for you." No, because school does not reward intelligence, it rewards effort, you know like, you have to wait til ___ grade to take the SATs. Asian kids have 4.0s because they work their butt off and they get disciplined severely at home when they don't do well in school. So it's not, it has nothing to do with if you're born smart or good in math.

This particular excerpt highlights the many nuances of being Asian American and the difficulties Asian Americans have in identity-making. It also highlights contradictions in Betty's own performance of race, class, and privilege. Betty begins by explaining that her students perceive her as being privileged because of her degree, the car she drives, where she lives, and what she wears. She counters this perception by reminding others that she is a Vietnamese refugee and immigrant who grew up poor. She says that she won't "apologize for [her] success", implying that she believes she worked hard to achieve what she has accomplished. She revisits this idea of hard work and success when she talks about how "Asian kids have 4.0s because they work their butt off and get disciplined severely at home". Betty *has* worked hard, and it is also likely that the Asian American students who have 4.0s have worked hard. Moreover, Betty makes these statements in order to counter the discourse that Asian Americans are inherently intelligent and always financially successful.

Yet, Betty fails to acknowledge the very racial dynamic at play in this situation that she acknowledged when she told her story of exiting ELD. There is no mention of the fact that racial discourses make it easier for Asian Americans than other students of color to achieve academic success. In other words, although Asian American students like Betty do work hard, the fact that teachers and administrators perceive them as model minorities is one reason that their success is

validated and encouraged. It is easy to perform the role of the smart and successful Asian American because it is an identity that others expect of Asian Americans.

Betty performs her role as social justice advocate and noisemaker by countering the blanket statement that all Asian Americans are inherently smart. Yet, in countering this stereotype, Betty reinforces others—that hard work results in success. Betty does mention that Asian Americans are viewed as a “sub-White group”, but she has it backwards: she says that Asian Americans are seen as sub-White because of their success; in truth, race theorists would argue that Asian Americans have been racially triangulated from the beginning and are allowed their success because of their honorary White (Tuan, 1998) or sub-White status. Thus, in her effort to dispel stereotypes and perform her social justice advocate identity, Betty calls on the myth of meritocracy to preserve the idea that academic success and professional success are merely the products of hard work. In drawing on this discourse, Betty’s performance of the social justice advocate falls short.

Betty, a social justice advocate

Betty passionately performs the role of the Vietnamese teacher and noisemaker. She is excited about enacting her Vietnamese identity, both because she no longer needs to cover her ethnic identity with a racial one, and because she seeks to model ethnic pride for her students. Her authenticity as a Vietnamese teacher is dependent on her students mimicking her version of being Vietnamese. She discourages them from minimizing their ethnic identities although this is what she once did.

Of the three teachers whose narratives are explored in this chapter, only one of them, Betty, explicitly acknowledges that racism is ordinary (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Yosso et. al,

2009; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) and that it should be confronted. Betty's narrative demonstrates her understanding that racism is systematic and structural. She acknowledges that "America is racist" and attempts to do her part to undo racism, despite the fact that she makes generalizations about Asian Americans and has meritocratic ideas about success. In addition, only Betty tries to challenge dominant ideologies by making noise. In this way, Betty also enacts social justice.

Betty has dedicated her career to uncovering racially hegemonic practices. She is adamant about confronting others' racism and challenging students to think about privilege. She is a teacher who makes use of her agency to teach others. Betty performs her social justice advocacy in different ways in order to suit each situation. While her approaches could be viewed as contradictory, she utilizes them in complementary ways, toward her larger vision of advocacy. At the same time, however, Betty's ideas of how to achieve academic success are colored by meritocratic notions of hard work and individuality. Her notions around privilege are contradictory and in calling on contradictory notions, Betty also performs contradictory roles—she challenges stereotypes around the model minority myth but also upholds discourses of meritocracy and racial triangulation. In evaluating Betty's performance, we must embrace her contradictory beliefs and actions. To only acknowledge one aspect would be too binary and narrow. Betty is a change agent despite the fact that some aspects of her performed identity contradict each other.

Conclusion

It is useful to return to the ideas of discourse and identity to think about tensions and contradictions in identity. Erika, Betty, and Joanna each reify and contest discourses having to do with Asian American identity and race and class in general. They each choose discourses to take

up and to resist; some of these discourses are consistent with each other and some are not. It is through this process that their identities become sites for contradiction and tension.

Identities that embody tension can help us understand the role of performance and performativity in the lives of these teachers. For example, Betty performs the role of change agent in response to being subjected to a system that allowed her to take honors classes but stopped her Hispanic friend from doing so, while reifying discourses around privilege. It is the push and pull between performance and performativity that has shaped these teachers' identities into complex forms that cannot and should not be reduced to a single entity. Instead, the ambivalence (Ngo, 2010) of these teachers' identities needs to be recognized as powerful examples of how individuals are shaped by and shaping discourse.

These tensions and contradictions in identity performance also highlight the ways in which Asian American teachers, in this case, Joanna, Erika, and Betty, engage with agency and power. That is, by agentially reifying and contesting discourses, these teachers challenge the power dynamics that are created by such discourses. By drawing on their “double consciousness” (DuBois, 1903), these teachers see themselves both through their own eyes and through the eyes of others. Knowing that they occupy a precarious in-between space, they perform Asian American identities that dispute stereotypical notions of who Asian Americans should be: forever foreigners, White-washed, demure. Joanna, Erika, and Betty disrupt the power that is produced by the discourses that portray Asian Americans as such. And yet, their attempts to perform new Asian American identities are not without contradictions.

Critical Race Theory can be helpful in understanding contradictory identities if one thinks about these contradictions through the tenet that racism is ordinary. Not only is racism ordinary, but biases are ordinary—biases that individuals hold against others, and biases that

individuals internalize and hold against themselves. Understanding that racism and bias are endemic can begin to help in understanding that contradictions and tensions in identities are also ordinary.

Chapter 4:
Identity and Pedagogy:
Intersectionality, Multiplicity, and Fluidity

This chapter focuses on the multiplicity of identity and pedagogical approaches. Although racial and ethnic identities are a main focus of my research, I use this chapter to examine other aspects of teachers' identities and how these other identities including gender, faith, and class intersect with race and ethnicity. In addition, I continue to discuss how teachers' enactments of identity influence their classroom practice. I begin by discussing intersectionality, which is the conceptual framework that I will be applying to the analysis in this chapter. Next, I use a summarizing chart to show the 25 teachers' multiple identities and demonstrate the range of identities that teachers assume and own. Following the visual summaries is an overview of how teachers teach and the range of pedagogical approaches they assume. Lastly, I highlight the narratives of three teachers: Bounmy, Simon, and Nicole, to more closely show how Asian American teachers' identities are multiple and how these identities influence their pedagogical and curricular decisions.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality acknowledges and affirms the interactions between race, class, gender, and other social positions in shaping identity and relationships. It was first conceptualized and coined by Black feminist scholars as a way to understand the "triple oppression" of African American women (Crenshaw, 1989). African American women lack privilege in multiple ways: as African Americans, they lack White privilege; as women, they lack male privilege; and those who are low-income lack class privilege. Crenshaw (1991) has discussed how the interactions of

these identities work against African American women in specific instances including employment opportunities (1989) and domestic violence (1991).

Asian American feminists have borrowed from this idea to describe their own double or triple oppression. They embrace the concept of intersectionality because it is a concept that acknowledges both how multiple identities intersect and because of the space it creates for them. Shah (1997) writes: “An Asian American feminist movement is *the only movement* that will consistently represent Asian American women’s interests” (p. XIX). In other words, because their womanhood excludes them in discussions of race among Asian American men and their color excludes them in discussions of feminism among White women, Asian American intersectionality is a space that acknowledges both of these unprivileged identities (Shah, 1997; Hune & Nomura, 2003). Intersectionality for Asian American feminists then, is a way to access power.

Asian American scholars also make use the concept of intersectionality to resist the discourse that Asian Americans are a homogeneous group (Yanagisako, 1994). Instead, by focusing on differences in gender, class, and sexuality among Asian Americans, scholars are able to have a more productive conversation about the heterogeneity (Lowe, 1991) of the Asian American experience. For example, Kumashiro (2004) and Coloma (2006) have used the framework of intersectionality to investigate how queer Asian American men identify.

I use intersectionality in this chapter to emphasize how multiple identities intersect and to highlight how Asian American teachers’ identities are shaped by many factors, only one of which is race. I seek to use intersectionality to analyze how individuals may share certain identifying markers (class, gender, race) but use them in different ways to perform personal identities and teaching identities. Moreover, by focusing on identity vis-à-vis intersectionality, I

am better able to understand how Asian American teachers wrestle with issues of privilege and power in identity production.

Multiple Identities

The 25 participants identified many different aspects of their identities as important to them. The chart below (Table 4.1) shows how each of the participants self-identified in response to the question “What identities are important to you?”

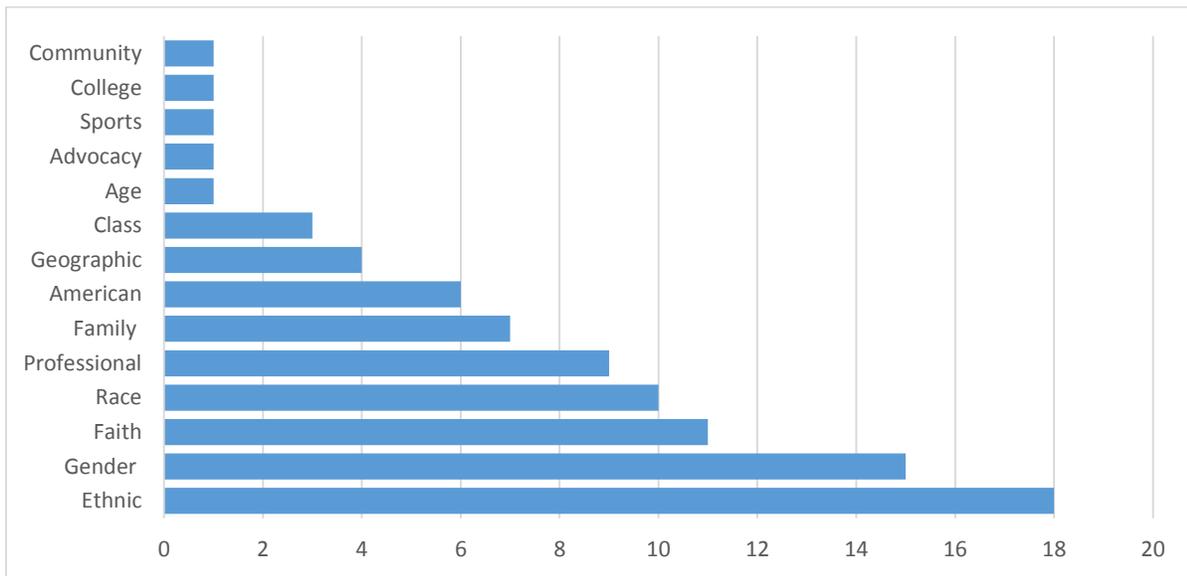
Table 4.1: Asian American teachers’ identities

	Eth.	Faith	Racial	Job	Gender	American	Family	Geog.	Class	Age	Advocacy	Sports	College	Comm.
Christy				x	x		x							
Mary	x		x		x				x					
Ruby	x	x	x	x	x		x							x
Bounmy		x	x		x				x					
Jessi	x		x					x						
Ming	x	x			x									
Lily	x	x		x										
Joanna				x										
Jordan	x	x			x	x								
Nicole		x	x		x									
Erika		x	x	x										
Anna	x				x	x	x							
Angela	x					x		x						
Mai-Li	x			x			x	x	x			x	x	
John	x				x	x								
Betty	x			x	x									
Stephanie		x	x	x	x	x								
Jae	x		x		x		x							
Heather	x	x								x				
Vanessa	x		x	x			x							
Simon		x												
Susan	x				x	x								
Gabriella	x	x												
Joseph	x	x	x		x		x				x			
Nikhita	x				x			x						

While many participants stated that their ethnic, faith, racial, job, and gender, and American identities were important to them, only some participants spoke about identifying with their

families, geographic locations, class, and age identities. In addition, very few participants acknowledged the importance of being a social justice advocate, an athlete, where they attended school, and being connected to where they lived. The bar chart below further illustrates how some types of identities are very important across the participants, while others are very unimportant.

Figure 4.1: Multiple Identities of teachers



It is interesting to note that 18 participants claimed that their ethnic identities were important to them, but only 10 participants claimed that their racial identities were important to them. This fits in line with Takaki (1989) and Espiritu’s (1992) claims that ethnic identities have greater importance among Asian Americans than do racial identities. It is also worth noting that six participants spoke about being American. These 6 participants explained how being American was different from being Asian but just as important in their lives. The fact that these participants had to distinguish between being American and Asian/Asian American speaks to the fact that one of the discourses Asian Americans contend with is that of assimilation. Because Asian Americans are framed as “forever foreigners” (Tuan, 1998) or “perpetual foreigners (Wu, 2003),

and not viewed as fully assimilated or White, these participants felt the need to emphasize that they were, indeed, American, although their appearance does not reflect the phenotype typically associated with American citizenship—that of a White American.

Pedagogical Approaches: A Visual and Thematic Summary

The chart below shows how the 25 participants in my qualitative study integrate their identities into their teaching. While some participants said their racial and ethnic identities did not matter much to their teaching identities, others felt it was important and claimed to play and perform the role(s) of cultural broker, cultural role-model, someone who defies stereotypes, and the role of the change agent. For the purposes of this study, I define *cultural brokers* (Gentemann & Whitehead, 1983) as those who believe it is their job to teach non-Asian students, colleagues, and parents about the Asian culture and also to bridge the “cultural divide” for Asian immigrant students and parents. Teachers who are *cultural role-models* (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011) believe that their presence as an Asian American sets an affirming example for Asian American students to embrace their racial identities. Teachers who *defy stereotypes* see their role as questioning the racialized assumptions of students, parents, and colleagues. Lastly, teachers who are *change agents* (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011) are aware of and advocate for changing the systemic causes behind racial hegemony.

As this chart indicates, teachers may identify with and enact one or more of these roles, adding to the idea that Asian American identity is complex and not easily categorized.

Table 4.2: Pedagogical approaches

	Don't identify strongly as AA in classroom	Cultural broker	Cultural role-model	Defy stereotypes	Change agent
Christy	x				
Mary		x	x		
Ruby		x	x		
Bounmy		x			x
Jessi			x		x
Ming		x			
Lily	x				
Joanna	x			x	
Jordan	x				
Nicole				x	x
Erika			x		x
Anna		x			
Angela		x		x	
Mai-Li					x
John		x	x		
Betty				x	x
Stephanie		x		x	
Jae				x	
Heather		x		x	
Vanessa					x
Simon			x		
Susan	x				
Gabriella	x				
Joseph		x			x
Nikhita		x			

While I have described five different pedagogical approaches, I would like to emphasize that many teachers simultaneously utilize more than one of these approaches. Just as Lowe (1991) insists that identity is heterogeneous, hybrid, and multiple, so too are these teachers' pedagogies. In other words, if we assume that teachers engage in Asian American identity in multiple ways and that identity influences pedagogy, we should assume that this fluidity of

identity should result in fluid approaches to classroom practice. For simplicity's sake, I will highlight each "category" of pedagogy one by one but will at times share examples of how the same teachers fall into more than one category.

(1) It doesn't matter

Five teachers reported or spoke about their racial and ethnic identities in a manner that indicated that these identities did not matter in their classrooms. Of these five, one teacher named Christy reported that this identity was not important to her personal identity either. And yet, when asked about her personal life, Christy discussed the importance of connecting with her parents through cultural traditions and her parents' language:

I think it was very important to my family that they'd be able to communicate with, with whoever I marry and I think it was important to me because we do participate in certain like, Chinese like traditions that I don't think a non-Chinese person or at least a non-Asian person would really understand. So like um, yeah, I don't think they [my husband] just would understand the culture. And there would be too much of a divide and there's enough of a divide with me and my parents just because of the language.

This particular excerpt implies that these practices are in fact a big part of her life, because they were important enough in influencing who she chose as a partner. Thus, even if these are not rituals Christy would choose to practice on her own, because she practices them with her family, they have become integral to her life and life choices. In turn, Chinese traditions, Chinese cultural practices, and the Chinese language are important in Christy's life—just perhaps not in a conscious and intentional way.

This leads me to conclude that the teachers who reported that their ethnic and racial identities did not matter in the classroom were simply not aware that they mattered. In other

words, just as Christy was unaware of how much her family's practices influenced her life decisions (e.g., who to marry), she and her peers were unconscious of the ways in which their background and identity influenced their teaching. These teachers are infusing their identities into their pedagogy in unintentional yet meaningful ways. For example, Lily talks about how being Chinese American is important to who she is but that her ethnic identity does not purposefully affect her teaching. However, she does recall the following incident and admits that being Asian American may help validate the racial identities of the few Asian American students in her school.

I don't teach a lot of Asian-Americans actually; maybe usually one or two a year, if any. ...but I think you know even sometimes walking to another classroom and a kid is like "Oh are you Chinese or Japanese?" in another classroom and you answer in that way and they can see some teachers that reflect them compared to a lot of their classmates maybe that's how it comes out a little bit.

Lily recognizes that although she is not intentionally integrating her identity into her curriculum or her teaching, she may be serving as a role-model for Asian American students through her presence. In addition, Jordan talks about how celebrating Chinese New Year and other Chinese holidays and customs are important to him. Like Christy and Lily, he does not consciously integrate his ethnic identity into his classroom practice. Yet, his students and their parents have expectations of him to speak Chinese because of his appearance: "I think when the year first started, there was kind of an assumption uh, from both the students and their parents that being Chinese, I'd speak Chinese and uh, which I don't." They look to him to be a cultural broker for them even though that is not how he views his teaching identity nor is it something he can offer because of his limited fluency in Chinese.

Both Lily and Jordan's anecdotes are reminders of how identity involves what Ngo (2010) calls a "double action": "where in one movement we are *put* in subject positions by others who draw on available, powerful discourses to identify us; and in another movement we take up subject positions by drawing on available discourses ourselves...Identity can be constituted in two ways" (p. 11). In this case, Lily and Jordan's appearance affects the way students (and their parents) respond to them, even if their teaching practices are not borne out of their identities. Though they are not actively taking on the role of the Asian American while in their classrooms, others are imposing it on them. This is also the case with Joanna, whose narrative I described in the last chapter. While Joanna chose not to identify as an Asian American in the classroom, she perceived her students as making assumptions about her because of the lens they were bringing into the classroom.

Thus, while it is possible that Asian American teachers perform teaching identities that are void of references to their ethnic and racial cultures, to their own student experiences, and that do not consciously broach the subject of race and Asian American identity, a teacher's statement that his/her Asian American identity does not matter begs further investigation. It begs investigation into how that teacher's Asian American identity unintentionally affects their pedagogy. It also begs us to ask how the mere presence of Asian American teachers might be pedagogically influential on their students, and how these teachers, though unaware, might in fact be acting as cultural role-models and cultural brokers, and defying stereotypes.

(2) I'm a cultural broker

More than a third of the participants in this study perform their teaching roles as cultural brokers. These teachers have taken it upon themselves to educate those who are not Asian about

who Asian Americans are. They also help to bridge the gap between their Asian American students and students' families and mainstream society.

In the previous section on teachers' experiences with being Asian American, I discussed how Anna is asked about Chinese American and Asian American culture by her students. As mentioned earlier, Anna believes her early elementary school students are merely curious about those with backgrounds different from theirs. They are mostly from Black and Latino families and do not have much interaction with Asian Americans. Anna is one of their only connections to the Asian American community. She takes pride in teaching her students about holidays and customs she practices like Chinese New Year. By teaching her students that people's differences need to be celebrated, Anna enacts a cultural broker's approach towards teaching and creating her classroom climate. Heather is another teacher who at times enacts the role of cultural broker. When she was teaching in Nigeria at an international school, she taught her students about Chinese New Year and other Chinese customs just like Anna does. Ming also uses a similar approach to talk about cultural differences with his preschool students:

We have lunch together and sometimes they'll notice that the food that I bring in is similar to the food that certain other children bring in. There's sometimes conversation about that, but not always. I think this year we have a lot of children that speak different languages and that's been a conversation that we've had. And so we count in our own languages and that's been a conversation that we had and we count in our own languages and this is before meeting we'll do some counting and... So we've counted in Mandarin before. Um, I don't know, I think that's about it, besides the way I look. That's kind of like a yeah. I think some children have had conversations at home about their skin color

and so when they bring that up, then I'll... That comes up but not explicitly. Or where we're from or places that we've been when we bring out the map.

Ming's students are fairly young. His approach to talking about differences with them is in a way that capitalizes on students' knowledge of their home languages, foods, and locations. When he brings in Chinese food for lunch and students notice that it is similar to the food Chinese students are eating, he is able to teach them about the Chinese culture. He also allows for students from different backgrounds to teach each other about their cultures—in essence, he creates a community for his students to be cultural brokers for each other. Teachers who are cultural brokers act on opportunities to teach their students about their personal backgrounds and also foster a classroom environment that encourages students to teach each other about their differing backgrounds and identities.

(3) I'm a cultural role-model

Seven teachers in this study consciously act as cultural role-models for their students. For the most part, among these teachers, there was a sense that being Asian American meant feeling different, and because they understood this sense of alienation, they wanted to alleviate that sense of difference for their Asian American students. These teachers also expressed a desire for their Asian American students to identify with them and be willing to open up about school and life issues. These teachers thought that their similar backgrounds would benefit students when it came to working through issues of identity. Some of these teachers taught many Asian American students. Others only taught a few, but were still dedicating to helping their Asian American students.

These teachers' approaches are akin to what Ladson-Billings (1994) has coined as *culturally relevant* teaching. Culturally relevant teaching "empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, pp. 17-18). These teachers understand what culture is and why it matters in education (Nieto, 1999) and they are racially and ethnically conscious of their own identities as well as their students' identities, biases, and perspectives (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2000). There was variation in how these seven teachers approached being culturally relevant role-models.

Some of these teachers took a more passive approach to being role-models. Although they were grounded in their Asian American identities and were available to support their students, they did not actively reach out to their Asian American students. For example, Mary said:

it [being aware of my Asian American identity] also, um, helps me to remind myself to be more sensitive to my students, many of whom are Asian...I would say I can be more sensitive to [them] in terms of you know, the cultural differences and how, how an Asian American student might be in a classroom...Um, and I would hope that perhaps some of the Asian American female students might feel more comfortable with me in a way.

Instead of actively performing a cultural role-model identity, Mary waits for students to approach her and utilize their cultural connection. Another teacher, John, who teaches in New York's Chinatown, sees similarities between his background and that of his students. He too grew up in Chinatown and was raised by immigrant parents. Although he does not discuss his immigrant experience with his students, he tries to play the role of a parental figure for them and tries to compensate for what he believes might be missing at home based on his own experience:

I think, and in this school's population in terms of the Chinese American kids, um, there's not a lot of touch at home in terms of getting a hug or just have a hand on a shoulder or head or whatever and they respond, they enjoy that sometimes when I'm working with them, I have my hand on their shoulder um, and that, I think part of it is just that sense of closeness of the adult um, in their lives.

By providing more physical affection for these students than what they are likely to receive at home, John models for his students a different type of Asian American identity than they are used to seeing. He affirms the importance of touch (when used appropriately) in nurturing children, and helps his students develop an awareness of a dimension of Asian American identity that they may not be learning from their parents. John is a cultural role-model by integrating affection into his pedagogy.

Other teachers integrated curriculum with lessons that were specific to Asian culture, which their immigrant students could relate to. For example, Ruby (who will be discussed further in chapter 6) created a unit that focused on China so that her students, who are mainly of Chinese descent, could see their home country reflected in their curriculum. Although Simon (whom I will discuss further in this chapter) states that his ethnic identity is not very important, his actions show otherwise. Simon uses excerpts from Chinese dramas to teach some of his lessons. He noticed that students were talking about the same Chinese shows that he watched, and he decided to integrate this cultural connection into his teaching. By doing so, he has engaged them and also formed a connection with students around similar cultural interests. Ruby takes an explicit approach to modeling a positive Chinese American identity by integrating Chinese culture into her curriculum in affirming and culturally relevant ways. Simon has done the same, though in an unconscious way.

Still other teachers used their knowledge of language and customs to relate to students in non-academic ways in order to build the rapport needed to engage students in academic activities. Erika (who was discussed in chapter 3) talks about how she lets her class of mostly Chinese students sing Chinese songs and speak in Chinese when they go on class trips. When they speak Chinese, she will also speak Chinese with them. By validating their language, Erika also validates her students' ethnic identities. Instead of chastising them for speaking a language other than English, Erika endorses their funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) and understands that culturally relevant teaching extends beyond planned, academic curriculum. Ming, who was mentioned earlier as an example of a cultural broker, also enacts the role of a cultural role-model when he uses his native Mandarin to communicate with his Mandarin-speaking students.

Finally, the teachers who identified as cultural role-models also found satisfaction in being able to coach Asian American students through questions around identity development, and saw their students' questions as a way to practice culturally responsive teaching. Jessi (to be discussed further in chapter 6) ended up leaving the teaching profession (but remains in education) after I conducted my first interview with her, so our follow-up interview was an opportunity for her to reflect on her teaching experiences. She remains in touch with former students and shared about one student in particular:

I've actually been emailing another of my former high school students who's Chinese American. Um, he was in my geometry class in my first year of teaching and he's actually been struggling a lot with his Asian American identity. And I'm actually been like counseling him through it.

This student looks to his former teacher to learn about being Asian American. Jessi's role as cultural role-model is indeed a performance—because in this case, she teaches her student how to perform an Asian American identity. Although their infusions of identity with pedagogy are varied, these seven cultural role-models act in ways that positively affirm Asian American identities for their Asian American students.

(4) I defy stereotypes

Seven teachers talked about how they challenged the assumptions of students, colleagues, and parents when it came to understanding Asian American identity and culture. As mentioned in chapter 3 in the section on teachers' experiences with identity, Asian American teachers encounter racism and microaggressions that are related to the model minority myth, the forever foreigner label, and racial lumping. In the section on the forever foreigner myth, I mentioned that Angela's students' parents are surprised to learn that she is Asian American because she sounds "White" on the phone. Knowing that her students and their parents hold these incorrect assumptions about her, she challenges her students to reconsider how they think about Asian Americans. She recalls one particular incident where she taught a student to think more broadly about Asian Americans:

I have this one kid. Who, who, the first time she met me, alright, was when she came to class, she sat in the back... and she's really out going, she's really cute, very nice, then I walked by her and she whispered to me, "my chiropractor's Asian." So I am talking about science, all of a sudden this kid tells me, "my chiropractor's Asian." So I'm looking at her, and in my mind, I say, "am I supposed to get anything out of that. _____ what does that even mean?" As I get to know her, and she's... and I'm learning a

lot of things about her. And dealing with her is a little easier, she's learning a lot of things about me, you know, she learns to ask these questions in appropriate ways. Just the other day, she said she was going to a basketball game. And we were talking about Yao Ming, and I was joking with her, "Are you going to tell Yao Ming your science teacher is Asian too?" [laughter] And then she just like, "What do you mean!?" "What do you mean?!" "Remember you said that to me." And she says, "Oh my God, that was so embarrassing, embarrassing." We are able to laugh about it. So in a way, I'm glad that I'm different from them. I'm able to teach them these essential skills that they never got from their own community.

Angela takes it upon herself to educate her students about how to think about Asian Americans and also how to ask questions about other people's cultures in appropriate ways. She defies stereotypes by simply being different from those stereotypes, but she takes things one step further and also challenges her students to think about why they hold those stereotypes and challenges them to change them. In addition to teaching science in her classroom, Angela engages in pedagogy that centers on human relationships and racial discourse.

In addition to being a cultural broker, Heather also defies stereotypes. By being a competent teacher who can successfully manage her middle school classroom, Heather defies the stereotype her principal holds of her. She proves that she is not too quiet to teach, and not too diminutive to manage middle schoolers. However, despite the fact that she defies one stereotype about Asian Americans, her principal is unwilling to relinquish another—the idea that Asian Americans are model minorities. Although she is unsuccessful at convincing her principal otherwise, Heather tries to inform him otherwise:

So he was have me come in and basically be like, well I've never met an Asian who isn't hard-working and isn't intelligent and isn't all these things. And I would sit there and I would say, are you kidding me, are you seriously saying this to my face right now? And I would try to push back as much as I could. But at the same time, I was a pretty new teacher, hadn't had any experiences like that before. And being non-tenured, I also didn't want to overstep my bounds in how much I fought back. But I did tell him, you know, "I've met plenty of people who aren't intelligent and aren't hard-working and are Asian". And um, I mean, he was still going to believe what he was going to believe.

Heather tries her best to provide her principal with information that will challenge him to think about Asian Americans in a more varied way, but is unable to change his mind. This example showcases how teachers' pedagogies can extend beyond the classroom and into other arenas of their professional lives. It is interesting to note that in both Angela and Heather's examples, it takes exemplifying something other than the stereotype to convince others that those stereotypes are incorrect. Angela's student needs to get to know her before she realizes not all Asian Americans are the same. Heather's principal needs to witness her competence as a teacher before he is convinced that she should be trusted in the classroom. This may also help to explain why Heather's principal maintains his belief of the model minority myth. Although Heather explains otherwise, he has not witnessed anything to the contrary.

Later on in this chapter, I also describe how Bounmy defies stereotypes by "making it" despite growing up in a poor neighborhood. She uses this identity to inspire her students to do the same and in this way also acts as a cultural role-model. Teachers who defy stereotypes perform identities that are non-stereotypical in order to challenge the assumptions that are thrust upon them. They too are negotiating the double-action of identities (Ngo, 2010).

(5) I am a change agent

Eight of the teachers performed the role of the change agent, or teachers who advocate for their students by working against structural inequalities. These teachers look beyond race when it comes to helping students; instead, their goal is for underprivileged students—whether because of race, class, or another identity—to succeed. In the last chapter, I touched on how Erika and Betty perform these roles, albeit in their own ways. Erika works to provide her low-income immigrant students with cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1993) so they can move beyond their parents' station in life and Betty challenges those with racist assumptions. Two other teachers, Mai-Li and Vanessa describe how important it is to them to work with low-income students so that they can change the life trajectories of these students. Mai-Li reflects:

Yeah, I want to be a teacher that will work um with really high poverty students? Um, or students living in poverty who are like low-income students of color but I want to bring a very like progressive, constructivist approach to my teaching...so I grew up in a housing um, programs in Seattle so I feel like I have this affinity for working with those students, students like myself... I've realized some people don't understand that what families need and what these children need so I have that privilege of being able to see where they're coming from because I've also been there so I want to continue that um and I feel like, I feel like if I have that understanding, like it's almost my responsibility or my like I feel like it's a great opportunity to be able to give back to that community.

Mai-Li's desire to work with low-income students is borne out of her own experience as an immigrant, refugee student who benefitted from teachers who mentored her and prepared her for

college. Mai-Li's role as a change agent is personal. In enacting this pedagogical approach, she affirms her life experience and mimics the actions of her own teachers.

Vanessa also believes it is important and a "passion" of hers to work in a low-income neighborhood but unlike Mai-Li, Vanessa grew up in a middle-class neighborhood and hasn't had to experience poverty first-hand. Instead, she has experienced it through the eyes of her students. She describes the worst part of teaching as confronting the bleak reality of her students' lives:

How do they not understand that there are other surrounding states around them that they can go to? Or that there are other parts of the world...how are they not fortunate enough, like how did this happen? You know what I mean? You get really involved in their lives. Where my first couple of years of teaching, I took everything to heart...I felt like, these kids don't really have much so I have to make sure that for Christmas, I'm going to give them this or that and they've never seen this before, they've never seen the tree in Rockefeller Center! We'll do that as a school trip...the good thing is that you're trying to make a difference—the worst part about it is that you're trying you know, so hard and they really are into what you're saying when they're at school but then when they go home, it's like the same, the same crap that they deal with every day...Like they want it so bad and they want to do well and they want to succeed. And they want something. And for them, getting a high school degree is a huge deal...And they say to me, "you know, it's great, I want to do it and we're going to try but it's like fighting a war." Because they say, "you don't understand what we deal with every day when we go home."

Vanessa is motivated to give her students what they lack so that they can have what she's had—the opportunity to go to college, study abroad, and live in a safe neighborhood. There are unequal power dynamics at play in this relationship between Vanessa, who has class privilege, and her students, who do not. Vanessa's enactment of this role fits in with the meta-narrative of the heroine teacher who saves the day by giving students access to escape their destitution. While I do not doubt that Vanessa's intentions are genuine, because of her background and positionality in providing for her students, her enactment of the change agent is very different from Mai-Li's.

Teachers who are change agents have made it their mission to help underserved students overcome structural inequalities. These teachers believe their students should succeed, despite what their racial or class (or any other identity) background may be. For these teachers, part of being Asian American is being involved in social change. However, it is important to understand the teacher's position and background in order to fully appreciate how this type of pedagogy is enacted.

This summary of codes provides insight into how Asian American teachers enact Asian American identities in the classroom. While some teachers are unaware of how their racial backgrounds influence their teaching, others are purposeful in bringing their identities into the classroom and use their understanding of hegemonic structures to bring about change. It is important to note that these pedagogies are not static, nor are they used in isolation. Just as teachers enact identities in purposeful ways and to accomplish specific goals, they adopt differing pedagogies as their identities and classroom situations shift. The next part of this chapter focuses on how three teachers enact their multiple identities and how these identities influence their pedagogical approaches. Using narrative analysis to examine identity and pedagogy provides greater insight on the fluidity and multiplicity of identity.

Intersecting, Multiple, and Fluid identities: Three Teachers' Stories

These three exemplars provide insight into how Asian American teachers make sense of and perform their multiple identities and how these multiple identities provide them with unique perspectives about the classroom and their practice. For example, all three teachers talk about their gender and faith identities, but their narratives demonstrate how each teacher makes sense of his/her gender and faith identity differently. Bounmy talks about dispelling stereotypes having to do with women, Simon speaks of how being a male teacher allows him to stand out in a good way, and Nicole both reifies and dispels female stereotypes. Bounmy, Simon, and Nicole all identify as Christians, but Christianity plays a different role in each of their teaching practices. Bounmy speaks little of her faith. Faith affects her teaching, but in subtle ways. Simon stories himself as a Christian and is very vocal about his faith and wanting to show his faith to colleagues and students. Nicole speaks openly about her faith and how it influences her teaching practice, but Nicole's faith identity is much more integrated into her racial identity than the other two teachers, and it is tied to her mission of being a social justice advocate. In other words, where Simon seeks to share his faith, Nicole uses her faith as a vehicle to accomplish her mission of advocating for her students.

Bounmy

Bounmy was a fifth year high school math teacher when I conducted my first interview with her. Although her parents are from Laos, she was born in a refugee camp in Thailand. She and her family immigrated to the United States and settled in the Midwest when she was two years old. She grew up with a lot of Asians and Blacks and describes her childhood

neighborhood as poor and “rough”, which is one reason she chose to attend a magnet high school that was farther away from her home than her local high school. Bounmy has taught at two different schools, both of which are located in low-income neighborhoods in Minneapolis. The student population in her first school is all African American. The population in her second school is comprised of African immigrants.

When I spoke to her the first time, she talked about how proud she was to have stayed in teaching for five years, but mentioned that she was starting to feel burned out by the classroom. She was in the process of pursuing a Ph.D. in Math Education, and talked about how although she wanted to remain in education, she had doubts that she would remain a classroom teacher much longer. By the time I conducted my follow-up interview with her, Bounmy was a full-time Ph.D. student in STEM Education. She had left the classroom but remained a consultant at the two schools where she had been a teacher.

I was able to Skype with Bounmy when we spoke, which allowed me to see how animated of a speaker she was. She was always energetic, speaking with an upbeat tone and using her arms and hands to gesture when she wanted ensure she got her point across. Bounmy smiled freely and spoke about teaching passionately. Bounmy named her Asian American and female identities as ones that were important to her. During our interview, it became clear that her class and to a lesser extent, faith identities also shaped her teaching philosophy and approach to pedagogy and curriculum. I will use Bounmy’s narrative to show how these identities intersect and how they are important to her identity and to her teaching.

Bounmy is a story-teller. In many ways, her narrative is one of performance—calling on meta-narratives and performing them, performing her own story of success for me to watch, and performing her story for her students in hopes that they will adopt her story and also be

successful. Bounmy tells stories well because of how she uses body language and tone of voice and it is this story-telling skill that enables her to story herself and use stories to relate to others.

I was highly valued

I began the interview by asking Bounmy for some demographic information about herself and her school. I asked what the teaching demographics were at her two schools and she told me that she was the only Asian American teacher at both of her schools. I asked her what that was like:

Well because I'm an Asian American teacher of math, it was not a surprise...I mean, people kind of accepted it or weren't surprised. So I was actually...Because I teach math I'm actually not well, liked, but valued. I can feel that in both schools that as a math teacher, and as a female, I was highly valued because of the demographics that I work with. I work with poor families and...Most of my students were...more than half were girls, so I was valued for that, I guess. I think less because I was Asian American but more because I was a math teacher and happened to be female and happened to be a person of color.

Bounmy discusses how she is perceived based on her visible identities. She talks about how no one is ever surprised to see an Asian American teaching math—likely because of how the model minority discourse stereotypes Asian Americans as high achievers (Tuan, 1998), particularly in the fields of math and science. More interesting is her discussion of how she is valued for being a female math teacher. Although racial stereotypes dictate that Asian Americans are good in math, gender stereotypes dictate that women are not. So, while Bounmy's area of expertise reifies one stereotype, it contests another. Bounmy is a role-model for her female students. She also mentions that she is valued because she works with poor families—perhaps referencing the

assumption that academic success in general is something reserved for middle- and upper-class, but not lower-class students (Erikson, Goldthorpe, Jackson, Yaish, & Cox, 2005). Bounmy continually references the connections she has with students in her narratives.

These points of connection are a part of Bounmy's pedagogy. She uses the fact that her background is similar to her students' to story herself in a way to inspire them. Bounmy believes that if she made it, they can too. She says: "I am what many people who grow up poor strive to be—not just educated but giving back." She is proud of the fact that even though she grew up poor, she "made it", and she wants others to have the opportunity to make it as well. She stories her identity as one of success, of overcoming the odds. In turn, she believes she has a special obligation to serve students who are growing up the way she grew up. She says she is "more than just a math teacher". She implies that because of her class background, she is uniquely positioned to be the change agent her students need (Achenstein & Ogawa, 2011). She is also confident that she is one of the "good teachers" all students should have, again adding to her successful persona. Not only has she been a successful student, but she is also a successful teacher. In the next narrative, Bounmy continues to describe how her class identity motivates her to teach low-income students.

I'm known for giving the "Obama-style teaching"

Bounmy describes what her own teachers did for her to help her be a successful student, and how she is trying to do the same for her students. She describes her teaching style as "uplifting" with "tough love". She credits her faith for inspiring this type of pedagogy.

V: ...the reason I became a teacher is so students could see that you could come from the hood or the projects and still...not just have dreams but make them come alive. So I think

that would be my goal is that my story would be what would help my students. And what my teachers did I wanted to do for my students, which was help me find scholarships, help them in whatever way they needed...I even funded some of my students to help them pay...Because someone has done it for me for many years, including through my Masters and my doctorate.

C: That's a huge contribution that not a lot of people make. So how do you describe yourself to your students? Like the first day of class—what do you tell them?

V: How would I describe myself? In the words of my students, they would say I'm very energetic, pretty loud, but I have passion. Most of them may not take math very seriously but if when they go through my class they start to realize—oh this is very meaningful, not just in math but what she's trying to teach us. So I would say I'm not just a math teacher, but I teach about life and I teach about survival out there because a lot of my students are coming from survival mode or are in survival mode. So I help them by telling them stories; I help them by sharing stories with them; written stories, oral stories. And whenever I get a chance I'm known in my school for giving the "Obama-style teaching"—you know to help uplift my student. And it would be sometimes informal, middle of the lesson to graduation to honor roll luncheon. So I would say the style of teaching for me would be whole student. I teach the whole student. Sometimes I give them tough love, but for the most part, I think my students appreciate the messages that I'm trying to convey in my lessons outside of content.

C: And do you weave in these stories while you're teaching? What inspires you?

V: You know, every class is different...It could be as simple as a kid asking me for a pencil in the middle of a test. And I'll start off with, 'ok, do you ever go to basketball

practice without the tennis shoes?’ And they’ll say, ‘well no’. And I’m like, ‘well coming to class without your pencil is setting yourself up for failure.’ And then it kind of drifts into... ‘it worries me that some of you have already given up on 9th grade’...Any time I can squeeze in a story—I mean I wouldn’t say I do it daily, but I do if not daily, weekly. To the point where I’m appointed to give...I’m not sure if this is true or not but I was asked to give the commencement speech for our first graduating senior class. But I’ve given many speeches for 8th grade graduation and honor-roll luncheons...It comes natural.

Bounmy’s narrative is a dialogical performance. By just focusing on this last part of this excerpt, one can see how she is performing her identity as a successful student and a successful teacher for me, the interviewer. According to Goffman (1969, 1974, 1981 as cited in Reismann, 2008), there are certain characteristics that characterize a narrative that is dramatized or performed, rather than just told. Reismann (2008) explains that among other characteristics, performance narratives include *direct speech*, or “speech that builds credibility and pulls the listener into the narrated moment” (p. 112), *asides*, where the narrator “steps out of the action to engage directly with the audience (p. 112), and the *historical present*, using a “verb tense performatively” (p. 113). The final section of Bounmy’s excerpt includes all three of these elements. Examples of *direct speech* and *asides* include the dialogue that she uses to re-create a scene in her classroom and the explanations of how she engages in dialogue with the students. The *direct speech* is in quotes, while the *asides* are underlined:

And I’ll start off with, ‘ok, do you ever go to basketball practice without the tennis shoes?’

And they'll say, 'well no'. And I'm like, 'well coming to class without your pencil is setting yourself up for failure.'

And then it kind of drifts into... 'it worries me that some of you have already given up on 9th grade'

Bounmy's use of the historical present demonstrates how she is telling a story for here and right now, rather than as a reflection of the past:

And then it kind of drifts into (as opposed to *then it kind of drifted into*)

Any time I can squeeze in a story (as opposed to *I've squeezed in many stories*)

Bounmy's narrative is a performance. Moreover, in this excerpt, Bounmy uses the word *story* repeatedly. She creates a story for herself and about herself as a way of performing her identity. She explicitly talks about how she hopes "[her] story would be what would help [her] students". Bounmy uses the meta-narrative of the poor student of color who has made it against all odds to story herself. By storying herself as surviving and emerging from the "projects", Bounmy personifies success and wishes to confer this success to her students through her pedagogy of story-telling. She believes that if her students hear enough of her own stories as well as stories about being prepared to succeed, that they too will inevitably succeed. Bounmy's class identity is a large part of her teacher identity because it is what provides her with her vantage point on education and how to teach students. In the next excerpt, Bounmy explains how her students perceive her stories.

Who do you think you are? You're going to come save us...

Thus far, we have heard a lot about how Bounmy perceives herself and her teaching. In the following excerpt, Bounmy explains how her students perceive her racial and class identities:

V: [They say] *Okay, we liked that you share your stories about your family – because a lot of them can identify with the whole idea that my parents are immigrants, my parents aren't educated, my parents don't make any money. I took the bus; I took the city bus. They like hearing that because from the outside they think I'm some privileged, adopted Asian child until they get to know me. Because I have no accent and you can't tell that I was born in a refugee camp. Like you can't tell because I grew up in America and if you close your eyes and you talk to me you wouldn't know I'm Asian. So I think they appreciate it.*

C: *They actually think that you're adopted?*

V: *Well at first, I remember someone said that "who do you think you are? You're going to come save us and you're some privileged..." It was a comment that I heard. But after that now everybody that knows me knows what I'm all about. I'm this teacher who grew up where you grew up. I always let them know specific stories about too – I used to chase after the city bus at night because I would be studying so late and we didn't have a car and I didn't want to wake up my parents up. And I would tell them about hardships that I faced so they could at least appreciate the effort that I'm trying to do for them. Some of them wouldn't get it the first time around, but I do notice that they get it eventually because of the effort that I see.*

Bounmy believes her students should automatically relate to her because of her immigrant background. For Bounmy, class identity is tied to racial identity. She grew up in a low-income neighborhood because her immigrant parents could not afford to live elsewhere. She repeatedly refers to herself as a "person of color"; in fact, she more often talks about being a person of color than she does being Laotian or Asian American.

However, Bounmy's students are suspect of her because of her racial background (Dickar, 2008). Although many of her students are also immigrants—though from Africa, not Asia—their initial impression of her is that she is different from them. Their assumption that she is a “privileged, adopted Asian child” is also based on the discourse of assimilation and the assumption that Asian Americans are forever foreigners (Tuan, 1998). When they hear her speak English without an accent and see that she is academically successful, they assume that it must be because she is adopted. Their explanation for her degree of assimilation is that she has been Whitened through adoption.

Thus, another motivation for Bounmy's storytelling pedagogy is to legitimize her identity as one of her students. It is through her stories of running after the bus that she is able to convince her students that she is just like them and therefore trustworthy. Bounmy's storytelling pedagogy is a product of her need to perform an identity that her students will relate to and respect.

When people feel important and loved, they do what you want them to do

Bounmy describes how forming connections with her students is key to engaging them in the classroom.

I get to know people....the way I execute you know, guided practice, you know to involve and engage people, like, I take the time to get to know people and know what makes them tick...I take the time to get to know people and it, when people feel important and loved, they do what you want them to do. It, it sounds like a trick and it sounds like a scam but it's not...So in a way, that's what makes me successful. I don't think it has anything to do with me being Asian American, but I think it does have a lot actually I think with being a

Christian. Because you know, you care about people, you know when you have faith, you care about people and you want them to be successful and you love them...

It is clear that Bounmy cares about her students and is deeply interested in their success. Bounmy attributes this attitude to her Christian faith, and also attributes her success as a teacher to her faith. This is a third way Bounmy performs her teaching identity: by performing the role of the caring Christian (though in an inexplicit way, because she does not talk about her faith with her students very often). Nonetheless, by adopting the role of someone who cares, she is able to win over her students, engage and involve them, and ultimately, get them to learn. Bounmy argues that it is her faith, not her race that most strongly influences how she treats and relates to others. While I would agree with Bounmy's assessment that her faith plays a large visible role in shaping her treatment of others, I maintain that her racial, gender, and in particular, class identities remain important influences in her pedagogy because they also shape how she has chosen to connect with students.

Bounmy the storyteller

Bounmy's multiple and intersecting identities have strongly impacted her pedagogy. She teaches because she wants her students to be able to leave the projects such as she did. In this way, her class identity affects her pedagogy. She is a successful teacher in part because her Asian American and female identities result in mostly positive student perceptions. In Bounmy's case, the performativity of being Asian and female works to her advantage. Because these identities legitimate her teaching identity, she is able to teach successfully. Her Christian identity affects the way she relates to and connects with her students. Bounmy's identities are multiple. Though

some are more salient and prominent than others, she has melded them together in her enactment of the storyteller teacher who has beat the odds.

Bounmy is a culturally relevant teacher and a critical pedagogue. Bounmy understands where her students are coming from, and creates a classroom environment that is welcoming to low-income students of color. She tells them stories they can relate to, that are relevant to their lives. At the same time, she challenges and encourages them to rise above their situation. She engages students to make them active participants in their learning. For Bounmy, classroom learning is dialectical and not a banking process (Freire, 1974). Although Bounmy does not openly address racial inequalities, Bounmy believes her students can be successful despite what hegemonic discourse might say otherwise. Bounmy's story is also imbued with a sense of agency. She believes she was in charge of her own success, and that if her students are willing to take charge of their lives, they will be successful as well.

By largely relying on the discourse of "beating the odds" while also embracing her Asian American and female identities, Bounmy's identity resists the mold that the model minority myth has laid out for her. In relying on this discourse to motivate her students, she helps them resist being constructed as uneducated students of color. In both cases, Bounmy's use of intersectionality to construct her identity opposes the power that produces model minority Asian Americans.

Simon

Simon was teaching a 4th, 5th, and 6th grade bilingual class the year that I interviewed him. I conducted my first interview with Simon at the beginning of the school year and the

follow-up interview midway through that same year. It was his third year as an elementary school teacher. He had spent his first year teaching a mainstream 4th grade class and his second year teaching a 3rd and 4th grade bilingual class. Simon spoke about how having to teach new grades and new curriculum every year was very tough, in addition to teaching multiple grades and English language learners. And yet, he envisioned himself being a life-long teacher.

Simon was born in China and moved to the Chinatown neighborhood of Chicago when he was two years old. He has lived in Chinatown, Chicago since then. He teaches at the elementary school he once attended. Because the school is based in Chinatown, 90% of his students are Asian, mostly Chinese. Most of the students are eligible for free lunch.

I conducted my interviews with Simon via Skype. He was kind enough to take time out of his busy weekends of lesson planning to speak to me. Simon was laid-back, and he spoke genuinely. He spoke quickly at times, particularly when he got excited. Simon spoke about his faith identity the most, though his racial and ethnic and gender identities also came up in conversation. I will use Simon's narrative to demonstrate how he performed his faith identity for me, while also demonstrating how his faith, racial and ethnic, and gender identities influence his pedagogy. Simon stories himself as a Christian. At times, he performs the role of the Christian for me, the interviewer. Simon is resolute in always bringing the topic at hand back to his beliefs and relationship with God, and demonstrating how God is behind everything that he does.

I was thinking of going back

When I asked Simon to tell me about his background, he told me about being an immigrant child and being able to relate to his students because they are also immigrants. He talked about specifically wanting to teach in the neighborhood he grew up in so that he could work with this particular student population. Similar to Bounmy, Simon has a desire to serve

students like himself. Simon chose to work in Chinatown so that he could teach students that are growing up the way he did. Simon also recognizes that as a teacher of immigrant children, he truly fulfills the duty of “in loco parentis”. Because his students do not have parents who have time to parent them, he has taken it upon himself to teaching “manners” and “how to socialize”. Simon became a teacher not just to teach academic knowledge but also to help his students develop socially and emotionally. Simon’s pedagogy focuses on the whole student, and it is based on the desire to give back. Although the beginning of our conversation revolves around how Simon’s class and ethnic identities influence his desire to teach and his classroom practice, he quickly moves into discussing how his faith identity influences his teaching. He talks about growing up in the church, being active in his church as an adult, and wanting to expose his students to his faith.

Letting people know that I’m a Christian

I asked Simon what identities were important to him. He responded by telling me about how he finds opportunities to share his faith with others, including his students.

S: ...besides letting people know that I’m a Christian, I don’t see as like I don’t have to tell people that I’m Chinese or American where it’s not that important to me, besides letting people know that I’m a Christian.

C: Okay. And why is it important to you and how do you tell people that you are a Christian?

S: Well, usually it’s hard to tell people because you don’t have a chance to like uh, share a testimony. But uh, I, I show, I mean, I witness to people you know, in front of them, do good works that I do in the neighborhood and why do I do it, I mean, trying to have—

something they would ask me why do you do certain things like uh, volunteer to open the tutoring program when it's a Friday night when you can do something else. Yeah, things like that. It gives me a chance to tell them who I am.

C: Mhmm. Do you get to...share your faith with your students?

S: Uh, no, I don't share my faith with the kids, I know that's illegal. So, I show my faith, you know, I walk my faith and the kids do see. I would say, the kids do see that I care for them and at the same time, most of my students come to tutoring at the church so they see a different side of me, yeah.

Simon's faith is an integral part of his life. It might even be the most important part of his life, considering that he does not find it important to tell people about other aspects of his identity (including being Chinese or American). Simon looks for every opportunity he can find to talk about his faith. He has created a venue where he can share his faith with them—an alternative school space where he can openly talk about his faith with his students. His Christian identity shapes how he acts, how he speaks to people, how treats his students, and how he teaches and supports his students. In the following excerpt, Simon speaks plainly about how he became a teacher because of his faith.

...I never thought of becoming a teacher...until my sophomore year actually in college. That's when I decided to become a teacher. Uh, I would say, one day I just, I was struggling with deciding on a major because I know it's my second year already so I gotta pick something. So I wasn't too sure what to pick. So I thought back, "God, I need, you let me become a Christian, let me believe in you so, what do you want me to do with uh, my life, you know? I leave it up to you, your dreams are my dreams." So uh, I just got um, I just got some flashbacks in my mind during that night in my dorm so uh, God just

showed me some flashbacks of my childhood life that no one cared for me, I don't have, uh, like no one cared for me. I don't have a older, especially older male role model so uh, but the thing that all my friends basically dropped out of high school, a lot of my friends that I know. So I'm so grateful that God um, let me get to college so I decided to tell God like, "if it's pleasing to you um, let me become a teacher and go mentor young kids". So that's the day I decided to become a teacher.

This excerpt demonstrates how Simon is storying his faith for me, the interviewer. He retells for me what he said to God the day that he decided to become a teacher and is reinforcing and performing his faith identity for me. This excerpt includes the direct speech, asides, historical present, and also *repetition* "to mark the key moment in the unfolding sequence of events" (Reismann, 2008, p. 113) that are characteristic of performance narrative. Below is part of the excerpt with all these elements marked: direct speech is in quotes, asides are underlined, the historical present is bolded, and repetition is capitalized.

*So I wasn't too sure what to pick. So I thought back, "God, I need, you let me become a Christian, let me believe in you so, what do you want me to do with uh, my life, you know? I leave it up to you, your dreams are my dreams." So uh, I just got um, I just got **SOME FLASHBACKS** in my mind during that night in my dorm so uh, God just showed me **SOME FLASHBACKS** of my childhood life that no one cared for me, **I DON'T HAVE UH**, like no one cared for me. **I DON'T HAVE** a older, especially older male role model so uh, but the thing that all my friends basically dropped out of high school, a lot of my friends that I know. **So I'm so grateful that God um, let me get to college** so I decided to tell God like, "if it's pleasing to you um, let me become a teacher and go mentor young kids". So that's the day I decided to become a teacher.*

Simon stories his conversation with God for me, providing examples of what he actually said to God that day, during his sophomore year of college, and also walking me through his conversation with God. Simon also repeats “flashbacks” and “I don’t have” to emphasize that the flashbacks were the key moment in this dialogue with God, and remembering that he didn’t have anyone in his life was a key part of the flashbacks. Although I had never met Simon prior to the interview, he knew I was a Christian. Thus, Simon’s performance of his Christian identity through the retelling of this spiritual experience might even have been a way to authenticate his faith identity for me, a fellow Christian.

Simon’s description of how he decided to become a teacher reflects a spiritual experience. Not only does his faith identity influence his pedagogy, his faith is the reason that he became a teacher in the first place. Again, Simon’s pedagogy is tied to the desire to serve others who are like him. This excerpt reveals another aspect of his identity that is related to his pedagogy—his gender identity. He mentions that he did not have a strong male role model in his life, but because he is a man, he can be a male role model for his students, something he suspects they lack just as he did. In addition, Simon’s narrative presents a different side of Asian Americans that is not commonly spoken about—that not all Asian American students follow the model minority trajectory. Many of Simon’s friends dropped out of school, and even Simon struggled in school. He was not the academically successful student that many Asian Americans are assumed to be. Interestingly though, although Simon is left out of this common discourse, he decides that the classroom is where he belongs—though as a teacher rather than as a student. In the next excerpt, Simon reflects on his gender identity in the classroom.

So I just want to go in just to make a difference

Earlier, Simon mentioned that he did not have any male role models and that by being a teacher, he could serve as such to other children who did not have male role models. In this excerpt, Simon again discusses how his gender identity impacts his decision to keep on going back into the classroom every day.

C: ...Why do you teach? Even though it's really hard, why do you keep on going back every day?

S: Uh, because I want to be a good role model to the kids. A lot of times, I mean for young kids, there's not that much male role models in their life. I mean, I'm very uh, just a recent incident, uh, there was a boy that comes to my tutoring program, I'm able to get some volunteers from church to come, they're so looking forward to uh the couple of brothers that tutor them. They were asking me, "where is whoever and whoever?" I mean, they keep asking me. I mean it really uh, I feel really good to see that they look up to some people, I mean some other male role model besides their dad or, I don't know who else they see, I mean, they don't see anyone. I mean for me, like when I was growing up, I didn't have any male role models, I mean, all of my teachers were female. So I just want to go in just to make a difference. Just to see that I mean, there are good male role models in the world that you can look up to.

C: Are they raised by their mothers? Do they have fathers in the picture?

S: ...Uh, it's not that, a lot of times, ...they don't see their parents often. Either that or their parents work late until 11:00, they're sleeping already. So um, I mean, I can see that um, over my years that God gave me a lot of grace. So I want to give that back to God, whatever God wants me to do, I feel like this is what God wants me to do, that's why I can go back everyday. [sigh]

Simon is inspired to teach because he gives his students someone to look up to. He understands that the teaching profession is gendered and is dominated by women. He seeks to provide his students with a different type of role model, particularly because he felt he lacked male role models while he was growing up. He has even recruited some male friends from his church to help him with his tutoring program so that his students have other males to look up to as well. Interestingly, his last sentence implies that not all male role models are good, or perhaps he is saying that there are not enough male role models in the world. Either way, this excerpt further demonstrates how his male identity plays a role in his teaching identity.

Additionally, Simon again stories and performs his identity as a Christian. He goes back to his meta-narrative that teaching is because of God and for God. He teaches because he believes it is his way of serving God. Simon's sigh seems to emphasize that if it weren't for being able to give back to God in this way, he might not be teaching. His sigh speaks to his tiredness, to the hardships he has faced in the classroom.

Simon has focused little on his racial/ethnic identity. In fact, earlier, he said his Christian identity was all that mattered. But in the next excerpt which is from the follow-up interview, I am able to catch a glimpse of his racial and ethnic identity at work in his pedagogical and curricular decisions.

I'm Chinese, really doesn't have a specific meaning to it

A large portion of our follow-up interview focused on the role of race and ethnicity in Simon's life. In this group of excerpts, Simon discusses the role that his racial and ethnic identities play in his life and in his classroom. We begin by talking about whether any of his lessons are particularly personal.

S: Personal? Mmm, I would say, I'm teaching World History to the bilingual 7th/8th grade class and um, very personal, I would say it's hard to motivate this class cause uh they...wouldn't, I wanted to have discussions and they wouldn't want to have discussions with me. So I would have to find different ways to motivate them and have them talk so I uh, we watch Hong Kong soap operas and then uh, too, so I try to relate certain things that they watch in certain movies to the history class...Yeah, especially historical uh, uh, Chinese movies that they're.

C: That's a good idea...Are those movies that you watch yourself?

S: Yeah I watch myself also...so it's a way for me to have a connection with the kids...I link it [the lessons] to some of those movies. They were talking among each other so I overheard it and I, uh, then I knew that they were watching certain things that I was watching...it's a fun way for me to do it.

Simon's racial and ethnic identity play a very important role in his classroom. Besides the fact that he is able to speak Chinese to his bilingual students so they can understand content through a language other than English, Simon's shared interest with his students in Hong Kong soap operas and Chinese movies provides them with another type of common language—the language of Chinese pop culture—to speak about content, which in this case is history. Because Simon was aware of the connection he had with students through Chinese pop culture, I expected him to talk more positively about his Chinese identity than he did, but Simon insisted repeatedly that being Chinese was not very important to him. Instead, Simon asserted that being a Christian was his most important identity:

I mean, I think my identity as a Christian, that's the most important thing uh, to, like, and everything revolves around that world and whatever I, as a Christian, __ see the

worldview, a lot of times I feel like, I mean, as I get to know God more, um, a lot of the values that uh, the other two uh, culture uh have, uh, has, doesn't necessarily align with _____ so uh, so yeah, I, that's why I think I don't have to like tell people that I'm Chinese or American actually uh.

Simon believes that being a Christian is what is most integral to his identity. It influences his values and his decisions in ways that he feels his racial identity do not. I would argue that being Chinese is more important to who Simon is and what he does than he thinks. For example, he speaks Chinese with his students and connects with students over Chinese pop culture. In addition, he chose to work in Chinatown with Chinese students in order to give back to a community he grew up in. Were it not for the fact that Simon was Chinese, he would not be working or living in his neighborhood. And yet, perhaps this is what makes it difficult for Simon to identify as Chinese—because he is so steeped in his Chinatown community. In other words, Simon has never stood out for being Chinese because he has lived in a neighborhood full of people who look like him his entire life. Now, he works with students who look like him. Being Chinese is not an identity he needs to name because it is obvious and assumed. It does not Other him the way it does Asian Americans who live and/or work in White communities or communities of color. In addition, identifying as Chinese does not serve Simon's greater purpose of wanting to stand out for his faith identity, which remains his most important identity.

Simon, the Christian

Simon's performance as a Christian is compelling and very different from the way Bounmy portrays her Christian identity. God is the reason Simon became a teacher, the reason he stays in teaching, the reason he tutors his students on Fridays, and the reason he cares for them.

At the same time, Simon's narrative illustrates that his male and Chinese identities also play a role in his life and help to shape his pedagogical approach. Although he is less aware of how these identities operate in his life, they seem to work in concert with his greater mission of serving his students for God. Simon enacts culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1994) pedagogy in his classroom and through his curriculum. A big point of connection for Simon and his students are their shared immigrant experiences and racial identities. Although Simon may not be explicit in sharing this aspect of his life with his students, this personal experience is what enables him to relate to his students and make learning relevant to them.

Interestingly, Simon does not mention class identity in his narrative, or allude to it when he talks about being an immigrant student. Instead, he emphasizes the fact that his parents worked long hours and weren't around to teach him rather than the fact that he grew up in a low-income neighborhood and that his parents were not around because they had to work long hours, like many immigrants do. The discourse of the model minority myth also did not come up in his narrative despite the fact that he is working with many Asian American students. This is an important reminder of how narrow and exclusionary the myth is—and how it monolithically portrays all Asian Americans as the same, neglecting to account for the great variation in students' immigration histories and class situations.

Simon's narrative is a performance of a faith identity. Purpose (and at times, God's purpose) undergirds the way he interacts with students and the actions he carries out in the classroom. Simon's use of a cohesive male, Chinese, and Christian identity subverts the power that is produced through dominant notions of maleness, assimilation, and Christianity. His multiple identities work together to produce a new identity that is much more than being simply male, Chinese, or Christian.

Nicole

Nicole was in her 5th year of teaching when we first spoke, and she was in her 6th year of teaching when I conducted the follow-up interview with her. Born in Hong Kong, Nicole spent the first seven years of her life in the Philippines before settling in Southern California with her family. Nicole grew up in a middle-class neighborhood, and talks about how she was a senior in college before she realized how privileged she was to have attended an excellent school in an excellent school district. She was inspired to teach once she learned how inequitable schooling can be and considers herself a social justice advocate. She has taught at three schools in California. Her current school is in downtown San Jose. The student population is mostly Latino and also mostly low-income.

Nicole was pursuing a master's degree in school administration when we "met" for our first interview. She had finished the degree by the follow-up interview but remained a classroom teacher, unsure of when she would make the transition into administration.

Nicole and I met via Google video chat during our interviews. Nicole was enthusiastic and eager to share stories about her teaching life. She smiled readily. She was eager to talk about how her graduate school program opened up new ways of thinking about racial identity and education for her. Nicole also mentioned that her gender and faith identities are important to her. I use Nicole's narrative to show how her racial, gender, and faith identities intersect and how these identities have shaped her pedagogy.

Nicole stories herself as a social justice advocate. In doing so, she talks extensively about how she cares for her students and how her act of caring is her way of advocating for them. Her faith and her graduate school education have inspired her to teach and love her students. Nicole

is aware that she benefitted from her class privilege, and uses this understanding as the impetus to work with students who are not from her class background. She wants others to have the same opportunities that she did.

I think being Asian is...pretty high...I would say a female is defining for me and also I would say a Christian

At the beginning of her narrative, Nicole explains why her racial, gender, and faith identities are important to her. Nicole admits that thinking and talking about race are new concepts for her, even though she is a person of color. It was her master's program in school administration that equipped her with a language for talking about race. Now that she is fully immersed in talking about how the concepts of race and education are tied together, she can articulate how a discourse like assimilation fails to affirm the aspects of her identity and culture that are not distinctly "American." She continues by talking about her female identity, by commenting how on the one hand, it is difficult to be a woman in the sciences, while on the other hand, being a female teacher is compatible for someone who wants to have children. Nicole concludes her discussion of identity by talking about her Christian identity:

I think being a Christian I often think of my job as being my mission field. Um, it's really taxing initially so I feel like I need some type of like, faith in some sense to kind of get through the day, like you gotta believe that it's not really on you to change these kids' lives but you can entrust them to God and that you can just do right by these kids and not expend yourself and know that, that's okay and sometimes good things happen and sometimes they don't but I feel like having a faith has been really energizing to me, I can't imagine teaching and not having much hope. It would be pretty depressing.

Nicole reflects on how her faith enables her to do her job because it provides her with a sense of purpose and a source of energy. Nicole draws on the Christian analogy of missions to describe her role in the classroom. Many Christians believe they are tasked with proselytizing to others, particularly abroad where there are not many Christians. Here, Nicole likens her classroom to the “mission field”. And yet, her approach to enacting her Christian faith in the classroom is very different from Simon’s. Where Simon has created a space where he can actively share his faith with his students, Nicole integrates faith into teaching through how she approaches teaching broadly. She continues her discussion of faith and the classroom in the following excerpt:

We watched this...compelling...Come to Jesus video

Nicole continues by explaining how she decided to become a teacher, and uses a faith analogy to do so.

I decided to be a teacher because well I actually went this Teach For America uh, free pizza night on campus and I went with my friend and we watched this really, really compelling, like it was a Come to Jesus video about how there’s so much injustice in the education system. And how you could be a part of changing that. And I was like, wow, I had no idea that there was such discrepancy in public school experiences. In, um, [my] high school, like, really, really sheltered, and I’m just really spoiled and I didn’t know, I mean I knew there were like ghetto schools, but I didn’t know that um, the quality of teaching could be so different and even the opportunities afforded just because they didn’t live in the right zip code could vastly change students’ experiences. And so I think that’s what kind of did me in, to teaching or at least applying to Teach for America.

Nicole continues by explaining that although she did not get into Teach for America, she applied to a credentialing program on her own because she was “*so bought into the idea of teaching as social justice*” that she had to teach. Popular media portrays Christians as out-of-touch with reality, pop culture, and society. Nicole stories herself as a different kind of Christian—one who believes in social justice and in disrupting privilege—even the privilege that she grew up with. Similar to Simon, teaching for Nicole is an act of faith, in that it is a way that Nicole is able to live out her faith. She describes her classroom as a “mission field” and makes the analogy that the Teach for America video is a “Come to Jesus” video, the kind used to draw non-Christians to the Christian faith. Differently from Simon, however, Nicole views teaching as an act of social justice. In other words, where Simon viewed teaching as a way to witness (or show others about his faith) to students and colleagues, Nicole views teaching as a way to change the system, with help from her faith in God.

Being a social justice advocate is a main theme of Nicole’s narrative. Her narrative was about performing the role of the social justice advocate as she described her understanding of identity, her relationship with her students, and her approaches to pedagogy and curriculum.

I don’t feel like I need to yell at students

Nicole explains how positive of an experience school was for her, and why it was natural and easy to do well in college—because it came easily and she was taught by encouraging teachers. Nicole acknowledges that Asian Americans are racialized in different ways than other people of color, acknowledging that her students’ school experiences are different from hers due to racializing discourses. Nicole aims to change the discourse around school for her students and

help them understand that they're not failures and that they are good at school. Nicole describes how she relates to her students and manages her classroom:

I don't feel like I need to yell at students or really "put them on blast" as the new term is, but um I realized that there's a lot of um, social capital that you can give by building rapport with your kids. And so I think that's kind of been my --- that I try to view teaching as, I have to assume the best of my students and well, truly believe that they can all succeed. Because there are some times that I don't know, I've been tempted to just write off a student...But then I'm like, I realize that it's good to have a short memory in that I can't have those past experiences affect the day-to-day things in your classroom. So, I think I got that from just my high school teachers in the sense that they were really firm with us, but they I got the sense that they respected us as human beings too.

Nicole performs the role of social justice advocate through building relationships with her students. Instead of alienating them by putting "them on blast", she stories herself as someone who is there to support her students, someone who recognizes their humanity. Nicole's description of her optimistic approach toward her students' success is also for my benefit. By describing this teaching philosophy to me, a former teacher, Nicole is able to validate her role as a social justice advocate who believes all students can succeed.

There's something in your rice

At all three of the school's Nicole has taught at, most of her students have been Latino/a. Nicole expressed an interest in working with more Asian American students because her Latino students view her as "suspect" (Dickar, 2008). Nicole explains how her students stereotype her and also how her students engage in discussions about race and racial inequality. This excerpt is a good

example of how Nicole performs her role and identity as a social justice advocate. As I have done before, I quote the direct speech, I underline asides, I bold the historical present, and I capitalize repetition.

N: *sometimes they think, that I'm part of perpetuating the system in some sense. They look at me and they're like oh, you know, you're um, you're smart, you're Asian, you're good at math, whatever. Kids say that to me.*

I: *Even though you teach science?*

N: *Yeah, they just have this...where like, "you're smart because...there's something in your rice." I'm like, "oh my gosh, you're ridiculous." And I try to be more comfortable TALKING about race things with them and um, there's tons of things that lend itself to that, like some kid brought up, "Why is it that like?" he heard some news about some kid who got in trouble for bringing an American flag to school during Cinco De Mayo and just waved it around, I think this was last year, just brought it to school and he was like, a future clan member, like anti-immigration, and he brought in this American flag and just paraded it around all the Hispanic/Latino students. **And my kids were super upset and were TALKING about** well, "this isn't the right response. Because is it wrong to do that?" And then we talked about how that principal handled it, he said, "why don't you guys bring your Mexican flags tomorrow and you get to do that too?" So I think TALKING about these things that they don't get a chance to vent is like important. And they really get into social justice issues. Like Trayvon Martin...they want to TALK about that all the time. And they were like, "yeah, it's really unjust," so they, even though like it might be awkward for me, this isn't awkward for them, it's a part of life where they live. Everyday, they get, **cops like go up to them and go** "what are you doing, where are you*

going?” And it happens to them all the time. So I feel sheepish about that kind of stuff because it doesn’t happen to me. But I feel if I acknowledge it, it makes me more like, I don’t know, understanding of their experience, and they’re like, “oh she kind of understands us.” It’s different, so that’s one of the ways I try to bring that in. But bio doesn’t really lend itself to a lot of TALK about that. So we don’t too much. But I do try to bring in the achievements of a lot of Hispanic/Latino scientists so they know they’ve done a lot of great things, it’s not just White people in Europe in the 1800s that had significant contributions in science. They’re totally shocked like, “what?” It’s not what they’ve been told. It’s partly changing the narrative of the curriculum. Um, just backing it up in how you, how I treat my students.

Nicole’s students draw on the model minority discourse to form perceptions of her—as someone who is inherently smart. At the same time, since they have internalized the model minority as truth, they believe that they themselves are not inherently smart. This is an example of how a racial discourse that is believed to “positively” stereotype one group can have detrimental effects on another group. Nicole explains that although she knows she has not had the same experiences as they have, and she cannot always relate to them, allowing them to talk about racially inequitable issues in her classroom is a way for her to build rapport for them and show them that she cares about them and their success. At the same time, Nicole is able to use curriculum in a socially just way, by highlight the achievements of non-White scientists.

Significantly, when analyzed from a performance basis, this excerpt demonstrates how Nicole acts as the social justice advocate in her classroom. She includes direct speech to give me a sense of the conversations she has with students, and how they are based around racial issues. She uses the historical present to make past encounters feel like they are happening as she tells

this story. Her use of asides draws me into her narrative and into her classroom as if I am an observer. Lastly, she repeats the word “talk” over and over again to emphasize how important talk and talking is to her strategy of advocating for her students. Letting her students talk and engaging them in talk is one of Nicole’s ways of ameliorating the social injustice they face. Below is another example of how Nicole’s approach to teaching has impacted her students.

You’re the only teacher that is excited to see me

In our follow-up interview, Nicole shared about an exchange with a former student:

I mean last year, when I...with a kid that was like extremely ADD...I think he got a D in my class and was upset at the level he was performing at and um, this year he came back and um, and I was just like, “hey, it’s good to see you” and he was just like, “Miss Nicole, you’re the only teacher that is excited to see me when I walked through the door...you’re the only one who smiles and says hi”. And I was just like, wow, like of all the things I did to help you, I’m surprised that this is probably the easiest thing to do...what stuck with him was just being treated with you know, like, with humanity.

This excerpt provides an additional a glimpse of how Nicole’s pedagogy is effective. She is surprised that her simple act of saying “hi” has made a difference. It is also a reflection of how uncaring this student’s other teachers may be, for him to comment on the fact Nicole stands out because she is willing to smile and greet him. If Nicole is effective as a social justice advocate for her students, it is because they know that she cares about them and they know she is invested in their well-being and success. Nicole concludes by talking about how her Christian and Asian identities are “intertwined”.

It's just so intertwined

Below, Nicole describes how it is difficult to separate out her Christian and Asian American identities because of how much they intersect and both inform her values and actions.

I don't even know when I became a Christian, you know it's like as long as I've been Chinese, like ___ it's just so intertwined to who I've always known myself to be, so um, I think when I, when I teach I would say that my a lot of the decisions I make are because I'm a Christian, um, though I would, I think I can't separate my Asian Americanness from that, like I don't think I'm, I don't know, perceptive enough to say, "oh, I can separate this from this".

Nicole's identities are multiple, intersecting, and overlapping. Although Nicole names her faith identity as more important than her racial identity, it is difficult for her to tell where one ends and the next begins. As Nicole states, she has been a Christian for so long and an Asian American all her life, she has identified as both for as long as she can remember. As a result, both identities inform how she interacts with others, including her students and colleagues.

Nicole, the social justice advocate

Nicole exercises a culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994) by trying to understand her students' lives, even though they are very different from her own. Although she grew up with privilege, she makes learning relevant to their experiences and their needs, drawing on their prior knowledge and strengths in order to get them interested in the curriculum and in schooling in general.

She exercises a critical pedagogy (Freire, 1974) by allowing her students to discuss issues of racism in the classroom. Although Nicole feels unqualified to discuss racism in her classroom

because she is not the same “type” of person of color as her students are, she believes that they need space to discuss issues that are relevant to their lives. In guiding her students through these discussions, Nicole is able to model a critically racial pedagogy (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Yosso et. al, 2009; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) for her students and help them think through racial divides in a meaningful way. Nicole’s actions and pedagogies are agentic; she is a social justice advocate who seeks to change education by changing the tone and discourse of her classroom. Nicole’s use of critical pedagogies in combination with her multiple Asian American, Christian, middle-class, and female identities work together to produce a new “social justice advocate” identity. Importantly, this new identity resists the view that Asian Americans do not identify as people of color and/or should not be viewed as people of color (Kim, 1999).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed how Asian American teachers, despite all being Asian American, have varying and multiple identities, and that these multiple identities translate into multiple pedagogical approaches. I used the framework of intersectionality to underscore the significance of acknowledging identity’s many parts and the ways in which those different parts can work in concert with each other.

The visual overviews of my 25 participants’ identities and pedagogical approaches highlight just how different each of the participants are from one another. The summaries of each of the pedagogical approaches offer examples of teachers enact various pedagogies but also emphasize how pedagogies are not discreet, but are overlapping and intersecting. In addition, regardless of which pedagogy(s) teachers have chosen to draw from, their Asian American

identities do affect their teaching in one way or another. Thus, while Asian American teachers choose to acknowledge or not, their racial and ethnic identities matter in the classroom.

The narrative analysis of Bounmy, Simon, and Nicole's interviews provide a deeper look at how faith, gender, and class identities overlap and influence classroom practice. Their narratives offer insight into how one can simultaneously perform the role of Christian, woman, and child of low-income parents; or Christian, man, and immigrant. Their narratives emphasize the messiness of identity construction. In addition, comparing Bounmy, Simon, and Nicole's narratives to each other provides perspective on the multiple ways one can perform a faith identity, a class identity, and a gender identity. While all three teachers strive to be role-models for their students and wish for their students to succeed, their performances of "the teacher" are constructed in different ways.

My previous chapter discussed how Asian American teachers perform Asian American identities in the classroom. This chapter focused on how Asian American teachers perform multiple identities and pedagogies, and how this multiplicity and intersectionality produces new identities which resist notions of Asian Americans as merely model minorities, forever foreigners, or tokens of diversity. In my following chapters, I discuss how Asian American teachers view teaching and how they perform teaching identities.

PART THREE
TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES

Chapter 5

Attitudes toward teaching:

A quantitative analysis

Thus far, I have discussed how the participants in my qualitative sample perform Asian American identities and intersectional identities. I have emphasized that their identity enactments are their ways of navigating through racial, gender, and class discourses. In their efforts to contest and reify these discourses, my participants have constructed identities that are ambivalent (Ngo, 2010), heterogeneous, multiple, and fluid (Lowe, 1991). Despite their differing approaches to and conceptions and constructions of identity, all participants have one thing in common: they are wrestling with ideas of autonomy and control in order to agentially perform identities.

This chapter takes a slightly different approach to understanding and conceptualizing teachers' identities and pedagogies. Though I still seek to comprehend how teachers perceive of identities and teaching, I now turn to using quantitative methods to understand how teachers perceive of teaching in very discrete, specific ways. I investigate how teachers in a nationally representative sample perceive of teaching. I begin by revisiting the concept of agency that I presented in Chapter 1 and provide additional literature on how teachers perceive the teaching profession and its responsibilities. Next, I present my quantitative findings in order to provide a broad view of teaching attitudes and how teacher race affects these perceptions and attitudes.

As a follow-up to these findings, I have also explored how teaching identities are performed by participants in my qualitative sample. I use the narratives of three participants, Ruby, Christy, and Jessi, to provide further insight into how Asian American teachers view and perform teaching identities. These findings will be discussed in Chapter 6. The mixed-methods

approach I utilize in these two chapters adds depth to the understanding of attitudes towards teaching and also serves to highlight how numbers and narratives can complement each other.

It is important to keep in mind that the teachers in both the quantitative and qualitative samples are working within and against structural constraints that come with teaching in the current standards-based and assessment-driven environment. Therefore, the findings in both parts of this chapter are presented against the backdrop of the reforms that have followed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, Race to the Top challenge, and most recently, the Common Core State Standards Initiative. NCLB was signed into law in 2001 and reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. Its main aims are to increase accountability, provide students with more educational choices and flexibility, and improve students' reading skills. In particular, NCLB has toughened teacher certification standards and requires school districts to implement assessments that are held to state-wide standards, and make adequate yearly progress in advancing all students' academic gains, regardless of race, ethnicity, income-level, ability, or language proficiency (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Race to the Top is an incentive program designed to encourage states and schools to create innovative and rigorous assessment and data tracking programs. Winning states receive additional educational funding (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Lastly, the Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort to raise educational standards. States have collaborated to develop these newly aligned standards and have independently decided to adopt this new curriculum. Since 2010, 45 states have signed on to the initiative (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012).

While all three of these programs aim to raise standards for students and improve the nation's educational system, educators have voiced concerns that the execution of these

programs, particularly NCLB, serve to limit their abilities to effectively teach students. In particular, educators are worried that what they teach, how they teach, and how their teaching is assessed has become too narrowly prescribed and detrimentally affects students (Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2007; Selwyn, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Hursh, 2007).

Background on Agency and Teacher Attitudes

To reiterate, I assume that individuals play an active role in identity formation (Holland et. al, 1998; Bettie, 2003). Although individuals are influenced by structural discourses, they have the agency to react to discourses imposed on them and to author themselves. I have drawn heavily from sociocultural and post-structural scholars in arriving at this understanding of agency. Since this section of my dissertation is quantitative and my approach to data analysis is post-positivist in nature, I also want to ground this section of data analysis in scholarship from the field of psychology. Though the conceptualization of agency is different in psychology, basic understandings of agency and control are similar.

Social scientists often discuss agency in terms of locus of control: whether individuals believe they have control over outcomes (internal locus of control) or outside forces determine outcomes (external locus of control) (Spector, 1988). The concept of locus of control has been used to understand job performance and satisfaction (Spector, 1982), student achievement (Findley & Cooper, 1983; Dweck & Reppucci, 1973), and mental health (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2002). The assumption is that those with stronger internal loci of control are more satisfied with their jobs, perceive academic achievement more positively, and are at lower risks of suffering from mental health illness.

Much of the literature on teachers' attitudes towards teaching investigates to what extent teachers act as agents in their classrooms or exercise an internal locus of control. In light of current educational policy and mandates, much of the recent work on teacher attitudes focuses on how teachers respond to these mandates and reforms. While most teachers view such reforms negatively, they have found ways to work around mandates and utilize many of the teaching strategies that they used before the emphasis on test-taking and assessment began (Lasky, 2005; Schweisfurth, 2006; Rex & Nelson, 2004). At the same time, studies have shown that teacher autonomy highly corresponds to the degree to which a teacher wants to preserve student-centered teaching and teaching that builds on best practices. That is, teachers who care more about resisting the trend to "teach to the test" are more likely to go out of their way to maintain lessons that make use of inquiry- and project-based learning (Sloan, 2006; Priestly, Edwards & Priestly, 2012). In addition, Anderson (2010) demonstrates how teachers build networks to sustain themselves and their pedagogical beliefs—particularly when those beliefs run contrary to what most of their colleagues practice.

Another way scholars have examined teacher attitudes is through Bandura's (1997) concept of efficacy: "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3, as cited in Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). These scholars examine to what extent teachers believe they have the ability to alter factors such as student motivation and student learning through effective teaching strategies. And in fact, self-efficacy has been shown to be strongly linked with an internal locus of control (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2002; Parkay, Greenwood, Olenjnik, & Proller, 1988). Teachers with a stronger internal locus of control are more self-efficacious. The literature on teacher efficacy and teacher and school characteristics reveals that teacher morale is higher in smaller classes

(Glass, 1982), and that teachers perceive more difficulty with classroom management and student motivation in larger classes (Cakmak, 2009). In addition, female teachers and elementary school teachers perceive higher degrees of teacher efficacy (Ross, 1994; Greenwood, Olejnik, & Parkay, 1990). Although teacher efficacy has a positive effect on student learning at urban schools, in general, teachers feel less responsibility toward students at schools with populations of low-income and high percentage of minority students (Halvorsen, Lee, & Andrade, 2009). Finally, years of experience has a counterintuitive effect on teacher efficacy—studies show that novice teachers report stronger feelings of efficacy than do experienced teachers (Halvorsen, Lee & Andrade, 2009; Hoy & Spero, 2005).

Finally, scholarship on teachers of color reveals that some teachers of color seek to be “change agents” by working against systemic norms that preserve “subtractive schooling” (Valenzuela, 1999) in order to advocate for students of color (Villegas & Irvine, 2010; Irvine, 1990, 2002; Beauboeuf-LaFontant, 1999; King, 1991; Michie, 2005 as cited by Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011). Achinstein & Ogawa (2011) illuminate how teachers of color are both change agents and change(d) agents. In other words, while they are able to support students of color, they must do so within the confines of educational policy and other constraints. Thus, teachers of color have less autonomy than they would prefer and find that they are not always able to be the change agents they set out to be.

Scholarship on Asian American teachers’ attitudes towards teaching yields mixed results. While some studies show that Asian American teachers want to serve as change agents, either by discussing issues of race or creating inclusive classroom communities (Suzuki, 1998; Philips, 2012), other studies reveal that Asian American teachers are disheartened by how they are perceived and treated by non-Asian colleagues, students, and parents. Due to these perceptions,

these teachers believe they have little curricular impact (Newton, 2003; Goodwin et. al, 2006; Nguyen, 2009; & Rong and Preissle, 1997). Interestingly, the literature on locus of control and race reveals that Asians and Asian Americans tend to report lower levels of perceived control than non-Asians (Sastry and Ross, 1998). Sastry and Ross (1998) explain that the value of collectivism, which is typically associated with Asian culture, to explain the finding that although perceived control is lower, psychological distress is not necessarily higher. My findings add to the literature on teacher attitudes and reveal the complexities around perceptions and performances of teaching identities.

Methodology

My quantitative analysis provides a broad perspective on how teachers across the nation perceive teaching. As noted in chapter 2, survey data, particularly data that is representative of a large population, can provide generalizable findings about a population at-large. Thus, the data from the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) *2007-2008 Schools and Staffing Survey Public School Teacher Questionnaire* provides a look at (1) how teachers across the nation perceive of teaching and (2) how teacher race affects perceptions of teaching. (Note: Since I am only using the public school teacher data, my findings refer to public school teachers only.)

As I explained in Chapter 2, I used descriptive statistics and regression modeling to look at the data. I use descriptive statistics to show how teachers across the nation perceive of teaching. I use regression to predict how various independent variables (race, gender, degree, subject/grade level taught, years of experience, school urbanicity, region, class size, percent of minority students, and percent of minority teachers) influence dependent variables having to do

with teaching attitudes (sense of control, sense of support, perception of problems, satisfaction, and likelihood to teach again). Table 5.1 explains how the dependent variables are defined (this is the same table as Table 2.2 from Chapter 2).

Table 5.1: Definitions of variables

Variable Name	Description	Questions from 2007-2008 Survey
Control	The degree to which a teacher believes they have control in their classroom. (1=no control; 4=a great deal of control)	54. a-f
Support	The degree to which a teacher agrees feeling supported by the administration, parents, and other staff and faculty (1=strongly agree; 4=strongly disagree)	55. a-q
Problem	The degree to which a teacher believes factors are problems in their school (1=serious problem; 4=not a problem)	56. a-j
Satisfied	The degree to which a teacher agrees they are satisfied with their school (1=strongly agree; 4=strongly disagree)	57. a-f
Teach Again	Teacher reports whether they would become a teacher if given a second chance (1=certainly would become a teacher; 5=certainly would not become a teacher)	58

The 2007-2008 SASS sample includes 38, 240 teachers. Based on this sample, population estimates can also be produced. As explained in the SASS survey documentation, producing weighted estimates with SASS data involves using replicate weights to compute the variance of a statistic, Y , as shown below:

$$Variance (Y) = \left(\frac{1}{n}\right) \sum_r (Y_r - Y)$$

Where: Y_r = the estimate of Y using the r^{th} set of replicate weights.
 n = the number of replicates.

The SASS survey uses balanced repeated replication (BRR) to calculate sampling variance. In addition, a bootstrap variance estimator is used to modulate the overestimation of variance that can be produced with BRR.

While using unweighted sample data is useful for understanding the SASS sample population, using weighted data is useful for generalizing the survey's findings to the broader teaching population. However, Stata, the program I used to perform my analysis, has limits on which functions can be performed using weighted data. I was not able to run all of my descriptive statistical analyses on weighted data and thus for consistency, all of the descriptive statistics are calculated based on the unweighted 2007-2008 sample. However, my regression modeling is based on weighted data. I followed the SASS's directions in setting the survey data to define the probability weight, BRR weights, and the variance estimation type and proceeded to calculate the regression models based on these estimates.

Results and Discussion

a. Descriptive statistics

i. All Teachers

The following figures and tables provide a snapshot of the 2007-2008 SASS teaching population sample. Figure 5.1 shows that most teachers teach in rural schools. This is interesting since 71.2% of the U.S. population lives in urban areas while only 19.3% of the population lives in rural areas (U.S. Census, 2010). Based on the Census data, one might expect more teachers in city schools. One way to explain this discrepancy is that the SASS definition of "rural" schools is broad. It includes both schools in rural territory less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area and schools in rural territory more than 25 miles from an urbanized area (SASS documentation, 2007-08, pp. 58-59). Based on this definition, some teachers in the "rural" category might in fact teach in locales more similar to suburbs or cities.

Figure 5.1: Teachers by school's urbanicity

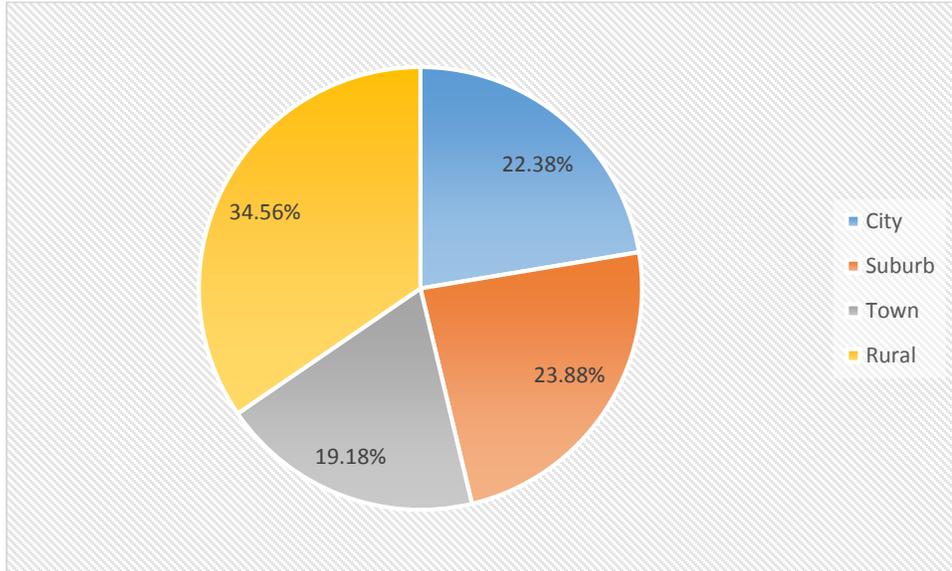


Figure 5.2 shows that most teachers in the sample are located in the South, and the least number of teachers are located in the Northeast. This corresponds to Census trends in population growth in the South (U.S. Census, 2010).

Figure 5.2: Teachers by school's region

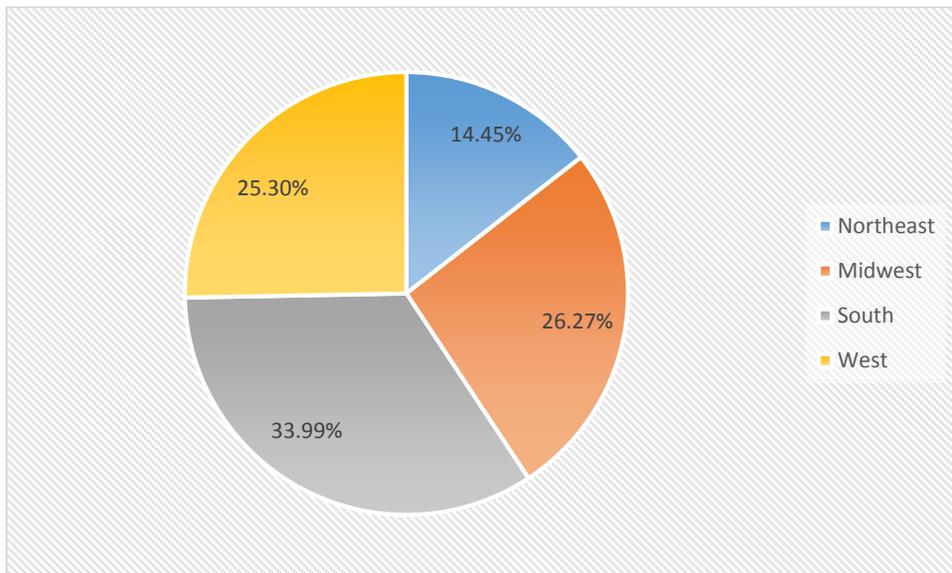


Figure 5.3 shows that most teachers' highest degrees are either a bachelor's or a master's. Figure 5.4 shows that the most popular teaching assignment is elementary education, followed by English Language Arts. Vocational, career, and technical education teachers make up the smallest percentage of the teaching population.

Figure 5.3: Highest degree earned

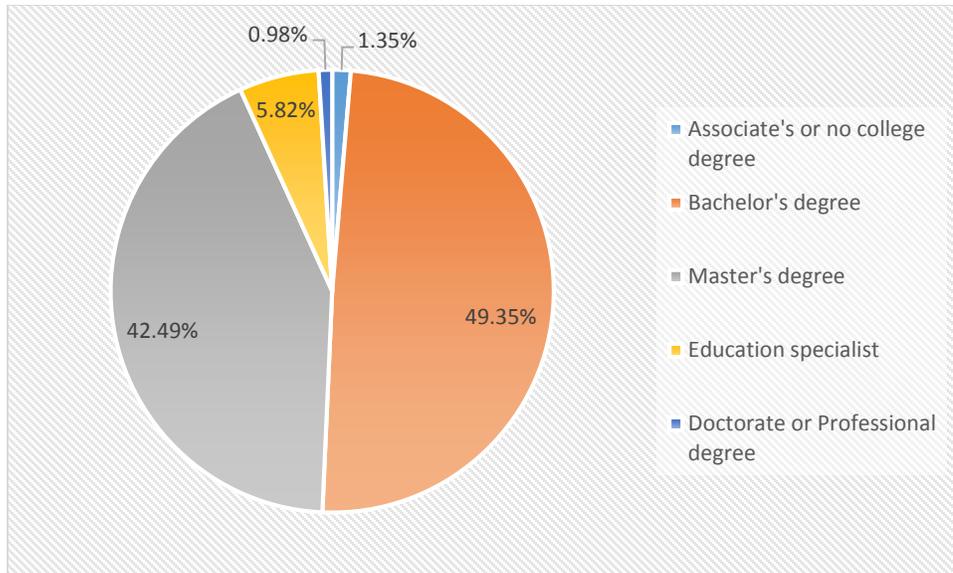
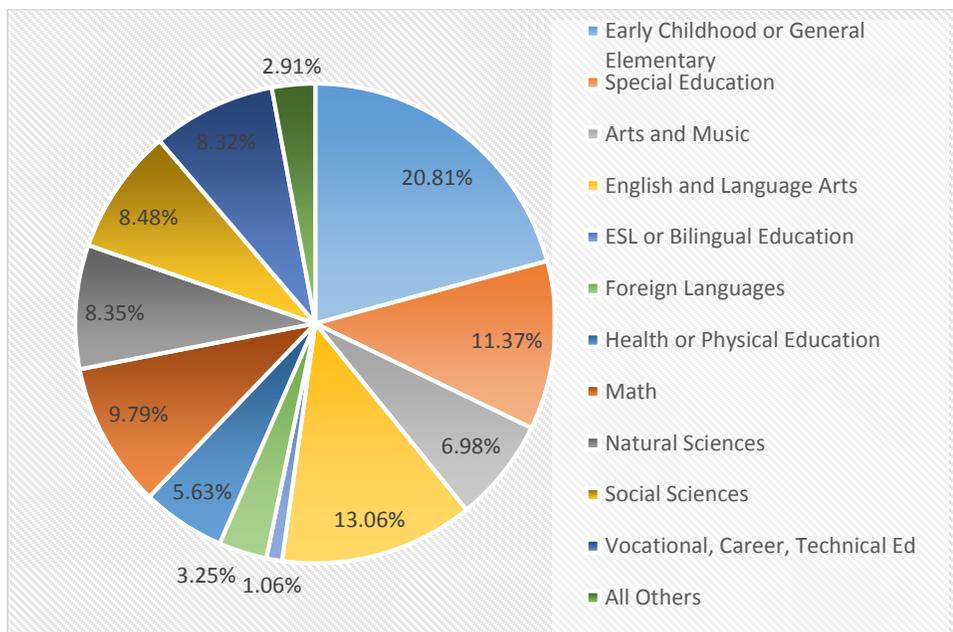


Figure 5.4: Main teaching assignment



Tables 5.2 and 5.3 show how the subject matter teachers teach are influenced by their gender and highest degree earned. Table 5.2 shows that there are more than two times the number of women in the teaching force than men. In addition, it shows how subject matter is stratified along gender lines. Women are overwhelmingly more likely to teach elementary school than men, while men are more likely to teach health/physical education, natural or social science, and vocational subjects. Table 5.3 shows that teachers with associate’s degrees are much more likely to teach vocational, career, and technical classes than anything else. Teachers with bachelor’s and master’s degrees don’t differ much in terms of what they teach.

Table 5.2: Gender and subject matter

	Women	Men
Early Childhood or General Elementary	7310	650
Special Education	3540	810
Arts and Music	1700	970
English and Language Arts	3990	1000
ESL, Bilingual Education, Foreign Lang	1330	320
Health or Physical Education	860	1290
Math	2270	1480
Natural Sciences	1750	1450
Social Sciences	1290	1950
Vocational, Career, or Technical Ed	1670	1510
All Others	660	450
Total	26370	11880

Table 5.3: Highest degree earned and subject matter

	Associate's	Bachelor's	Master's	Ed Specialty & Doctorate
Early Childhood or General Elementary	20	4480	3060	400
Special Education	10	1830	2090	380
Arts and Music	20	1420	1080	150
English and Language Arts	20	2360	2210	400
ESL, Bilingual Education, Foreign Lang.	10	730	750	160
Health or Physical Education	10	1240	800	100
Math	10	1860	1660	210
Natural Sciences	20	1460	1480	240
Social Sciences	20	1580	1430	210
Vocational, Career, or Technical Ed	320	1470	1210	190
All Others	60	440	480	130
Total	520	18870	16250	2570

Lastly, Table 5.4 provides a look at what the teaching and student populations look like, based on the 2007-08 SASS data. 17,540 teachers in this sample teach in schools with few teachers of color and few students of color. This makes sense since the majority of teachers are White, and thus most teachers have mostly White colleagues (Ochoa, 2007; NCES, 1999-2000; SASS 2007-08). 5,340 teachers teach in schools with few teachers of color but many students of color. Again, this reflects the fact that nearly 40% of public school students are students of color (NCES, 2004; SASS 2007-08) and that the teaching population does not reflect the student population. Lastly, 130 teachers are in schools with many teachers of color but few students of color, while 2,440 teachers are located in schools with many teachers and students of color. These numbers indicate that teachers of color are more likely to teach in schools with high numbers of students of color, which reflects previous findings (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011; Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2004).

Table 5.4: Students and teachers of color

	Low percentage of students of color	High percentage of students of color
Low percentage of teachers of color	17,540	5,340
High percentage of teachers of color	130	2,440

ii. Asian American teachers

The next set of figures show where Asian American teachers in the 2007-2008 SASS sample teach, what kind of schools they teach in, what they teach, and their highest earned degree. Figure 5.5 shows that Asian American teachers are overwhelmingly located in the West. This should not be surprising, given that the highest population of Asian Americans is located in California (U.S. Census, 2010). Figure 5.6 shows that the majority of Asian American teachers teach in city and suburban schools. Again, this data is in line with Census (2010) data which reveals that most Asian Americans live in large cities or in suburbs. The SASS data provides a comprehensive look at what Asian Americans are teaching. The most popular teaching assignment (Figure 5.7) is elementary education (23.24%, followed by math (18.91%), natural science (10.87%), English Language Arts (10.66%), and special education (8.65%). Finally, Figure 5.8 shows that the majority of Asian American teachers' highest degrees earned are bachelor's and master's degrees.

Figure 5.5: Asian American teachers by region

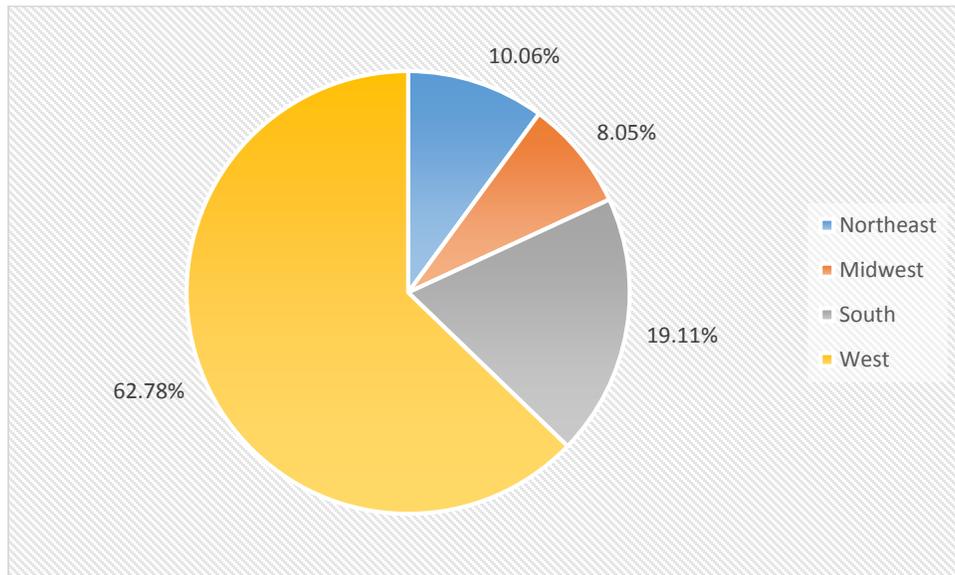


Figure 5.6: Asian American teachers by urbanicity

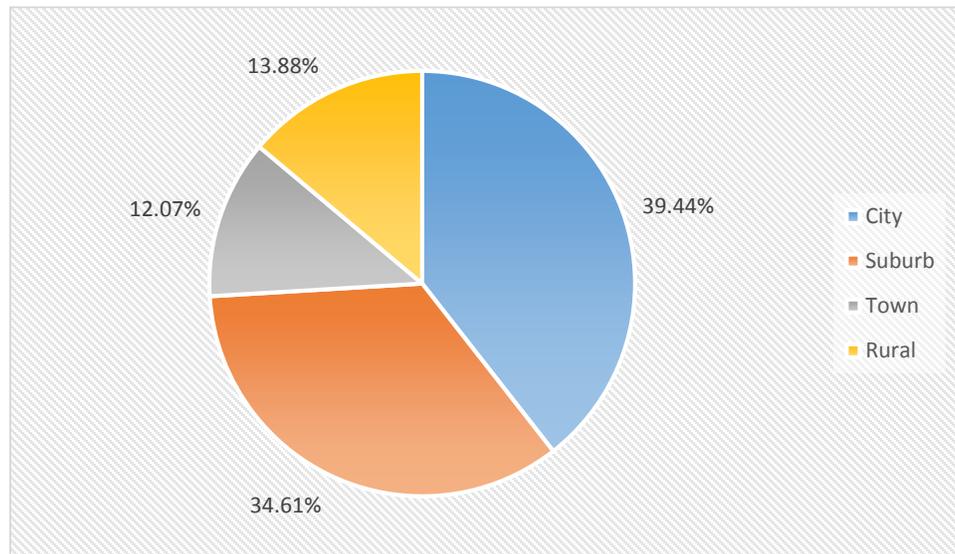


Figure 5.7: Asian American teachers by assignment

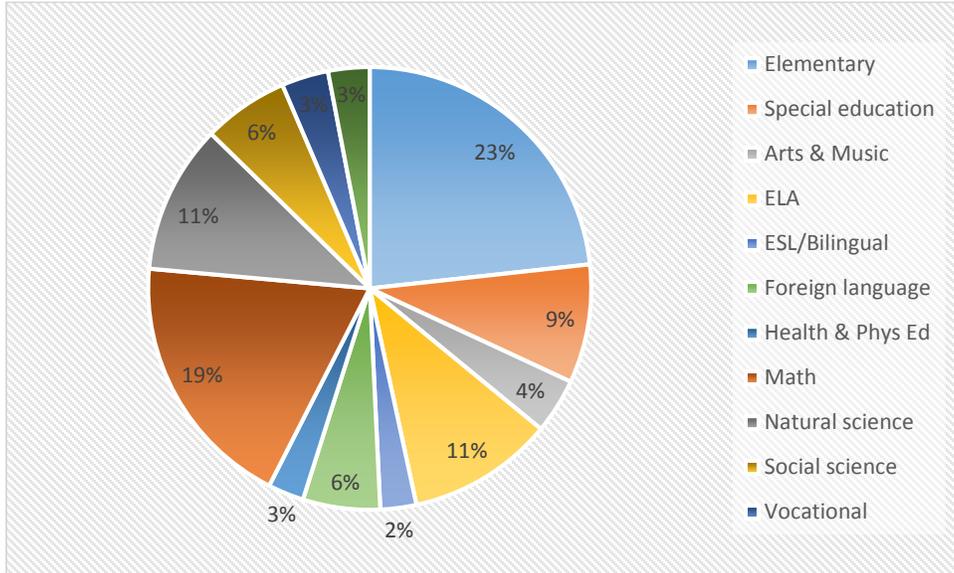
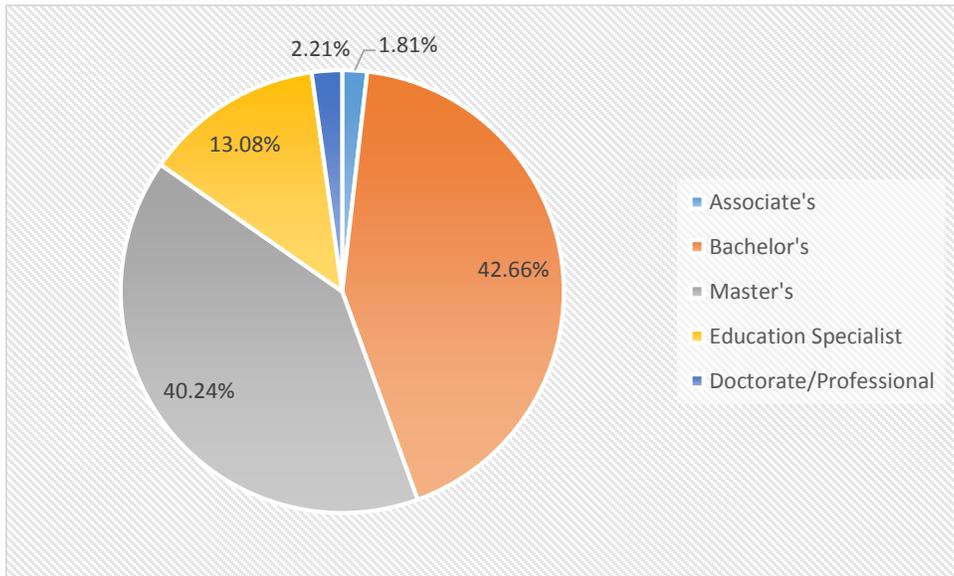


Figure 5.8: Asian American teachers' highest degree earned

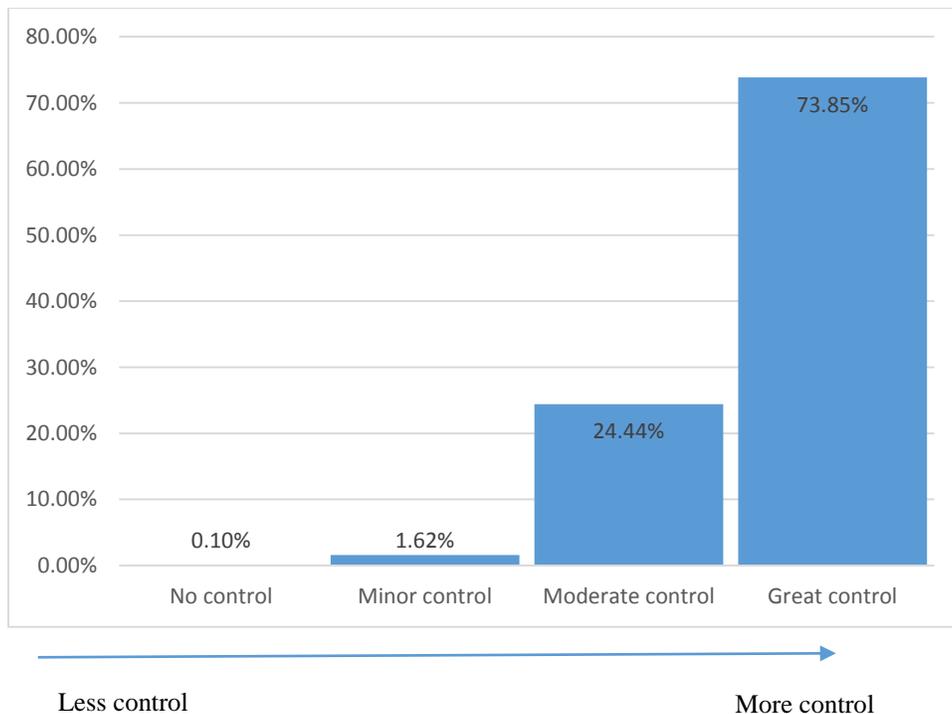


iii. Dependent Variables

The following figures (5.9-5.14) are used to display how teachers in the 2007-08 sample reported on measures of control, support, perception of problems, satisfaction, and attitudes toward teaching. The figures simply show what percentage of teachers reported identifying with each of the Likert-scale responses. (Reminder: Although I will use weighted data in my regression models I use unweighted data here.)

Figure 5.9 shows that 73.85% of teachers report having a great deal of control in their classrooms, and 24.44% of teachers report having a moderate degree of control in their classrooms. The majority of teachers feel that they have control in and over their classrooms.

Figure 5.9: Control



According to Figure 5.10, 23.09% of teachers agree that they are strongly supported, and 63.01% of teachers agree that they are somewhat supported. The majority of teachers feel supported in their schools.

Figure 5.10: Support

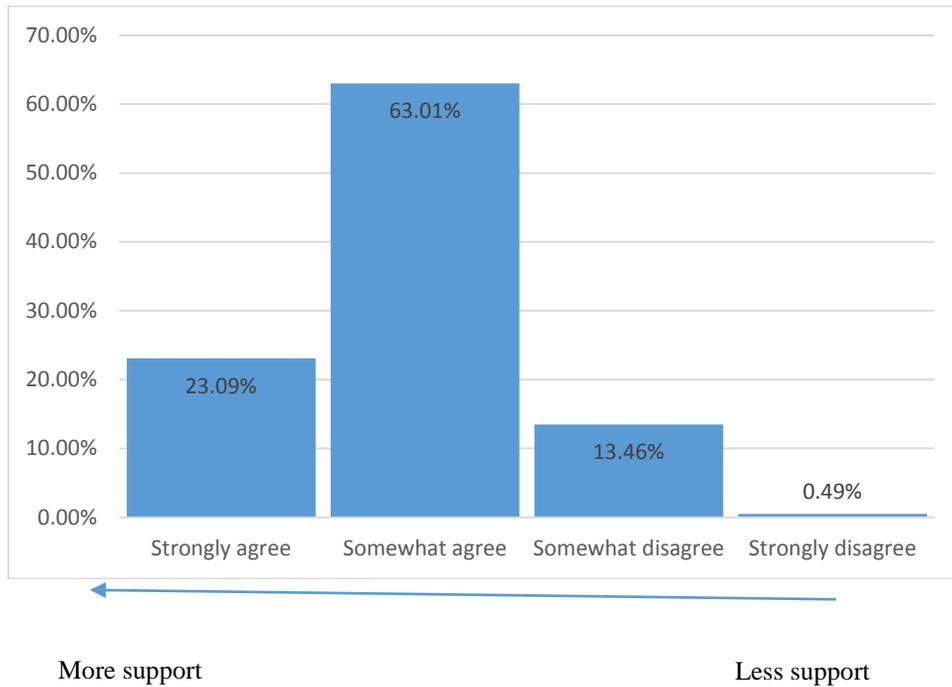


Figure 5.11 shows how teachers perceive problems in their schools. Very few teachers perceive that there are serious problems at their schools. Instead, 51.15% of teachers believe that minor problems exist, and 33.89% of teachers believe that no problems exist at their schools. Thus, the majority of teachers believe that there are minor or no problems at their schools.

Figure 5.11: Perception of problems

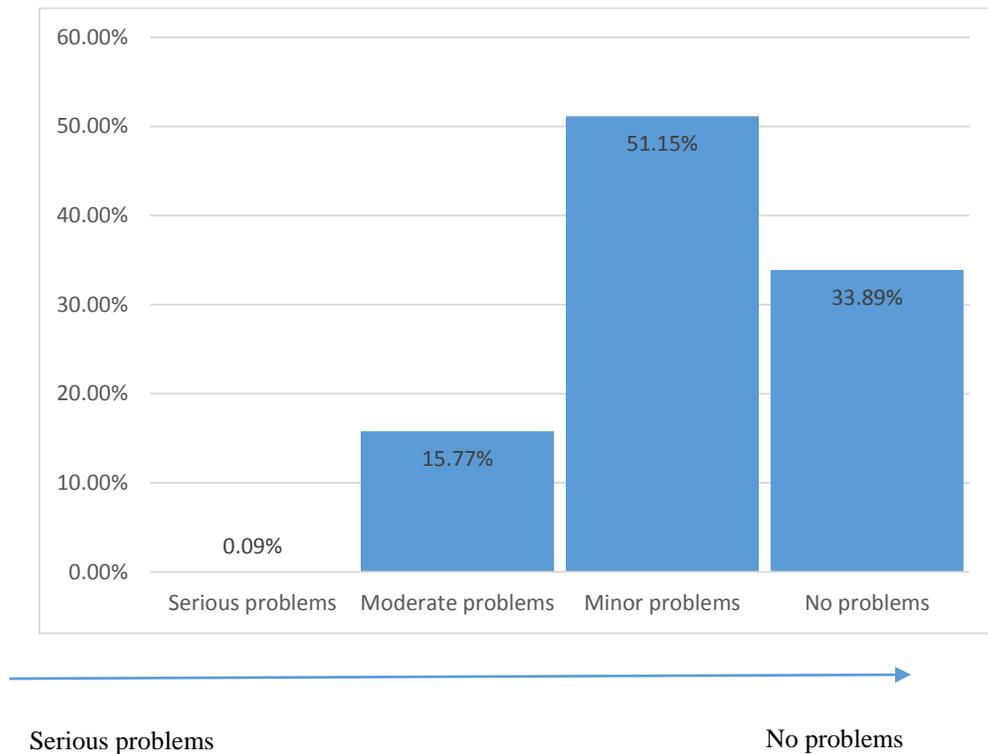
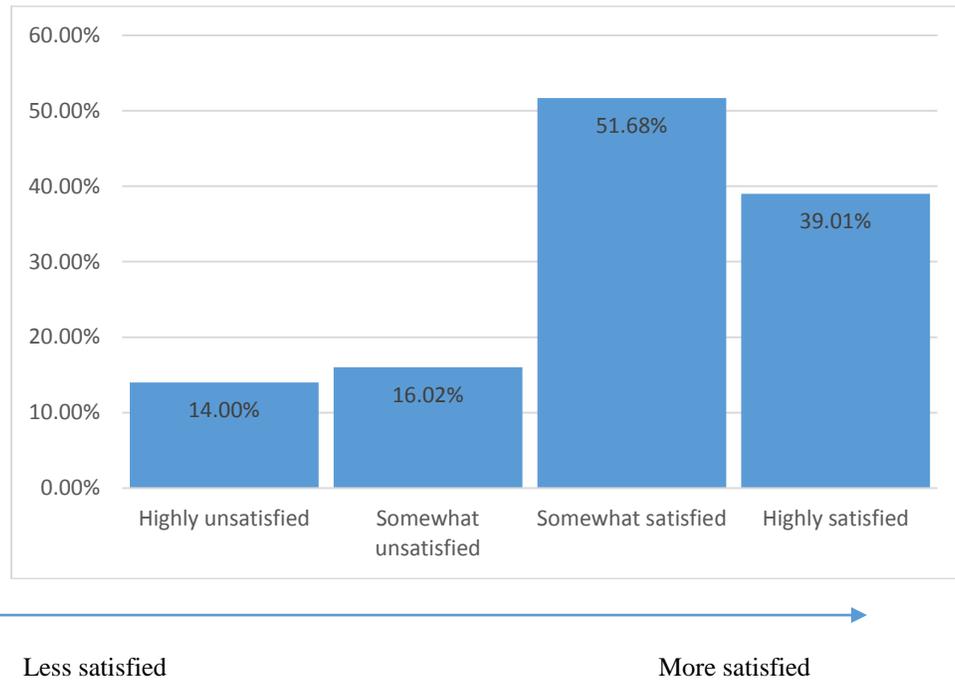


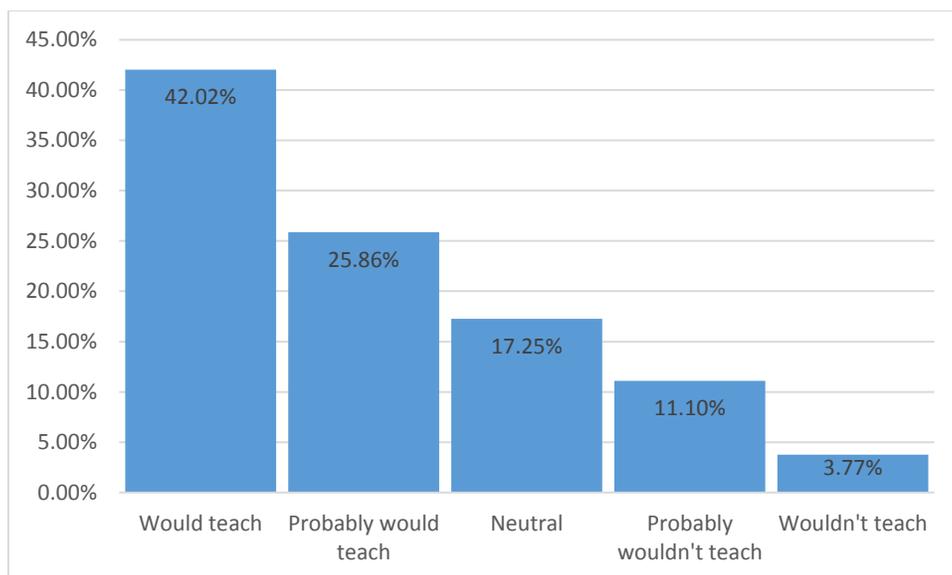
Figure 5.12 shows that the majority of teachers are satisfied with their jobs. 51.68% of teachers are somewhat satisfied, and 39.01% of teachers are highly satisfied.

Figure 5.12: Satisfaction



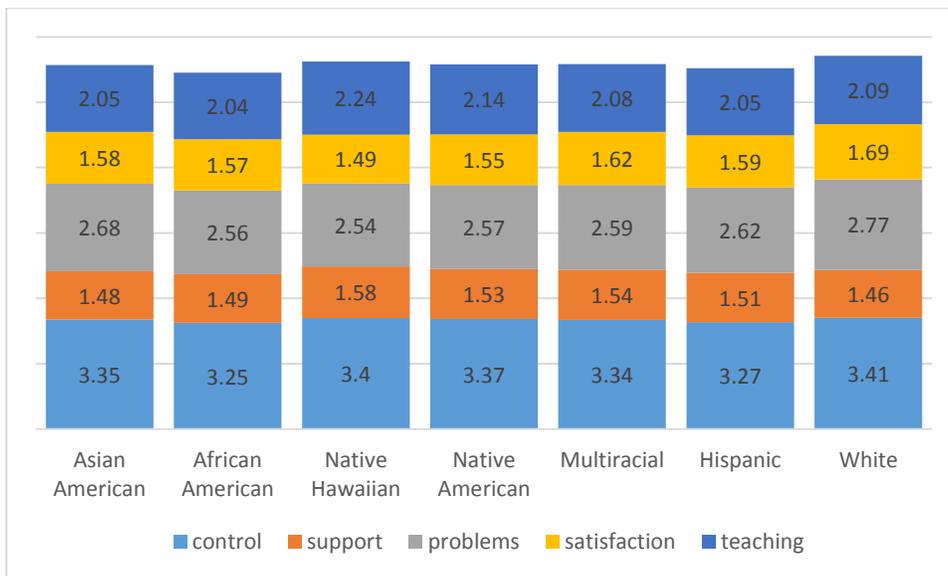
Finally, Figure 5.13 shows that if given the chance to start over again, 42% of teachers would certainly become a teacher and 25.86% would probably become a teacher. Only 3.77% of the sample would not choose to teach again.

Figure 5.13: Desire to teach again



These 5 figures illustrate that overall, the majority of teachers perceive that they have control in their classrooms, support at their schools, experience few problems in their schools, are satisfied with their jobs, and if given the chance, would become a teacher again. Together, this data supports the idea that despite systemic and structural constraints imposed on them, teachers hold positive attitudes about teaching. Figure 5.14 displays mean responses on each of the five variables by race.

Figure 5.14: Comparison by race (mean responses)



I used ANOVA to see whether these means were statistically different. In fact, there is a statistically significant difference among the means on measures of control ($p < 0.001$), support ($p < 0.001$), problems ($p < 0.001$), and satisfaction ($p < 0.001$), but no significant difference in whether teachers would teach again. To further explore how characteristics such as teacher race predict teacher attitudes, I turn to regression modeling. My next set of analyses explores what teacher and school characteristics predict teacher attitudes.

b. Regression Modeling

As explained earlier, I performed my regression modeling using weighted data. I ran several regression models for each of the dependent variables. Since I am especially interested in how Asian American teachers perceive teaching, I made race a central focus of the regression models. I began by examining how race predicts teachers' sense of control, support, problems, satisfaction, or desire to teach again. Next, I added teacher characteristics as regressors: gender, degree, subject/grade level taught, years of experience. Lastly, I added school characteristics as regressors: school urbanicity, region, class size, percent of minority students, and percent of minority teachers. For simplicity's sake, I only present the full models here, which include all 10 regressors. It should be noted that some indicator variables have also been collapsed to simplify these regressions models. For example, although there are 12 different teaching assignments that teachers could identify with, I collapsed the 12 categories into four categories based on subject matter after ensuring that the means within the categories were similar (see table 5.5). In addition, although some variables (years of teaching experience, class size, percent of minority students, and percent of minority teachers) are continuous, because they were not normally distributed, I collapsed them into just three categories in order to see how these variables predicted the regression models. Since I could not find any literature to provide a definitive definition for small vs. large class size, novice vs. veteran teacher status, or low vs. high minority enrollment, I used the SASS's definition of such variables to define cut points for these variables (see table 5e).

Table 5.5: Collapsed category descriptions

	Collapsed categories	What collapsed categories include
Subject	Language	English language arts, ESL, Foreign language, social sciences
	Arts	Art, music, vocational subjects
	Oth/Phys	Other subjects, physical education
	MatSci	Math, science
Degree	SpecDoc	Specialty degree, doctorate
Class size	ClassSm	Class size < 20 students
	ClassMed	Class size between 21 and 30 students
	ClassLar	Class size > 31 students
% Minority Students	LowPerc	Minority enrollment < 20.5%
	MidPerc	Minority enrollment between 20.5% and 50.5%
	HighPerc	Minority enrollment > 50.5%
% Minority Teachers	LowPTeach	Minority teachers < 20.5%
	MidPTeach	Minority teachers between 20.5% and 50.5%
	HighPTeach	Minority teachers > 50.5%
Years of experience	Novice	Teachers with < 3 years of experience
	midCareer	Teachers with between 4 and 19 years of experience
	expTeach	Teachers with > 20 years of experience

I was also interested in how Asian American teachers compared to teachers of other races in their perceptions of control, support, problems, satisfaction, and attitude towards teaching. Thus, I ran several versions of the regression models. I began by examining how teachers of all races compare (model 1, or ALL for “all teachers”). Second, I looked at how Asian American teachers compare to all other teachers (model 2, or AA vA for “Asian Americans vs. all teachers”). Next, I dropped White teachers from the model and used teachers of color as the control to compare Asian American teachers with other teachers of color (model 3, or TOC for “teachers of color”). Finally, I dropped Black, Hispanic, Multiracial, Native Hawaiian, and American Indian teachers from the model and looked at how Asian American teachers compare to each other (model 4, or “AAO” for “Asian American teachers only”).

In Chapter 1, I discussed how Asian Americans are marginalized because of the racial discourses around the model minority myth (Lee, 2009) and because their experiences are overshadowed by the Black/White paradigm (Okimoto, 1994; Wu, 2003). In addition to being marginalized, many Asian Americans' experiences involve invisibility and stereotypes (Okimoto, 1994; Tuan, 1998; Wu, 2003; Lee, 2004; Ngo, 2010). I have also discussed (both in chapter 1 and earlier in this chapter) how although some Asian American teachers have positive attitudes towards teaching and seek to be change agents (Suzuki, 1998; Philips, 2012), others are discouraged by how they are perceived and treated in the classroom and believe they have little curricular impact (Newton, 2003; Goodwin et. al, 2006; Nguyen, 2009; & Rong and Preissle, 1997). Moreover, I explained that scholarship reveals that Asian Americans tend to report having less of an internal locus of control (Sastry and Ross, 1998). Knowing that Asian Americans experience marginalization, that Asian American teachers have varying attitudes towards teaching, and that they have less of an internal locus of control, I hypothesized that Asian American teachers as a whole would have less positive teaching attitudes than White teachers. That is, they would report having less control, support, and satisfaction, have a greater perceptions of problems, and be less likely to want to teach again. In addition, because of the racially triangulated (Kim, 1999) position that Asian American teachers occupy which places them in-between Blacks and Whites, I hypothesized that the perceptions of Asian American teachers would be different from those of other teachers of color.

However, the regression models reveal that Asian American teachers perceive having more control in their classrooms than teachers of any other race, including White teachers. At the same time, being Asian American (or any other race) does not significantly estimate models of support, perception of problems, satisfaction, or desire to teach again. Instead, other teacher

characteristics such as subject taught and years of experience and school characteristics, including urbanicity, census region, class size, and percent of minority students do seem to impact these models in significant ways. Thus, when these regression models are controlled for race, teacher characteristics, and school characteristics, it is the teacher and school characteristics that significantly predict outcomes, above and beyond race. Below are the various versions of each regression model.

i. Control

The variable measuring control is not normally distributed (see Figure 5.15). Since multiple regression assumes the data is normally distributed, using it to model control is not ideal. Instead, I used logistic regression to examine control. By using the mean (indicated on Figure 5.15 by the red line) to divide the data into two groups, I could predict the likelihood that a teacher would report having less (the group below the red line) versus more (the group above the red line) control in their classroom.

Figure 5.15: Distribution of control variable

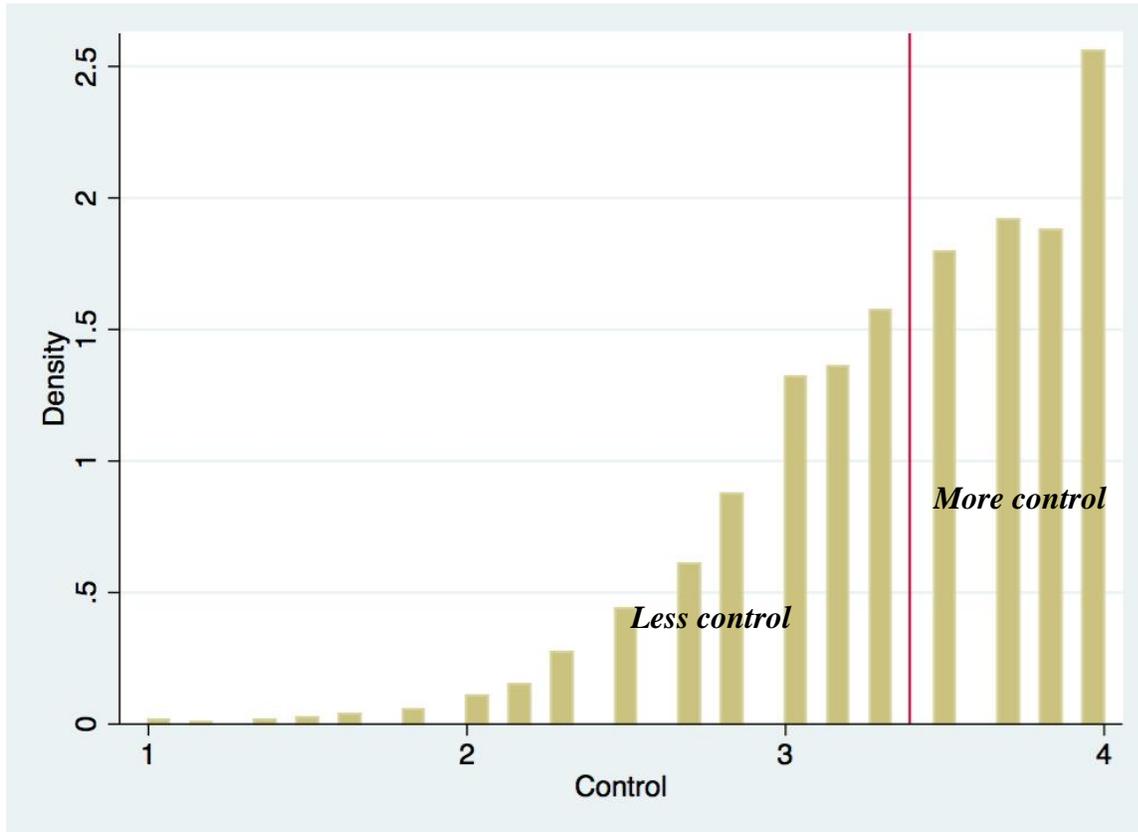


Table 5.6: Control regression model

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
		ALL	AAvA	TOC	AAO
		n=38,420	n=38,240	n=5180	n=500
		<i>Odds Ratio</i>			
teacher race	AsAm	1.63*	1.56*	1.50*	
	AfAm	1.11			
	Nat Haw	1.60			
	AmerInd	1.10			
	Multi	0.94			
	Hispanic	1.19			
teacher char.	Male	1.06	1.06	0.88	0.83
	Bachelor	1.01	1.00	0.60	0.07
	Master	1.00	1.00	0.45	0.07
	SpecDoc	0.85	0.84	0.45	0.15
	Lang	2.71***	2.72***	2.34**	1.23
	Arts	8.46***	8.40***	5.35***	6.21
	OthPhys	5.01***	5.01***	4.42***	19.95**
	MatSci	1.80***	1.79***	1.20	0.46
	SpecEd	3.07***	3.07***	2.26**	3.81
	midCareer	1.30***	1.30***	1.12	0.59
	expTeach	1.74***	1.73***	1.23	0.51
school char.	Suburb	1.08	1.08	1.10	0.71
	Town	1.45**	1.45**	1.18	2.57
	Rural	1.77***	1.76***	1.58	0.98
	MidWest	1.29**	1.29**	1.00	0.56
	South	0.74**	0.75**	0.68	0.11
	West	1.04	1.05	0.69	0.43
	ClassMed	0.71***	0.71***	0.92	0.73
	ClassLar	0.75***	0.75***	1.04	0.53
	MidPerc	0.82**	0.82**	0.68	0.91
	HighPerc	0.74***	0.75***	0.63	0.82
	MidPTeach	0.95	0.98	1.13	1.18
	HighPTeach	0.85	0.90	0.97	0.81
	_cons	0.19	0.18	0.63	34.94

* denotes significance at the $p < .05$ level

** denotes significance at the $p < .01$ level

*** denotes significance at the $p < .001$ level

ALL = all teachers; AAvA = all teachers vs. Asian American teachers; TOC = teachers of color (White teachers dropped from model); AAO = Asian American teachers only

Model 1 (hereon referred to as model ALL) shows that race is only a significant variable for Asian American teachers. In other words, in comparison to White teachers, the only group with a statistically significant difference in perceptions of control is Asian American teachers. Asian American teachers are 1.63 times as likely as White teachers to report having a high degree of control in the classroom, above and beyond the effects of the other control variables. Certain teacher characteristics, including subject taught and years of experience are also significant variables. In fact, those who teach the arts are over 8 (models ALL and 2/AAvA) and 5 times (model 3/TOC) as likely as elementary school teachers to report having a high degree of control in the classroom. This relationship holds despite the fact that literature shows that elementary school teachers often report higher degrees of self-efficacy than middle and high school teachers (Ross, 1994; Greenwood et. al, 1990). Physical education teachers are also much more likely to report having a high degree of control. In addition, mid-career teachers and experienced teachers are more likely to have a high degree of control than novice teachers, again despite the fact that previous scholarship has shown that teachers lose efficacy with experience (Halvorsen et. al, 2009; Hoy & Spero, 2005). School characteristics also have a significant effect on this model. Teachers in towns and rural areas report having more control than teachers in cities. Teachers with larger classes and high percentages of minority students are less likely to report having a high degree of control, supporting the literature around these topics (Glass, 1982; Halvorsen et. al, 2009).

Model AAvA presents similar results. Race remains a significant variable for Asian American teachers, above and beyond the effects of teacher and school characteristics. Subject taught also remains significant as is years of experience. In addition, school characteristics remain significant predictors of teachers' sense of control. In Model TOC, race also remains a

significant predictor of sense of control. Subject taught also remains significant. However, all other teacher and school characteristics lose significance. Model 4/AAO shows that not much variation exists among Asian American teachers. Although physical education teachers and teachers of other subjects are 19 times as likely as teachers of elementary grades to have a high degree of control, no other variables significantly predict an Asian American teacher's sense of control.

ii. Support

The support variable is not normally distributed (see Figure 5.16), just as the variable measuring control was not. However, whereas the control variable was so skewed that it could not be transformed into a more normal shape, the variable measuring support can be transformed. Log transformation was used to give the curve a more normal shape (see Figure 5.17). Once transformed to a more normal distribution, the variable was also converted to a z-score with a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1. In addition, the Likert scale for the questions in this factor ranged from 1=strongly agree to 4=strongly disagree, with a mean of 1.46. Thus, z-scores below the mean reveal a stronger sense of support while z-scores above the mean reveal a lesser sense of support.

Figure 5.16: Distribution of support variable

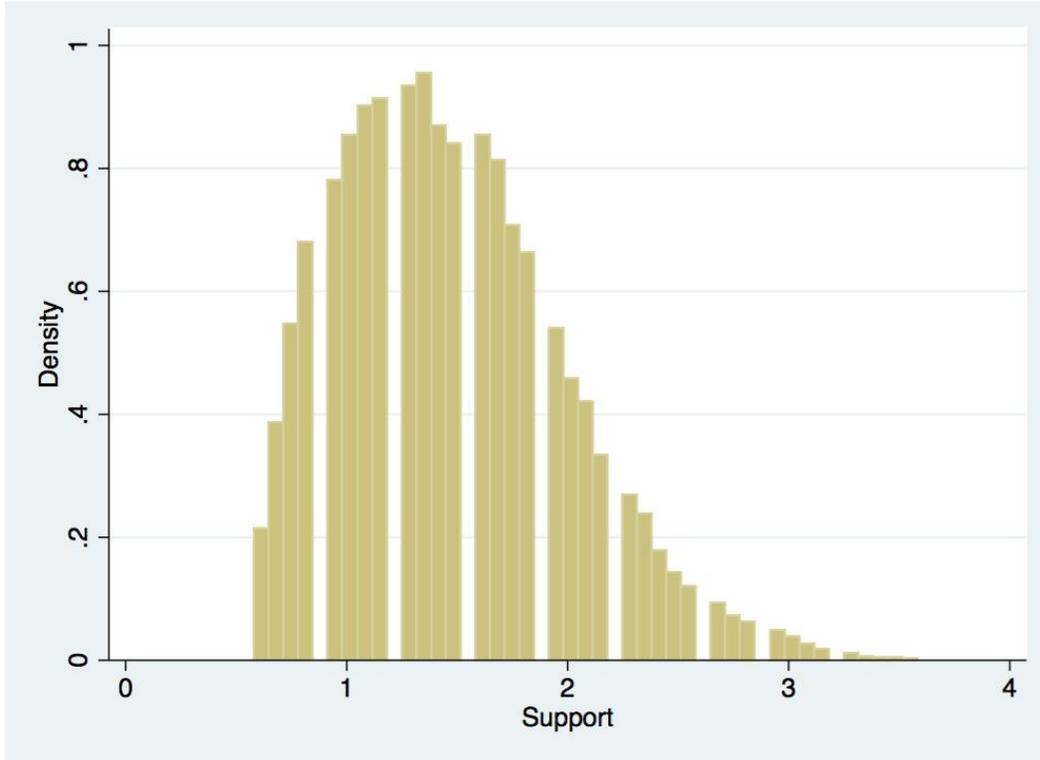


Figure 5.17: Distribution of support variable after log transformation and z-score conversion

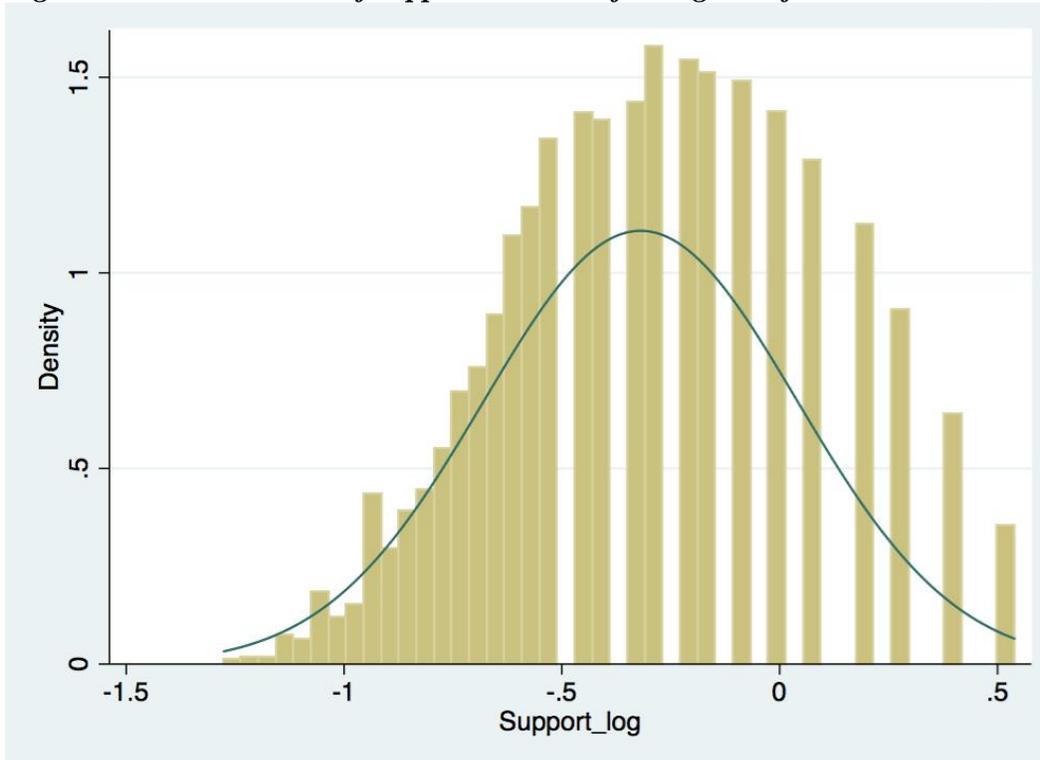


Table 5.7: Support regression model

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
		ALL	AAvA	TOC	AAO
		n=38,240	n=38,240	n=5180	n=500
		r2=0.06	r2=0.05	r2=0.05	r2=0.20
		<i>z-score</i>			
teacher race	AsAm	0.15	0.12	0.08	
	AfAm	0.13*			
	Nat Haw	0.03			
	AmerInd	-0.27*			
	Multi	0.02			
	Hispanic	0.08			
teacher char.	Male	-0.04	-0.04	0.06	-0.13
	Bachelor	-0.15	-0.16	-0.61**	-1.55
	Master	-0.20*	-0.20*	-0.66**	-1.83
	SpecDoc	-0.20**	-0.27**	-0.87***	-1.74
	Lang	-0.28**	-0.14**	-0.19*	-0.20
	Arts	-0.04	-0.04	0.15	-0.01
	OthPhys	-0.00	-0.00	-0.06	-0.07
	MatSci	-0.15***	-0.15***	-0.19	0.19
	SpecEd	-0.07	-0.07	-0.19	0.20
	midCareer	-0.06*	-0.06*	-0.06	-0.24
	expTeach	0.09**	0.09**	0.07	0.06
school char.	Suburb	0.12**	0.12**	0.04	0.20
	Town	0.04	0.03	0.22	0.30
	Rural	0.07	0.06	0.10	-0.15
	MidWest	0.01	0.01	-0.05	0.08
	South	0.21	0.22***	0.13	0.63
	West	0.11	0.11*	-0.04	0.24
	ClassMed	-0.04	-0.04	0.02	0.35
	ClassLar	0.14***	0.14***	0.15	0.39
	MidPerc	-0.08**	-0.08**	-0.05	-0.14
	HighPerc	-0.29***	-0.28***	-0.18	0.06
	MidPTeach	-0.12**	-0.10*	-0.05	-0.30
	HighPTeach	-0.24***	-0.20**	-0.18	-0.50
	_cons	0.25	0.25	0.76	1.36

* denotes significance at the $p < .05$ level

** denotes significance at the $p < .01$ level

*** denotes significance at the $p < .001$ level

ALL = all teachers; AAvA = all teachers vs. Asian American teachers; TOC = teachers of color (White teachers dropped from model); AAO = Asian American teachers only

In Model AT, being Asian American does not significantly predict how a teacher will perceive being supported in their classroom and school. However, being African American and Native American are significant predictors. When this model is controlled for the full set of control variables, African American teachers perceive less (.13 of a standard deviation above the mean) support, while Native American teachers perceive more (.27 of a standard deviation below the mean). Race is not a significant predictor of perceived teacher support for the other models.

Teacher characteristics other than race and school characteristics are stronger predictors of perceived support than race is. In Models AAvA and TOC, the subject/grade level taught is a significant predictor of how supported teachers feel. These models reveal that some subject-area teachers perceive being more supported than elementary school teachers, which again runs counter to previous scholarship. The AAvA and TOC models also reveal that a teacher's highest earned degree is a significant predictor. Teachers with bachelor's, master's, and special degrees/doctorates perceive being more supported than teachers with associate's degrees. It is possible that this effect is due to the fact that teachers with higher degrees tend to receive more training in their professions and are better prepared to handle teaching duties and tasks. In addition, teachers with associate's degrees tend to teach vocational, career, and other technical education subjects (Table 5.3). It is possible that teachers with associate's degrees differ in perceptions of support because of the subjects they tend to teach. Finally, some school characteristics, including urbanicity, class size, and percentage of minority students and teachers significantly predict teachers' perceptions of support. Specifically, Model AAvA reveals that teachers in suburban schools perceive receiving less support than do teachers in city schools. While literature has shown that teachers have lower perceptions of urban schools (Halvorsen et al., 2009), it is possible that due to interventions in urban schools, urban schools provide teachers

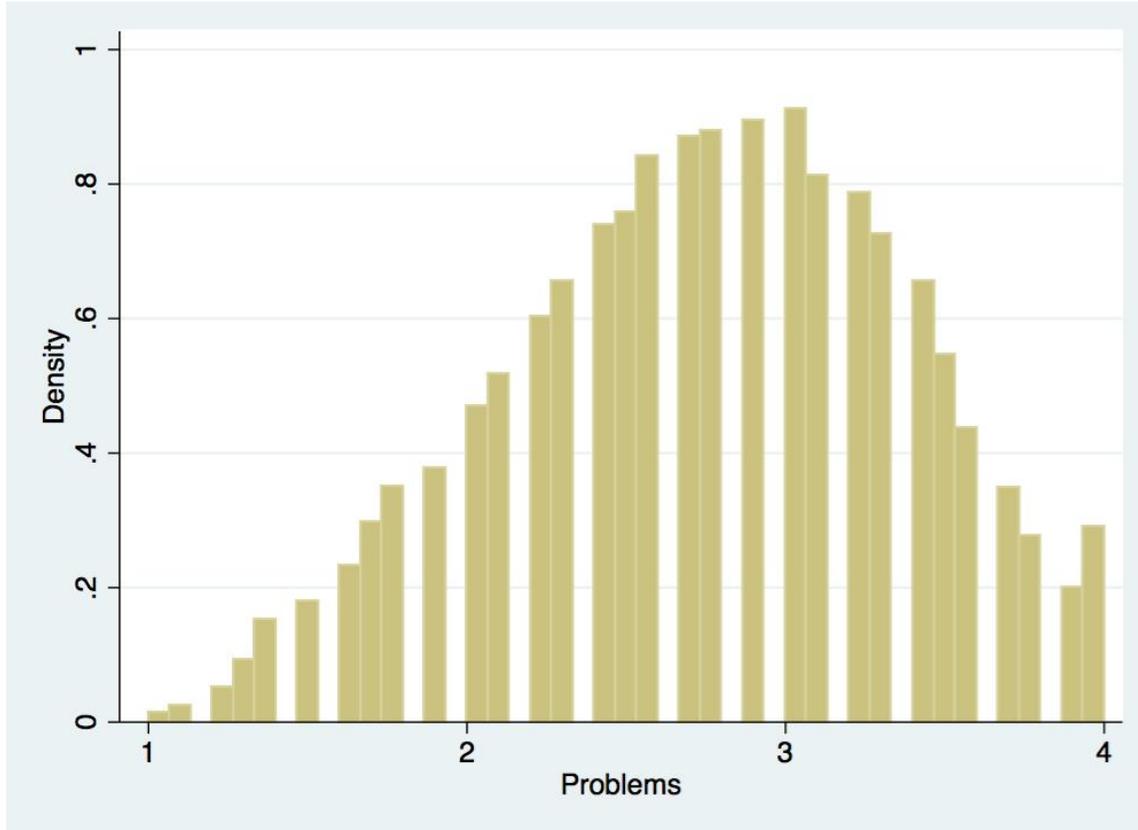
with more support than their suburban counterparts. Additionally, teachers of large classes perceive receiving less support than do teachers of small classes, supporting the idea that teacher morale is higher in smaller classes (Glass, 1982). Lastly, teachers with mid and high percentages of minority students perceive receiving more support than their peers at schools with low percentages of minority students.

None of these teacher or school characteristics are significant regressors in Model AAO, which reveals that there is not much systematic variation in the way Asian American teachers perceive support. Any variation in support can be described as random. In addition, the r^2 (the amount of variance in perceptions of support) for all four models is quite low, and thus, although some results are significant, none are very substantive. My findings in the previous chapter, chapter 4, may help to explain this low r^2 . In chapter 4, I discussed how teachers' identities are multiple and fluid and that their pedagogies are equally dynamic and changing. Because this regression model cannot capture the fluidity and nuances in how teachers identify with different parts of their identities over time, it is difficult to use regression modeling to fully capture the variance in teachers' perceptions of support.

iii. Perception of problems

The perception of problems variable is normally distributed (see Figure 5.18). Basic multiple regression was used to model perception of problems.

Figure 5.18: Distribution of problem variable



Again the Likert scale for the items in this factor range from 1=serious problem to 4=not a problem. Thus, positive coefficients mean teachers perceive less serious problems while negative coefficients mean teachers perceive more serious problems. 20% of the variance in Models ALL and AA_vA of perception of problems is explained by its variables. Only 14% of the variance is explained in Model TOC, while 24% of the variance is explained in Model AAO.

Table 5.8: Problem regression model

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
		ALL	AAvA	TOC	AAO
		n=38,240	n=38,240	n=5180	n=500
		r2=0.20	r2=0.20	r2=0.14	r2=0.24
		<i>coefficient</i>			
teacher race	AsAm	0.10	0.09	0.10	
	AfAm	0.05			
	Nat Haw	0.06			
	AmerInd	-0.11			
	Multi	0.02			
	Hispanic	0.06			
teacher char.	Male	-0.05**	-0.05**	-0.03	-0.13
	Bachelor	0.07	0.07	-0.07	-1.55
	Master	0.06	0.06	-0.08	-1.83
	SpecDoc	0.04	0.04	-0.14	-1.75
	Lang	-0.23***	-0.23***	-0.32***	-0.20
	Arts	-0.18***	-0.18***	-0.33***	-0.01
	OthPhys	-0.12***	-0.12***	-0.18*	-0.07
	MatSci	-0.22***	-0.22***	-0.33***	0.19
	SpecEd	0.20***	-0.20***	-0.23**	0.20
	midCareer	0.00	0.00	0.01	-0.24
	expTeach	0.04*	0.04	0.03	0.06
school char.	Suburb	0.19***	0.19***	0.15**	0.20
	Town	-0.03	-0.03	0.10	0.30
	Rural	0.07**	0.07**	0.09	-0.15
	MidWest	-0.07*	-0.07*	-0.11	0.08
	South	-0.04	-0.04	0.01	0.63
	West	-0.07*	-0.07*	-0.14*	0.24
	ClassMed	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.35
	ClassLar	0.21***	0.21***	0.13**	0.39
	MidPerc	-0.13***	-0.13***	-0.13*	-0.14
	HighPerc	-0.36***	-0.35***	-0.33***	0.06
	MidPTeach	-0.13***	-0.12***	-0.07	-0.30
	HighPTeach	-0.15***	-0.12*	-0.11	-0.50
	_cons	2.98	2.99	3.22	1.36

* denotes significance at the p <.05 level

** denotes significance at the p <.01 level

*** denotes significance at the p <.001 level

ALL = all teachers; AAvA = all teachers vs. Asian American teachers; TOC = teachers of color (White teachers dropped from model); AAO = Asian American teachers only

Race is not a significant predictor of teachers' perceptions of problems. Models ALL, AA_vA, and TOC reveal that subject-area teachers (e.g., teachers of language and math/science) perceive more serious problems than their elementary school counterparts. Again, elementary school teachers also experience higher degrees of teacher efficacy (Ross, 1994; Greenwood et. al, 1990), which may explain why their perception of problems is lower. It is also possible that problems including tardiness and absenteeism are actually less serious at lower grade levels.

According to models ALL and AA_vA, male teachers perceive more serious problems than do female teachers. The literature shows that female teachers experience higher degrees of teacher efficacy (Ross, 1994; Greenwood et. al, 1990), which may in turn allay the seriousness of problems they encounter. This may explain why male teachers perceive that problems in their schools are more serious than their female peers. Another explanation is that male teachers are more likely to teach subject-area classes instead of elementary school (see Table 5.2). If subject-area teachers already perceive more problems than elementary school teachers, then it would follow that male teachers may perceive more serious problems merely because of what they teach

Teachers in suburban schools perceive less serious problems than their peers who teach in city schools. Models ALL and AA_vA reveal that while teachers in small towns perceive more serious problems than their peers in city schools, teachers in rural areas perceive less serious problems. Teachers in the West perceive less serious problems than their counterparts in the Northeast. Interestingly, teachers of large classes perceive less problems than teachers of small classes. There is a significant increase in perceptions of problems among teachers in schools with mid and high percentages of minority students than in schools with low percentages of minority students. Again, none of the variables in model AAO are significant in predicting teacher

perception of problems, indicating that there is little variation in how Asian American teachers perceive problems.

iv. Satisfaction

The satisfaction variable is not normally distributed (see Figure 5.19). Log transformation was not sufficient for normalizing this curve, so I used logistic regression instead. I used the mean to divide the responses into two groups in order to compare those teachers who were less satisfied with those who were more satisfied.

Figure 5.19: Satisfaction distribution

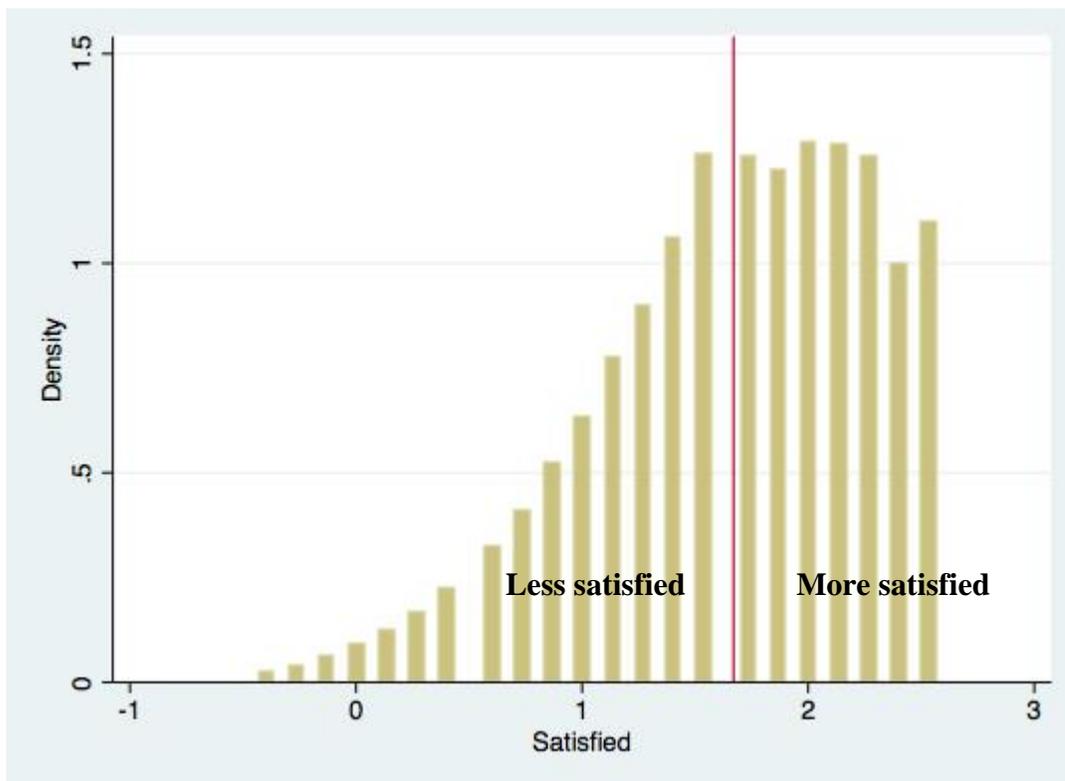


Table 5.9: Satisfaction regression model

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
		ALL	AAvA	TOC	AAO
		n=38,240	n=38,240	n=5180	n=500
		<i>Odds Ratio</i>			
teacher race	AsAm	1.16	1.17	1.21	
	AfAm	0.94			
	Nat Haw	0.99			
	AmerInd	1.20			
	Multi	1.01			
	Hispanic	0.98			
teacher char.	Male	1.04	1.04	0.97	1.33
	Bachelor	1.21	1.21	3.35*	20.86
	Master	1.26	1.26	3.37*	21.01
	SpecDoc	1.40	1.4	3.86*	35.51
	Lang	0.99	1.00	0.93	0.53
	Arts	1.00	1.00	0.85	0.41
	OthPhys	0.86	0.86	0.79	0.40
	MatSci	1.02	1.02	1.02	0.38
	SpecEd	1.09	1.09	1.20	0.34
	midCareer	1.31***	1.31***	1.62**	1.65
	expTeach	1.12	1.12	1.27	0.92
school char.	Suburb	0.81**	0.81**	0.80	0.61
	Town	1.01	1.01	0.84	0.59
	Rural	1.02	1.02	1.00	1.71
	MidWest	1.16*	1.16*	1.07	0.36
	South	1.29***	1.29***	1.34	0.26
	West	1.09	1.09	1.08	0.77
	ClassMed	0.98	0.98	0.96	0.45
	ClassLar	0.84**	0.84**	0.85	0.54
	MidPerc	1.15*	1.15*	1.54*	2.78
	HighPerc	1.44***	1.43***	1.45	1.35
	MidPTeach	1.27**	1.26**	1.31	1.26
	HighPTeach	1.65**	1.62***	1.64*	2.74
	_cons	0.54	0.54	0.17	0.16

* denotes significance at the $p < .05$ level

** denotes significance at the $p < .01$ level

*** denotes significance at the $p < .001$ level

ALL = all teachers; AAvA = all teachers vs. Asian American teachers; TOC = teachers of color (White teachers dropped from model); AAO = Asian American teachers only

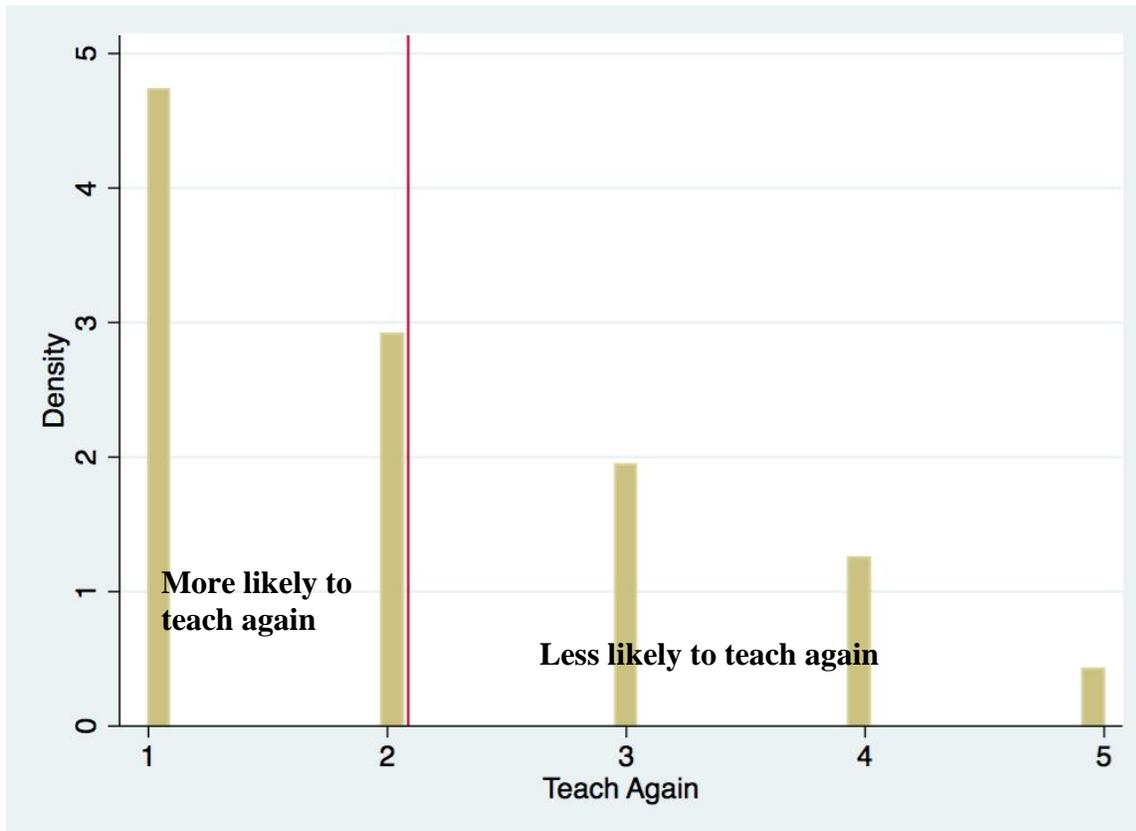
Race is not a significant predictor of teacher satisfaction, according to these models. Teachers' highest earned degree is a significant predictor in Model TOC. This is likely explained by the fact that teachers with higher degrees have received more training in the teaching profession and thus are better prepared to handle teaching duties and responsibilities. Another explanation for this finding is that these teachers have made a commitment to their field through advanced study. In addition, teachers with these degrees tend to teach different courses from those who have Associate's degrees, which could provide another explanation for higher reports of satisfaction.

In terms of years of experience, it is the mid-career teachers whose measures of satisfaction are significant in models ALL, AA_vA, and TOC. Models ALL and AA_vA reveal that teachers in suburban schools measure slightly less on the satisfaction measure than do their urban peers. According to the ALL and AA_vA models, teachers in the MidWest and South are 1.16 and 1.29 times, respectively, as satisfied as their counterparts in the Northeast. According to the ALL and AA_vA models, teachers of large classes also measure slightly less on the satisfaction measure than do their counterparts who teach smaller classes, supporting the literature that states small classes are associated with higher teacher morale (Glass, 1982). Finally, the ALL and AA_vA models reveal that teachers in schools with many minority students and many minority teachers measure higher on satisfaction than their peers in schools with few minority students and teachers. One explanation for this finding is that teachers of color choose to teach in schools with high percentages of students of color (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011), and because they choose to teach in these schools, they are more likely to be satisfied there. My descriptive statistics also showed that teachers of color tend to teach in schools with more students of color (see Table 5.4).

v. Desire to teach

Desire to teach is not normally distributed (see Figure 5.20).

Figure 5.20: Desire to teach distribution



Unlike the four previous variables, which were factors based on multiple-item measures, this measure of teaching attitude is based on only one question: “If you could go back to your college days and start over again, would you become a teacher or not?” Responses were recorded by a 5-item Likert scale, and ranged from 1= certainly would become a teacher to 5=certainly would not become a teacher. In order to hone in on whether teachers tended to respond “yes” or “no”, I used logistic regression to predict this response. The mean response was 2.08, and is indicated on Figure 5.20

Table 5.10: Desire to teach again regression model

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	
		ALL	AAvA	TOC	AAO	
		n=38,240	n=38,240	n=5180	n=500	
		<i>Odds Ratio</i>				
teacher race	AsAm	0.71	0.71	0.73		
	AfAm	0.91				
	Nat Haw	1.06				
	AmerInd	1.19				
	Multi	0.72				
	Hispanic	1.06				
	teacher char.	Male	1.21***	1.21***	1.04	1.01
Bachelor		0.82	0.82	1.36	6.45	
Master		0.86	0.86	1.65	5.64	
SpecDoc		1.01	1.01	1.65	12.25	
Lang		0.98	0.98	1.04	0.99	
Arts		0.98	0.97	1.16	1.02	
OthPhys		0.77**	0.77**	1.27	0.64	
MatSci		1.16	1.15	1.35	0.92	
SpecEd		1.12	1.11	1.34	0.31	
midCareer		1.45***	1.46***	1.62**	1.22	
expTeach		1.50***	1.50***	1.33	1.97	
school char.		Suburb	0.78***	0.78***	0.82	0.21
		Town	0.91	0.91	0.97	0.81
	Rural	0.90	0.90	0.94	0.57	
	MidWest	1.14	1.14	0.88	1.28	
	South	1.69***	1.69***	1.50	0.61	
	West	1.48***	1.49***	1.27	1.22	
	ClassMed	0.96	0.97	1.07	0.48	
	ClassLar	0.81**	0.81**	0.80	0.67	
	MidPerc	0.96	0.96	0.93	1.52	
	HighPerc	1.02	1.02	1.01	0.79	
	MidPTeach	0.97	0.96	0.91	1.13	
	HighPTeach	1.15	1.14	1.33	2.97	
	_cons	0.31	0.31	0.17	0.08	

* denotes significance at the p <.05 level

** denotes significance at the p <.01 level

*** denotes significance at the p <.001 level

ALL = all teachers; AAvA = all teachers vs. Asian American teachers; TOC = teachers of color (White teachers dropped from model); AAO = Asian American teachers only

Race is not a significant regressor in any of these models. In models AT and AA_vA, gender significantly predicts teachers' likelihood of teaching again. Male teachers are 1.21 times as likely as female teachers to teach again, despite the fact that literature shows that female teachers tend to report higher degrees of efficacy (Ross, 1994; Greenwood et. al, 1990). Teachers of other subjects and physical education are less likely than elementary school teachers to teach again, supporting the literature that shows that elementary school teachers have higher degrees of teacher efficacy (Ross, 1994; Greenwood et al., 1990). Years of experience also significantly predicts whether teachers will teach again: both mid-career and experienced teachers are roughly 1.5 times as likely as novice teachers to report teaching again if given the chance to start over. Region also makes an impact on this model. The ALL and AA_vA models reveal that teachers in Southern and Western regions are more likely to teach again than teachers in the Northeast. Finally, class size is a significant predictor: teachers of large classes are less likely than teachers of small classes to say that they would teach again.

Conclusion

In this study, both descriptive statistics and regression modeling were used to investigate how teacher and school characteristics are related to teacher attitudes. The descriptive analysis shows that the majority of teachers believe they have agency in their classrooms and schools. Most teachers report having a sense of control, feeling supported, experiencing little or no problems, feeling satisfied, and committed enough to teaching that if given the choice to start over, they would choose to teach again. These findings support the literature that states that teachers have agency (Lasky, 2005; Schweisfurth, 2006; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Sloan, 2006; Priestly et. al, 2012; Anderson, 2010).

The regression models predict how teachers perceive of control, support, problems, satisfaction, and teaching again based on their personal characteristics and the characteristics of their schools. Overall, the regression models show that race does not significantly predict a teacher’s attitudes. However, it is worth exploring why Asian American teachers experience more control in their classes, even more so than White teachers. Perhaps one explanation can be attributed to the model minority myth. Asian American students are viewed as universally smart and capable and Asian American adults are perceived as professionally successful (Lee, 2009). If Asian American teachers are perceived this same way—as smart and capable, then it would follow that their peers and administrators give them more freedom and autonomy in the classroom (regardless of whether they are capable), leading to a greater sense of control.

An alternative explanation for this finding is due to highest degree earned. Asian American teachers have more Education Specialist degrees within their racial category than teachers of other races (see Table 5.11).

Table 5.11: Degree earned by teacher race
(Table 80, Digest of Education Statistics, NCES, 2012)

	Associate's	Bachelor's	Master's	Education specialist	Doctorate
White	0.7	46.8	45.7	6	0.8
Black	1	47	41.4	8.7	2
Hispanic	0.9	56.3	34.1	7.7	1.1
Asian		37.7	47.1	10.5	1.5
Pacific Islander		51.7	39.1		
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.8	56.2	34.1	4.7	
Multiracial		37.1	52.7	8.9	

A previous study has shown that more teacher preparation yields higher levels of self-efficacy (Raudenbush, Rowan, & Cheong, 1992). If we assume that more education translates to more preparation, it would follow that Asian American teachers report perceiving higher levels of

control than White teachers and teachers of color simply because they are more prepared in the profession. In the control model that I used in this study, highest degree earned was not a significant predictor of perceived control. Instead, being Asian American predicted higher perceptions of control above and beyond degree earned. However, future studies could investigate possible interactions between degree earned and teacher race, which might corroborate this hypothesis that Asian American teachers report having higher perceptions of control because they have received more education and preparation for their roles as teachers.

In either case, race was only a significant predictor of teacher's attitudes in this one case. What appears to have more of an impact on these models than race is subject assignment, school location, class size, and how many minority students are enrolled in teachers' schools. Subject assignment has very large and significant effects on teachers' sense of control, support, and perception of problems. School location is a significant predictor of control, support, perception of problems, satisfaction, and attitude towards teaching. This might be explained by the fact that teachers' responsibilities, curricula, and test preparation are highly dependent on what they teach and *where* they teach. That is, in addition to teachers of different subjects areas having different responsibilities, teachers in different regions in the U.S. are also subject to different teaching and testing requirements. Again, the high-stakes testing that is mandated by NCLB influences the degree to which teachers must spend time on teaching content versus test-mastery skills. In addition, the new Common Core standards are shaping what content teachers need to include in their curricula. While these programs are meant to improve education, they also influence how teachers are able to teach (Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2007; Selwyn, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Hursh, 2007).

In addition, while elementary school teachers' curricula are quite rigid because of the wide range of subjects and skills they must teach, subject-specific teachers likely have more freedom to teach content in a variety of ways, leading to a higher sense of control. On the other hand, since elementary teachers work with younger children and supervise them much more closely than secondary school students are supervised, it makes sense that elementary school teachers perceive less problems in their schools, both because of their students' ages and because with such close supervision, there is less room for students to cause problems.

Another way to understand teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their attitudes towards teaching is to consider what the discourses around the teaching profession are. Earlier I alluded to the fact that there are mainly two ways that society, teachers included, are taught to think about teaching: one way is through the discourse that policy is used to limit teacher autonomy (Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2007; Selwyn, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Hursh, 2007). A second way is that teachers do have agency, will rise above "teaching to the test" no matter what, and will seek out ways to fight the system that policy holders have implemented (Lasky, 2005; Schweisfurth, 2006; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Sloan, 2006; Priestly et. al, 2012; Anderson, 2010). Clearly, these are two opposing discourses, and to believe that teachers must appropriate one or the other is too binary and narrow.

Instead, I propose that my findings be considered in light of the fact that depending on the situation, teachers both have limited autonomy as well as agency to teach in ways they deem appropriate. And thus, while subject assignment and school location certainly affect teaching attitudes, another thing to consider is to what extent teachers have internalized and drawn on these two discourses in assessing their perception of control. For example, the discourse around teaching for subject-area teachers might be very different from the discourses for elementary

school teachers. If subject-specific teachers arrive to the classroom already believing that they're more autonomous because they teach older children, or because they are deemed experts in their subject-areas (as opposed to elementary teachers who must know a little about many subjects), then this belief may translate to higher reports of control. At the same time, because of mandated testing, these same teachers may be subject to more pressures to teach specific curricula items. In the end, a teacher's perceived sense of control in the classroom is derived from the actual freedom they are given as well as what they believe about freedoms and constraints.

Perhaps what is necessary to change attitudes towards teaching is not only to change the way policies are implemented but to change the discourses around teaching. If we begin thinking about teaching as a profession where individuals must negotiate policy makers' interests, their own interests, and those of their students, rather than as a profession that needs to be regulated because teachers are deemed incompetent, then teaching will become a profession that recognizes and affirms teacher autonomy and teacher intelligence.

Another school characteristic that predicts teacher attitudes is percentage of minority students. Percentage of minority students predicts control, support, perception of problems, and satisfaction. This might be explained by the fact that a school's characteristics contribute highly to the school's atmosphere, above and beyond whatever characteristics individual teachers bring to that school. While teachers perceive being more satisfied at schools with higher percentages of minority students (possibly explained by the fact that more teachers of color teach at these schools out of choice (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011)), they also report experiencing less control and more problems. Perhaps teachers are satisfied because they feel good about serving students of color and working in these schools, just as Vanessa does (chapter 4), despite their perceived realities of having less control and experiencing more student problems. Either way, there does

appear to be a difference between schools with low percentages and high percentages of minority students.

Here too, it is important to consider how discourses affect teacher attitudes as well as teacher-student relationships. The discourses that were available to the teachers in my qualitative study to understand schools with high percentages of minority students are that they're bad schools (Vanessa), the students at these schools don't have the right attitude towards learning (Joanna) or that they're mission fields with children who need to be saved (Erika, Nicole and Vanessa). Few teachers discussed their desire to work in underprivileged schools that placed students on equal terms as themselves—only Bounmy and Mai-Li, who themselves were from low-income communities. Even though the intentions of these teachers were good and positive, for the most part, the language focused on how much teachers could contribute to students' lives and draw them out of poverty rather than on how teachers saw themselves in their students.

However, if more teachers viewed teaching in schools with high percentages of minority students as a way to teach students who were just like themselves, this change in discourse could also be a way to reframe how teachers view their perceived control and student problems. In other words, if teachers see themselves in their students, and view their students as equals (rather than as others who need to be saved), this could change the deficit view of teaching that frames students in these schools as problems (Valenzuela, 1999) and instead as individuals with funds of knowledge (Moll et. al, 1992).

Lastly, class size affects all five teacher agency variables above and beyond what teachers bring to their classrooms, implying that larger classes simply change the dynamics of

classrooms and teacher-student relationships. While this study yields some novel and interesting findings, particularly concerning race and teacher agency, there are also limitations to this study.

One limitation is that because this is a quantitative study, we have only been able to capture teachers' attitudes at one particular moment. Another way to think about this is that the answers recorded on these surveys are a product of *performance* at a specific time and place. In answering the questions, the survey respondents have performed identities that reflect a particular level of control, or a particular level of desire to teaching again. Yet, because these surveys only capture one moment in time, they are void of the nuances and changes over time that occur with identity performance.

A second limitation is that race and identity are not a central focus of this survey. In order to truly understand how teachers' identities affect teaching attitudes, a future survey could focus more explicitly on the role of race. This could be accomplished in a variety of ways. The first way would be to make race (or identity in general) more of a focus on the survey. One simple way to do this would be to ask teachers to report their race and ethnicity earlier in the survey. Currently, teachers are not asked to report this information until the very end of the survey. However, if teachers were asked to think about their race and ethnicity before they were asked questions about teaching attitudes, the race and ethnicity questions could serve to prime teachers to respond in reference to their racial and ethnic identities (McFarland, 1981; Schuman & Presser, 1981).

Another way to make race more of a focus would be for NCES to add a small section to the existing survey which asks teachers more direct questions about how their racial (and other identities) relate to their teaching. Sample questions could include "Teachers who share my racial background are valued in this school" or "I am able to use my cultural identities (race,

ethnicity, class, etc.) to connect with students”. Alternatively, follow-up surveys could be conducted with a subset of the participant sample in order to ask these more specific questions about teacher identity and teacher attitudes. Any of these modifications to the survey as I’ve described would provide a means to better identify how teacher identity and teaching attitudes intersect and interact.

In conclusion, in this chapter I have discussed how teachers across the United States perceive of teaching, despite the structural and systemic constraints that have been placed upon them due to educational policies and mandates including high-stakes testing. My findings reveal that teachers perceive of teaching in positive ways, and that characteristics most likely to affect their perceptions of teaching include subject taught, school location, class size, and percentage of minority students. I explain how it’s useful to think about these findings in terms of the discourses that exist around teaching, teacher-student relationships, and student communities. In the next chapter, I explore how three Asian American teachers are confined by school administrators and educational policy and yet find ways to act autonomously in their classrooms. My analysis in Chapter 6 builds the scholarship and findings discussed above by demonstrating how Asian American teachers perform teaching identities in spite of structural and systemic constraints.

Chapter 6

Attitudes toward teaching:

A qualitative analysis

In this section, I continue my examination of how teachers perceive of teaching. While I examined perceptions of control, support, problems, satisfaction, and likelihood of teaching again in Chapter 5, I mainly investigate how teachers perceive of control and support in this section. In addition, while my quantitative analysis revealed a relationship between teacher and school characteristics and teaching, my qualitative analysis provides an understanding of how Asian American teachers *view* teaching. I highlight the narratives of three of my participants, Ruby, Jessi, and Christy. Their exemplar narratives offer insight on the nuances around working within and against structural and systemic constraints of schools and the educational system. Examining these narratives reveal how teachers perform teaching identities.

Three Teachers' Stories

I utilize theme-based, performance-based, and structural-based analysis to examine the narratives of Ruby, Christy, and Jessi. As I demonstrated in Chapter 3, *thematic analysis* is useful for revealing the overall storyline of a narrative and can also help point out tensions and contradictions within an individual's performed narrative. As I demonstrated in Chapter 4, *performance analysis* helps to understand how individuals story themselves—for themselves and for others. Performance analysis is useful for understanding how individuals respond to heteroglossia and the orchestration of voices (Holland et. al, 1998). Utilizing *structural analysis* is useful in understanding what lies beyond the surface of an individual's words. Paying attention to *how* things are said can illuminate “how a narrator uses form and language to achieve

particular effects” (Reismann, p. 81) In using three approaches to my analysis in this chapter, I show how using multiple forms of narrative analysis together can reveal much more than when one method is used on its own (Gardinier, 2012).

Ruby

Ruby was a 5th year teacher when I conducted my first interview with her. She taught in Boston’s Chinatown in a unique setting—the school itself was designed for grades six through 12, but the building she taught in only housed the sixth and seventh graders. Because the school is located in Chinatown, the majority of Ruby’s students are Asian American (Chinese and Vietnamese), though there are also African American, Latino, and White students who attend the school. The student population is mostly low-income, as nearly 90% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

Ruby was born in Boston and lived in a Boston suburb for most of her life. However, between the ages of three and seven, she lived in the Marshall Islands, a territory of the United States that is located in the South Pacific. Although she was young when she lived there, she remembers being one of only two Asian families. Upon returning to the States, she was placed in ESL despite being a U.S. citizen, speaking English, and having moved back to Boston from United States territory. Ruby was not removed from ESL until her mother intervened. It is interesting that the administration assumed that Ruby needed to be in ESL and that her teacher did not recommend that she return to general education class upon discovering Ruby’s true language abilities. In contrast to the erroneous assumption the school system made of her, Ruby insists that being “bicultural” is a reminder to never assume anything of her students, because there is usually more to the story than meets the eye.

Ruby was a friend from college, so most of the beginning portions of our conversations were devoted to small talk and catching up. Neither of our interview sessions was conducted via a video platform so I could not see her. Nevertheless, Ruby was eager to answer my questions and provide ample stories and examples of how she negotiates her classroom identity.

But the reality of it is...we still hit red tape all the time

In the excerpt below, Ruby discusses her frustrations with her principal, and her inability to act agentically in this situation.

R: Um, we don't really have an administration other than a principal. We have a headmaster, and the model he uses is called "Teachers as Leaders." So there are no other administrators except for him. And then each... I guess organized into team leaders, and so every couple of grade levels there's team leaders who are teachers, and who also teach classes, and then there's also a group called "operations," and so they're the people in charge of kind of running the building and also discipline. But most of them... Well I wouldn't say most of them—I would say half of them are teachers as well, and the other half are just like operations staff—so people hired by the school system to take care of things like attendance, test administration—like that kind of operations stuff, making sure the building is open. And then after that there are separate teachers who lead subject teams—so like math, science, whatever. And then there's also teachers that lead work teams, which are kind of like taking care of things around the school, like the library team, um, family outreach team, and things like that. So I think it sounds good on paper because if the teacher is a leader, they'll be your colleague, and they're also the person in charge which is empowering to teachers, and you have the ability to change things based

on your experience, instead of always hitting red tape. That's in theory. But the reality of it is, I mean we still hit red tape all the time, except it's not as obvious. Like it's more kind of like... I feel it's always shaded, like you don't know if can or you can't. And the impression is that "Oh yeah, you guys decide amongst yourselves. And you can do it." And so sometimes you do, but then sometimes you want to and then the people or the powers that be are like "No, what are you doing? You can't do that." And then it's like, "Wait, but you said we could decide." So there's this kind of unclear ... the boundaries are not clear and it can be frustrating.

C: Does that also... Go ahead.

R: I was going to say it's like the impression that we are in power, but we really aren't.

C: Right. Does that also create more work for you since you have like this added responsibility?

R: Yeah. So I was team leader for the past three years, and last year I already didn't want to do it. But I felt like I got strong-armed into it because it was like – "Well no one else... There are two other people who can do it, we're changing job descriptions, so it won't be as overwhelming and we really need you so can you please do it?" And I can't say no to that really. Well I guess I could have, but I felt like I couldn't say no. So I did it last year and I just... I'm just done with it because so much administration with a full teaching load. And a lot of it was just like things that were, you know... I felt like they were not relevant to what goes on in the classroom and we could have just hired a secretary to do it. OR, that's what a secretary should have done—the job of the three of us team leaders. And we were ___ for the middle school building, then there's a group that leads for the high school building. And so this year, I was like no. N-O—no. I'm not

doing it. And the principal kept pushing like, “Oh, you know, there’s new people; things are still changing.” And the changing part refers to the fact that the administration has been trying to redefine the roles of all those different groups that I mentioned before. And the idea is that we _____ if she wants to do as much, which was the problem before. So I mean yes, maybe some little progress has been made since the first year I did team leading, but still a lot of just, um, operation things that I feel like take away from the practice, teaching time, and the overall mentality of being a teacher.

Ruby’s description of how leadership in her school works reveals how complicated relationships can be between administration and faculty/staff. She explains how a system that is supposed to empower teachers is coded because it actually limits their power and autonomy. Just as there are hidden curricula (McLaren, 2006) for students, a hidden curriculum exists for teachers. Teachers like the ones at Ruby’s school are encouraged to work freely and lead peers toward change, only to find that their freedoms are limited by administrators. A thematic analysis of this excerpt reveals that Ruby’s sense of control as a teacher is limited, and that she is subject to the whims and desires of her headmaster.

Other excerpts from Ruby’s narrative reveal that within the confines of her classroom, Ruby is fully able to enact change in a way that is comfortable for her and that fits in with her mission of being a cultural role-model for her students:

But I feel like there’s a connection between me there that you know, is useful not just in teaching them but more in just kind of like being able to talk to them about life, their issues or what they’re facing and I think because they see me as some, you know, someone they could be like in the future or someone they don’t want to be like in the

future, like a model, it makes them able to share more things or to be able to relate. Or be open to asking certain things.

Ruby is able to perform the role of role-model and cultural broker for her students and their families. And yet, at the school level, or macro level, she has little control over her role and the changes she can make within that role. Ruby's narrative demonstrates how a teacher's autonomy in the classroom may be asynchronous to their lack of freedom outside of the classroom. Ruby's narrative also reflects a meta-narrative that administration and faculty/staff are at odds with one another and do not have the same goals or views. These ideas are what a thematic analysis reveals.

Examining Ruby's narrative from a performance-based analysis reveals more. For example, we can revisit her excerpt about her conversation with her principal noting all uses of direct speech, asides, repetition, and historical present. As a reminder, *direct speech* "builds credibility and pulls the listener into the narrated moment" (p. 112), *asides* occur when the narrator "steps out of the action to engage directly with the audience (p. 112), and the *historical present* involves using a "verb tense performatively" (p. 113). As in Chapter 4, direct speech is in quotes, asides are underlined, the historical present is bolded, and repetition is capitalized.

*So I was team leader for the past three years, and last year I already didn't want to do it. But I felt like I got strong-armed into it because it was like – "Well no one else...There are two other people who can do it, we're changing job descriptions, so it won't be as overwhelming and we really need you so can you please do it?" **And I CAN'T SAY NO to that really.** Well I guess I could have, but I felt like I COULDN'T SAY NO. So I did it last year and I just... **I'm just done with it because so much administration with a full teaching load.** And a lot of it was just like things that were, you know...I felt like they*

were not relevant to what goes on in the classroom and we could have just hired a secretary to do it. OR, that's what a secretary should have done—the job of the three of us team leaders. And we were ___ for the middle school building, then there's a group that leads for the high school building. And so this year, I was like NO. N-O—NO. I'm NOT doing it. And the principal kept pushing like, "Oh, you know, there's new people; things are still changing." And the changing part refers to the fact that the administration has been trying to redefine the roles of all those different groups that I mentioned before. And the idea is that we ___ if she wants to do as much, which was the problem before. So I mean yes, maybe some little progress has been made since the first year I did team leading, but still a lot of just, um, operation things that I feel like take away from the practice, teaching time, and the overall mentality of being a teacher.

Based on my thematic analysis, I concluded that incidents like these are indications that Ruby's autonomy is compromised and limited. But in fact, a performance analysis reveals that there is more lying beneath the surface of Ruby's story. By examining Ruby's repetition of resisting her principal's request to lead, we get an idea of how her autonomy is limited but also finally respected. Ruby describes how she previously felt unable to say "no" to leading a team at her school. Even though her principal asked her to serve as team leader rather than demanding it, Ruby felt that her decision was already made up for her—and that she "couldn't say no." However, she finally decides to stand up against her principal, despite the principal's "pushing". She recalls and performs this turning point by saying "no, n-o, no. I'm not doing it." This repeated use of the word "no" emphasizes a watershed moment in this encounter—where she was once unable to make a decision about being team leader, she is now able to finally express she will not perform this duty and her decision is respected.

By examining this excerpt while paying attention to direct speech, asides, the use of the historical present and repetition, we can understand how this incident is a performance of identity. Using a performance-based lens allows us to see how Ruby's position actually changes—from ignored and unempowered to respected, empowered, and agentic. Ruby uses this incident to explain how she can position herself as a teacher who has control over her role at the school. She performs this metamorphosis for me, the interviewer. The conclusion of Ruby's excerpt—that only a little progress has been made at the school is discouraging, but—does not take away from the fact that she now has the power and freedom not to be held down by the confines of school leadership roles.

Using a performance-based analysis in addition to a thematic-based analysis to analyze Ruby's narrative added a layer of depth to the way we can understand Ruby's sense of autonomy and control. Utilizing a third method of analysis—structural analysis—adds yet another layer of insight. As Reismann (2008) explains, according to William Labov (1972), narrative can be understood in terms of its structural components. Specifically, Labov (1972 as cited by Reismann, 2008) describes how a “fully formed” narrative contains six parts: “an abstract) summary and/or “point” of the story); orientation (to time place, characters, situation); complicating action (the event sequence, or plot, usually with a crisis or turning point); evaluation (where the narrator steps back from the action to comment on meaning and communicate emotions—the ‘soul’ of the narrative); resolution (the outcome of the plot); and a coda (ending of the story and bringing action back to the present)” (p. 84). Reismann notes that not all narratives may contain all of these elements and they may occur in different orders.

Here is that same excerpt, this time parsed into these six elements:

01 So I was team leader	AB
02 for the past three years,	
03 and last year	OR
04 I already didn't want to do it.	EV
05 But I felt like I got strong-armed into it because it was like –	
06 “Well no one else...	
07 There are two other people who can do it,	
08 we're changing job descriptions,	
09 so it won't be as overwhelming and we really need you	
10 so can you please do it?”	CA
11 And I can't say no to that really.	
12 Well I guess I could have, but I felt like I couldn't say no.	EV
13 So I did it last year and I just...	OR
14 I'm just done with it	
15 because so much administration with a full teaching load.	
16 And a lot of it was just like things that were, you know...	
17 I felt like they were not relevant to what goes on in the classroom	
18 and we could have just hired a secretary to do it.	
19 <i>or</i> , that's what a secretary should have done—	
20 the job of the three of us team leaders.	EV
21 And we were ___ for the middle school building,	
22 then there's a group that leads for the high school building.	OR
23 And so this year, I was like no. n-o, no. I'm not doing it.	EV
24 And the principal kept pushing like,	
25 “Oh, you know, there's new people; things are still changing.”	CA
26 And the changing part refers	
27 to the fact that the administration has been trying	
28 to redefine the roles of all those different groups that I mentioned before.	
29 And the idea is that we ____ if she wants to do as much,	
30 which was the problem before.	EV
31 So I mean yes,	
32 maybe some little progress has been made	
33 since the first year I did team leading,	RE
34 but still a lot of just, um, operation things	
35 that I feel like take away from the practice, teaching time,	
36 and the overall mentality of being a teacher.	Coda

AB = abstract
 OR = orientation
 CA = complicating action
 EV = evaluation
 RE = resolution

Looking at Ruby's excerpt in this manner highlights the negotiations that take place and tensions that exist between her and her principal. It reinforces the fact that Ruby's position changed over time—from unheard to heard, from subject to agent. Moreover, it shows how Ruby's evaluative actions reveal her resistance to accept the leadership position, which are juxtaposed by the complicating action that her principal presents—unrelenting requests to lead. Interpreting Ruby's narrative this way shows the push-and-pull and back-and-forth that it took for Ruby to finally be heard by her principal. This type of analysis illuminates how differently Ruby and her principal understand the role and priority of teachers and the type of support they need. While Ruby believes teachers should concentrate on their classrooms and students, her principal believes teachers should be responsible for administrative tasks in addition to their classrooms and students. While Ruby would appreciate support from the administration for her classroom, her principal wants support for administrative tasks from teachers.

Thematic analysis reveals that Ruby's sense of control in the classroom looked different from her sense of control outside of the classroom. Performance analysis reveals that Ruby's sense of control outside of the classroom has evolved over time and that she understands herself as actively constructing her role at her school. Structural analysis reveals the intricacies of negotiating this role of autonomous teacher and why Ruby's desire to not be a leader runs in such opposition to her principal's desires. Using all three forms of analysis together affords a much richer understanding than one method could reveal on its own of Ruby's understanding of self, her understanding of control, and how her ability to be agentic is located within structural and systemic confines.

Jessi

When I conducted my first interview with Jessi, who was teaching as part of Teach for America, she had been teaching math for two years in a suburb right outside New Orleans. Incredibly, however, she was already teaching at her fourth school. She explains that she began her first year of teaching at a middle school. After a month, she was moved to a high school in the same district due to teacher shortages. She was laid off the summer after her first year of teaching and ended up getting a new job at a middle school, was fired again, and found another middle school to teach at. Being laid off is one of the subjects we spoke about during the interview.

In addition, Jessi was assigned to teach math even though she was an English major in college. Jessi explains that many teachers are assigned to teach math, though, because of the shortage of math teachers. Although she was initially concerned about having to teach a subject that was not her area of expertise, after teaching it for two years, she concluded that in some ways, lesson planning for math was easier than for English.

Jessi was born and raised in the Bay Area in California. She spoke about how different it was to teach in New Orleans after having been raised on the West Coast, and emphasized how important her West Coast identity had become while she was living in New Orleans. Jessi was inspired to join Teach For America because of the educational inequalities she saw occurring at her own high school. Despite the fact that Jessi was a successful student whose schooling afforded her the opportunity to attend an Ivy League University, Jessi saw that some of her peers were failed by the very same system that worked for her. In college, she spent time studying educational inequalities, and realized that education and ethnic studies overlapped. Taking part in Teach for America has allowed her to explore both.

Jessi was an acquaintance of mine, and all of our interviews were conducted via Skype. Jessi was eager to share her stories—good and bad—about her teaching experiences.

Teachers get the blame for things that they definitely don't deserve

Jessi explained how several situations over the past two years left her feeling upset—upset about how the system works and upset about how the change she has affected has gone unnoticed:

then over the summer I got fired for um ... Well let's say _____ is also very well known for laying teachers off randomly for ... And I was really, it was actually really painful for me because my high school students did super-well on their standardized state tests ... You could tell that the school board was not necessarily looking at teacher performance in terms of student progress. They didn't really know what they were doing because I wasn't the only one who got laid off. I wasn't the only teacher who showed student progress who got laid off, which was pretty upsetting.

Although I've only shared one excerpt from this conversation, Jessi painted a more extensive picture of the instability that exists within teaching and the educational system. The fate of Jessi's career was abruptly put on hold and nearly ended three times—each time she was transferred or fired. Moreover, Jessi's anecdotes highlight how many teachers are powerless to decide whether they will remain teachers, and how not having the agency to advocate for remaining in their roles can compromise a teacher's ability to view themselves as a competent teacher. As Jessi explained, she was fired from her second school despite the fact that her students' test scores improved while she was with them. Although her administration had proof that Jessi was an effective teacher (based on test scores at least), they decided to lay her off. Jessi recognizes that despite the blame she could place on her administrators, the system does not

work much better for administrative staff. She explains how the administration at her various schools is disorganized and how this disorganization stems from larger problems:

...I do think that my principal can be a little bit disorganized, but that's actually something that I've found that's very common in most schools in New Orleans. I mean I think that's one of the things that may be why like the New Orleans public school system has so many issues. Not that the actual people are bad, but because there isn't really a set infrastructure within all the schools...I think it's because New Orleans schools are still in the process of rebuilding themselves since Katrina...I think it definitely trickles down in a bad way to the teachers at least.

Jessi sheds light on how systemic constraints, such as rebuilding a city after a natural disaster, can trickle down and affect teachers and students' opportunities to effectively teach and learn. This excerpt provides an idea of just how difficult working against the "system" can be, and how everything about the educational system needs to work in concert in order to bring about effective change in the classroom. While Jessi was unable to decide her fate as a teacher at the district and even school levels, she used her time in the classroom to influence her students' thinking about identity and discrimination.

Where are you from?

As I explained earlier, Jessi joined Teach for America because of her interest in educational and racial inequalities. It is fitting that many of her conversations with students centered on teaching students about racism and other forms of discrimination and inequality.

I mean like when my students ask me like "Where are you from?" then I'll...I'm more patient with them [than adults] because I understand that they don't necessarily

understand and stuff. And with them I'll be like really gentle about it. I'll be like "are you asking me about my ethnicity?" "Oh yeah". There's a lot of like interesting conversations I've had with them because I'll be like "I'm Chinese-American." And they'll be like "But I thought you were Asian?" And then like some of them will be like "Well, China is IN Asia." _____ I'll be like "Thank you." Stuff like that. And like when they say "Oh, do you speak Chinese?" I'll say "I speak Cantonese, which is a dialect of Chinese." And some of them will get what a dialect is and some will be like "What?" And then I tell them "Oh it's like ..." The best way I can explain to them so they understand is like "It's like you have different slang or different accent." It's kind of an incomplete explanation but they understand that...

Definitely I've had to say a few words about being gay. Like students would be like "Oh, that's... Oh you're a fag." And I would stop and be like, "That is rude. That is offensive. You cannot say that in my classroom." I mean I always said something for maybe like 10 seconds or something like that. But I like, I made it clear, and actually I think that actually did have a positive effect because during lunch the next day the student came ... she was just eating lunch in that classroom, just asked me one day "Miss Jessi, why is it so offensive to call somebody gay if they actually ARE gay?" And then I explained to her "Well, it's just the way that you say it. Like for example, if I say ... Her name is Tina, and I was like "Tina you're African American, right? So there's a difference between me saying 'Oh you're black; [and] oh you're black.'" And she got it right away, so she was like "Oh, it's just like the way, your attitude when you say it." And I'm like yeah, exactly. You can be offensive... And I was like—See how I said the exact same thing, the

same words, but I said them in a different way. And one way was clearly more offensive. And I explained to her—you can tell when people mean things as an insult. And that's different from just describing what somebody is. So there was that. Definitely a lot [of teachable moments] around race. I mean most of the time it's not really a deep serious conversation. Most of the time it's just a kid will be like "Oh, you're Vietnamese, right?" And I'm like "No, I'm Chinese." "Ohhh..."

Jessi uses her students' questions about her "origin" to engage them in conversations about how to talk about ethnicity, and also what Chinese culture is like. The "where are you from?" question is a sensitive one for Asian Americans because it frames them as "forever foreigners" (Tuan, 1998), but Jessi understands that her students are asking because they are curious about her ethnicity and do not know how to ask about it. Jessi uses her role as an Asian American teacher to teach students about a cultural with which they are unfamiliar. In this way, she acts as a cultural broker. She also acts as a change agent by using opportunities to teach about discrimination and sexual orientation, by using a teachable moment to explain how discriminatory and hurtful insults go beyond simple language and also include tone. In addition, Jessi is able to use a student's own experience of being a minority to understand how another minority might feel if discriminated against.

While Jessi has little control over how long she will remain at her school, what she will teach (math vs. English), how her school is run, or how the district is run, she exerts control over her classroom. In this instance, she creates a classroom culture that integrates life lessons into her math curriculum. In addition, in responding to students' inquiries about race, sexual orientation, and discrimination, she empowers her students to engage with these issues in a non-threatening way. Thematic analysis reveals that while the school system and structure limit Jessi's ability to

take charge of her professional career and fate, Jessi finds ways to teach about topics that are important to herself and her identity.

Further examination of Jessi's exchange with her students from a performance-based aspect reveals more. Direct speech is in quotes, asides are underlined, and repetition is capitalized.

Definitely I've had to say a few WORDS about being gay. Like students would be like "Oh, that's... Oh you're a fag." And I would stop and be like, "That is rude. That is offensive. You cannot SAY that in my classroom." I mean I always SAID something for maybe like 10 seconds or something like that. But I like, I made it clear, and actually I think that actually did have a positive effect because during lunch the next day the student came ... she was just eating lunch in that classroom, just asked me one day "Miss Jessi, why is it so offensive to call somebody gay if they actually ARE gay?" And then I explained to her "Well, it's just the way that you SAY it. Like for example, if I SAY ... Her name is Tina, and I was like "Tina you're African American, right? So there's a difference between me SAYING 'Oh you're black; [and] oh you're black.'" And she got it right away, so she was like "Oh, it's just like the way, your attitude when you SAY it." And I'm like yeah, exactly. You can be offensive... And I was like—"See how I SAID the exact same thing, the same WORDS, but I said them in a different way. And one way was clearly more offensive." And I explained to her—you can tell when people mean things as an insult. And that's different from just describing what somebody is. So there was that. Definitely a lot [of teachable moments] around race. I mean most of the time it's not really a deep serious conversation. Most of the time it's just a kid will be like "Oh, you're Vietnamese, right?" And I'm like "No, I'm Chinese." "Ohhh..."

When this excerpt is examined from a performance-based aspect, the repetition of the use of the words “words” and “say” becomes noticeable. Jessi is performing the role of the change agent by challenging what language and words are allowed in her classroom. In other words, Jessi directly targets students’ words and teaches them why words are hurtful. This is also why she stresses “saying” words and how words are “said”, because connotation is everything in communication. Although Jessi is a math teacher, her subject expertise is English. Jessi is uniquely positioned to use language to teach and to teach students about language, and this excerpt is evidence of that. Thus, another way to examine this excerpt is by keeping Jessi’s position as an English major in mind. Although Jessi’s job is to teach math in school, here, she performs the role of an English teacher by using a spontaneous moment to teach her student about language and the power of words. This excerpt shows how Jessi has found ways to integrate her knowledge about English language arts into a math curriculum. Despite the fact that she is told she must teach math instead of English, Jessi is able to teach aspects of English when she can.

Examining this excerpt using structural analysis also sheds more light on Jessi’s interaction with her students, her role as a teacher, and her degree of autonomy and control in the classroom.

01 Definitely I’ve had to say a few words about being gay.	AB
02 Like students would be like	OR
03 “Oh, that’s... Oh you’re a fag.”	
04 And I would stop and be like,	
05 “That is rude. That is offensive.	
06 You cannot say that in my classroom.”	CA
07 I mean I always said something for maybe like 10 seconds	
08 or something like that.	
09 But I like, I made it clear,	
10 and actually I think that actually did have a positive effect	EV

11 because during lunch the next day the student came ...	
12 she was just eating lunch in that classroom,	
13 just asked me one day	OR
14 “Miss Jessi, why is it so offensive to call somebody gay	
15 if they actually <i>are</i> gay?”	CA
16 And then I explained to her	
17 “Well, it’s just the way that you say it.	
18 Like for example, if I say ...	
19 Her name is Tina, and I was like	OR
20 “Tina you’re African American, right?	
21 So there’s a difference between me saying	
22 ‘Oh you’re black; [and] oh you’re black.’”	
23 And she got it right away,	EV
24 so she was like	
25 “Oh, it’s just like the way,	
26 your attitude when you say it.”	
27 And I’m like yeah, exactly.	
28 You can be offensive...	
29 And I was like—	
30 See how I said the exact same thing, the same words,	
31 but I said them in a different way.	
32 And one way was clearly more offensive.	
33 And I explained to her—	OR
34 you can tell when people mean things as an insult.	
35 And that’s different from just describing what somebody is.	
36 So there was that.	RE
37 Definitely a lot [of teachable moments] around race.	Coda

AB = abstract
 OR = orientation
 CA = complicating action
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When evaluated in this way, this excerpt reveals that this incident has two levels of complicating action. The first occurs in lines 3 to 6, when Jessi tells students that they cannot use the word *fag* in her classroom. It is because Jessi is in control of her classroom that she is able to intervene in a situation she believes to be wrong and offensive. The second level of complicating action is when her student, Tina, questions her a second time about why the word *gay* is offensive. Tina’s questions are not rebellious; they are simply asking Jessi to provide further

explanation. Again, Jessi is able to act and exert her control by providing Tina with more information about the use of language and tone. However, this incident also reveals that although Jessi's intentions are well-meaning, they were not understood initially. In other words, if it weren't for the fact that Tina asked for clarification around this issue, she may have been confused for a long time about why language can be inappropriate.

This excerpt highlights how Jessi is still developing the skills necessary to effectively convey a point and to provide evidence or reasoning behind commands and directives. In other words, this excerpt reveals how Tina's identity as a teacher is still developing and evolving. While Jessi uses this incident as a teachable moment for her students, it is also a learning moment for herself—one in which she practices performing the role of the teacher. As Jessi retells this incident, she steps in and out of her roles as teacher and narrator so that the retelling becomes a rehearsal of her teaching practice. This rehearsal of identity is particularly meaningful because I am a former and more experienced teacher. Thus, by performing this encounter for me, Jessi practices her pedagogy to be evaluated by a more experienced teacher.

Thematic-, performance- and structural-based analysis can be combined to understand the many aspects of a single narrative excerpt, such as Jessi's encounter with Tina. Thematic analysis highlights Jessi's performance as a teacher who has control over her classroom. Performance analysis reveals how Jessi capitalizes on her expertise and background in English to enhance her teaching performance. Lastly, structural analysis hones in on how teachable moments in the classroom are instances of learning for both students and teachers.

Christy

When Christy and I first spoke, she was a 5th year special education teacher. Her first teaching job was in Manhattan's Chinatown, and her second and current job was in Queens. Christy used to teach kindergarten but her current position required her to teach a combined 2nd and 3rd grade class of children with autism spectrum disorder. Although her school was located within a certain district, students from outside the district were allowed to attend her school if they qualified for the services that this class provided. In addition, this was a new program—this was the first year that such a program was housed at this school and Christy was its inaugurate teacher.

Christy was born in Hong Kong and immigrated to the United States before she turned one. Her family settled in New York City and she has lived there since. When asked what identities were important to her, Christy responded that being a teacher was the identity she most identified with. She mentioned that being female was important too, but stated that being Asian was not very salient to her identity (I've discussed this further in Chapter 3). My conversations with Christy centered mostly on her teaching life, though she did try to use her Asian American background and culture to explain some of her approaches to teaching.

I conducted my interviews with Christy over the phone. I have known Christy for over ten years. She used to attend the same church that I did, the same one that Erika (chapter 3) still attends. Christy spoke honestly and openly, especially about the difficulties she was currently facing which I highlight below.

I'm not going to small talk with you

Much of the early part of our conversation centered on the conflicts Christy was experiencing in the classroom. Similar to Ruby, Christy's biggest conflicts and difficulties are with other adults in her school, not with the students. Christy begins by talking about how since her class is a new program, she has had difficulties in developing her curriculum, coordinating the students' schedules (because they see other professionals for therapy), and teaching two grade levels of content at the same time. Ultimately, however, she expresses the greatest sense of frustration over working with other adults. Christy describes the confusion associated with having to work with other people in a new setting. Although her role as the teacher is the same as it has always been, she now has other adults (paraprofessionals) in her classroom helping her out, and these adults have different roles from the ones they have had in previous positions (in general education classrooms). So, although Christy is the person in charge, and she is comfortable being the person in charge, playing the role of delegator has caused problems. Moreover, Christy points out that problems have risen over the issue of communication, which she speaks in depth about below:

But I think they were upset because I wasn't talking to them—like doing that small-talk with them. But again, I went back to “the kids are here; I'm not going to small-talk with you.” And they're not...They don't have same schedule as me; they don't have to stay after school so there's never really time for us to have these conversations, like side conversations. And I think because I wasn't having that with them, they felt like I wasn't treating them respectfully because I didn't make an effort to like... I was just telling them what to do and that's it. And in my mind I thought that was what I was supposed to do. And that's it. And they know I was offered this position; I didn't know that my role here was to have a conversation with you to help you feel good about what you were doing.

So a lot this came to head this past week, or the week before grades. A lot of conversations with the principal, and my principal was like “You need to make more small-talk with them.” And that really frustrated me.

...I think because the whole time I’ve been doing my job and I think I’ve been doing it very well. I don’t think anyone can deny the fact that I’ve done a lot with the kids. In every meeting in every case that has not been at all a factor. Everyone knows that the program is doing well. The only thing that I’m being judged on right now is the fact that I’m not making small-talk with the paras. And that really frustrates me because I don’t feel like that should have been my job. And it shouldn’t be a priority right now—that the paras’ feelings are hurt because I’m not talking to them on a personal level. But then I also have a trainer who does ABA with me—I call her my mentor. So she comes once a week and she’s not part of _____. She’s really just part of the program for working with children with autism. So I trust her completely...she pretty much agreed that there should be no side conversations. But the way she put it to me was if me having like a 2-minute conversation with paras is going to make the paras feel good about themselves so that they work harder for the kids, and how your direction gets better with the kids—then it’s something worthwhile to do. When she put it that way to me, I was more willing to work on that. Because then it didn’t become about the paras and their feelings—it became about the kids and that’s the only time I feel like I would listen. So when my principal was telling me I needed to do this just so the paras feel better, I didn’t care. I felt like I was _____.

Christy's paras don't have a problem with her teaching, but they have a problem with how she conducts her relationship with them. In Christy's opinion, this perception is unwarranted and irrelevant. Christy strongly identifies as a teacher, and that's the identity she performs at school—being a teacher and working with students rather than attending to the paras. Although Christy's autonomy to teach is not being limited in this situation, her ability to conduct her classroom the way she would like to (by focusing on the students and not having to make small talk) is limited, both by her paraprofessionals and by her principal, who has instructed her to do what the paras want. Christy asserts that she knows how to be a good teacher, but the way she is doing it is perceived as wrong by everyone else.

Another difficulty that Christy faces is working with special education students within a context of testing-centered education:

Um, [the worst aspect of teaching is] teaching things I feel like the kids don't really need—at least in this population. Like I don't think that kids really need to learn how to convert like how many pints are in a quart...Or telling them to write a realistic fiction piece about a character that's your age and a problem and solution. I find it get really frustrating because for the kids that are non-verbal, like that's really not a goal that I need...that I want them to meet, or like care if they meet. But I'm still held to those standards—that they have to learn how to do it. And that's frustrating.

Christy is bound to certain teaching goals and standards despite the fact that these goals do not serve her students' greater needs. Nonetheless, regardless of Christy's difficulties in relating to and working with colleagues in her school and being confined by curriculum standards, she is proud of the work she has been able to accomplish with her students:

Um, I really think it's those moments where, yes you can say for a fact like I made a difference. Yeah, or see them improve. Especially my class like because they ___ like they have strange behaviors. ... seeing and having those moments is definitely like the best part of teaching.

Christy's ability and freedom to work with her students and help them is unbounded, unlike her interactions with colleagues. Both of these excerpts highlight Christy's pride in being the good teacher she knows she is, and how helping students improve empowers Christy.

Examining Christy's narrative from a thematic perspective reveals the differing degrees of control she has at her school. While she feels fully in control when it comes to working with her students, her ability to work with her colleagues and principal are bounded by others' expectations. In addition, Christy's ability to implement curriculum is limited by district, state, and national standards. Using performance analysis to analyze Christy's narrative reveals more. I revisit the excerpt about Christy being told to make small talk with her paras. For brevity's sake, I examine just a portion of this excerpt. As a reminder, direct speech is in quotes, asides are underlined, and repetition is capitalized.

So a lot this came to head this past week, or the week before grades. A lot of conversations with the principal, and my principal was like, "You need to make more SMALL TALK with them." And that really FRUSTRATED me...

I think because the whole time I've been doing my JOB and I think I've been doing it very well. I don't think anyone can deny the fact that I've done a lot with the kids. In every meeting in every case that has not been at all a factor. Everyone knows that the program is doing well. The only thing that I'm being judged on right now is the fact that I'm not

making SMALL TALK with the paras. And that really FRUSTRATES me because I don't feel like that should have been my JOB. And it shouldn't be a priority right now—that the paras' FEELINGS are hurt because I'm not talking to them on a personal level. But then I also have a trainer who does ABA with me—I call her my mentor. So she comes once a week and she's not part of ____. She's really just part of the program for working with children with autism. So I trust her completely...she pretty much agreed that there should be no side conversations. But the way she put it to me was if me having like a 2-minute conversation with paras is going to make the paras FEEL good about themselves so that they work harder for the kids, and how your direction gets better with the kids—then it's something worthwhile to do. When she put it that way to me, I was more willing to work on that. Because then it didn't become about the paras and their FEELINGS—it became about the kids and that's the only time I feel like I would listen. So when my principal was telling me I needed to do this just so the paras FEEL better, I didn't care. I felt like I was ____.

In my introductory paragraph about Christy, I mentioned that her strongest point of identification was as a teacher. And, when I analyzed this excerpt using thematic analysis, I pointed out that it reinforced Christy's belief that she went to work to be a teacher and focus on students, not her paras. Analyzing this section of Christy's narrative with a performance-based lens shows how Christy is appealing to me, a former teacher, to be her ally and to understand her plight. She frames herself as an excellent teacher. She says she has been “doing her job”, doing it “well”, and that no one can “deny” this. Moreover, her performance as a teacher has “not been at all a factor” throughout this whole series of discussions. She uses repetition to contrast her feelings of frustration over wanting to focus on her teaching with her paras' feelings, which she believes are

unwarranted because they are not focused on the teaching. The only reason she decides she will try to make small talk with the paras is because her mentor convinces her that in the end, making small talk will result in better teaching for the children, which in turns supports her role and identity as the excellent teacher.

When read in this manner, Christy’s autonomy becomes the focus of the narrative. Regardless of who is “right” (Christy or the paras and the principal), Christy is portraying herself as a great teacher to a former teacher. She tells this story to get her listener (me) to empathize with her, by appealing to universal understandings of what it means to be a good teacher—someone whose bottom line is to work with, help, and care for students. She looks to me to support her position because she feels unsupported by her paras and principal. Using structural analysis provides an even richer understanding of what is happening in this excerpt.

01 So a lot this came to head this past week,	AB
02 or the week before grades.	
03 A lot of conversations with the principal,	OR
04 and my principal was like,	
05 “You need to make more small talk with them.”	CA
06 And that really frustrated me...	EV
07 I think because the whole time	OR
08 I’ve been doing my job	
09 and I think I’ve been doing it very well.	
10 I don’t think anyone	
11 can deny the fact that I’ve done a lot with the kids.	
12 In every meeting in every case that has not been at all a factor.	
13 Everyone knows that the program is doing well.	EV
14 The only thing that I’m being judged on	
15 right now	
16 is the fact that I’m not making small talk with the paras.	OR
17 And that really frustrates me	
18 because I don’t feel like that should have been my job.	EV
19 And it shouldn’t be a priority right now—	
20 that the paras’ feelings are hurt	
21 because I’m not talking to them on a personal level.	CA
22 But then I also have a trainer who does ABA with me	
23 —I call her my mentor.	

24 So she comes once a week and she's not part of ____.
 25 She's really just part of the program
 26 for working with children with autism.
 27 So I trust her completely... OR
 28 she pretty much agreed that there should be no side conversations.
 29 But the way she put it to me was
 30 if me having like a 2-minute conversation with paras
 31 is going to make the paras feel good about themselves
 32 so that they work harder for the kids,
 33 and how your direction gets better with the kids—
 34 then it's something worthwhile to do. CA
 35 When she put it that way to me,
 36 I was more willing to work on that. EV
 37 Because then it didn't become about the paras and their feelings
 38 —it became about the kids
 39 and that's the only time I feel like I would listen. RE
 40 So when my principal was telling me
 41 I needed to do this just so the paras feel better, I didn't care.
 42 I felt like I was ____ Coda

AB = abstract
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Examining Christy's narrative from this perspective reveals how a difference of opinion in job responsibilities can be resolved through effective communication. Each complicating action shows how a different party communicates with Christy. First, in lines four and five, Christy's principal commands her to make more small talk with her paras. Instead of inviting Christy to dialogue about what is going on, her principal gives her a directive, which in turn causes frustration. Lines 19-21 show how that the paras have tried to express their opinions, and that their opinions have become a priority over Christy's. This too causes frustration—that Christy must focus on attending to the needs of her paras rather than her students. Lastly, lines 29-34 demonstrate how a third approach to the issue at hand finally provides some resolution around this issue. Christy's mentor gives her the same message as her principal and paras have—

that she should make small talk with them—but because she presents this directive differently, Christy receives it differently. The fact that Christy’s mentor meets Christy where she is and explains why she should engage with her paras in a way that makes sense given Christy’s priorities is what makes the difference.

Using structural analysis to read Christy’s story highlights how communication and miscommunication can make or break a relationship. Breaking the narrative down through structural analysis allows us to see why Christy’s relationship with her paras and her principal is contentious—because none of the three parties understand how to communicate with each other in a way that affirms each party’s goals and communication styles. In fact, the very heart of this conflict is the fact that Christy is not communicating with her paras in a way that is important to them—this narrative centers on how Christy does not want to make small talk. Yet, it takes narrative analysis to reveal that these communication problems are multi-layered. Not only is the conflict around communication, but the resolution also relies on an effective use of communication. However, once Christy understands why she needs to communicate the way the paras have requested, she regains that sense of autonomy needed to be an excellent teacher, conduct her classroom as the excellent teacher she is, and lead the paras to do the same.

Again, using three forms of analysis in concert provide a deeper understanding of this narrative. The thematic analysis revealed that Christy’s sense of control in the classroom was limited by her paras’ opposing opinions about how teaching should be conducted. The performance analysis revealed that Christy was appealing to me, the interviewer and former teacher, through dialogue and re-telling of a story in a way that would help me empathize with her. Lastly, the structural analysis reveals that communication that respects the differing needs

of different parties can help resolve differences of opinion and also grant everyone involved control to fulfill their roles and preserve their identities.

Conclusion

Collectively, all three teachers' narratives provide examples of how teachers battle against structural and systemic constraints. In each instance, Ruby, Jessi, and Christy find it much easier to work with students than with co-workers, administrators, and larger structural forces. While Ruby, Jessi, and Christy have a great deal of autonomy and control over what they want to teach, how they want to teach, and how they interact with their students, conflicts arise due to the fact that they lack control over other areas of their teaching lives. Ruby must fight for the freedom not to be a teacher leader, Jessi is at the mercy of the school and school district in terms of job placement, and Christy's autonomy in supervising her paras is limited. Thus, while Ruby, Jessi, and Christy have control over their teaching, it could be said that they lack support from their teaching and school community.

In Chapter 5, I discussed how my quantitative analysis reveals that teachers generally view teaching positively, despite policy reforms which have largely shaped (and placed constraints on) teaching responsibilities. However, my qualitative study reveals that there are both positive and negative aspects of teaching. The narrative analysis further reveals the intricacies around what aspects of teaching make for positive experiences and which ones create negative experiences. These narratives also highlight that teaching is personal and that teachers will continue to find ways to work around policy mandates to teaching effectively. For example, Sloan (2006) discusses how advocates of "teacher-proof" curriculum argue that all teachers should be provided with the same materials to teach for accountability purposes, despite the fact

that uniform curriculum “undermines” teacher efficacy (p. 123). In fact, the narratives of Ruby, Christy, and Jessi illustrate that if it were not for the fact that teachers were allowed autonomy in the classroom, they would not be able to make a difference where it is truly needed. It is through the personal exchanges with students that teachers move beyond limitations of high-stakes testing to perform professional identities that reclaim control and autonomy.

PART FOUR
CONCLUSION

Chapter 7

Conclusion:

(Un)Making Asian American Identities:

Disrupting Power Dynamics

I began this dissertation by sharing some personal anecdotes of what it means to be an Asian American teacher as a way to introduce the significance of my study. What I discussed in the subsequent chapters has provided a big picture overview and rich, in-depth stories of how Asian American teachers reify and resist racial discourses and how they perform Asian American and teaching identities. More specifically, while racial discourses clearly manifest themselves in the lives of Asian American teachers, the ways in which teachers have chosen and continually choose to navigate these discourses has led to various productions of Asian American identity. To reiterate, my three main research questions were:

- (1) How do Asian American teachers perceive of agency (the ability to be purposeful and reflective) in classroom spaces which function to simultaneously oppress and liberate identities?
- (2) How do Asian American teachers negotiate the multiple aspects of their identities within a larger framework of racial discourse?
- (3) How do these identities influence curricular and pedagogical decisions?

I will review my dissertation's findings in relation to these three overarching questions in order to highlight just how Asian American teachers enact racial, ethnic, and teaching identities.

In Chapter 3, I discussed the different ways that Asian American teachers experienced their racial and ethnic identities and provided exemplar narratives to highlight how these identities influence classroom practice. The data and analysis I presented reveals that Asian

American teachers are keenly aware of the racial discourses that produce assumptions of Asian Americans as forever foreigners (Tuan, 1998) and model minorities (Wu, 2014; Lee, 2009). I argued that teachers such as Joanna, Erika, and Betty perform the roles of “unimportant identity”, “cultural role-model” and “change agent” for the specific purposes of contesting such discourses. In performing these roles, Joanna, Erika, and Betty challenge students’ assumptions of who Asian Americans are, thereby producing new ideas about Asian American teachers’ roles and pedagogies.

I focused on intersectionality and its role in validating multiple aspects of teacher identity in Chapter 4. I presented a summary of the different pedagogies that teachers utilize. In addition, I discussed how Bounmy, Simon, and Nicole draw from their faith, class, and gender identities in their performances of self. I argued that these multiple identities intersect to produce new identities that reflect a consciousness of racial discourse. These new identities also transcend assumptions of Asian American identity because they are dynamic, robust, and do not reduce Asian Americans to binary, either-or entities (Ngo, 2010) of immigrant vs. American; model minority vs. struggling student. I also discussed how these intersecting and multiple identities produced pedagogies that focused on teacher-student relationships and building student success.

In Chapter 5, I presented descriptive statistics on who Asian American teachers are, and how the entire SASS sample measures on variables of control, support, perception of problems, satisfaction, and likelihood of teaching again. In addition, I used regression modeling to predict how these teacher attitude variables are affected by teacher and school characteristics. My analyses revealed that subject assignment, school location, class size, and how many minority students are enrolled in teachers’ schools tend to be the independent variables that predict how teachers view teaching. Race was not a significant factor except in the control model, where

Asian American teachers are roughly 1.5 times as likely than teachers of any other race ($p < .05$) to experience having a great deal of control in their classrooms. I used the model minority myth as one way to explain this finding, with the assumption that if Asian American teachers are perceived to be more competent, just as Asian American students are, and are given more autonomy in the classroom, then it follows that they would perceive having more control. The findings from this chapter demonstrate that overall, teachers do feel in control of and are supported in their work. In addition, this chapter reveals that racial discourses are potentially pervasive in their impact on Asian American teachers.

Lastly, in Chapter 6, I discussed how three teachers, Ruby, Jessi, and Christy, wrestle with issues of control and support in their classrooms. I used different narrative analysis approaches to examine their stories. Their stories reveal that while they have a great deal of autonomy over what they teach and how they interact with their students, conflicts arise over their roles at their schools, their job security, and differing expectations from supervisors and colleagues. Their struggles for autonomy, control, and support in their classrooms and schools through their interactions with supervisors, students, and colleagues are the ways in which their teaching identities are constructed and produced.

All of these teachers are wrestling with and navigating discourses to construct identities at the intersections of race, gender, and class, and they are using these identities to perform various pedagogies in their classrooms and schools. In addition, teachers are purposeful and reflective in their classrooms, whether it's deciding what content to teach, choosing teaching techniques, building relationships with students and their parents, or contesting assumptions of the model minority myth and the forever foreigner. While classrooms are oppressive for Asian American teachers in that they are spaces in which stereotypes and racially-charged assumptions

are produced, they are also liberating because they are spaces in which stereotypes and assumptions are contested.

My mixed-methods approach has enabled me to understand Asian American teachers in multiple ways. I used descriptive statistics to get an idea of what the national Asian American teaching population looks like. My qualitative coding provided insight into the various ways Asian American teachers experience Asian American identity and enact these identities in the classroom. My regression modeling revealed surprising findings about how race can predict teacher attitudes. Lastly, my narrative analysis has highlighted the nuances in how racial discourses manifest themselves in Asian American teachers' lives and in turn, how these discourses influence teaching practices. Using both methods has provided me with a richer understanding of Asian American teachers, in both big-picture and in-depth ways.

My summative findings reveal that Asian American teachers do not stand idly by while assumptions are thrust on them. Instead, they challenge these assumptions, perform intersectional identities, and enact teacher identities that are nuanced and intricate. In doing so, these Asian American teachers contest the power dynamics that relegate Asian Americans to White-washed, forever foreigner, model minority, and racially-lumped roles. By creating nuanced, multiple (Lowe, 1991) and ambivalent (Ngo, 2010) identities, these teachers are (un)making Asian American identity into new, evolving, and dynamic constructions. Moreover, they are using these newly (un)made identities to perform pedagogies that provide points of connection for Asian American students, that defy stereotypes, and that enact social change. Asian American teachers are an important and essential component of the teaching force and the teaching population and educational system is better because of them.

In chapters 3 and 4, I listed possibilities for identity enactments and classroom pedagogies, based on my coding analysis. After presenting my findings and noting how messy identity production and pedagogical choices are, I present a new way of understanding these themes. Instead of viewing them in a list, which presupposes that they are separate categories, these different productions of identity should be viewed as possibilities for one's whole identity. In addition, the various pedagogies should be understood as various possibilities for pedagogy. The double arrows between "identity" and the various identities and "pedagogy" and the various pedagogies symbolize the back-and-forth negotiation of identity performance and pedagogical enactment.

Figure 6.1: Asian American teacher identities

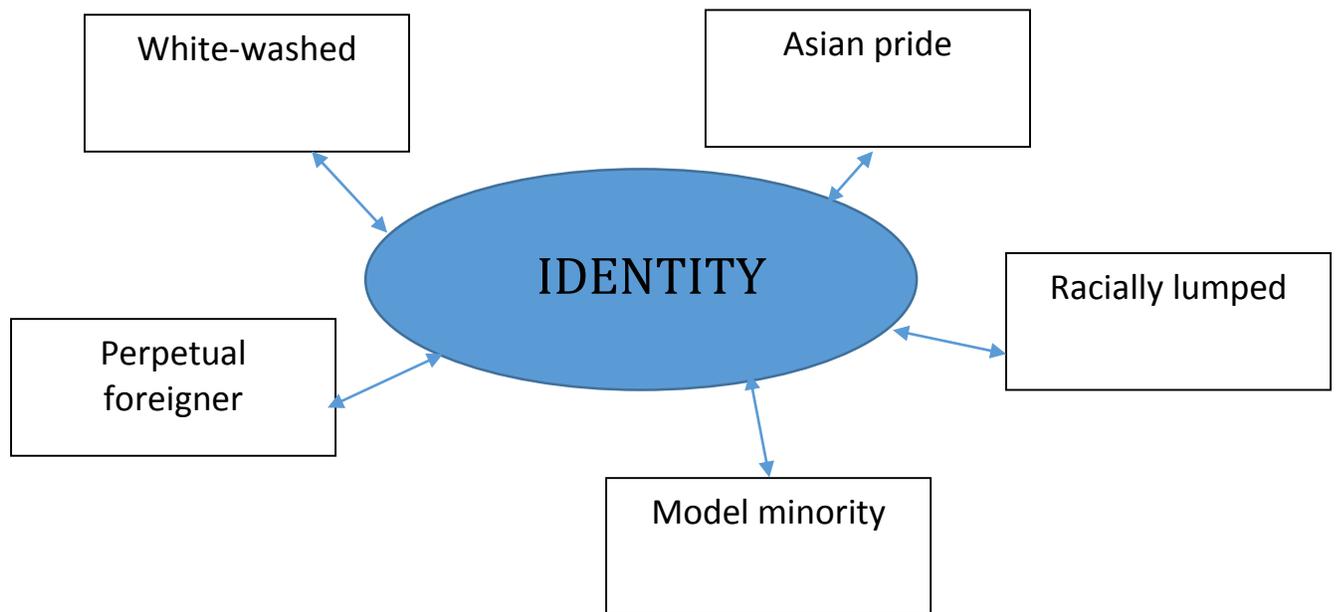
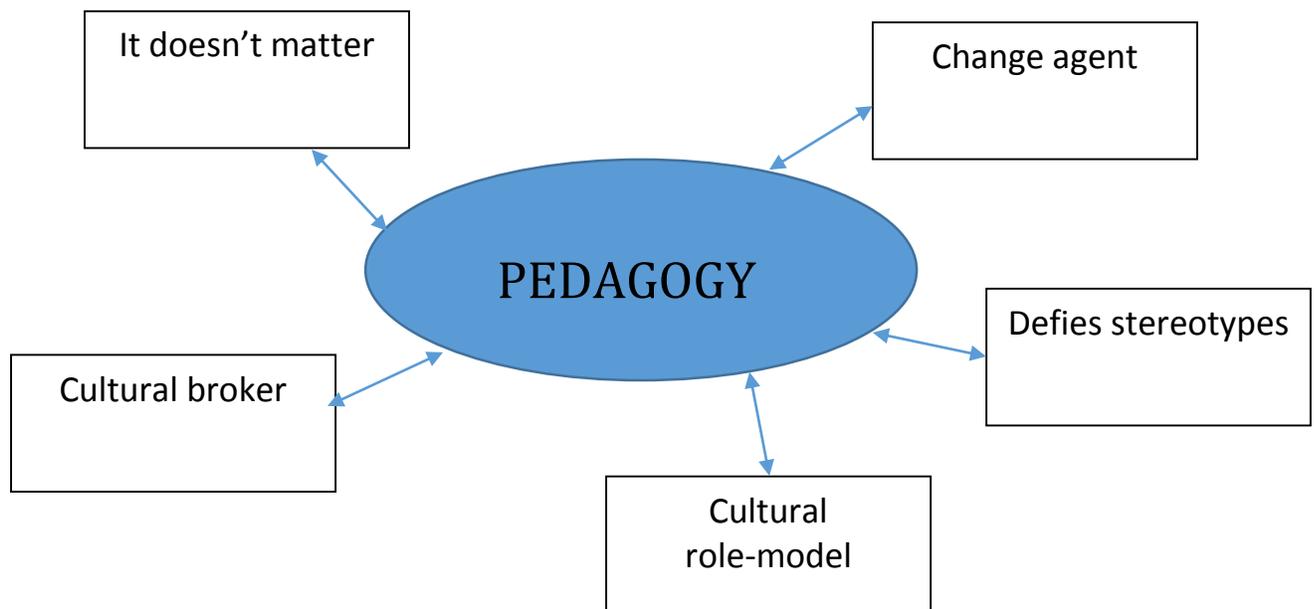


Figure 6.2: Asian American teacher pedagogies



Implications for Teacher Education

This research contributes to our understandings of teachers' experiences during their teaching careers. In Chapter 1, I discussed how identity affects teaching practice (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Knowles, 1992; Alsup, 2006). I also discussed what this project reveals about Asian American teachers' understandings of identity and how those identities shape their pedagogies. I explored how teachers subconsciously and consciously include their racial and ethnic identities in the classrooms and how these exclusions and inclusions legitimate their roles as teachers, cultural brokers, cultural role-models, and change agents. I also discussed how teachers' awareness of racial/ethnic identity contributes to a desire to enact socially just change in the classroom.

To this end, my work contributes to the field of teacher education by providing more evidence that identity and practice are tightly connected. Identity exploration and identity affirmation are important aspects of a pre-service teacher's education and these topics should be

included in teacher education curricula. By encouraging prospective teachers to understand their identities before they set foot in the classroom, they will be better prepared to enact these identities and respond to discourses that jeopardize these identities.

My work also speaks to the importance of approaching teacher education with diversity in mind. Previous scholarship has shown that Asian American teachers face bias and racism during their teacher preparation process and in their classrooms (Newton; 2003; Goodwin et. al, 2006; Nguyen, 2009; and Rong & Preissle, 1997). My study reinforces this finding. I've provided examples of how Asian American teachers have faced discrimination and microaggressions both as students and now as teachers. It is imperative that teacher educators ensure that their curricula is culturally sensitive to non-White teachers. While important, teacher education scholarship tends to focus on preparing White pre-service teachers to work with diverse student populations (Sleeter, 2001; Howard, 2006; Gay, 2002), rather than preparing teachers of color for the classroom, as evidenced by my findings. Teacher education programs should place more emphasis on helping all teachers, including teachers of color, to understand how they will be viewed by future students, peers, and supervisors. Programs should also pay attention to how course design and student-teaching placements affect teacher experiences, and provide room for teachers to discuss these effects and outcomes.

One way teacher education programs can provide opportunities for identity exploration and development *and* provide spaces for teachers to talk across their different identities is through Intergroup Dialogue. "Intergroup dialogues are facilitated face-to-face encounters that cultivate meaningful engagement between members of two or more social identity groups with a history of conflict or potential conflict" (p. 7, Zuniga, Baagda, & Sevig, 2002). The dialogues are meant to provide sustained communication and consciousness raising and bridge differences, and

in doing so, allow the individuals in the dialogue to form relationships with one another, learn from one another, and work together to create change (Zuniga, Baagda, & Sevig, 2002). When intergroup dialogue participants are invested in their dialogue groups, they experience positive outcomes in thinking about racial identity, understanding different points of view, and a desire to bridge differences (Nagda & Zuniga, 2003). Intergroup dialogue also promotes awareness of social identity and difference, reduces stereotyping, and improves abilities to deal with conflict (Dessel, Rogge, and Garlington, 2006).

Including intergroup dialogue as part of the curriculum in teacher education programs would encourage and allow future teachers to think about and explore their identities and provide language to help them think about identities. It could promote collaboration and understanding across program cohorts, and encourage prospective teachers to learn from each other. Lastly, it would enable teachers to be aware of how their identities will be regarded in their classrooms and promote awareness of their students' identities. Intergroup dialogue has the potential to go a long way in building bonds among teacher education program cohorts and between teachers and their students.

Implications for multicultural education

My findings also further enhance our understanding of multicultural education. In addition to highlighting why sensitivity to a diverse teaching force is important, my findings reveal that Asian American teachers are an important component of the teaching force. Understanding Asian American teachers' experiences improves our understanding of teachers at large, and our understanding of teachers of color and the diversity of teaching experiences. Multicultural education covers a multitude of diversity in educational settings, one of which is

race. Recent multicultural education textbooks do explore the experiences of Asian Americans (Banks & Banks, 2003; Nieto, 2000; Pang, 2005), and my work reinforces the importance of continuing to include Asian Americans in this literature.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the racial triangulation (Kim, 1999) of Asian Americans has led to a heightened sense of invisibility and marginalization among Asian Americans. My study is significant in its disruption of the Black/White binary and its focus on how and why Asian Americans are also an important part of the conversation on race. My work centers Asian Americans as a focal point in this discussion and serves as a reminder to the field of Multicultural Education that Asian American teachers and students are central to our study of how race, class, and gender intersect with education.

In addition to using multicultural education textbooks that include the experiences of Asian Americans, I suggest that multicultural education instructors include material that frames Asian Americans in terms that extend beyond the model minority myth. In other words, rather than just teaching future teachers that the model minority is a myth, instructors need to explore how Asian American identity is multiple and intersectional, as my project reveals. In addition, it is important to emphasize that Asian American identity is not necessarily about bridging cultural divides, but about reifying as well as disrupting racial, class, and gender discourses.

Implications for Asian American Studies

I mentioned earlier in my dissertation that I use the terms race and ethnicity interchangeably because that is how my participants use the terms. While some participants identified strongly with their ethnicity (such as when Betty asserts that she is Vietnamese) while others defined themselves by race (Mary speaks mostly about being Asian American), many

participants went back and forth and identified simultaneously as Chinese, Chinese American, and Asian American (p. 67). Based on a preliminary data analysis of how my participants chose to identify, the main difference in whether a teacher chose to identify primarily with their race versus their ethnicity was involvement in a race-based organization during college or participation in a college or graduate-level course that focused on issues of race and social justice. This analysis suggests that identifying racially is a product of consciousness-raising. In addition, it indicates that although racial and ethnic identities alike have become more cultural than political in recent years (Philips, 2012), participating in a race-based organization or academic course equips individuals with language to understand and discuss race and identity.

What this means is that ethnic studies courses, such as those in Asian American Studies, and multicultural education courses that discuss racial inequalities help to contribute to potential teachers' self-understandings. Just as intergroup dialogue can help to raise awareness around social identities and stereotyping, race-based organizations and courses provide spaces for Asian American teachers to reflect on their life experiences and prepare them to relate to their students in culturally relevant ways. Thus, I'd suggest that teacher education programs consider partnering with ethnic studies departments and programs in preparing teachers to be more culturally aware and culturally relevant in their practice.

Implications for Educational Policy

In Chapter 5, I discussed how the changing landscape of education has been thought to constrain how teachers teach because of stricter guidelines around curricula and more attention to testing (Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2007; Selwyn, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Hursh, 2007). But, in fact, this is not always the case. Previous scholarship demonstrates that teachers

actually have a great deal of control in their classrooms if they make the effort to maintain their self-efficacy (Lasky, 2005; Schweisfurth, 2006; Pennington, 2007; Sloan, 2006; Priestly et. al, 2012; Anderson, 2010). My findings add to this scholarship and showed that teachers do have some control over their work and classrooms.

However, I also discussed how the existing discourses around teaching may also be contributing to teacher attitudes and may influence which teachers feel they have control and also in what specific situations teachers perceive having control, support, problems, etc. Thus, while it appears that many teachers are still able to teach in ways they deem effective despite changes in education policy, it does not mean that these policy changes are not constraining teachers. Instead, teachers are likely drawing on discourses of teacher agency and their own desires to teach curriculums that go beyond testing mandates to accomplish these goals.

Thus, one policy-related recommendation is for policy makers is to continue to implement changes in a way that gives teachers autonomy over how to enact classroom-specific changes. In other words, although higher-stakes testing will likely remain mandatory for decades to come and the Common Core curriculum is going to become integral to American school curriculum, additional testing and curriculum changes can be made in ways that allow teachers the freedom to decide when and how to teach test preparation and how to use the new Common Core guidelines in their classrooms.

Another recommendation is to ensure that all teacher education programs provide training that focuses on critical thinking and critical teaching. Teacher education programs need to equip teachers to teach content to students no matter what constraints they are up against. They need to be trained to be experts in pedagogy as well as subject-matter so that they can continue to meet the needs of their students despite what new policy mandates are handed down.

Additionally, I propose that a more important policy change is to change the discourse around teaching. We need to stop talking about teachers as so incompetent that they require “teacher-proof” curricula (Apple, 1990; Sloan, 2006; Macdonald, 2010) and instead, frame teachers as knowledgeable experts, experts whose students’ test scores may reflect some aspect of teaching but do not definitively provide evidence that an individual is or is not a “good” teacher. We also need to stop framing the interests of teachers, administrators, and policy-makers as mutually exclusive, and change the conversation so that these individuals who should be working together for the best interests of our students can work together toward mutual goals.

That said, there are some practical changes to be made that have the potential to make teaching a more positive experience. One is to restrict class sizes. If smaller class sizes predict higher degrees of teacher control, less perceived support, less satisfaction, and less of a desire to teach again, then one solution to creating more positive teaching environments for teachers is to lower class sizes if at all possible. While tightening budgets are what no doubt contribute to increases in class sizes, my findings provide clear evidence that smaller class sizes are important because of the effects on teachers’ attitudes towards their classrooms and towards their profession.

In addition, my findings revealed that for Asian American teachers, race is a significant predictor of perceived classroom control. This data, coupled with the existing population data which reveals that teachers of color make up a very small percentage of the teaching population (Ochoa, 2007), makes a strong case for educational policy to concentrate on the needs and recruitment of teachers of color. This could take the form of mentoring programs for teachers of color, which have proven effective (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011), and recruitment programs

which specific target teachers of color, such as South Seattle Community College's program to recruit Asian American teachers (Teranishi, 2010).

Limitations/Future Directions

Although I have provided a rich picture of the identities and teaching experiences of Asian American teachers, this study is not without limitations. As with all qualitative studies, the findings from the qualitative portion of my study are not generalizable. Although the data I collected reveals that Asian American teachers' identities are nuanced, ambivalent (Ngo, 2010), and intersectional (Lowe, 1991), I have no way of encapsulating specifics around these nuances. In addition, although I have made summative statements concerning gender and class, and different ways identity and pedagogy are performed as they pertain to my participants, I have no way of knowing whether these same conclusions apply to the general Asian American teacher population.

Instead, what I have provided through this qualitative study is a rich, in-depth (Patton, 2001) picture of who Asian American teachers are. In addition, my study contributes insight to an under-studied population. It provides a strong foundation for future research, particularly projects that focus on understanding racial discourse, intersectionality, and performances of pedagogy.

My qualitative study has provided a wealth of data around identity enactments and classroom practice. However, I only used one form of data collection—the interview. And thus, my analysis is based entirely on the teachers' self-perceptions of identity and pedagogy and my interpretations of their reported narratives. A future avenue for continuing this research could be through classroom observations of Asian American teachers. Utilizing ethnography to learn

about teachers would provide insight into whether what teachers report is occurring in their classrooms is actually happening, or whether their reports are influenced by their perceptions. A second way for gathering more data would be to interview the students, colleagues, and administrators of Asian American teachers. These interviews about Asian American teachers would add another layer of complexity to understanding the identities and pedagogical performances of Asian American teachers.

Another future direction for my research would be to talk to participants from different regional areas. My current participants are from the West Coast, South, Midwest, and Northeast. However, a high number of them are located in the Northeast, particularly New York and New Jersey. Knowing that most Asian American teachers live in the West (SASS, 2007-08), it would be interesting and beneficial to talk to more participants from the West Coast, to get an idea of whether their understandings of identity and pedagogy are inherently different because of where they live and teach.

While my quantitative study was able to provide generalizable findings about teacher attitudes, how teacher attitudes correspond with teacher race, and in this way was able to add another dimension to my qualitative study, my quantitative study was very focused on recent data findings. Thus, a third avenue for future research could be to see how perceptions of control, support, problems, satisfaction, and likelihood of teaching again have changed throughout the years. I could look at how teacher and school characteristics, such as teacher race, predict how teachers perceive of teaching over the span of nearly three decades. This would provide more data on how race and teacher attitudes are connected in addition to data on how policy changes may affect teachers' perceptions of teaching.

Lastly, as I mentioned in Chapter 5, one of the shortcomings of the SASS is that it does not explicitly focus on teacher race or teacher identity. Thus, a fourth way to add to my research would be to conduct an original survey that asks teachers about how their identities are connected to their teaching, and use this survey data to provide generalizable data around identity and pedagogy.

To conclude, I could build on my current study by using additional approaches to data collection and enlarging my participant focus. By utilizing ethnography and the interviews of students, colleagues, and supervisors of Asian American teachers, I could add to the complexity to understanding Asian American teachers. In addition, by focusing on more data points and collecting quantitative data that gets at the heart of my research questions more specifically, I would be better equipped to talk about the entire Asian American teaching population and their experiences with identity and teaching.

Final thoughts

Since I began my dissertation with some personal reflections, it seems only fitting to end with a personal reflection as well. Leaving the classroom has not shielded me from experiencing micro-aggressions. I have several counter-stories to add to my collection. I have been mistaken for other Asian American female staff members at Cornell numerous times. Upon learning that my family speaks Cantonese, a White colleague used his badly accented Cantonese to share a few of the phrases he learned while living in Hong Kong.

No matter how I think about myself, I will always live in a marked body. My identity is the product of ongoing double action (Ngo, 2010). Working on and studying race, identity, and racial inequalities does not make one immune to these types of experiences. But, it does provide

an ameliorating effect. It has given me a place to take these struggles to, a language with which to work them out, and a sense of productivity and empowerment. Crafting my participants' interviews into narratives has taught me much about my own identity.

I, too, have drawn on competing discourses to understand myself and others. While I cringe whenever anyone asks where I'm really from because I know that skin color and race should not have anything to do with citizenship and belonging, I am quick to label Chinese immigrants as "fobs" and mark them as "unbelonging." Clearly, discourses around assimilation, citizenship, and belonging are ones I am still wrestling with.

My own research has made me much more aware of my own multiple identities and how my own identity is performed. I am simultaneously an Asian American, straight middle-class Christian woman whose family identities (wife, mother, sister, daughter) are also important. I draw on different aspects and variations of these identities as they become appropriate. I have also drawn on different aspects of my identity in my analysis and constructions of my participants' narratives.

Writing this dissertation has been an act of identity exploration and identity development, a performance of scholarship. Berger & Quinney (2005) write:

...lived experience can be understood through the stories people tell about it. Stories are ways not merely of telling others about ourselves but of constructing our identities, of finding purpose and meaning in our lives (p. 5).

So too do the narratives in my work tell stories about identity, purpose, and meaning—both those of my participants and of myself and my own journey.

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