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From Margins to Center: Developing Cultural Citizenship Education Through the Teaching of Asian American History

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Keywords

Asian critical race theory, citizenship education, critical race theory, cultural citizenship, elementary education, teachers of color

Disciplines

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**From Margins to Center: Developing Cultural Citizenship
Education Through the Teaching of Asian American History**

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Abstract

Citizenship education is considered a primary purpose for social studies education, however in elementary classrooms, it is often limited to the memorization of mainstream civic knowledge and learning about a handful of American heroes. This qualitative study of three Asian American educators uses Asian Critical Race theory to explore how the teachers drew from their own cultural and linguistic experiences to inform pedagogies of cultural citizenship education which interrogated what it means to be a citizen. By (re)defining the terms Asian American and American (citizen), the teachers enacted cultural citizenship education through the use of counternarratives and children's literature that disrupted normative conceptualizations of citizen. Their work demonstrates how educators can present more inclusive depictions of civic identity, membership, and agency to young learners.

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While the panethnic term Asian American masks great ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, and other forms of diversity (Espiritu, 1992), its sociopolitical roots are grounded in shared historical limitations on citizenship privilege, social mobility, and economic opportunities, which served as the basis for the development of a shared Asian American identity (Iwata, 2005). This panethnicity can be a means to express agency and "to contest systems of racism and inequality in American society--systems that seek to exclude, marginalize and homogenize" (Espiritu, 1992, p. 175) Asian Americans. One of the most significant aspects of Asian American history is the designation of Asians as "aliens ineligible to citizenship" (Parker, 1925), distinguishing them from other migrant or racialized groups and distancing Asians from the national cultural terrain (Lowe, 1996). This distinct disenfranchisement on the basis of citizenship demonstrates the need to uncover histories usually hidden in schools, especially at the elementary level, as well as the explicit teaching of broader understandings of citizenship.

This article examines how three Asian American elementary teachers' pedagogical decisions regarding the teaching of Asian American history were influenced by their understandings of citizenship. The theoretical frames of Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) and cultural citizenship revealed the tensions of broadening young students' understandings of civic identity and civic agency as the teachers taught Asian American histories rarely discussed in schools. AsianCrit was essential to this examination as it centers the Asian American experience in the teachers' decision-making processes, asserting the significance of their common identity as Asian Americans (Omi, 1997) in spite of their personal and professional differences. Through their work, the teachers enacted cultural citizenship education, which disrupted traditional and normative examples of civic agents and civic action as they presented their students with Asian American counternarratives. Given the lack of attention paid to Asian

American historical narratives throughout K-12, the teachers' pedagogical practices offer important insight into the nuances of teaching histories normally excluded in the curriculum.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Asian American

The term Asian American¹ was coined by activists Yuji Ichioka and Emma Gee in 1968 when they co-founded the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) at the University of California, Berkeley. The AAPA was a diverse organization composed of multiethnic Asians from a variety of geographical, socioeconomic, class, and immigrant backgrounds united by anti-racist and anti-imperialist politics (Author, in press; Maeda, 2012). Despite these origins, Asian American is no longer widely used as a political-racial identifier due to several recent trends that have altered its meaning (Philip, 2014), including the increasing ethnic diversity of Asian Americans, perceptions of the model minority stereotype (Park, 2008), and census use as a racial category. While recognizing the complexity of this term (Chen & Buell, 2017), in this article, Asian American is used to describe any person of Asian descent living in America, whether they are first generation immigrants or fourth generation Americans of Asian heritage.

Asian American Citizenship

Asian American immigration history in relation to U.S. citizenship is distinct from other migrant or racialized groups as Asians are the only group for whom legislation was crafted to exclude their entry into the United States (e.g., Page Act of 1875, Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882) and the only group legally rendered "aliens ineligible to citizenship" through the denial of naturalization (Naturalization Act of 1870). Although the Supreme Court case *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* (1898) upheld birthright citizenship for Chinese and other Asian immigrants, the dissents in the seven-to-two decision emphasized popular notions of the unassimilability of the

Chinese, citing blood lines as an indicator of their immutable foreignness (Lowe, 1996). These sentiments came to the fore in *Ozawa v. United States* (1922) and *United States v. Thind* (1923), cases whose Asian American defendants invoked both science and popular knowledge to argue for the classification of Asian immigrants as white/Caucasian (rather than “Yellow,” “Oriental,” or “Mongoloid”) and therefore eligible for citizenship (Haney López, 1996). The *Thind* decision declared that understandings of whiteness could only be extended to other European immigrants “unquestionably akin to those already here and readily amalgamated with them” (*United States v. Thind*, 261 U.S. 204, at 211), asserting the assimilability of southern and eastern Europeans in contrast to the inalterable foreignness and subsequent unassimilability of Asians. Moreover, although the *Ozawa* and *Thind* cases applied only to Japanese and South Asians, the Supreme Court made a leap in racial logic and applied the rule of ineligibility to citizenship to Koreans, Thais, Vietnamese, and other Asian nationalities in the final paragraph of *Thind* (Ngai, 1999).

The Immigration Act of 1924, which prohibited Japanese immigration² and barred the entry of women from China, Japan, Korea, and India while allowing thousands of Europeans to immigrate, completed full Asiatic exclusion by codifying racial exclusion into American immigration and naturalization law (Ngai, 2004). Since the mid-1800s arrival of Chinese immigrants during the Gold Rush, the United States' immigration policy has been built on legal definitions of “white”³ and the rule of racial unassimilability (Ngai, 2004) that impacted a wide range of Asian American experiences and opportunities, from basic rights such as access to public schooling and the right to testify as a witness in court to property rights and interracial marriage (Lee, 2015; Sohoni, 2007). Consequently, immigration is the most important historical and discursive site of Asian American formation as it has directly impacted Asian American citizenship, naturalization, and racialization for one hundred and fifty years (Lowe, 1996).

Changing historical conceptions of race continue to disrupt Asian Americans' ability to function and be identified as U.S. citizens; in the American imagination, to be Asian American means to act according to fundamentally different cultural dictates regardless of legal status or political activity (Volpp, 2011) that render individuals unassimilable and immutably foreign. Being viewed as perpetual or forever foreigners (Tuan, 1998) is an experience common to many Asian Americans, whose sheer presence challenges the requirements for recognition as citizen in the United States (Young, 2004). As Tupper (2006) noted, modern-day "citizenship has not necessarily transcended the exclusions that once shaped its very existence" (pp. 46-47), regardless of the number of generations that Asian Americans have lived in the United States.

Troubling Traditional Textbook Depictions of Citizenship

According to Nelson and Pang (2014), "the social studies curriculum often does a poor job of examining the disparity between the credo of justice and equal treatment and the pervasiveness of racialization in everyday life" (p. 208). In particular, the curriculum centers white middle/upper-class, Christian narratives and experiences as the norm (Yosso, 2002), often neglecting or avoiding substantive discussions about marginalized groups historically excluded from full participation in national culture (Kymlicka, 1995) and the subsequent civic estrangement and racial and gendered hierarchies they must confront (Haney López, 1996; Tillet, 2012; Vickery, 2017a). Schools generally ignore complex and inclusive renditions of citizenship, instead presenting narrow, simplified constructions that leave many students feeling detached and unrecognized (Parker, 2003; Taylor, 2009). Therefore students and teachers of color may have experiences that differ drastically from textbook depictions of citizenship and result in racial, ethnic, and religious identification before national allegiance (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Bondy, 2014, 2016; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Vickery, 2017a).

Those who occupy more privileged social locations are more likely to engage as traditional participatory citizens (Tupper, 2006; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), while individuals whose multiple identities are marginalized by the broader society may be less apt to identify as citizens (Ladson-Billings, 2004). Rubin, Hayes, and Benson (2009) argue that larger social forces (including racial and socioeconomic inequality) as well as youth's daily schooling experiences affect their emerging sense of civic being. Therefore, teachers must recognize that civic identity is constructed within particular structures and practices, a departure from conventional notions of civic education (Rubin, Hayes, & Benson, 2009; Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997). As the ideals of citizenship found in school spaces do not necessarily match students' life experiences, Abu El-Haj (2007) calls for public schools to reinvigorate their "commitment to citizenship education in ways that engage with diversity, conflict, and structural inequalities," recognizing schools as "one of the few sites in which youth come together across the many communities that constitute our global village" (p. 312). By reframing citizenship education in this way, teachers can expand definitions of civic membership and thereby construct more robust possibilities for civic identity and civic agency.

Asian American History in Schools

In general, social studies curriculum rarely includes meaningful representations of communities of color (Wills, 2001), who may only be present when relevant to Anglo-European experiences or actions (Cornbleth, 1997). Many scholars of social studies education have attended to the need to critically reframe traditional narratives of African Americans (Busey & Walker, 2017; King, 2016; Vickery, 2017b; Woodson, 2016), Latinx (Author, 2016; Cruz, 2002; Santiago, 2017), and Native Americans (Craig & Davis, 2015; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Shear, Knowles, Soden, & Castro, 2015), however the field continues to neglect curricular

representations of Asian Americans. Asian Americans are nearly invisible in K-12 history educational standards (An, 2016; Heilig, Brown, & Brown, 2012; Noboa, 2012; Pang, 2006) and textbooks (Harada, 2000; Hartlep & Scott, 2016; Suh, An, & Forest, 2015), typically addressed just twice in secondary U.S. history: upon the enactment of Chinese exclusion in 1882 and during the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II (Noboa, 2012). This minimization of Asian American involvement in U.S. history is reductive in its attention to only two Asian American groups pre-1965 and problematic in context: Chinese and Japanese Americans are presented as pariahs, either wholly excluded from entry or viewed as enemies of the state, and removed from any past or present contributions to the nation.

Considering the minimal, if any, mention of Asian Americans in the curriculum, K-12 teachers are unlikely to include Asian American historical narratives in any substantive way. Notably, the few instances in which Asians and Asian Americans are mentioned in U.S. history textbooks follow typical narrative templates of American progress (Suh et al., 2015) and focus on male immigrants, relegating women and children to supporting if not invisible roles bound by the home (Okiihiro, 1997). Secondary U.S. history courses and textbooks that mention Chinese exclusion and Japanese American incarceration during World War II may reference the economic and academic successes of Asian Americans in ways that perpetuate the model minority stereotype and depict Asian Americans as passive rather than active agents who did not resist inhumane working conditions or wartime imprisonment (Harada, 2000; Hartlep & Scott, 2016; Suh et al., 2015). Yet at the elementary level, teachers rarely cover these topics. Instead, Asian Americans may only be addressed in relation to holiday celebrations and food (Hartlep & Scott, 2016). Such representations preserve exotic stereotypes that emphasize difference and situate Asian Americans as foreign Others (Pang, Colvin, Tran, & Barba, 1992). Overall, on the

rare occasions when Asian Americans are discussed in schools, they are depicted as outsiders who are decidedly more Asian than American.

However, the realm of multicultural children's literature offers elementary educators alternative instructional resources about Asian Americans. While children's literature, like textbooks, is dominated by white, middle class, cisgendered, abled characters, there has been a notable increase in books both by and about Asian Americans (Children's Cooperative Book Center, 2017). Early children's literature about Asian Americans often perpetuated stereotypes and maintained notions of Asian Americans as forever foreigners (Aoki, 1981); while this remains an issue with contemporary Asian folktales (Hartlep & Scott, 2016; Roy, 2008), studies revealed growth in positive-non-stereotyped portrayals, historically accurate information, and contemporary representation of Asian American life in books published during the last three decades (de Manuel & Davis, 2006; Harada, 1995; Yi, 2014; Yokota, 2009). However, while many of these books have won recognition from organizations like the National Council of the Social Studies, they are often not readily consumed by the general public, indicating a lack of demand by parents, teachers, librarians and booksellers (Loh-Hagen, 2014).

This study contributes to the extant research on teaching Asian American histories through its focus on elementary contexts with Asian American teachers in the South; unlike comparable research on the introduction of Asian American histories in secondary classrooms (Kiang, 2004; Halagao, 2004), these teachers did not have any background in ethnic studies content and/or pedagogy (Tintiangco-Cubales *et al.*, 2015) and worked in communities where there was no critical mass of Asian Americans. This study also highlights the use of children's literature as a resource for teaching more diverse histories and examples of citizenship.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Citizenship education is shaped in great part by teachers, who in turn are shaped by their own religious, political, and social commitments (Gutmann, 1999). This study of three elementary educators is framed by two bodies of research. First, in recognition of the complex racial, cultural, and sociopolitical identities held by the Asian American teachers in this study and the influence of these multiple identities upon their pedagogy, I utilize the theoretical lens of Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit). Second, this study is framed by the notion of cultural citizenship, which facilitates a nuanced analysis of the ways the teachers (re)visioned their pedagogical approaches to who is considered an American “citizen.”

Critical Race Theory & the Call for AsianCrit

AsianCrit draws heavily from the larger, well-established traditions of critical theory, critical legal studies, and critical race theory (CRT). These critical strands of research are founded on resistance to oppressive aspects of society for the purposes of fostering societal and individual transformation (Tierney, 1993). Early critical race legal scholars like Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Mari Matsuda understood racism to be a normal, not aberrant, part of U.S. society, with racial inequality permeating every aspect of social life (Delgado, 2013). CRT has since been applied in a variety of fields in addition to outgrowths that address more specific issues beyond race faced by other groups, such as Critical Race Feminism (FemCrit), Tribal Critical Theory (TribalCrit), Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), and AsianCrit. These branches of CRT are extensions of a theory that remain rooted in the same basic principles, yet grew in different directions to address distinctive community needs based on complex histories and experiences in multiple contexts (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Chang (1993) first called for an Asian American legal scholarship in recognition of the failure of civil rights work and CRT scholarship to address Asian American issues. The

discrimination faced by Asian Americans, Chang (1993) argued, “is quantitatively and qualitatively different from that suffered by other disempowered groups” and CRT had “not yet shown how different races matter differently” (p. 1247). The Black/white paradigm that dominated early CRT work ignored the complexity of America’s racial hierarchy (Gotanda, 1995, 2010; Haney-López, 1996) and the convoluted nature of Asian Americans’ racial designation. Asian Americans were positioned as perpetual foreigners and threatening yellow perils since their earliest arrivals in the United States (Lowe, 1996; Takaki, 1990) through an “outsider racialization” that situated Asian Americans as immigrants and foreigners regardless of their actual citizenship status (Ancheta, 2006). Asian Americans also suffer from nativistic racism distinct from the nativism of the 1840s that included anti-Catholic and anti-European strains (Chang, 1993; Gee, 1999). Moreover, as described previously, the uniqueness of the Asian American experience is noted by the legislative response to Asian immigration and citizenship. AsianCrit recognizes and forefronts the racialized history of Asian immigrants and its subsequent impact on Asian American citizenship and experiences in U.S. society.

AsianCrit in Education

As schools are powerful institutions that create and reinforce racial inequality (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2010), CRT applications in school contexts can deepen understanding of the educational barriers faced by people of color (Taylor, 2009), from the inequality in school funding to issues related to assessment and curriculum (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) which often marginalize the knowledges of students of color (Yosso, 2002). To attend to the invisibility of Asian Americans in schools, Museus (2014) offered an AsianCrit perspective to center racial realities at the core of Asian American educational experiences. Two tenets of Museus's (2014) AsianCrit framework are particularly salient in this paper:

(re)constructive history and story, theory, and praxis. (Re)Constructive History underscores the importance of (re)constructing an historical Asian American narrative by re-analyzing history to expose racism toward Asian Americans and recognizing their racial exclusion from American history. It also emphasizes the need to advocate for transcending this invisibility and silence to construct a collective Asian American historical narrative and foster strong Asian American identity and consciousness.

Story, Theory, and Praxis underscores the notion that counterstories, theoretical work, and practice are important, inextricably intertwined elements in the analysis of Asian American experiences and advocacy for Asian American people and communities. The tenet of *story, theory, and praxis* draws from critical race theory scholars such as Bell (1992), Delgado (2013), and Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) who emphasized the importance of counternarratives/counterstories. Counterstories are "a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society). The counter-story is also a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege" and "can help strengthen traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). Given the invisibility of Asian Americans in schools, counterstories are important tools that can resist and disrupt the dominant curriculum and white normative conceptualizations of citizenship (Williams, 2004). These two AsianCrit tenets provide a foundation to examine the experiences of Asian Americans by articulating and historicizing the distinct ways in which Asian Americans are racialized.

Cultural Citizenship

Citizenship has been defined in a multitude of ways across a range of fields. In schools, Tupper (2006) argues, citizenship espouses a vision of what is "good" and "responsible" for

teachers and students without interrogating the concept itself and developing understandings of the (im)possibilities that inhibit and foster meaningful social and political participation. This study regards citizenship as an ontological problem that is both a crisis of meaning and a crisis of belonging (Carson, 2006). As illustrated earlier, Asian Americans and other marginalized groups have been and continued to be viewed as not fully American and are structurally excluded from full economic, social, cultural, and political participation (Abu El-Haj, 2007). Therefore Rosaldo's (1997) notion of cultural citizenship, the process of "claiming membership in, and remaking America" (Rosaldo & Flores, 1997, p. 58), provides a useful lens through which to view the work of Asian American teachers in this study as they (re)conceptualized the meaning of (American) citizen with their students.

Cultural citizenship emphasizes the agency in marginalized groups in establishing and asserting human, social, and cultural rights to enfranchise themselves (Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Kang, 2010). However, cultural citizenship is also "a dual process of self-making and being made within webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society" (Ong, 1996, p. 738). In particular, cultural citizenship goes beyond traditional classroom discourses of "kinds" of citizen based on formal processes of civic action (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) by instead highlighting those groups whose cultural practices have historically been disrespected and rendered invisible and their ongoing struggle to participate in a truly democratic society (Stevenson, 2011). Like other marginalized groups, Asian American experiences with citizenship are deeply tied to their racialization in American society but are also influenced by immigration status, class, and international events.

Early scholarship on cultural citizenship focused on Latinx populations (Bernal, Alemán & Carmona, 2008; Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Rosaldo, 1997) but has expanded to examine the

experiences of Asian Americans, Muslims, and other marginalized communities worldwide (Bhandar, 2012; Kang, 2010; Lopez, 2016; Merchant, 2016; Ong, 1996; Stevenson, 2012). However, the application of cultural citizenship within education remains limited. Fránquiz and Brochin (2006) determined four premises for educators to consider in the development of cultural citizenship: 1) providing access to culturally relevant oral, visual, and written texts; 2) offering multiple opportunities for children to use cultural assets in the production of texts; 3) fostering cultural preservation; and 4) engaging students in activities with transformative potential. U.S. educational research on cultural citizenship has generally focused on immigrant and Latinx students (Bondy, 2014, 2017; Fránquiz & Brochin, 2006) with fewer studies that center the role of the teacher (Jaffee, 2016; Salinas & Alarcón, 2016). However, regardless of their research subjects, these cultural citizenship views of education examine ways in which we can ultimately foster societies founded on respect, democracy, engagement, and learning (Stevenson, 2012).

METHODS

This instrumental qualitative case study (Stake, 1995) advances Asian American perspectives in elementary citizenship education by looking in depth at the ways Asian American teachers enacted Asian American history and understood citizenship. This study was centered on the following research question: How do Asian American elementary educators broaden their students' understandings of citizenship?

Setting & Participant Selection

The study took place during the 2016 spring semester in Navarro⁴, Texas, a large city where Asian Americans constitute 6% of the city's population, comparable to national statistics. As the study was foregrounded by AsianCrit, I actively sought Asian American Navarro

Independent School District (NISD) elementary teachers who expressed a personal interest in transforming (mis)representations of Asian Americans. Recognizing that Asian American history is rarely taught in K-12 and is particularly scarce in elementary schools beyond cultural celebrations, I selected participants based on the following criteria:

- 1) The participant identified as Asian American and was willing to discuss their cultural and immigrant experiences both in and out of the classroom.
- 2) The participant agreed to teach multiple Asian American history lessons. The form and scope of these lessons was at the teacher's discretion.
- 3) The participant committed to attending a half-day professional development workshop on Asian American history sponsored by NISD's elementary social studies department. I was an invited speaker at this workshop and provided several dozen instructional resources for teaching Asian American history to elementary students.⁵

This case study was bounded by the participants' self-identification as Asian American elementary teachers willing to diverge from traditional social studies curriculum. Although each teacher's school context and student groups were distinct (see Tables 1 and 2), there were many parallels in their educational, cultural and professional experiences. Moreover, unlike the majority of extant literature on Asian American teachers set in the West Coast, this study examined the racialized experiences of teachers in an area with no critical mass of Asians but experiencing Asian American population growth (Hoeffel et al., 2012), where the teachers studied were frequently the sole faculty member of their ethnoracial group and/or the first Asian American teacher that students had.

Participants. After receiving research permissions from NISD, I was provided with a list of the district's Asian American elementary teachers; similar to national statistics, these

educators composed 2% of the district's teaching force (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). From this list, I contacted individuals based on reputational case selection (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982) and snowball sampling (Yin, 2014), using various NISD contacts to determine which educators taught social studies and might be willing to teach histories traditionally missing from the curriculum. Ultimately, five Asian American teachers participated in the study. This article focuses on three veteran Asian American elementary teachers in NISD during the 2015-2016 school year.

Elyse was Vietnamese American and in her tenth year of teaching. She held a post-baccalaureate degree in elementary education and taught all subjects in a third-grade classroom; her campus had a disproportionately large percentage of Asian/Asian American students (9%) due to the many Asian families who lived in the nearby university's graduate student housing and were zoned to her school. Krishnan was Indian American and in his sixth year of teaching in the United States; in addition to his six years in NISD, Krishnan had experience teaching elementary students in India and Guatemala. Krishnan went through an alternative certification program and was a dual language teacher who taught language arts, social studies, and science in Spanish to third- and fifth-grade students. His campus' dual language program was an enrichment program overwhelmingly enrolled by non-native Spanish speaking, upper class white students in a neighborhood that underwent significant gentrification in the last decade. Virginia was Chinese American and in her eighth year of teaching. She was the only teacher in this study who went through a traditional undergraduate teacher preparation program and also held a Master's degree in education. Virginia taught second-grade at a Title I school composed exclusively of Latinx and African American students. [insert Tables 1 and 2 here]

In addition to the participants' 6-10 years of teaching experience in NISD, all three were bi- or multilingual and the children of Asian immigrants or refugees. Illustrative of Asian diasporas, Elyse was born in Germany after her parents fled Saigon on a German naval ship during the Vietnam War and Krishnan was born in Kenya to parents of Indian descent. Both immigrated to the United States as children and received first through twelfth grade schooling in Texas, learning English upon their arrival. Virginia was the only participant born in the United States and grew up in a Texas suburb with a tight-knit Chinese American community. All three participants described active participation in their respective ethnic communities as children but did not have many Asian or Asian American friends as adults living in Navarro. Of these three teachers, only Virginia recounted teaching any Asian American historical content in the past; this instruction was limited to the teaching of Japanese American incarceration in relation to the book *Sylvia and Aki* (Conkling, 2011) with a third-grade class.

Data Collection

Interviews. The Asian American elementary teachers in this study participated in three lengthy semi-structured interviews outside of the classroom space. The first interview, conducted prior to classroom data collection, focused on the participant's cultural background, family, and personal experiences in school. The second interview, conducted within a week of their first observation, explored their reasons for entering the teaching profession, their teaching philosophy and goals, and established context for both their classrooms and campuses. The third interview took place after the end of the school year and served as an opportunity to reflect on their pedagogical choices and understandings of citizenship, to consider how they might teach Asian American history in the future, and discuss how our conversations about race and culture over the course of the semester influenced their personal and professional lives. At the third

interview, participants were also provided with student work samples and/or transcripts of a project related to Asian American history from their classrooms and were asked to reflect on their students' learning and their instructional decisions during that particular lesson.

In addition to these three interviews, multiple informal lesson debriefs and lesson planning discussions occurred within the school space. Before and after lessons were taught, the teachers sat down with me during their lunch and planning times, in their classrooms and school libraries, to describe what they were planning, what they observed while teaching, and to explain their instructional decisions. These informal interviews occurred at the teachers' convenience and were often unplanned and interrupted, but provided valuable insight into the many decisions that took place in the classroom. Some lengthier reflective conversations also took place via Skype in the evening, allowing the teachers more reflection time when their hectic schedules did not permit an immediate post-lesson debrief. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and provided to the participants.

Classroom Observations. A minimum of six observations were conducted in each participant's classroom on days when the teachers informed me that they would be teaching Asian American content, either as stand-alone social studies lessons or integrated with language arts. My role as participant observer (Merriam, 2009) varied based on the lesson and age of students being observed; younger students tended to engage with me directly as a classroom helper while older students treated me as a formal observer or content expert. All observations were audio-recorded for the duration of the lesson, and in some cases two audio recorders were used on opposite sides of the classroom to capture as many student conversations as possible. During observations, field notes were written, setting diagrams were drawn, and photographs of any relevant writing on the dry erase board were taken; any videos shown in class or books

referenced or read aloud were documented such that moments when videos were paused to allow for clarification were noted for timestamps and pages/paragraphs where the teacher stopped to ask questions were also explicitly described in the field notes and transcriptions. Field notes included direct quotations of both students and teacher; descriptions of the setting and layout of the people in the classroom; activities throughout the lesson; and my own reflective comments.

Artifacts. The artifacts collected in this study ranged from PowerPoint slides created by teachers for the purpose of direct instruction to pieces of children's literature and teacher-scribed notes on the dry erase board during a classroom discussion. Some examples of student artifacts included group-created posters, photographs of students' research notes, and reading reflection journals; student artifacts were only collected from students who obtained parental consent.

Data Analysis

Merriam (1998) explains, "The sense we make of the data we collect is equally influenced by the theoretical framework. That is, our analysis and interpretation... will reflect the constructs, concepts, language, models, and theories that structured the study in the first place" (p. 48). First cycle coding occurred with all interview and observation transcripts and artifact data in the form of descriptive and en vivo codes (Saldaña, 2009). AsianCrit served as a guiding lens to determine codes describing the ways race, culture, experience, language, and history intersected, resulting in codes such as "sharing stories of self," "family history," and "language use." Social studies notions of curricular enactment and the dominant narrative of history led to codes such as "connections across racial/ethnic groups," "addressing (in)equality/(in)justice," and "students recognize (in)equality/(in)justice" while the frame of cultural citizenship influenced codes such as "marginalized perspective" and "examples of agency."

After an initial descriptive and en vivo coding of all data, values coding was conducted to analyze the participants' perspectives and worldviews in regard to issues such as the teaching of diverse historical narratives and institutional racism. Saldaña (2009) notes that values coding is particularly appropriate for case studies that "explore cultural values and intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions" (p. 95). Analytical memos were also written during first cycle coding to begin to synthesize emerging patterns and themes. These memos included reflections on my personal/ethnic connections to the participants, reflections on the teachers' instructional decisions, and comments on the student responses to the content (Saldaña, 2009). During second cycle coding, similarly coded passages were assigned pattern codes, such as "teaching students what they didn't learn in school" and "learning from the past." Given the wide array of data forms, axial coding was also used to examine specific data sources that were common among two or three participants. Axial coding groups similarly coded data in a wide variety of forms and can "bring codes and analytic memos to life and help the researcher see where the story of the data is going" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 161). Some examples of axial coding included "teaching about difference," "who is citizen," and "Asian American agency/resistance."

Trustworthiness. Multiple approaches were used in this study to ensure trustworthiness. First, triangulation of multiple sources of data was conducted for each participant. For example, the application of values coding to interview transcripts, observation transcripts, and field notes corroborated coding and enhanced trustworthiness of findings by addressing whether the participants' attitudes and beliefs expressed in interviews were also addressed in their classroom observations and instructional decisions (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, cited in Saldaña, 2009). Second, participants received electronic copies of all interview and classroom transcripts in order to provide member checks for internal validity. Third, peer review and debriefing was conducted,

particularly in regard to the teacher's understanding of the dominant narrative of history and their ethnic identities. As I conducted these peer reviews, I consulted both Asian American educators as well as non-Asian elementary educators to consider multiple viewpoints during my analysis.

Researcher Positionality

As the American-born child of Asian immigrants, a former NISD elementary teacher and current elementary teacher educator, I know Asian American teachers' voices are grossly underrepresented in educational research. However, Asian American educators have distinct experiences and knowledges that can be immensely valuable to their colleagues and students. In an educational atmosphere that continues to struggle with the needs of both teachers and students of color but tends to overlook the experiences of Asian Americans, I believe this growing population deserves space to express their voices and should have opportunities to see their own (hi)stories in the curriculum they teach and learn.

Wertsch's (2000) distinction between the official histories of school and the unofficial histories of home reflects my personal experience with social studies. The stories of individual, social, economic, and political struggle in their homelands and upon arrival in the United States shared by my parents, family, and friends were never present in my school textbooks. In school, I never learned about Asian immigration to America, as our conversations were limited to European immigrants who arrived in Ellis Island at the turn of the 19th century. My parents' native languages were never uttered in school and I did not have access to learning those languages in formal educational settings. Knowledges, histories, and ways of being related to Asia were always absent in school. I recounted many of these stories and the emotions associated with them as I recruited participants for this study, and these memories often served as starting

points for lengthy conversations about identity, race, citizenship, and the role of social studies education during our interviews.

By sharing identities and stories with one another, reciprocity and rapport are increased while the notions of power and authority invested in the role of the researcher are broken down (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Oakley, 1981). As an Asian American cultural insider (Banks, 1998), it was important to illustrate the complexity of Asian American identity and Asian American history that is so often ignored in mainstream society; however, as I did not share the same ethnicity or religion as my participants, I was simultaneously positioned as a cultural outsider. These varying positions undoubtedly benefitted and challenged my research in a multitude of ways that scholars have detailed elsewhere (Coloma, 2008; Merriam et al, 2011).

FINDINGS

The data analysis revealed that the elementary teachers' individual experiences and understandings of citizen influenced their social studies praxis in three ways. First, as Elyse, Virginia and Krishnan embarked upon the ambitious work (Grant, 2003) of teaching histories beyond the dominant narrative, they often referenced their own experiences with culture, language, and immigration to help their students understand the term *Asian American*, which their students initially understood as foreign and *not* American. Second, the teachers interrogated the term *American*, and over the course of multiple lessons their students developed broader understandings of who was considered "American" and "citizen." Third, the teachers emphasized notions of cultural citizenship in their teaching of Asian American history.

(Re)Defining Asian American

The American *citizen* has historically been defined in contrast to the Asian *immigrant* (Lowe, 1996), from the earliest renderings of Asians as exotic barbarians (Said, 1978) and the

threatening "yellow peril" (Takaki, 1990) to contemporary perceptions of Asian Americans as perpetual or forever foreigners regardless of how many generations their families have lived in the United States (Tuan, 1998). To support their students' understanding of what it meant to be Asian American, the teachers in this study frequently used themselves as examples. In an interview, Elyse described how she revealed her Vietnamese identity with her students at the start of each school year:

The first day of school, I'm like, "I'm from Vietnam. These are my pictures from when I was in Vietnam. Vietnam is here. It is not China. China's here." You know? I have to let them know everything. "Don't call me Chinese"... all that stuff.

Elyse's efforts to broach these conversations soon after meeting her students revealed that she recognized her young students' tendency to misunderstand all things Asian as Chinese, and therefore was verbally and visually explicit about the distinction between China and Vietnam. By establishing China and Vietnam as separate countries with unique cultures, languages, and traditions, she disrupted student perceptions of Asia as a monolithic culture and instead began to foment understandings of inter-group difference within Asian America.

Virginia and Krishnan also described giving similar introductory explanations about their ethnoracial identity with each new group of students, and continued to address stereotypes and misconceptions related to their Asian heritage throughout the school year. In spite of their different ethnicities, the three teachers' lived experiences revealed an intimate understanding of the attachment of foreignness to Asian American bodies and practices (Chang, 1999), and subsequently they actively worked to disrupt such misperceptions with their students. "They assume everything I bring (for lunch) is Chinese food," Virginia recalled with amusement during our first interview. "Is that Chinese food?" "No, it's spaghetti!" The teachers recognized that their

students frequently conflated Asian with all things Chinese and/or Japanese, and used such moments as opportunities to dispel stereotypes of Asians and Asian Americans.

The teachers' Asian American identities were not always part of planned daily instruction in the classroom, but sometimes emerged unexpectedly in student conversations and provided serendipitous opportunities for discussion. For example, Virginia reflected on a lively argument that arose during one lesson when she shared a photo collection of Japanese Americans during World War II. Her students argued about the "race" of the individuals pictured:

"They're White! No, they're Black! No, they're White!" (my students) were confused about whether or not they thought Japanese Americans were Black or White. And I'm like, "Well, they're not really either." And then I think (my students) were kind of like, "What about Ms. Ye? She seems like she could be Japanese American." They made some kind of comment... and I was like, "No, I'm *Chinese* American," and they were like, "Hmm, interesting." And then (they were) starting to remember that Chinese American and Japanese American *aren't* the same thing.

During a lesson many weeks later, Virginia reiterated this distinction with her students. "I am Chinese American. I was born in Houston, Texas... my parents are Chinese, my grandparents are Chinese, we are *all* Chinese. I'm *also* American. So I'm Chinese *and* American." Virginia's continued need to clarify the distinction between Asian countries indicated her young students' struggles to fully understand Asian Americans. As the only Asian American teacher at a campus that was predominantly Latinx and African American, she was often the only Asian American teacher (and in some instances, the only Asian American individual) that her students encountered in their academic careers. Therefore, she was explicit in situating herself as an example of an Asian American citizen who was both Chinese *and* American.

The teachers' pedagogical approaches to the overt nuances of Asian American identity, culture, and racial positioning were founded in their lived experiences as Others in society and schooling spaces. Volpp (2001) argues that identity is a citizenship discourse which is often

denied to Asian Americans; regardless of their legal status, Asian Americans are generally not fully considered citizens in terms of politics and American national identity. As the teachers introduced Asian American, Japanese American, and other such terms to their students, they confronted misperceptions and stereotypes pervasive in U.S. society and the media that situate Asian Americans as foreign, unassimilable Others while broadening examples of civic identity and membership. Furthermore, as race is typically only presented to children through a Black/White binary (see Bolgatz, 2005), the teachers' work to (re)define Asian American identity through the sharing of their own experiences in tandem with the inclusion of Asian American historical narratives signaled a major shift in students' understandings of race in America.

(Re)Defining What it Means to Be an American

The United States' history of citizenship has long been racialized, gendered, and classed (Jen, 2011; Lowe, 1996; Roediger, 1999; Rosaldo, 1994; Smith, 1997). Discrepancies in who is, and who is not, considered a part of the citizenry continue to challenge many people living in the United States and other societies today. As the children of Asian immigrants and refugees, the teachers in this study experienced Otherness in their own schooling that they shared in their interviews as well as with their students. Elyse recounted going through a silent period after arriving in elementary school from Germany as well as difficulty understanding English slang until she was in college. Krishnan described being the target of racial epithets like "towelhead" from his classmates while Virginia shared distinct memories of shame and embarrassment about the Chinese lunches her mother packed for her to eat at school. Unfortunately, these types of experiences of linguistic, racist, and cultural discrimination and oppression are all too common to those who grow up Asian in America (Goodwin, 2003).

As a Spanish dual language teacher, Krishnan regretted the loss of his native Gujarati and constantly reiterated to his students the importance of maintaining and honoring one's cultural and linguistic heritage while also learning English. In his fifth-grade graduation speech, Krishnan told his students, "I had to grow up between cultures." Similarly, in an interview, Elyse described how she felt "in-between, like I'm too White to hang out with these Vietnamese people but I'm too Asian to hang out with these White people... I was in the middle... at a very young age, I felt caught between the two worlds." Similar to Anzaldúa's (1987) notion of the borderlands "wherever two or more cultures edge each other" (p. i), the "in-betweenness" explained by Krishnan and Elyse is a hybridity common to the Asian American experience as Asian Americans are often perceived as unassimilable perpetual foreigners, regardless of how many generations they have lived in the United States or how perfect their English may be (Chang, 1999; Museus, 2014; Tuan, 1998).

As the teachers taught social studies to their young students, their hybrid experiences as racially "in-between" informed their pedagogy. In his concluding lesson on Japanese American incarceration, Krishnan asked his students to write a response to the question, "What does it mean to be an American?" His students' responses varied considerably; some clung to the notion that "being American means being born in America" or possessing legal citizenship, while others described "being American" as a self-described identity. When asked what influenced the teaching of this lesson, Krishnan explained, "It comes from having to carry so many torches. You're the voice of so many minority voices that aren't going to be heard or their perspectives are not going to be given in schools if it doesn't come through me." Krishnan considered exposing his students to more than was offered in the standard curriculum to be part of his personal

responsibility as an educator, and deliberately created instructional spaces to discuss "Other" narratives and present perspectives beyond the white mainstream.

The construct of "being an American citizen" also arose in Virginia's class when she used the picture book *The Bracelet* (Uchida, 1996) to teach her second-graders about Japanese American incarceration during World War II. In one illustration, a sign stating "I am an American" prompted the following discussion:

José: I think that they wanted to put up the sign to know that they're Americans because (other people) thought that they was [*sic.*] Japanese, but they are actually Americans cause they were born in America.

Virginia: So they were trying to prove to people that, "Hey, I am an American, too! Just because I don't look the way that you think I should, the way that other people look like, I still feel like I'm an American. I *am* an American."

MJ: Oh, like I'm Black?

Virginia: You want to say more about that, MJ?

MJ: Because the Black people, they come from America, and they're getting treated differently.

Anna: They're not just like Japanese because they're not just Japanese, they're American and because they were born in America.

While Virginia's second-grade students only recently learned the term "Japanese American," they articulated emerging understandings of Asian Americans as *American* (citizens) and were able to make connections between Japanese Americans and African Americans (and later Mexican Americans) as groups of people who looked "different" but were still American. Moreover, they intuitively recognized whiteness as the default construction of who is an American citizen (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2004).

The day following the above conversation, Virginia's students described a white character in *The Bracelet* as "regular" and the Japanese American character as "different"; as they were

reconsidering their understandings of what it meant for someone to be American, they still implicitly understood whiteness as the norm in U.S. society and thus equated whiteness with Americanness, and in turn, citizenship. Virginia pressed her students to reconsider their proposal of what is "regular," asking, "Does that mean all of us are *not* regular?" It is important to reiterate that Virginia's entire class was composed of students of color, yet the equation of whiteness with what was perceived as normal was firmly embedded in her students. Her second-graders recognized whiteness as "the 'natural' state of affairs" and therefore "to be nonwhite is to be non-American" (Hurtado & Stewart, 1997, p. 323), despite the fact that such a construction placed themselves, as well as the characters in *The Bracelet*, on the margins. Consequently, for the remainder of the lesson and the semester, Virginia continued to interrogate student comments that equated citizenship to whiteness in an effort to deconstruct this notion.

Tensions about what it means to "be American" continue to pervade society as people of every age struggle to define what "makes" someone an American. While youth of color may already be civically engaged in home and community spaces (Knight, 2011; Salinas, Vickery & Fránquiz, 2016), schools are an ideal site to nurture broader understandings of citizenship (Parker, 2003). In response to Asian Americans finding themselves "in between," Goodwin (2003) urges, "We need to embrace the in between, take ownership of where we are. We need to reinvent ourselves, define ourselves as free-standing as opposed to in comparison or by default. We need to find space to resist" (p. 22). The three teachers in this study created such a space of resistance by drawing on their hybrid experiences "in-between" Asian and American cultures as they pushed their elementary students to consider the complexity of racial and civic identity in the United States and to disentangle notions of citizenship from dominant and normative whiteness discourses.

Promoting Cultural Citizenship

Rather than abide by traditional civic republican or political liberal conceptions of citizenship (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006), the three elementary teachers instead highlighted more inclusive, critical notions of cultural citizenship as they taught Asian American histories. In classroom settings, cultural citizenship can be exhibited in multiple ways. First, cultural citizenship views difference as a resource, not a threat (Flores & Benmayor, 1997). Second, cultural citizenship emphasizes the dynamic nature of citizen construction (Rosaldo & Flores, 1997; Salinas, Vickery, & Fránquiz, 2016). Third, cultural citizenship includes the voices, experiences, and perspectives of students of color (Banks, 2001; Rosaldo, 1997; Urrieta, 2004). Fourth, cultural citizenship "speaks a language of rights and agency" (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006, p. 670), affirming that one does not and should not have to choose between belonging to one's cultural community and belonging to the nation (Silvestrini, 1997).

Presenting Difference as a Resource. Cultural difference is traditionally seen as a threat to the integrity of the nation-state as it defies assimilation into the dominant culture (Castles & Davidson, 2000; Kymlicka, 1995). The teachers in the study were aware of the exclusionary nature of the traditional American historical narrative and thus were deliberate in emphasizing culturally *and* linguistically diverse groups in the teaching of social studies. "I want (my students) to appreciate and have empathy for people who are different; understanding that different isn't bad, that different is actually something that's really good, and that we all have differences," Virginia explained. Elyse echoed these sentiments:

I definitely wanted to open their minds to people who are immigrants, or people who don't know English very well... helping them understand that the norms are different in different cultures. And with kids, they're so- you know, they've only been alive for eight or nine years! Sometimes they don't realize they have norms until they've been taken out of their norms... You learn about yourself when you read or learn about someone else's experience.

As Virginia and Elyse facilitated discussions of difference with their students, they engaged in the development of historical empathy (Barton & Levstik, 2009) toward the Other as a step toward broader understandings of diverse civic membership.

Sometimes the teachers drew on their own experiences as the Other to foster student empathy regarding difference. One day, when some of Virginia's students mocked the pronunciation of a Japanese phrase in a class read aloud, she admonished them:

If you're purposely putting a bunch of words together and saying that that's part of a language, that's pretty much like making fun of another language. I'm gonna tell you right now - when I was little and people would find out that I was Chinese, they would just say a bunch of random words to me that didn't make sense, they weren't even real Chinese words, and that was very hurtful because my language is important to me... So can we try to say (the Japanese phrase) correctly? That's us trying to learn to say words correctly. Same with Spanish, when I'm trying to learn Spanish, I'm going to try my best to say it correctly. So we can be respectful.

Virginia addressed the issue of English hegemony (Shannon, 1995) that many Asian Americans experience in contemporary American society, and used Spanish, the language spoken at home by many of her Latinx students, as an example to which they could directly relate. Her bilingual comparison between Asian American and Latinx panethnicities established shared struggles in a society that values English above all other languages, and in turn associates unaccented English fluency with citizenship. In this example, Virginia tried to raise her students' consciousness about language status and power, engaging in humanizing pedagogy as her instructional efforts "coincide[d] with the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization" (Freire, 1970/1982, p. 62). Cultural citizenship interrogates the different regimes of power in civil society, including the ways individuals are positioned based on their cultural and linguistic capital (Kang, 2010; Ong, 1996)

In the same vein, Krishnan and Elyse also recounted sharing stories of their personal struggles learning English with their students. Because all three teachers were bi/multilinguals themselves, they were especially attentive to establishing the significance of language within the scope of civic identity and civic membership addressed in class. Rosaldo and Flores (1997) emphasize the role of uniform (English) monoglot in the construction of U.S. citizens, stating, "In ideological terms, the nation-state thus denies the very existence of polyglot citizens" (p. 82). In contrast, the teachers established that many citizens speak languages other than English, thus highlighting the role of language difference in identity and citizen construction and affirming that speaking English is not part and parcel of U.S. citizenship.

Recognizing Citizen Construction as Dynamic. Respect is a defining demand of cultural citizenship, which is an ongoing, contested, and urgent process (Rosaldo, 1997). Elyse and Krishnan were purposeful in addressing the roles of (dis)respect and dehumanization in their lessons on Japanese American incarceration during World War II. During her read aloud of *The Bracelet*, Elyse paused during a scene when the Japanese American family arrives in their new "apartment" at the Tanforan Assembly center: "a dark, dirty horse stall that still smelled of horses. And the linoleum laid over the dirt was littered with wood shavings, nails, dust, and dead bugs" (Uchida, 1996, p. 17). She asked her students how they would feel if they were in a similar situation, emphasizing the dehumanizing conditions of the horse stable as well as the unfairness of the family's removal from their home due to their ethnicity.

In Krishnan's lesson with the nonfiction book *Dear Miss Breed* (Oppenheim, 2006), he urged his students to consider the perspectives of Japanese American children who found themselves the target of racial slurs and epithets after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. At the heart of these discussions was an emphasis on basic human decency. Elyse and Krishnan chose

particular moments in their lessons to highlight the injustices and lack of dignity faced by young Japanese Americans during World War II who were born in the United States yet treated in unequal and degrading ways simply because they looked like the enemy. The teachers' decisions to highlight dehumanizing moments when American citizens were treated as non-citizen Others were critical to the development of the notion of citizenship as an ongoing process rather than a fixed state of being. In particular, these conversations explored the limits of civic participation - although the Japanese American children highlighted in class were indeed American citizens, the U.S. government was directly responsible for denying their fundamental civil rights.

Krishnan and Elyse also dedicated multiple days of instruction to teaching about Asian American immigration, and the Asian American immigrants presented in Krishnan and Elyse's lessons often fought for the respect of their non-Asian peers and teachers. It is important to note that both of these teachers are considered "1.5 generation" immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Krishnan arrived in the United States from Kenya at the age of two and Elyse arrived at the age of five from Germany, neither knowing English at the time of their arrival. The teachers embodied many of the challenges described in their immigration book selections (see Appendix), such as struggling with a new language, culture, traditions, and civic identity, and therefore Elyse and Krishnan often referenced their own experiences as these issues arose in students' conversations about the books. Thus the act of revealing themselves as immigrants *and* citizens was significant in disrupting normative depictions of White, native English-speaking citizens.

The children's literature used by Elyse and Krishnan demonstrated the Asian immigrants' acculturation to life in America and included multiple instances in which the characters felt ashamed of their names, native language, and culture -- themes common to the immigrant story regardless of country of origin (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). These depictions echo Rosaldo and

Flores' (1997) definition of cultural citizenship as "a process that involves claiming membership in, and remaking, America" (p. 58), even when one does not feel a sense of belonging and civic membership in the negotiated interactions of school and the community. As Asian Americans and other groups demand the full enfranchisement afforded to citizens of the dominant group, the process of cultural citizenship is dynamic, neither fixed nor guaranteed. Through the presentation of both Asian American citizens and Asians who recently immigrated to the United States, the teachers situated the claiming of civic membership as an ongoing, humanizing struggle for respect and dignity that was sometimes necessary regardless of birthright.

Including the Voices, Experiences, and Perspectives of Students of Color. In contrast to the propertied white subject who possesses dominant and unquestioned civic agency, cultural citizenship is founded in the experiences and perspectives of those who are marginalized, giving voice to the traditionally voiceless (Rosaldo, 1997). In their lessons about Asian American history, all three teachers intentionally selected children's literature narrated by Asian American children. Primary sources shared by Krishnan and Virginia often featured Asian American children, and Elyse brought in family artifacts to support her reading of *Inside Out and Back Again* (Lai, 2011), a book about a Vietnamese refugee family whose journey to the United States mirrored her parents' experience. These examples of Asian American civic identity and civic agency reiterated the teachers' efforts to contest the normalization of citizenship with whiteness.

As she read *Inside Out and Back Again* to her third-grade students, Elyse discovered that the book initiated cultural connections with her East Asian students, who would often interject to describe how the story's events were similar to their cultures. Elyse's centering of an Asian immigrant narrative produced a space for her students to incorporate their own families' stories, both positive and negative. For instance, during a scene where the Vietnamese mother struggled

to communicate with a butcher in English, Sofia, a child whose mother was from Spain, commented, "When my mom came here, she had an accent and people thought she was dumb." In an interview conducted after she completed the book with her students, Elyse noted, "I think that the quieter kids like Sofia connect in the sense that they empathize with being different or the cultural struggles, but just aren't ready to talk about it and share and have the attention on them." *Inside Out and Back Again* offered a complex representation of civic membership and identity with which students could commiserate in various ways. Furthermore, the use of a book depicting an immigrant family's struggle to acculturate to life in American society coupled with Elyse's descriptions of her own family's journey to the United States created multiple moments for her students to openly share their unofficial histories (Wertsch, 2000) and experiences related to culture, discrimination, acceptance, and civicness.

Cultural citizenship highlights how communities of color often strive for full recognition in U.S. society while they simultaneously challenge the requirements for recognition. The Asian American voices, experiences, and perspectives selected by the teachers in this study were not rewritten to appeal to the larger culture but instead advanced views from the margins (Ching & Pataray-Ching, 2003). Such acts that emphasize the transformation from cultural Other into legitimate American subjects rather than common narratives of "becoming American" are a discursive process of cultural citizenship that intervenes into existing discourses of power, both acknowledging and rewriting the American story (Young, 2004).

Speaking the Language of Rights and Agency. Sharing examples of social justice and activism was especially important to Virginia and Krishnan. During one of her social studies lessons, Virginia's Latinx and African American students began to discuss the 2016 presidential candidates and expressed their concerns about Donald Trump's disparaging remarks about

Mexicans (Reilly, 2016). When a student commented that she could not make a difference because she was a kid, Virginia described ways in which the student *did* have agency:

You might not be able to go to the voting booth and vote, but you can use your words. You can make posters, you can make signs, you can write notes, you can write letters - those are all things that you *can* do... What I want you to realize is that you have a voice and you can say something about all of these things that you see are unfair.

Virginia was unequivocal in her determination to give her students agency: "Ordinary people can do things that make a difference for the world. I want (my students) to leave knowing that they're capable of doing that." The children's literature and racially diverse historical narratives that Virginia and her students engaged with over the course of the semester provided a range of representations of civic identity and civic agency. Her students ended the school year by recording group podcasts that reflected their emerging consciousness through self-constructed narratives that discarded dominant narratives and official histories and instead centered the agency and resistance of communities of color.

In his final interview, Krishnan recounted his speech at his campus' fifth-grade graduation ceremony, which occurred in the midst of the 2016 Presidential Election and Trump's proposed border wall between the United States and Mexico. He addressed his dual language students and their parents exclusively in Spanish, which he described in translation:

You may hear people in politics say that walls need to be divided between countries, but you can be even more powerful than that. You can be a bridge, and a bridge - you can build the highest wall you want, but a bridge can always cross that.

Krishnan's speech was grounded in cultural citizenship demands for enfranchisement and drew from his own transnational experiences in multiple immigrant communities. He urged his students to ignore divisive rhetoric and to maintain their bilingualism and biculturalism as a source of power and change, establishing their right to be who they were, without apology, as well as their agency as individuals (Fránquiz & Salazar, 2004; Halagao, 2010). Furthermore, his

exclusive use of Spanish directed his message toward the often marginalized Latinx population of his campus frequently left without access to Spanish language content. By refusing to translate his words into English at the graduation ceremony, Krishnan resisted the hegemony of English and upheld linguistic diversity as a fundamental aspect of civic identity and expression.

The study participants' approaches to cultural citizenship in their lessons on Asian American history exemplified how educators can challenge exclusionary and restrictive representations of citizenship and promote more inclusive views of civic identity, membership, and agency that reflect America's diversity. While this particular group of Asian American elementary teachers drew heavily from their own experiences being Othered in school and society to critically engage students in Asian American histories, their efforts to view difference as a resource, to emphasize the dynamic nature of citizen construction, to include the voices, experiences, and perspectives of students of color, and to position students as having rights and agency are important aspects of broader understandings of citizenship that all elementary educators can enact.

DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

This study heeds Abu El-Haj's (2007) call for educators to shift their conceptual frameworks for citizenship education "in ways that engage questions of identity and inequality, and that educate youth for social change" (p. 309). Two themes emerged in response to the research question, How do Asian American elementary educators broaden their students' understandings of citizenship? First, the teachers exemplified the AsianCrit tenet of *(re)constructive history* as they presented students with Asian American historical narratives and representations of citizen that countered the exclusionary narratives that permeate traditional curriculum. Second, the teachers embodied the AsianCrit tenet of *story, theory, and praxis* as

their personal experiences as racialized, cultural Others informed a transformational pedagogy of cultural citizenship education.

Centering Asian American Perspectives and Histories

While the complex and exclusionary nature of citizenship has been well established, calls for more inclusive approaches to elementary citizenship education often neglect issues related to race and immigration. In the state of Texas, home to the three teachers in this study, elementary educational standards for citizenship overwhelmingly focus on state and national symbols, customs, celebrations, and characteristics of “good citizenship,” such as truthfulness, justice, and equality (Texas Education Agency, 2010). Yet the vast majority of historical and contemporary figures listed in the Texas standards are white, reiterating notions of whiteness as the default construct of citizen (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2004), and historical standards related to (in)justice and (in)equality focus on events in the past. By centering Asian American perspectives and histories in their classrooms, Virginia, Krishnan, and Elyse revealed racism and discrimination in the past *and* present beyond the Black/white binary while embodying agency and broader representations of what it meant to be an American (citizen).

The teachers' curricular and pedagogical choices in the teaching of Asian American histories often drew from their own lived, marginalized experiences as a way to disrupt stereotypes and misperceptions, which simultaneously nuanced and countered the dominant civic narrative. Lowe (1996) proposes that culture is the means by which "the subject becomes, acts, and speaks itself as 'American.' It is likewise in culture that individuals and collectivities struggle and remember and, in that difficult remembering, imagine and practice both subject and community differently" (p. 3). As the educators shared stories and images of diverse individuals, they presented to their students multiple portraits of *who* is citizen, *what* citizens do, and *how* one

can be citizen/American. As demonstrated in the findings above, teachers' decisions to help students interrogate their misconceptions about who is and is not considered an American can lead to a richer enactment of a more representative American history.

Elementary teachers can use Asian American children's literature as a means to disrupt exclusionary official narratives and dominant notions of white citizenship, supplementing historical fiction with primary source photos, letters, and media to provide additional historical context. Such acts of critical historical inquiry (Author, 2016; Salinas, Blevins & Sullivan, 2012) emphasize the agency of marginalized communities and their negotiation of civic identities, agency, and membership, an aspect of cultural citizenship heavily endorsed by the elementary educators in this study as they broadened student understandings of citizenship beyond the simplistic notions traditionally taught in school (e.g., following rules, voting). When used through the lens of critical historical inquiry, Asian American children's literature can be an important site through which children can merge their existing understandings of the world around them with the new ideas, situations, and stories that they encounter to think critically about the multiple meanings of citizen in U.S. society.

Counterstorytelling as Praxis: Toward Cultural Citizenship Education

Instruction tailored to build on students' comments, connections, and worldviews affirms the AsianCrit tenet of *story, theory and praxis* that "practice can excavate stories" and "stories inform theory and practice" (Museus, 2014, p. 27). Like Elyse, Krishnan, and Virginia, teachers may use counterstories from their own lives, as well as primary sources and Asian American narratives, to nurture understanding of the Asian American experience, historically and contemporarily. This combination of perspectives can deliberately dislodge majoritarian tales through the development of counterstories, which are essential in exposing, analyzing, and

challenging the raced and gendered norms of citizenship that dominate educational curriculum (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Through counterstories, students of marginalized groups can see themselves reflected in the political process in multiple forms - as civic members *and* as civic agents - in order to fully develop civic identity. Thus the inclusion of counterstories, particularly those told by people of color, "can contribute to the knowledge base of those often pushed to the margins in education" (Milner & Howard, 2013, p. 542) while exposing members of the dominant group to perspectives beyond their own worldview. In citizenship education, counternarratives play a vital role in challenging, disrupting, and/or counteracting the multiple conditions and realities of oppression found in both schools and society (Vinson, 2006).

When teachers adopt a critical stance in the teaching of histories, counternarratives can lead to transformative understandings of the past and present. However, it is important to note that counterstories can be used in ways that appropriate the dominant narrative rather than resist it (Wertsch, 2000). Teachers must be intentional in both using a critical lens (e.g., examining notions of racism, classism and sexism) as well as contextualizing history. For example, when using texts like *The Bracelet*, teachers should address both racial injustice and dehumanizing civil rights violations in order to trouble the dominant narrative of justified incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II (Author, 2017). *The Bracelet* on its own is an Asian American narrative with transformative *potential*, but its use as a counternarrative is dependent on whether the historical narrative is centered and problematized by teachers *and* students.

If educators with critical pedagogical perspectives seek to transform classroom structures and practices that perpetuate undemocratic life, the introduction of Asian American and other marginalized histories are crucial elements of cultural citizenship education. Cultural citizenship education makes central the voices and experiences of those who have historically existed within

the margins of mainstream institutions and in the dominant narratives of history (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2003). Rather than relegating these groups to the margins of the textbook (Cornbleth, 1997) or simply adding forgotten voices (Brown & Au, 2014) in ways that reinforce tokenized perspectives (Goodwin, 2010), cultural citizenship education places counterstories at the fore with an emphasis on cultural and linguistic diversity and agency, ultimately offering hope for schools to truly prepare *all* students to participate in America's democracy.

Promoting Cultural Citizenship with Current & Future Educators

The majority of pre- and in-service teachers hold a vision of citizenship that aligns with Westheimer and Kahne's "personally responsible" model of teaching students character traits and how to be a cooperative member of a community and lack substantive critical social studies content knowledge (Castro, 2013; Fry & O'Brien, 2015; Patterson, Doppin & Misco, 2012). Such thin conceptions of citizenship continue to marginalize Asian Americans and other historically disenfranchised groups. In this study, the teachers' intimate personal experiences with discrimination, immigration, biculturalism, bilingualism, and transnationalism cultivated an epistemology of race and contested belonging in America that white, native-born and English monolingual teachers may not be aware of or be able to fully articulate as outsiders to such experiences. To increase exposure to a more diverse array of perspectives and histories, teacher educators can infuse historical examples of social (in)justice and agency into their classes. Within social studies methods courses, opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage in projects focused on critical historical inquiry and teaching difficult histories can provide spaces for learning marginalized historical narratives that can later be applied in classrooms.

Many practicing teachers are genuinely interested in engaging students with more diverse representations in U.S. history beyond the textbook; however, they likely were denied access to

such representations in their own schooling. As social studies professional development opportunities are rarely offered to in-service teachers (Passe, 2006; Zhao & Hoge, 2005), schools and districts can team with museums, colleges, universities, and community organizations to provide ongoing professional development support that furthers not only pedagogical content knowledge but critical pedagogical content knowledge--one focused upon other perspectives and countering majoritarian tales.

The pedagogy that emerged from these Asian American educators' personal experiences revealed the depth of perspectives that teachers of color may offer in classroom spaces; unfortunately, teacher preparation programs rarely afford prospective teachers of color opportunities to consider how their unique societal positionings might be used for transformative purposes in the classroom. Teacher educators should consider ways in which they might highlight the cultural and linguistic capital possessed by their pre-service teachers of color (Yosso, 2005), and how such capitals might inform more inclusive pedagogical practices for all prospective teachers. Given the increasing diversity of America's public schools and ongoing calls to increase and maintain a diverse educator workforce, it is imperative that teacher preparation programs adapt their own pedagogies and curriculum to attend to the full range of students they have the privilege of preparing to enter the classroom.

CONCLUSION

The civic participation taught in traditional citizenship education models results in an assimilationist pluralism that appears inclusive through a false depiction of racial harmony (Ching, 2005; Vinson, 2006). As schools are a technology of power (Ong, 2006), it is essential that educators are cognizant of the ways in which they may be complicit in citizenship discourses that maintain normative formations while making invisible identities and subjectivities of

marginalized groups (Maira, 2009). In order to achieve the American ideals of a pluralistic democracy, elementary school teachers can engage in cultural citizenship education by centering more culturally diverse representations of civic identity, membership, and agency. Such an approach can transcend the invisibility of marginalized groups in the dominant narrative of U.S. history and work toward the social studies goal of truly preparing *all* our future citizens.

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APPENDIX

Asian American Children's Literature Provided to Workshop Participants

Baseball Saved Us

The Bracelet

Coolies

Asian American Children's Literature used by Elyse

Baseball Saved Us

The Bracelet

Heroes

Passage to Freedom

Asian American Children's Literature used by Krishnan

Dear Miss Breed

I Hate English!

My Name is Yoon

The Name Jar

Asian American Children's Literature used by Virginia

Baseball Saved Us

The Bracelet

Dear Miss Breed

Sylvia and Aki

¹ As this study's teacher participants did not identify as Hawai'ian or Pacific Islander nor did the teachers' instruction of historical content include the Pacific Islands, I prefer "Asian American" for its specificity within this study's context rather than terms such as Asian Pacific Islander (API), Asian Pacific American (APA), or Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI)

² The Immigration Act of 1917 restricted the entry of individuals from the "Asiatic Barred Zone," effectively extending Chinese exclusion laws to all other Asians with the exception of teachers, merchants, and students. However, the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907-1908 exempted specific classes of Japanese immigration that remained unaffected by changes in U.S. immigration law until the Immigration Act of 1924. As Guam and the Philippines were under U.S. jurisdiction at the time, they were not included in either immigration act (Azuma, 2005; Palumbo-Liu, 1999).

³ Drawing from the work of critical race legal scholar Neil Gotanda, I consciously leave white lowercase while capitalizing Black. Despite its use as the dialectical opposite of Black, white has historically and contemporarily summarized racial domination and "is better left in lower case, rather than privileged with a capital letter. 'Black,' on the other hand, has deep political and social meaning as a liberating term, and, therefore, deserves capitalization" (Gotanda, 1991, p. 4). Therefore white will only be capitalized in this paper when used in direct citation and Black will be used in lowercase only in direct citation.

⁴ All names are pseudonyms

⁵ Recognizing that few teachers receive Asian American historical content in schools and/or teacher preparation programs, the workshop attendance component was designed to provide participants with district-approved teaching materials about Asian American history. The NISD workshop centered on book studies of particular pieces of Asian American children's literature provided by the district (see Appendix) and the subsequent development of lesson plans in preparation for Asian Pacific Heritage Month in May. NISD's elementary social studies department asked me to provide an initial overview of Asian American populations and Asian American history for thirty minutes followed by an hour and a half of collaborative lesson planning time for attendees. During that lesson planning time, I was present as a content expert and provided feedback and suggestions to all attendees. Participants in my study, including the three teachers described here, composed one-fifth of the total workshop attendees and worked with non-study participants to design lessons for NISD; however, none of the study participants in this paper taught their group-designed lessons.