DIASPORIC MANEUVERS: ASIAN IMMIGRANT/AMERICAN MEDIATIONS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY AND PEDAGOGY

DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I trace how four Asian immigrant/American teachers negotiate their identities and craft cultural teaching practices. First, I examine how the teachers negotiate their immigrant identities both within/outside of school. I describe the heterogeneous experiences of the teachers within their communities (locally and globally) and also within schools, particularly in regards to Asian immigrant teachers' relationship with teachers and students. Second, by sketching the performances of teaching, I outline specific ways the teachers enable cultural ways of teaching to engender student learning, particularly within economically underprivileged contexts.

The study describes the heterogeneous and hybrid identity location of Asian immigrant teachers within U.S. schools and the differing passages in becoming a multicultural teacher. I argue that the teachers' enabling of immigrant pedagogy creates alternative spaces to situate discourses on teacher identities and pedagogy.
This labor is dedicated to my parents

Bimal and Indira Subedi
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CHAPTER 1

EDUCATION AND ASIAN IMMIGRANTS/AMERICANS

Introduction

During the year 2001, Cleveland school district officials traveled to India and hired fifty teachers to teach in local school districts. "It’s unfortunate we had to go this route," a school official noted in regards to the hiring and teacher shortage, particularly in the fields of science and math in the district. A rationale for hiring operated with the assumption that "putting qualified teachers in the classroom is worth the cost of recruiting and the trouble of overcoming cultural differences."

The practice of importing Asian labor is not new within the annals of U.S. history, as it has functioned in relation to the building of the U.S. nation-state (Lowe, 1998). The historical and contemporary entry of Asians into U.S. has produced Asian labored identities whether via

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1 See The Columbus Dispatch, May 14, 2001, 10B.
building of railroads in the western states or contemporary labor for dominant society (Okiihiro, 1994).\textsuperscript{2} My intention in invoking the case of Indian teachers is not only to situate the discourse of teacher shortage in U.S. but also to speak of the intricate relationships between identity and teaching. If the teachers’ South Asian affiliations and identities are assumed to embody content and pedagogical knowledge of math and science, their negative differences are also evoked. Similarly, the importation of teachers from the space of India is considered “unfortunate” yet worth the effort in relation to the “cost of recruiting and the trouble of overcoming cultural differences.” In other words, the teachers are undesired yet needed, and the hiring of the teachers speaks much about importation and migration of labor within contemporary times. Furthermore, it speaks of how Asian identities are often constructed as “models” yet often rendered as undesirable outsiders. Such a discourse as well as the practice of importing Asian

\textsuperscript{2} See Okiihiro (1994) for the history of Asian indentured labor in the building of railroads in the western part of U.S. and in plantations in southern and eastern U.S. states. Okiihiro also provides a useful analysis of U.S. involvement in the much-neglected topic of “collie trade” of the mid-1800s in which the U.S. state was actively importing Asian labor for the benefit of southern white
teachers "silently" activates the "model minority" myth in which the teachers are represented with dominant notions of what immigrants should be.

Yet the Cleveland case of importation of Asian labor is not for the profit of high-tech agenda of technology mega-industries but it serves the purpose of teaching science and math within economically marginalized geographies. Neither can one ignore the economies of power that functions to import labor available from the Third World and the financial capability of U.S. state to actively license such practices. The placement of the teachers also operates with the assumption that Asians know science (their identities) or that they can teach (their practices) science. The politics of the placement of teachers is not within white suburbia (where they would be summarily denied) but in marginalized urban locations where there is a larger demand for teachers who are committed to

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My use of the term "Third World" is strategic and serves to appropriate the negative (uncivilized, deviant, etc) meaning that has historically been assigned to non-industrialized, non-European cultures. Here, the utilization of the term "Third World" reverses the gaze of dominance thus to question the very foundation of the nomenclature by repeating the interpellation "Third World" (See Alexander and Mohanty, 1997). This is consistent with the re-appropriation of terms such as "yellow" in Asian American Studies (Okikiho, 1994).
students’ academic success. The globalization\(^4\) of teachers speaks much about the politics of traveling of people and knowledge as well as the larger shortage of teachers in the United States.

Yet if privileged white people can cross-borders and desire to know (and to grasp) the world, why can’t Third World teachers enter U.S. to perform their own teaching possibilities? Or what is the fuss about earning a living that can financially benefit those who have been erstwhile disenfranchised or not allowed to cross international borders? In other words, one cannot ignore the possibilities the teachers can create within underprivileged schools and work with students where there is a larger demand for math and science teachers.

I have evoked the case of Indian teachers to situate the complex and assumed relationship between identity and teaching since this research examines ways in which four Asian\(^5\) immigrant/American teachers negotiate their

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\(^4\) I use the term globalization to refer to contemporary movement of people and knowledges across national/international borders, and which engender new forms of cultures and economic inequalities (Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

\(^5\) I have utilized terms such immigrant/American, Asian American, Asian immigrant (and sometimes “Asian”) to collectively identify the participants of the study as well as to position the locations of people of Asian-origin in
identities and pedagogy within U.S. schools. It is useful to read the intricate relationships between Asian immigrant identities and practice as an effect of contemporary cross-cultural border crossings in which the traveling of people, cultures, and knowledge interact with Other local and global cultural formations. Recognizing contemporary cross-cultural mediations, I have found it useful to incorporate the conditions and trajectories of hybridity since the term is a recurring oppositional language in this discussion (May, 1999). Without romanticizing hybrid conditions, I suggest that we read the performance of hybrid identities

the U.S. The subjects of this study use the terms such as Asian, Asian American and Asian immigrant interchangeably recognizing their Asian origins and immigrant experiences. I recognize the historically sedimented meanings of the term and recognize the dangers of conflating Asian (living in Asia) to Asian American in the U.S. As Ancheta (1998) points out, terms such as "Asian American" can be inclusive as well as exclusive categories and are often socially constructed. To identity specific ethnicity within Asian America, I utilize ethnic terms such as Filipino, Filipino American or Indian, Indian American. I utilize the terms recognizing the political dimensions as well as how individuals and collectives position themselves (often for everyday survival) to articulate alternative, fluid yet political, and non-coercive identities.

Hybridity or hybrid identities are not a new phenomenon by any means. For example, W.E.B. Du Bois' "double consciousness" as well as the use of "creolization" in the Americas has been common throughout the twentieth century. Yet there is significant difference between hybridity that was enacted by willful violence of neo/colonialism as opposed to hybrid identifications performed by the oppressed.
not as a move towards assimilation with dominant paradigms but more of a direct engagement that allows possibilities to create alternative identities and practices within marginalized cultural terrain. As described by Bhabha (1994), hybridity is a minority maneuver that unsettles the commands of dominant power and its regimes of knowledge by subverting the very claims of its superiority. Thus, hybridity becomes a "strategic reversal of domination through disavowal...(hybridity) displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination" (p. 112). If the discourse of hybridity signals the emergence of an alternative space of identity and practice, how do we account (or not account) for such negotiations of identities and practices as a form of loss via the effects of hybridity? In what follows, I address the following topics in relation to my study: (a) research questions (b) diasporic methodologies (c) immigrant cultural maneuvers (d) cultural epistemologies

\footnote{I utilize Lowe's (1997) notion of culture as a fluid yet a resistant concept: "Culture is the medium of the present.....the site that mediates the past, through which history is grasped as difference, as fragments, snarks, and flashes of disjunctions. It is through that 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}
(e) theoretical investments (f) limits and possibilities of the study (g) the ambivalence of writing dissertation (h) overview of chapters.

Research Questions

The rationale for the project was fueled by the need to explore the complex strands of Asian immigrant teacher identity and how it intersects the realm of pedagogy. The absence\(^8\) of such studies speaks of the often invisible nature of Asian American discourse both within and outside of the field of education in which the Asians are often rendered ahistorical and are considered not to be "legitimate racial minorities" (Lee, 1996, p. 3). The percentage of Asian American teachers in U.S. public schools is declining (only 1.2% of total teaching population) despite the rise in Asian American students in U.S. schools (Rong & Preissle, 1997). Furthermore, there is a larger cultural disjunction between the growth of students of color within schools and the teaching force
differently" (p. 2).

\(^8\) ERIC, education abstracts and dissertation abstracts located only three articles in relation to Asian American or Asian immigrant teachers. Another study on Asian American teachers was "discovered" when one of the authors, whom I met at Bergamo JCT conference, pointed out her study of Asian American teachers. For me, this only confirms that such studies are rarely included within official research archives.
that remains largely white (Suzuki, 1998). And such discontinuities effect identity formations\(^9\) and the academic success of students of color (Grant & Secada, 1990). Within the discourse of teacher education, the cultural work of teachers of color in opening possibilities of liberatory teachings remains largely a marginalized field of study (Dillard, 1994).

Although research on the cultural identities of Asian American students within the schooling context are beginning to emerge (See Chapter Two), the location of Asian immigrant or Asian American teachers’ identities as well as pedagogical performances have yet to be fully addressed (Suzuki, 1998). Recognizing the need of such studies, this research traces two inter-related, overlapping questions of:

(A) What is the nature of Asian immigrant/American teacher identities?

(B) What movements of pedagogy do such identities enable?

My move is to operationalize a complex, non-linear reading of teacher identities and pedagogical performances that

\(^9\)I use terms such as identity formation, identity production or performance of identity to describe the fluid nature of identities, and to note how identities are non-linear constructions and which are often strategically positioned
moves towards sites that demand "obligations to openness, passage and non-mastery" (Lather, 1998, p. 408). Within such flexible maneuvers, I articulate how four Asian immigrant teachers\textsuperscript{10} negotiate identities and teach within three economically underprivileged school settings (and a privileged school) to craft academic possibilities for students. This study (as I further elaborate in Chapter Three) includes field work, for eight months during school year 2000-2001, including observation, interviews and document analysis.

I have resisted narrating romantic tales of teacher performances and have suggested the learning possibilities created as well as the challenges within specific conditions of teaching. The described cultural practices reveal the possibilities created within specific acts of teaching that intervene to assist in students' academic endeavors. As Gay (2000) has pointed out, research on specific acts of teaching that open academic possibilities for students is needed since the long wait for structural reforms compromises the everyday academic struggles of marginalized students.

\textsuperscript{10} I have elaborated on the ethnic, gender, nationality, social-class identities of the teachers in Chapter 3 (See
Diasporic Methodologies

In this discussion, what I attempt to articulate is the diasporic Asian immigrant teaching acts within the larger U.S. multicultural discourses by addressing the performances of identities and the pragmatic, transformative practices such identities can enable. By working the intricate affiliations between identity and pedagogy, my intention is, following Bhabha (1997), to address both the ontological and epistemological questions and to ask:

What is identity?—to face the ethical and political perogative—What are identities for?—or even to present the pragmatist alternative—What can identities do? (p. 434).

I attempt to describe the question of "what is identity" by articulating the ways in which Asian immigrant teachers negotiate identities, and such a methodology erases dominant formulations of "neutrality" of identity. Then, by elaborating specific practices within and outside of the classroom, I attempt to address Bhabha's questions of "what are identities for?" and "what can identities do?"

Appendix D for profile of teachers).
"I borrow the term "immigrant acts" from Lowe (1998) who argues that the space of "immigrant" allows "conditions for the emergence of Asian American culture as an alternative cultural site and the place where the contradictions of immigrant history are read, performed, and critiqued" (p.
Recognizing that the articulations of identities are not objective political acts, the last two questions (for and what questions) offer specific descriptions on the performances of identity, both in theory and in practice, to engage in decolonizing teaching projects. To illustrate the relations between teachers' identity and for/what questions in the realm of pedagogy, I have deployed theories that address the heterogeneity of immigrant experiences, identity negotiations, and the political praxis it engenders within the diaspora.\textsuperscript{12} As I will argue, Asian immigrant teacher identities need to be theorized as fluid and flexible by recognizing the differences within such identities. Yet we also need to understand that such cultural identities are collective, political, and often enacted to work against racism, sexism and other forms of oppression. When dispossessed speak of "one" identity, it is not about flexible aspect of identities but about strategic operations of stable identity. Such speaking of identity works to depose dominance as well as moves to register alternative practices for every day living.

\textsuperscript{12}I use the term diaspora to signify the contemporary movement of people from Asia to U.S. Similarly, I use the term diasporic to describe the conditions and identity location of Asian immigrants within U.S. (Radhakrishnan,
Immigrant Cultural Maneuvers

To address "what is identity?" and the relationship between identity and pedagogy, one must shift to the space of the classroom and the larger terrain of schooling that may allow us to investigate the space of immigrant teaching acts. Suarez-Orozco (2001) theorizes that the relationship between immigration and education be formulated within the effects of contemporary globalizations and its relationship to the schooling of immigrant students. The investigations on the political complexities that undergird contemporary globalizations, as Suarez-Orozco suggests, allow possibilities to address intricate questions of how immigrants articulate identity/community and if such globalized conditions effect "crafting and performing of hyphenated identities? (p. 358)" As Nieto (1996) has theorized, the specific conditions under which immigrants perform cultural practices offer sites to articulate alternative forms of multicultural discourses. Immigrant experiences offer productive spaces to understand the social context of education since the relationship between immigrant education and the discourse of their colonization "have simply been left at the schoolhouse door" (Nieto, 1996)
Nieto goes on to argue that the identities and experiences of immigrants are often silenced, constructed as "imposed reality" and are represented as "alien" (p. 3). Following Nieto, my move here is to re-articulate possibilities of resistant Asian immigrant identities and practices that interrogates dominant knowledge of its claims of cultural supremacy and its attempts to discipline immigrants.

Where do Asian immigrant teachers fit (or not fit) within the discourse of education? Or “why hasn’t the Asian American perspective received more attention from teacher educators and the research about the minority teacher?” (Suzuki, 1998, p. 4). Such omissions can be traced to the forever-foreigner status of Asian immigrants as well as how Asian subjects\(^{13}\) are appropriated as "model minorities" who represent "the hope and possibility of the American dream" (Lee, 1996, p. 5). Furthermore, the politics of non-inclusion positions Asian subjects within the neo/colonial discourse of orientalism\(^{14}\) to be projected as mystical,

\(^{13}\)Throughout the discussion, I utilize the term subject (also to refer to research participants) to point out Asian immigrants/Americans as subjects (and not objects) of history and culture (See Lowe, 1996).

\(^{14}\)The term orientalism refers to ways in which dominant discourse represents non-western societies to impose power over Third World cultures/knowledges (Said, 1979; see
exotic and inferior to whites (Said, 1978; Prashad, 2000). Suzuki’s (1998) case-study analysis is the only scholarship that has examined how Asian American teachers negotiate racialized discourses and enact specific cultural acts of teaching. Studies by Su (1996) and Goodwin, Genishi, Asher & Woo (1997) point out the marginalized locations of Asian American teachers and the subjects’ rationales to entering the teaching profession. The studies note the need for further inquiry in relation to Asian American identities and practices (see Chapter Two for full description).

My argument in this study is that the cultural epistemologies and the cultural difference of Asian immigrants offer alternative spaces to engender non-coercive and anti-conquest forms of knowledges. Recognizing how dominant discourse operates against Asian immigrants, this study intervenes to reveal, however partial, how discourses of racism operate against Asian immigrant teachers and how the teachers negotiate and resist such racism.

**Cultural Epistemologies**

The invisibility of Asian immigrant teachers and the dearth of research in the field of education signifies the
erasure/void of Asian immigrant epistemologies within educational discourses. Discussions on cultural epistemologies offer a useful ground to situate this discussion and to activate a stance, as suggested by Tyson (1998), that not only traces the dominant society's "epistemology of oppression" (p. 22) but also allow spaces to articulate "epistemology of emancipation" (p. 22) for projects of social justice. And such cultural trajectories of epistemologies, as Dillard (2000) notes within the context of endarkened feminist epistemology, articulate possibilities of "the distinguishable difference in cultural standpoint" (p. 4). Cultural epistemologies of Asian immigrant teachers offer sites to speak knowledges that are situated within the axis of post-colonial\textsuperscript{15} and U.S. multicultural formations, and which can intervene within education debates to legitimize minority cultural thoughts. Moreover, such epistemologies allow sites to interrogate the colonial dimensions of knowledge productions, as Merryfield (2001) has asked teachers to

\textsuperscript{15} "Post-colonial is not to be conflated with the end of colonialism but as an engagement with both the historical violence of colonialism and contemporary neo-colonialisms. It is, as Hulme (1995) explains: a "process of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome...’post-colonial’ is (or should be) a descriptive not an evaluative
examine why:

Is there a portrayal of "the Other" (people of color in the U.S. or peoples in African, Asia, the Middle East) based only upon European or American perceptions and scholarship?... Do whites dominate discourse and set the agenda with people of color given much less attention, voice, or complexity of character than the whites? Do whites interact on exotic backdrops with people of color serving minor roles? (p. 8).

Thus recognizing the knowledge violence\(^{16}\) of neo/colonialism, this discussion enacts diasporic, anti-colonial theoretical positions to incorporate the demand to address the relationship between post-coloniality and U.S. multicultural discourses (McCarthy, 1998). Similarly, the field of education has largely neglected Asian American perspectives in which Asian subjects are neither considered legitimate minorities nor marginalized immigrants (Coloma, 2001). I suggest that the heterogeneous Asian immigrant epistemologies open up spaces of, what Banks (1996) has called, "transformative knowledge" to engender educational projects of social justice as well as create sites to

\[^{16}\] My use of the term "knowledge violence" or "epistemic violence" (Spivak, 1988) refers to ways in which non-western societies are/were intellectually and culturally violated and represented as the "other" due to western legacies of colonialism in Third World societies.
critique "concepts paradigms, theories and explanations that constitute traditional and established knowledge in the behavioral and social sciences" (p. 14).

I also frame this discussion within specific and strategic operations of race/racism within the discourse of Asian immigrant teacher identities and practices. Hence, identity re-articulations are not only performances of nationhood, gender, ethnicity, social class but are often effected by what Omi & Winant (1994) call "racial formations." As Omi & Winant point out, racial formations are "sociohistorical processes by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed" (p. 55). Within such formations, ways of speaking about race continues to change via the incorporation of new and old racialized languages that are always coded with meanings of minority difference (underclass, gangs, etc.) and are "submerged and hidden in ways that are offensive though without identification" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 9). Despite the significance of race, "progressive" scholars continue to avoid speaking about race and racism claiming "race" as a "scientific" category produced by the European imagination (Fine & Weis, 1996). Such mis-understandings fail to realize that race and racism is a "daily
discourse," and as pointed out by Morrison (1992), it has become metaphorical—a way of referring to and disguising forces, events, classes, and expression of social decay and economic division far more threatening to the politic that biological "race" ever was (cited in Ladson-Billings, 1992, p. 8).

Within dominant U.S. national narratives, Asian immigrant experience has been racialized within multiple domains. As Palumbo-Liu (1999) illustrates, the dominant construction of Asian Americans has operated within the spheres of immigrant law, scientific racism, economic and social policies and cultural practices—all drew on particular understandings and imagining of the racialized Asian-American body and psyche, and the ways Asian Americans might occupy, or should occupy, a particular place in American (p. 7).

Such forms of racialization effect the contemporary locations of Asian immigrants within the larger context of schooling and to undermine the psychological, academic, and cultural needs of Asian American students (Endo, Park & Tsuchida, 1998; Pang & Cheng, 1998). Via dominant forms of representation, Asian educational experiences are often constructed within orientalistic or mythical "model minority" frameworks (Pang, 1995; Lee, 1996). Hence, the
experiences and practices of Asian Americans teachers are to understood within such racial formations within the schooling context (Suzuki, 1998).

I also suggest that the cultural identities and practices of Asian immigrant teachers\(^7\) be located within the context of the transformative cultural practices of teachers and how teachers negotiate students’ cultural knowledge as well as curriculum knowledge to activate culturally meaningful teaching practices (Au, 1980; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Howard, 2001). Such a framework addresses both the socio-political context of school inequalities, the specific ways dominant discourses perpetuate and recycle inequalities, and how marginalizations are resisted to create academic possibilities.

**Theoretical Investments**

As I fully describe in Chapter 2, I proceed to frame this study by incorporating theories from Asian American studies, post-colonial studies and the larger discussions of multiculturalism within the context of education. A “single” theoretical trajectory (based on either race/ethnicity or gender or class) limits the reach or the

\(^7\)To identify the teachers I have used terms such as participants, respondents, narrators, subjects, etc.
boundaries of this study since this discussion is designed to reveal the contemporary cultural contours of multiple border-crossings that effect identity and cultural identifications. Similarly, this study traces the contemporary effects of historical sedimented cultural contacts that have engendered multifaceted political praxis of Asian communities in the diaspora.  

I have negotiated new homes within the confluence of such a theoretical convergence thus to constantly re-read the meanings that (re)formulate cultural identities. As I will suggest in subsequent chapters, the travel of identities from Third World societies to North America and then its movement within the U.S. cultural scenes evoke complex maneuvers of identity as well as cultural practices. If the post-colonial trajectories uncover spaces to read historical and contemporary tensions between west and the rest, the specificities of and the heterogeneity of Asian American experiences situates the location of Asians within the U.S.: often being appropriated as “model

"My intention here is not debating theory/practice relevance but to note the need to go beyond the assumption that “unless theoretical ideas immediately translated into political action, then they were in some way valueless” (Bhabha, 1990, p. 220). The promises of theory must recognize its perils yet theory does open new spaces of knowledge to interrogate dominant ways of organizing
minorities" or/and deviant foreigners. Similarly, the intersection or cultural conversations between post-colonial and U.S. multicultural discussions on education reveals the complex location of Asians immigrants within U.S. thus allowing intellectual spaces to articulate cultural epistemologies of difference. What I am suggesting is not a separation among the theoretical undercurrents but a relational mediation that activates political practices for the "production of identity" (Hall, 19, p. 224).

The heterogeneous immigrant trajectories offer possibilities to conceptualize identity (which are effects of epistemologies) and pedagogy in alternative terrain as well as to read the complex relationships between identity and pedagogy. In such formulations, as I suggest, identity is a reflection of history and contemporary cultural formations; identities are mobile, hybrid, flexible, diasporic yet always political. Such formations are also effects of lived experiences in which individual mediate their local and global social justice works (Merryfield, 2000). My hope is that such diasporic readings of identities offer locales to complicate the binaries of home/foreign, school/community and individual/collective knowledge and its claims of truths and realities.
and to perform identities beyond the one-dimensional “one true identity” models yet recognizing collective and strategic operations of cultural identities.

**Limits and Possibilities of the Study**

My work attempts to reposition Asian immigrant discourses within the field of education by re-appropriating the category of “immigrant” from its mythical “melting pot” frameworks. I have also attempted to resituate the often “invisible” Asian immigrant political maneuvers within the larger discussions of multiculturalism. Such a schema, I argue, redefines the category of Asian cultural immigrant as being simultaneously both and global formations, which allows spaces to look at immigrant identities outside of the frame of national identities. The “in-between” or the “Third Space”\(^{19}\) occupied by cultural immigrants negotiates spaces of post-colonial and U.S. multiculturalism to interrupt traditional meanings attached to identity and teaching. Without lionizing such “in-between” teacher identities or

\(^{19}\) Here, I utilize Bhabha’s (1994) notion of “in-between” or “Third Space” of culture and identities. Such formations, as Bhabha posits, work against binary oppositions of identity (us and them, etc) and creates alternative and hybrid locations of culture in which cultural meanings are “appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew” (p. 37).
practices, I argue that immigrant acts create passages towards alternative cultural epistemologies to not only displace “objective” knowledge claims but in crafting pedagogical possibilities within economically marginalized spheres. Such a trajectory undisciplines the orientalist and the white mythologies of Asian-as-model-minority, and also situates the border-crossing moves of the teachers as liberatory and decolonizing educational movements.

This study would have enormously benefited from K-12 students’ perspectives. Moreover, I would have unlearned more in the field if I had been able to spend more time with the teachers. Since all translations are partial, the act of writing this description in standard English has “lost” cultural elements that often undergird cultural conversations. The act of writing in standard English also limits the readership or the audience of this work. Similarly, despite the diversification in the deployment of theories, my utilization of theories published in English language limits the intellectual scope of this research thus to exclude those who do not and would not write in standard English. Similarly, my formative knowledge in areas of U.S. science curriculum, urban pedagogy and the gender aspect of identity and teaching has limited the
scope of necessary interpretation. In the fieldwork context, I have further addressed the limits of the knowledge produced within this discussion in Chapter Three.

The Ambivalence of Writing a Dissertation

If writing serves the purpose to create/express knowledge, to interrogate scientism from its parasitic relationship with “truth” and to partake in scholarly enterprise, then one is often left wondering if acts of writing are always emancipatory or transformative. As Smith (1999) argues, writing remains a dangerous and non-innocent practice since the unintended outcomes of writing may further marginalize Maori indigenous knowledges and methodologies. Therefore, my ambivalence in writing this dissertation is not to be interpreted as an apologetic gesture for writing diasporic culture. I have intentionally not-written certain stories, recognizing the political repercussion of writing dissertations. Such a move is not only about protecting the anonymity of the teachers but, most of all, a recognition on the complexities or the difficulties of writing such cultural stories. As Fabian (1990) has suggested, the acts of not-writing certain stories is worth thinking through since coercive writings
perpetuate representational violence that directly and negatively affects the everyday lives of the oppressed.

As I have suggested earlier, nor have I ignored the politics and ethics of writing in standard English since it reveals the tensions and the non-innocence of language use. By complicating the binary formulations of accessible/inaccessible language, as Lather (1996) asks us within the politics of clarity: “What is the violence of clarity, its non-innocence?” (p. 529). Thus, I have remained ambivalent of my utilization of the standard English (despite its hybrid use) which evokes its own sets of possibilities and challenges. If the world of standard English has been bastardized through writing-back-to-the-center to question knowledges produced via standard English language, how does one not ignore the continued linguistic and cultural neo-colonialism of standard English? (Thiong’o, 1986). Since English is the only required and accepted medium of expression in this discussion, such language requirements nevertheless elevate the neo-colonial educational status of standard English as the only legitimate medium by which to express knowledge. Here, one cannot ignore how such requirements marginalize non-European (or non-standard English) languages and its frame
of knowledge references. As Macedo (2000) has pointed out, the attempts to revive standard English is very much interrelated to the discourse of racism and neo/colonialism and its attempt to legitimize dominant forms of knowledge. In other words, writing this project is also a profound “loss” of not being able to express in alternative languages sufficiently. As Anzaldúa (1987) reminds us, writing is more than a form of communication and that language is inextricably tied to cultural formations: “I am my language” (p. 59).

Yet, my deployment of English does not mean it has followed the traditional forms of writing but it attempts to perform hybrid, creolized half-English English. The inclusion of Nepali, Spanish and Hindi in this discussion has been strategic and operates to culturally contextualize the writing process as well as to break the monotony/dominance of standard English. Despite the appropriation\(^\text{20}\) of English, the very idea of being required to write in English, for a non-native English speaker or writer, is nevertheless a violent yet a liberatory\(^\text{21}\) process

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\(^{20}\)My use of the term appropriation signifies the strategic use of dominant discourse that questions western knowledge frames and creates transformative possibilities within minority contexts.

\(^{21}\)Liberatory in the sense of unlocking a dominant language
that is woven within power/knowledge spheres of university as well as within U.S. society. I have found Rao’s (1963) thoughts helpful to situate my own writing:

The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own ….. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word “alien” yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up—like Sanskrit or Persian was before—but not of our emotional make-up. … We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians (p. vii).

I have attempted to not “write like the English” while recognizing the impossibility of such acts. As Rao suggests, our ways of writing cannot look for authentic forms of writing yet the ways we write are often inseparable from cultural ways we read “the word and the world” (Freire, 1998). For me, as Rao suggests, the very act of writing in English is not easy since the speaking is a difficult project. Thus for me, recognizing the larger scenes of violence ushered in by standard English language, I have pondered over the ways to resist to re-colonize or re-inscribe the Other via my writing in standard English. If hybrid trajectories of writings offer a critique of imperial aims of writings, I have attempted to write to

and working the standard English.
open-up possibilities for decolonization that contributes for social change, which must ultimately benefit subalterns who are dispossessed everyday. Similarly, I have attempted to move away from the traditional ways of doing dissertation yet recognizing the institutional demands to follow academic trails of a largely Euro-centric dissertation process. I have attempted to “spice” the literature review chapter and have intentionally scattered elements of “literature review” within Chapter One, Two, Three and Eight.

**Overview of Chapters**

Chapter One has provided the problematics of this research that frames the study within the performances of identity and pedagogy. I have also attempted to situate the research both within historical as well as contemporary theoretical terrain of Asian American studies, post-colonial studies and U.S. discussions of multiculturalism within the contexts of education.

In Chapter Two, I describe selective studies on identity that elaborate on the hybrid, diasporic cultural maneuvers of identities and its political positionings. Such articulations describe identities as effects of colonialism as well as neo-colonialism, and also situate
identity formations as an effect of movement of people and
cultures, particularly in relation to discourses of
orientalism, imperialism and model minority. I also
describe how scholars have attempted to understand the
nature of identity of Asian Americans within the schooling
context and how students resist marginalization. This
project is a necessity since, with a few exceptions (See
Chapter 2), studies on Asian American teacher identities
and practices are virtually non-existent. Lastly, to
situate my study on the relationship between identity and
teaching, I describe the scholarship that addresses how
educational possibilities are created by cultural relevant
ways of teaching, particularly the studies that speak on
the relationship between language and teaching, culture and
teacher and the practices of teachers of color within U.S.
context.

Chapter Three addresses the methodological domain in
which I describe the tension of doing as well as writing
qualitative research. The chapter includes discussions on
how the participants were selected, ways in which
interviews were conducted, coding/analysis of data, issues
of data trustworthiness, and the ethics and politics of
writing qualitative research.
Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven describe how each teacher negotiates identity and performs pedagogy. The chapter begins with the educational experience of the teacher, then proceeds into “arrival” stories, the nature of their association with their “communities” in diaspora, relationship with teachers and students, and their ways of enacting immigrant cultural pedagogy. In order to provide each story its own space, each chapter is devoted to one teacher’s performances of identity and pedagogy and all four chapters are without citations. I consider the move to separate chapters and the act of not citing related scholarship as an ethical move that offers the telling and writing of the stories its own cultural locations (see the genealogies of this separation in Chapter Three), even if it is a partial space. A draft of each chapter served as “member check” as each was submitted for teachers’ feedback, which is included in this document.

To articulate collective stories, Chapter Eight reads the heterogeneity and hybridity of identity negotiation of Asian immigrant teachers and their cultural practices. The chapter situates the identity formations (as well as dis-identification) and experiences of teachers outside of the school and how the teachers negotiate U.S.
racial formations. Moreover, by examining the experiences of teachers within schools, the chapter examines ways in which the teachers negotiate identity, particular with teachers and students. Finally, the chapter describes the enactment of immigrant cultural pedagogy within classrooms by proposing alternative spaces to enable educational political praxis. I illustrate how the teachers engage with issues of silence/speech, research and multicultural/global knowledge within the classroom. Chapter Eight makes efforts to link the identity/pedagogy of teachers to related scholarship in the field of education and beyond.
CHAPTER 2

ASIAN IMMIGRANT/AMERICAN IDENTITIES
AND CULTURAL PEDAGOGY

Who strives for identity, a certain identity? (Minha, 1987, p. 62)

In this chapter, I analyze literature within and outside of the field of education that are relevant to my study of the Asian immigrant teachers’ identities and practices. In the first segment, I describe scholarship that addresses (a) diasporic mediations of cultural identities as being hybrid, fluid, political and resistant. Secondly, I analyze literature on how Asian immigrants have been identified as well as how Asian subjects re-identify or self-identify themselves in relation to (a) dominant discourses of orientalism and imperialism, and (b) the fictions of model minority discourses that speaks of how U.S. racial formations operate against Asian/Asian Americans. In the third segment, I describe research on Asian American educational identities within the schooling context that enables us to understand the academic,
cultural and psychological challenges faced by Asian American students. Furthermore, within the context of the academic underachievement of economically underprivileged students of color and teaching practices, I describe research on three interrelated areas of study (a) language and teaching (b) culture and teaching and (c) the practices of teachers of color. Such a multifaceted scholarship review offers alternative grounds to situate Asian immigrant teacher identities and their practices within cross-cultural terrain.

Diasporic Mediations of Cultural Identities

The writings on the diasporic cultural identities are relevant to my study since it speaks of hybridity or the in-between aspects of identities that have been performed in response to the violence of colonialism and contemporary neo-colonialism (Bhabha, 1994; May, 1999; Hall, 1990; Lowe, 1996). What I suggest in this discussion

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1The research on culture and teaching is of particular significance since it posits that language and culture are not separated entities but interrelated constructs (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

2Once again, I refer readers to Bhabha’s (1994) work on hybridity, Third Space or the in-between aspects of identity. Such identity formations, as Bhabha posits, work against binary oppositions of identity (us and them, etc) and creates alternative and hybrid locations of culture in which cultural meanings are “appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew” (p. 37).
is that diasporic mediations register hybrid cultural as well as political identities that question the very foundations of identities that are often packaged as stable, static and homogenous. Diasporic aspect of identities offer syncretic possibilities in formulating identities that are local as well as global, situated as well as nomadic. May (1999) argues that the effects of (neo)colonialism have produced multiple immigrant identity dislocations thus re-configuring ideas of culture, identity and community. In such post-colonial spaces, we have to ask “how do immigrants, migrants, and nomads imagine, perform, and invent themselves anew or insert themselves into the unfamiliar politics of place and arrival?” (May, 1999, p. 12). Similarly, within such displacements, in the words of Said & Mohr (1986), “identity--who we are, where we come from, what we are--is difficult to maintain in exile” (p. 16). Diasporic identities are performed to enact hybrid, resistant knowledges in which:

Performed hybridity rejects the developmental model of modernity in which everyone is always “catching up” with the West. Instead of reproducing “peoples without history” or peoples always out of sync, performed hybridity levels the playing field, with simultaneous or contingent modernities (Joseph, 1997, p. 144).
What I suggest is that, in relation to my study of Asian immigrant/American identities, the hybrid aspect of identities offer alternative political sites to speak of identities within the matrix of race, language, class, gender and nationality. Cultural performances or diasporic articulations alter the meanings assigned to identities, and such performed identities are “in-between” and politically occupy the Third Space. Such positions allow sites to not only subvert dominant images, power and authority but also, as Bhatha (1994) enable people to “actually use authorized image, and turn them against themselves to reveal a different history” (p. 190). If identities are to be re-projected as

never being complete...as being as scenario, or a circulation of meanings and values and positions, identity as being an illusion to totality, and yet that illusion, that ambivalence within identity, can be strategically, historically, socially deployed (p. 192).

As Hall (1990) has suggested, identity is not “a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture” (p. 226) but more a fluid concept. For Hall, diasporic identity is to be articulated “not by essence or purity, but by the conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity”
(p. 225). Thus, cultural identities are overtly political, individual as well as collective and yet fluid. For Hall, cultural identities are also about how individuals identify with other identities which are forged by historical and cross-cultural formations via "points of identification" (p. 226). And such an interpretation of identity, as Hall describes, is "not an essence but a positioning. Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position..." (p. 226). Such performances of identity are political acts that work via multiple identifications and incorporates "memory, fantasy, narrative and myth" (p. 226) to interrogate dominant notions of identity.

Bhabha (1990) suggests that the oppressed often perform identities that unsettle the commands and practices of dominant society. For Bhabha, hybrid identities negotiate the spaces in which cultural "identification is a process of identifying with" (p. 211) in which identities create spaces to identify with other marginalized identities. The hybridity of identities is not an assimilation of minorities within dominant narratives but political engagements, as Bhabha argues, which recognizes the historical and contemporary interactions that has not only re-produced the unequal powers among individuals and
societies but has also spawned massive inequalities. Such hybrid identities are "in-between" in the sense that it critiques binary formations of identities (good/evil, us/them, etc). Thus, culturally hybrid identities are "something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiating meaning and representation" (p. 211). For Bhabha, hybrid identities are articulated via cultural difference to work against being assimilated or being contained, controlled by dominant attempts to administer a depolitized idea of cultural diversity or diluted version of multiculturalism. Thus, the discourse of hybridity allows space to engage with dominant discourse and works to create alternative spaces for the marginalized. Such moves recognize the historically sedimented and contemporary unequal contacts between "the colonizers and the colonized" (Memmi, 1965). The performance of such minority hybridity function in opposition to colonial forms of hybridity that was deployed to colonize, rape and plunder non-western people and societies (May, 1999).

Bilgrami (1992) describes the intricate question of "What is a Muslim?" as in-between positions that work the realm of identity by neither embracing western secular
positions nor aligning with unyielding, inflexible definitions of being a Muslim. The cultural identity and commitment to being a Muslim occupies, as Bilgrami suggests, a deliberately situated “third space” that enacts political moves to critique the racialization of Islam as contained within orientalist and imperialist discourses. Simultaneously, for Bilgrami, such in-between identities resist being appropriated by intractable, narrow beliefs of being a Muslim and works against claims of unmediated Muslim communal identities. Kondo (1990) speaks of how cultural identities often fragment within cross-cultural interactions in which individuals negotiate “power-imbued attempts to capture, recast, and rewrite each other” (p. 17). Similarly, as Anzaldúa (1987) suggests, marginalized cultural identities are performed within the contested space of “borderlands” in which identity negotiates its hybrid cultural formations. Anzaldúa’s (1987) statement of “you are at home, a stranger” (p. 194) speaks of the contested relationship between identities and histories that intersect the terrain of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class and nationhood within specific communities. For Anzaldúa, hybridity of identity or space becomes a location to identify as well as dis-identify and such maneuvers are
about cultural positioning and survival:

To survive the Borderlands
you must live in *sin fronteras*³
you must live in
be a crossroads (p. 195).

As I have noted, if cultural identities are
ambiguous, hybrid and re-projected via cultural difference,
such performances of individual or cultural collective of
identities work against the matrix of racism, imperialism
and colonialism that randomly, willfully and negatively
violate people locally as well as globally. Thus, one
cannot neglect how individual and collective cultural
communities (re)negotiate and (re)claim a cultural “will to
identity” or “will to culture” since such performances of
identity serve a transformative, a decolonizing and a
survival agenda. Similarly, diasporic notions of identity
do not follow the dominant linear approach to identity that
rely upon the “notion of continuous, self-sufficient,
developmental, unfolding, inner dialectic of selfhood”
(Hall, 1997, p. 42). As Hall (1997) argues, such
developmental approaches to identity rarely recognize the
multiple layers of cultural interactions, histories,
languages, and experiences that effect identity formations
within specific locations. The linear approach to framing
identity assumes that "when we get there, we will at last know exactly who it is we are" (Hall, 1997, p. 42).

Within the field of education, McCarthy (1998) describes diasporic identities as being non-linear, in-between, multi-layered and hybrid. Such strategies of articulating identity detours from cataloging identities as static to be placed on grids, resists following teleological identity paths and questions the ultimate ascent into a quantifiable or numbered level of identity as a sign of the end of identity. For McCarthy, identities are not measurable categories but are interactive, and are multi-layered performances that are relational not only to the classroom and schooling discourses but to the larger socio-political contexts.

Non-synchronous formations of identities are useful sites to articulate the "vast differences in interests, needs, desires, and identity that separate different

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3 sin fronteras--without borders

4 A useful theorizing is offered by Britzman (1991) who suggests that identities are "messy" and that identities are positions in which "the self is produced and reproduced through social interactions, daily negotiations and within particular contexts that are already overburdened with the meanings of others" (p. 23). Examining identity negotiations by pre-service teachers, Britzman describes how student-teachers work the boundaries of being a student as well a teacher and within the power/representation settings in which "normative discourse can collapse
minority groups from each other" (McCarthy, 1997, p. 65).

McCarthy (1993) further argues that,

minority cultural identities are not fixed or monolithic but multivocal, and even contradictory. These identities are indeed "fluid" and are....effects and consequences of the historically grounded experiences and practices of oppressed groups, as well as the process by which these practices and experiences came to be represented, reconstructed, and reinvented in daily life, in the school, in the work place, in the symbolic media, in textbooks, and in the school curriculum (p. 290).

Similarly, as Yon (2000) argues, the contested nature of immigrant identity negotiations within schools are not only
effected by local conditions but also via global flows of cultures and people. Such formations, as Yon points out, complicate monolithic notions of identity and engender hybrid immigrant cultural identity formations. Hence, diasporic identities are to be situated within the scope of cultural difference or via what JanMohamed and Lloyd (1987) call minority discourse, a mode of articulation that does not read minorities as essences but as oppositional, active agents of decolonization. In what follows, I describe the selected literature that is relevant to my study on the performances of Asian immigrant/American identities. The illustrated research speaks of how Asian immigrants are

identity into role" (p. 24).
identified and how Asian subjects, by resisting dominant representations of orientalism and imperialism, self or/and re-identify themselves.

**Asian Immigrant Cultural Identities:**
**Discourses of Orientalism and Imperialism**

Historically and in contemporary contexts, Asians, Asian immigrants and Asian Americans identities have been produced in relation to the close encounters with the colonizing practices of western imperialism (Ma, 2000). Dominant obsessive desires to manufacture Asian identities often operates through, what Said (1979/1994) calls, Orientalism, in which the seemingly deviant non-western societies are represented within the imperial narratives of western knowledge machinery. Such portrayals, as Said suggests, construct a:

system of knowledge...style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident” ...by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it, in short, Orientalism as a Western style of dominating, and having authority over the Orient (p. 1-6).

If the colonized non-west is often framed within the grid of western universalism and described within the dominant frameworks of western power/knowledge formations, such
tensions of empire produced heterogeneous and multiple cultural identities that resisted the monocultural identity that was introjected on marginalized people.

Asian American cultural critique Lowe (1996) argues that the commitment to Asian immigrant cultural identity must work the boundaries of both identification as well as dis-identification since the identities of Asian Americans are “partly inherited, partly modified, as well as partly invented” (p. 65). The dominant invention of Asian identities, which Asian subject must dis-identify with, as Lowe points out, operates “in relation to the dominant representations that deny or subordinate Asian and Asian American cultures as ‘other’” (p. 65). If the possibilities of identification are offered via the collective Asian American pan-ethnicity (Esiritu, 1992) or via horizontal affiliations with other marginalized groups, Asian immigrant subjects also perform the politics of dis-identification. For Lim (1997), the cultural terrain of diasporic Asian identities offer grounds to activate resistant practices in opposition to the legislated racism against Asians and Asian Americans despite the diasporic frameworks being “excluded from a U.S.-based grouping for
extraliterary, ideological, and political reasons... (and being) often seen as falling out U.S. canonical work” (p. 290).

Lowe (1996) suggests that the political as well as the cultural concept of “Asian American” be re-conceptualized to work certain collective experiences as well as the differences/heterogeneity of Asian experience within the U.S. Such formations of heterogeneous Asian American cultural identities engage in internal critical dialogues about difference and the interrogation of dominant interpellations, however, Asian American cultural can likewise be a site in which the “horizontal” affiliations with other groups can be imagined and realized (p. 71).

If the concept of Asian American serves as a politically organizing space, Lowe also suggests the need to not succumb to the dominant “discourse (that) generalizes Asian American identity as male, (in which) women are invisible” (p. 71). Similarly, Lowe argues against the practices that desire “to formulate binary oppositions between cultural nationalism (that promotes men-only discourse) and assimilation in which Asian American feminists are cast as ‘assimilationist,’ as if betraying Asian American ‘nationalism’” (p. 71). Lowe suggests that the difference and hybridity within the Asian experience be further
dissected otherwise there is the danger of such conceptualizations re-enforcing the myth of Asians as indistinguishably homogenous thus only to be re-positioned within dominant psychological models or "types" profile.\(^5\).

The identities of Asians, Asian immigrants in diaspora, and Asian Americans are effects of old and new orientalist discourses. Although such orientalist discourses also function within the Asian-on-Asian contexts (Lye, 1995), my move here is to chart the double practice of how U.S. orientalist discourses identifies and yet how the identified Asian subjects re-identify themselves. Such a project must register the histories and experiences of Asians within the U.S. in which Asians have not only been excluded from entering the country but also have been constantly marked by dominant society as perpetual foreigners (Takaki, 1999). Prashad (2000) points out that U.S. orientalist discourses have repeatedly portrayed Asians as "poor and unfree, with an special endowment of ahistoricalness" (p. 12). As Prashad suggests, orientalist deviant representations of Asians have permeated within the

\(^5\) Lowe similarly notes the dangers of essentializing Asian American identities in which one ethnic group’s experiences is totalized as the experience. For example, “Chinese are presumed to be exemplary of all Asians, the importance of other groups is ignored” (p. 71).
U.S., both historically and contemporary contexts, in which Asians are constructed as not only people without history, culturally mysterious, exotic, but, also as apolitical figures "without a developed social consciousness" (p. 58). A related discourse that functions, in relation to orientalist representation of Asian American identity, is the depiction of Asians as dominated people via the effects of U.S. military involvement in Asian wars as well as through the active racialization of Asians within the United States. Within such frameworks, as Lowe (1996) points out, both male and female Asian subjects are represented as differently gendered to be possessed, invaded and ruled. The dominated-people portrayals, represent racial and sexual difference of Asians in American (in comparison to whites) which, for example, operates to violently emasculate Asian American (male) identities by "feminizing" such Asian subjects (Eng, 2001).

Since Asians are racialized by dominant discourses both within local and global spaces, how do Asians in diaspora enact counter-hegemonic practices to oppose such identity fabrications as well as re-identify themselves? Lowe (1998) argues that Asian identity differences be
situated within the convergence of heterogeneity (difference within Asian Americans), hybridity (resistant Asian American cultural practices) and multiplicity (location of Asian American subjects within historical and contemporary power, race, class formations). Within the framework of capitalistic labor practices, as Lowe suggests, the identities of Asian immigrants are defined against mainstream American values and epistemologies. In other words, the "always alien" or alienated status of Asians in America often selectively "includes" Asians within the labor force yet represents them as "contradictory, confusing, unintelligible elements to be marginalized and returned to their alien origins" (Lowe, 1998, p. 4). Lowe proposes that Asian identities be conceptualized both within the "the history of U.S. involvement in Asia and the historical racialization of Asians in the United States" (p. 16). The deviant portrayals of Asians, as Lowe argues, are effected by the historical and contemporary racialization of Asians within the U.S. as well as the discriminations that are produced in relation to U.S. colonialist and neo-colonialist involvement in Asia. Lowe argues that Asian immigrants
create counter-spaces, counter-memories of “immigrant acts” to re-imagine Asian/Asian American representations within the U.S.

By articulating the complex relationship forged by U.S. invasion of Laos and its effects on immigrant Laotian identities, Norindr (1994) describes a Laotian immigrant’s ambivalence of U.S. state’s proclamation of “independence day” that functions at the expense people of color within the U.S. as well in Southeast Asia. Norindr suggests that Asian immigrant cultural and political identities supplement the cultural works of other people of color against dominant practices of racism and imperialism. San Juan (1995) similarly argues that Filipino Americans continue to interrogate dominant U.S. constructions of Filipino identities as “little brown brothers...barbaric yellow bellies” (p. 214) that are produced as an effect of U.S. interventions in the Philippines. Filipinos in the diaspora, for San Juan, must resist the identities based on “U.S. disciplinary knowledge production and surveillance” and cannot not interrogate its “asymmetrical cartography of metropolis and colony, core and periphery, the official world system” (p. 214). Describing the colonial effects of Spanish as well as U.S. occupation in the formations of
Filipino identities in the diaspora, Strobel (2000) argues for the de-colonization of Filipino American identities to position the geography of the Philippines as a location of resistant cultural knowledge. The double processes of de-colonization and non-essentialist indigenization serve, as Strobel describes, a parallel trajectory of Filipino indigenous articulation or self-identification through counter moves of identity.

By situating my discussion on Asian immigrant teacher identities, my attempt here is not to romanticize a collective Asian immigrant identity since an unmediated collective Asian American identity conflates differences of class, gender, nationality within ethnic communities. Yet the ways in which dominant discourses operate against Asian immigrants, deviant representations often construct Asians as a homogenous, monolithic and monocultural people who are incapable of enacting agency. Nor do I intend to elide the tensions within Asians (in Asia) as well as within Asian American communities that are effected by wars within Asia (for example Japanese occupation of Korea, etc) or the ethnic difference within Asian immigrants within the U.S. (Indian and Nepali, etc). As Strobel (2000) illustrates, identities that are often evoked within the political
collective of "Asian American" do not always articulate the different experiences of marginalized groups within Asian America, such as the location of Filipinos within the category of Asian America. Thus, as Strobel suggests, a re-conceptualization of the term Asian American opens up dialogue to move beyond the works of ethnic groups (mostly Japanese and Chinese Americans) who have historically been internally canonized as Asian Americans. This demand to expand the meaning of Asian American has also been echoed within South Asian American circles (Shankar & Srikanth, 2000).

Neither are identities within specific Asian American groups stable but rather that identity differences are often affected by power relationships, gender roles, social class affiliations, etc. (Lee, 1997; Bhattacharjee, 1992). Nor is there a shortage of privileged Asian immigrants who claim the assimilated identity of "American" and refuse to recognize exploitation and racism within U.S. geographies (Katrak, 1997). Pointing out the heterosexual and patriarchal practice within the Indian diaspora, Bhattacharjee (1992) points out that hegemonic and mythic

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6 For example, Indian-American writer Mukherjee (1988) situates her assimilated immigrant identity by pointing out that: "I am one of you now."
notions of Indian national identities are often evoked to re-colonize women in the diaspora. By romanticizing male, heterosexual Indian nationalist discourses against Britain, as Bhattacharjee describes, such intentions attempt to exercise power over women (thus to regulate their movement), to re-position women as the “protectors” of tradition, and to claim gender as the space of ideal and pure culture. As Bhattacharjee illustrates, such hegemonic formation demands that women sacrifice their political practices for the sake of mythical national preservation in the diaspora. Next, I will describe the dominant racialized production of Asian American as “model minority” and I argue that discourse of model minority is inextricably related to western discourses of imperialism and orientalism. The model minority discourse is particularly relevant in this discussion since, as Lee (1996) has argued, the representation often serves as a dominant identity trope that operates against Asian immigrants within schooling as well as within societal spheres.

Fictions of Model of Minority Discourse

The mythologies of “model minority” posits Asians as successful immigrants who have reached the proverbial American dream of economic success, and such identity
constructions position Asian immigrants against other racial minorities, in which Asians are represented as exemplar minority group. As Norindr (1994) illustrates, the model minority portrayal always accompanies deviant images of Asians. Thus, the Asian never quite fits the melting pot myth and is always an alien, foreigner, a spy and a traitor and the Asian subject betrays the ideals of U.S. nation-state by aligning with an “enemy” identity. The discourse of model minority summarily renders invisible the terrors of racism against Asian Americans within the U.S. and promotes that economic and social mobility is always possible for minorities. And by undermining the significance of race, Palumbo-Liu (1999) argues, the dominant discourse claims that the Asian American “success” is to be emulated, particularly by other people of color. Such dominant representations operate within, what Kim (2001) calls, “racial triangulation” in which Asians are positioned between whites and other minority groups. Within such a triangulation, two simultaneously operating discourses of “relative valorization” and “civic ostracism” appropriate Asian immigrant identities. Relative

7The most recent event is the case of Wen Ho Lee, the Taiwanese born nuclear scientist, who has been investigated for spying for Taiwan.
valorization, for Kim, functions to romanticize the experiences of Asian Americans in relation to the historical and contemporary experiences of other minority groups (African American, etc). On the other hand, civic ostracism positions Asian Americans as “immutably foreign and unassailable with whites on cultural and racial grounds in order to ostracize them from the body politic and civic membership” (p. 41). Similarly, often the dominant society’s agenda of “Asiatic racialization” operates to link particular ethnic group within Asian America to U.S. international politics in which Asian nation-states are constructed as enemies of the U.S. state (Gotanda, 2001).

The model minority myth also has a global reach. Legally sanctioned dominant practices selectively “invite” or glean Asians locally and globally to labor for the U.S. The U.S. state’s role in establishing regulations and codifying laws to import Asian labor thus appropriates Asian subjects for the untrammeled operations of global capitalism (Palumbo-Liu, 1999; Lowe, 1998). The codification of local, state and national laws allows U.S. based companies to import “model” or “skilled” workers (mostly privileged men who specialize in science related
fields). Subalterns from Third World are controlled in their access to cross-borders into North America to be part of the fast-track towards state-sponsored "model minority."

I suggest that the myths of model minority impose yet another form of colonization of (and against) Asian immigrant identities. Such deviant identity representations manipulate Asians as objects of white desire: people who are to be represented, to be disciplined and to be appropriated for further economic aggrandizement of dominant society. The concomitant racial constructions, whether in the media or in the text books, denies the complexity of Asian American experiences to only render Asians as convenient people to be used, yet be omitted, in America's race discourses. By working within orientalist paradigms, the discourse of model minority positions Asian Americans as domestic foreigners and constructs such subjects as disciplined people as an effect of U.S. "victorious" wars in Asia.

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8 The codification of laws on the international level is also at work in which U.S. based companies exploit labor in Third World to strengthen U.S. economic supremacy at the expense of Third World subalterns. See Alexander and Mohanty (1997) on the role of transnational companies in the exploitation of underprivileged women in the U.S. and in Third World.
The dominant making of Asian American identities are not cyclical but have been produced throughout U.S. (and European) history. Asians in American become easy targets because of their Asian, non-western, “foreigner” roots. The discrimination against Asians accelerates during national identity crisis whether effected by domestic economic malaise or/and international crisis. The culturally hyphenated identity (Nepali-American, etc) is always a suspect. Yet, the Asian experiences in America is often introjected, as Palumbo-Liu (1999) argues, to serve the national myth of immigrant progress to occasionally make Asians visible while not allowing spaces for Asians to speak.

The racialized discourses of orientalism, imperialism and model minority are not separate discourses but complement and intersect each other to invent Asian identities that are inextricably part of the dominant desire to control, to access, to consume the Other. In such contexts, dominant people often reveal their profound ignorance by asking Asian immigrants “are you Chinese or what?” (Lee, 1999). For the dominant mind, Asian identities within the U.S. are an aberration and such identities are not or cannot be part of U.S. national
formations. And such non-recognitions of Asian identities are spoken via questions that suggest that Asians are not really American, cannot be trusted and must depart: “Who are you and what are you doing here? Where did you come from and when are you going back?” (Kim, 1993, p. 216). Such an occupation with historical amnesia serves to construct Asian subjects as undesirable “aliens” or objects who must return “home” and must not belong within the geographies of the U.S. In this willful misreading of identity, dominant people willfully render themselves incapable of understanding racialized histories. Next, I move into the realm of literature that speaks of Asian American identities within the field of education and its relationship to my study.

**Asian American Educational Identities**

Research on the location of Asian American teachers and their practices are rare within the field of education (there are only a few published studies in relation to Asian American teachers). For example, Suzuki’s (1998) study delves into issues of race, identity and practice of Asian American teachers and ways in which the teachers’ practice pedagogy. Suzuki points out that the pedagogy performed by teachers is often an effect on their
experiences as well as their ethnic identities, and how the teachers' cultural biographical journeys often become catalyst in circulating multicultural knowledge within the classrooms. Such biographically-mediated pedagogy, as Suzuki describes, offers sites to culturally work with parents as well as students, and to engage in teaching performances in which cultural knowledges of students become a site to activate student learning.

The study by Su (1996) examines the personal biographies of teachers, twenty of whom are Asian Americans, in regards to their family background, reasons for becoming a teacher as well as views towards the teaching profession. And the study by Goodwin, Genishi, Asher & Woo (1997) articulates the teaching intentions of Asian American teachers and also traces their experiences as teachers. In narrating the stories of the teachers, the authors point out how the teachers are often rendered invisible within schools, including often not being recognized as teachers.

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9Chinn & Yong Wong (1988) and Escueta & O'Brien (1995) point out that Asian American teachers do not enter the field of education due to the lack of financial incentives as well as noting the profession as a terrain that would further marginalize their cultural identities.
Much of the work on Asian American educational identities has addressed students’ negotiation of identities within schools and its relationship to students’ academic, socio-cultural and psychological needs. There is a particular relationship between the larger dominant inventions of Asian identities within the U.S. and its relationship to the white mythology of “model minority” that posits Asians as being destined for academic success (Suzuki, 1977). Due to the insidious circulation of the trope of model minority propaganda, Asians are often represented as “naturally” intelligent and high-achieving subjects, only to be discriminated against and not heard within schools thus undermining the academic, social, economic and psychological needs of Asian American students (Pang, 1995; Lee, 1996). Kiang & Kaplan (1994) have pointed out in the context of Vietnamese students that the dominant construction of Asians as silent and conforming subjects positions Vietnamese students as easy targets of discrimination within schools. Given the racially charged atmosphere within schools, Asian American students often endure the hostility of white students who identify them as a threat to their privileged ways of life (Min, 1995). The “successful” societal images of Asian Americans that are
often filtered via the media feeds into the schooling context, in which, the complex identities and experiences of Asian Americans are rendered invisible (Pang & Cheng, 1998). The model minority discourse operates to selectively craft media representations of particular Asian American students’ classroom success stories totalize the schooling experience of Asian Americans (Walker-Moffat, 1995). As Pang (1998) describes, often the needs of Asian American students are segregated within language realms thus non-recognizing the larger socio-psychological needs of Asian American students. Mythical model minority representations mute the political voices of Asian American youth and the resistant perspectives of Asian Americans are not heard within educational circles as if such cultural voices were apolitical (Kiang, 2001). Such dominant practices, as Olsen (1997) has illustrated within the context of immigrant students, simultaneously racializes as well as attempts to “Americanize” students thus to marginalize students’ indigenous languages and knowledge in which education becomes a passage of erasing minority ethnic identities.

Classroom curriculums also serve as a terrain to cannibalize the identities of Asians in America. Yee (1973) argues that the histories and contemporary experiences of
Asian immigrants are provided limited space within textbooks and such representations are replete with stereotypical images of Asian American “difference” in comparison to the normalized and fictionalized images of dominant society. Asian American experiences are often constructed as marginal episodes within the grand narratives of dominant U.S. history (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). The cultural knowledges of Asian American students are rendered invisible within classroom discussions thus further locating Asian American students’ knowledges on the periphery (Cheng & Chang, 1995). Thus, the omission of histories and contemporary experiences of Asians within schools serves to position Asian subjects as model minorities who have apparently melted within the melting pot mythologies.

In other words, Asian American identities, knowledges and cultural practices are often not part of the everyday teaching vocabularies within schools. What needs to be recognized is that, as Lee (1996) echoes, Asian American educational identities are not homogenous, are not monolithic and that Asian American “culture” is not static. Lee points out that the linear models that describe identity formulations rarely articulate the individual, pan
ethnic or collective identities as well as the differences within Asian Americans that are often effected by class, language, gender, nationality, ethnicity, etc. Furthermore, for Lee (1999), linear constructions of identity casually equate ethnicity with culture in which the latter is conceived as static. Ethnic identities are not to be conflated with culture, as Lee argues, in which individuals often effect changes within cultural communities yet embody commitments to particular ethnicity. The category of Asian American is a heterogeneous group comprised of multiple cultural groups and who negotiate community both within and outside of United States, and that includes communities of multiple social class and gendered identities (Pang, 1995). Asian American students identify themselves in selective ways, Pang (1997) argues, in which the identification may or may not include the “Asian” component. For Pang, identity conflation between recent Asian immigrants and those who have two hundred-year identity genealogies often lead to unmediated generalizations.

If Asian immigrant identities are marginalized, it does not signify that individually or collectively Asian subjects don’t resist or create alternative cultural possibilities. Lee (1997) posits that Hmong women in their
attempt to obtain higher education not only negotiate power terrain within dominant society but also within their own communities. Their passages into the spaces of higher education, as Lee describes, is not to be valorized as a romantic story and the trajectory towards/within higher education is often impeded by institutional constraints (economics, racism, etc) that continue to marginalize their cultural identities. Within the context of Vietnamese students’ resistance to institutional racism, students often create cultural spaces by self-segregating themselves in hallways and cafeterias, and avoid locations within the school where they could be verbally or physically violated (Kiang, 1998). The silences of Asian American students are not to be stereotyped as inability to speak but as resistance to domination as well as signs of respect for people within a particular community (Pang, 1997). In what follows, I begin with the larger school failure of students of color and then describe the demand for cultural relevant pedagogies since my research addresses the ways in which Asian immigrant teachers enable pedagogy to reverse the academic challenges faced by racialized and economically underprivileged students.
Academic Underachievement and Teaching

What effects school failure or academic underachievement of marginalized students? Ogbu’s (1995) voluntary/involuntary typology describes how voluntary groups (mostly immigrants, according to Ogbu) achieve academic success because of their “voluntary” status. For Ogbu, immigrants’ arrival into the U.S. is not by coercion (and immigrants do not have the extended history of colonization within the U.S.), their arrival embodies non-resistant identities. On the other hand, Ogbu argues, involuntary groups (for example, those who are descendants of slaves or those who have an extended history of colonization within U.S.) underachieve in schools since such identities often resist schooling due to operations of historical and contemporary oppressions. Although Ogbu’s analysis places emphasis on the school failure of students of color, its linear approach often displays a binary approach to theorizing school failure that neglects to address the intricate contours of immigrant/non-immigrant identities that are embedded within cultural experiences and how it effects students’ school failure. Ogbu’s theory seems to largely neglect structural elements that perpetuate racism and that neglect and impede students’
academic underachievement. One has to ask if the typologies set rigid frameworks to undermine the knowledge of students. Similarly, do the conceptualizations omit how historical and contemporary forms of oppression heterogeneously operate against both voluntary and involuntary immigrants to undermine their knowledge and identities?

To address the contemporary underachievement of students, recent discussions on school failure of students of color posit the need to deploy what has been termed as “cultural relevant” or “cultural responsive” teaching practices (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2000). The studies note the need to understand and formulate linkages between students’ cultural identities (and knowledges) and classroom curriculum. The scholarship articulates culturally mediated teaching performances of teachers who are either part of a particular racial, ethnic group and identify with students or teachers who are white yet have strong affiliations or identify with particular cultural communities of students. Such cultural approaches to teaching not only underscore the need to emphasize curriculum knowledge but also the need to simultaneously perform teaching acts within the cultural context of
classroom or in reference to students’ cultural knowledges. The studies that I describe articulate the relationship between teaching and cultural identity in which the acts of teaching not only situate teachers’ identities but also infuse students knowledge as an integral part of classroom curriculum. To describe the relationship between teachers’ identities and their pedagogies, I have reviewed literature that speaks of how teachers’ recognize students’ knowledge to enable specific classroom practices.

Much of the work within the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy articulates the relationship between teaching and academic success of marginalized students by situating the location of culture, minority cultural knowledges, as a space to enable academic success of economically underprivileged students of color. The studies that I describe suggest the need for teachers to recognize and to validate students’ cultural knowledges and identities to create academic possibilities within classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Howard, 2001). The validation of students’ identities creates spaces to enhance students’ academic achievement and that such practices are mediated by teachers\textsuperscript{10} who recognize their own

\textsuperscript{10} The theme of teachers as “transformative intellectuals”
identities, make efforts to connect with students’ community, and identify with students’ cultural backgrounds. The performances of pedagogy that enhance students’ academics are not only mediated by teachers of color but also by white teachers who recognize and incorporate students’ knowledge within the classroom. The studies suggest that although racial/ethnic membership of a teacher within a particular ethnic community offers certain cultural possibilities, it also outlines how white teachers can create meaningful teaching practices due to their commitment to students’ academic success as well as their relationship with students communities (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The studies are significant to my research on Asian American/immigrant identities and teaching since the literature charts relationship between identity and teaching and addresses the practices of teachers of color.

Nor are ways of practicing cultural teachings “new” in the sense of recent “discovery” but that such practices have cultural genealogies. Marginalized communities have

is addressed by Giroux (1988) within neo-Marxist lines. On a similar theme, incorporating theories articulated by Bhaktin, see Casey’s (1993) work on the oral narratives of Catholic, Jewish and African American teachers.

This is often mediated by class, gender, language use,
educated their own despite their oppressed conditions to counter dominant society’s willful practice of mis-
education (Anderson, 1988; Woodson, 1919; 1933).12 As Walker (1996) points out in her study of a pre-civil rights rural North Carolina school, Black teachers and communities designed culturally meaningful learning spaces despite the dearth of resources and the legalized codes that undermined the schooling intentions of African American communities. Similarly, the liberatory teaching practices within Mississippi Freedom Schools also enacted culturally

12 An account of African American individual as well as communal aspects of education is offered by Woodson (1919) within the pre-1861 context:

Many picked it up here and there, some followed occupations which were in themselves enlightening, an others learned from slaves whose attainments were unknown to their masters....Shrewd negroes sometimes slipped stealthily into back streets, where they studied under a private teacher, or attended a school hidden from the zealous execution of the law (p. 206)....(in which) “forbidden association with fellows for mutual help and....had in several states made it a crime for a Negro to teach his children” (p. 9).

As Anderson (1988) has pointed out, in the post-civil war contexts, African Americans were “ruthlessly disenfranchised; their civil rights and political subordination were fixed in southern law, and they were trapped by statues and social customs in an agricultural economy that rested heavily on coercive control and allocation of labor” (p. 2)....(yet) ..“ex-slaves, however, persisted in their crusade to develop systems of education compatible with their resistance to racial and class subordination” (p. 3).
meaningful teaching and learning practices that questioned social inequalities (Radical Teacher, 1991). Below, in the first part, I describe studies on teaching that explicate the links between curriculum knowledge and students' cultural language. The second part addresses studies on the relationship between curriculum knowledge and culture(s) of students that can create culturally meaningful teaching practices. The studies are significant to my study of Asian immigrant teachers' pedagogies since it addresses relationships amongst language, culture and teaching.

**Research on Language and Teaching**

An area of research that addresses the disjunctions between curriculum knowledge of schools and students' knowledge/experiences is within the field of socio-linguistics, which examines the role of verbal language (standard English) in re-producing home and school learning discontinuities. For example, Mohatt and Erickson (1981) speak of "culturally congruent" practices of an indigenous and a non-indigenous teacher working with an Odawa Indian American student population. For Mohatt and Erickson, "cultural congruent" practices are produced via group oriented projects, small group discussions and interactive exchanges within the classroom and which are catalysts in
elevating students’ academic performances and are aligned with students home/ cultural practices. By examining the barriers faced by Native Hawaiian children, Au & Jordon (1981) describe “culturally appropriateness” as a teaching practice that incorporates culturally appropriate reading practices within the classroom. The authors’ study suggests that culturally appropriate ways of teaching reading (that infuses students’ a-priori languages) creates grounds for students to better comprehend what is being read, rather than relying upon de-contextualized deployment of phonics. Vogt, Jordon & Tharp (1993) similarly suggest the use of comprehension approach to reading instead of phonics to enhance the low academic performance of native Hawaiian students at Kamehameha Elementary Education Program (KEEP). The study also suggests the academic spaces enacted when students work within individual as well as in group settings in which teachers validate students’ perspectives. Heath’s (1983) study examines the disjunction between African American students’ language use at home and at school, and the research suggests the need to incorporate students’ cultural ways of speaking at school to enhance students’ academic performances. In the study, after recognizing the differences between home and school ways of
speaking, teachers’ construct teaching practices (including learning to ask questions) that incorporates elements of students’ everyday language use within local communities. Tharp’s (1989) study, within the context of Native American students, points out that students prefer to respond to questions that are open-ended and reflective in nature rather than time-constrained formats that reward instant responses. Kleinfeld (1973) addresses ways in which white teachers work with rural Athabascan Eskimo and Native American students by learning local practices. The study describes how teacher-student relations are forged both within and outside of classroom through verbal and non-verbal interactions (smiling, joking, etc). The formations of such informal practices allowed, Kleinfeld points out, students to speak more in class and offered sites to create meaningful learning ambience.

Research on Culture and Teaching

Along with language discontinuities, scholarship has addressed the need to enact specific teaching practices recognizing the disjunctions between cultural knowledges of marginalized students and curriculum knowledge.¹³ Echoing

¹³See for example, King (1995) and Gordon (1995), who argue, within the context of Black Studies, that curriculum based on the cultural knowledges of students offers meaningful
the possibilities evoked by culturally relevant or appropriate teaching maneuvers, there has been a parallel scholarly move to de-center and to decolonize dominant disciplinary knowledge in order to infuse students cultural knowledge within classrooms. Such a move not only unsettles the grounds of dominant “truths” but also re-positions cultural knowledges of marginalized students’ communities that can activate possibilities for students’ academic success. In other words, as Pewewardy (1994) has suggested within Native American education contexts, there is a demand to place education within the larger framework of local culture as opposed to contemporary practices of superficially adding minority cultures with dominant frameworks of curriculum or ways of teaching. By addressing the knowledge validity of minority cultures, Delpit (1995) suggests the need to critique the “culture of power” that silences the voices of marginalized people within schools. As Delpit argues, most often teaching practices privilege the knowledge of dominant members of society and “those with power are frequently least aware of—least willing to acknowledge—its existence” and “those with less are often most aware of its existence” (p. 24). Nelson-Barber &
Estrin (1995) argue for incorporating Natives American knowledges to problematize dominant knowledge foundations within mathematics and science. Dominant constructions of science and math, as the authors point out, only “represent a ‘Western’ approach to mathematics thinking” that operates within epistemologies of “discrete entities, quantities” (p. 176). The de-colonization of dominant mathematics and science knowledges, as the authors note, would complicate the myths of teaching science as an objective or innocent practice. Tate (1995) argues for the need to teach mathematics from Africentric perspectives by linking the field of mathematics education within the historical as well as contemporary experiences of African Americans. Culturally relevant approaches to mathematics would allow spaces to move beyond Euro-centric notions of mathematical knowledge and enable students to interrogate the reproduction of social inequities and investigate ideologies imbedded within “symbol systems and to link them to real problem solving and decision making” (p. 170). Such practices allow sites to question the politics of “percentages, decimals, and fractions” (p. 170) thus enable alternative perspective on mathematics education. Similarly, within the context of social justice, Banks &
Banks (1995) advocate “equity pedagogy” that utilizes culturally relevant approaches to teaching about diversity and equity, and “actively involves students in a process of knowledge construction and production” (p. 153). By questioning the social construction of “reality,” as Banks & Banks point out, equity pedagogy examines broader issues of knowledge, power and authority in the schooling process. Within the framework of social justice, Eller-Powell (1994) argues for culturally relevant approaches to teaching poor white students by recognizing the “involuntary minority” identities of the students and its relationship to the economically underprivileged, colonized geography of Appalachia. As Eller-Powell argues, the “industrial onslaught” (p. 63) and subsequent exploitation of the region’s resources and labor has created deviant representations of the people/cultures and spawned a cycle of dependency on industrial capitalism. Schools have rarely emphasized, as the author suggests, the cultural knowledge of the region, and have yet to serve the academic needs of poor white students. Instead, by legitimizing:

the dominant rationality and simultaneously devaluing the belief system of non-mainstream populations, schools in the region have encouraged the better educated to leave for greater economic opportunities, thereby helping to perpetuate the cycle of poverty and dependency (p. 68).
For the author, school reform (including curricular reform) must begin by examining the culturally relevant ways Appalachian students can benefit from education. Such an educational practice, as the author suggests, would address local cultural practices and its relationship to students’ identities to work towards teaching for social justice. Next, I describe the practices of teachers of color, particularly in relation to African American and Latino/Latina teachers.

**Teachers of Color and Teaching**

Scholars have also examined the location of teachers of color within schools and their culturally meaningful teaching acts. For example, Foster’s (1990; 1995) research examines the role of African American teachers in relation to the socio-political changes effected by the post 1960s civil rights desegregation of schools. Despite their marginalized status within schools, as Foster argues, African American teachers create their own philosophies and practices that allows them to resist dominant discourses as well as to work towards emancipatory teaching practices. Foster (1990) writes:
In spite of the limitations imposed by the schools and larger society they have fashioned a teaching philosophy and pedagogy that enables them to act as social agents in ways that both change and construct their own and their pupil’s realities (p. 138).

For Foster, much of the traditional research on the teaching practices of African American teachers have discounted themes of racial identity and portrayed the teachers within deficient paradigms. Such dominant constructions of African American teachers’ cultural identities and practices are often framed, Foster suggests, within psychological models that were grounded within individuality, cognitive and behavior traits thus discounting collective identities and cultural works of such teachers.

Darder (1993) similarly speaks of identities and cultural practices of Latino teachers and outlines how such teachers create academic possibilities by validating Latino students’ bi-cultural identities. The practices of teachers, as Darder outlines, emphasize academic success, infuse topics of power and oppression within classroom discussions, and work towards developing meaningful relationship with parents. Darder points out that research on critical pedagogy has yet to address the intersections of minority cultures and race within the schooling context.
Despite the possibilities created by Latino teachers, Darder argues, the teachers encounter constant institutional demands to “disregard, marginalize, and de-legitimize the cultural knowledge they bring about themselves and their communities, while being expected to conform and assimilate” (p. 19) within schools. Quite often, Latino teachers are constructed as “perpetual foreign identity of otherness in their own country” (p. 199).

Similarly, Ladson-Billings (1994) outlines culturally relevant teaching practices enacted by African Americans in which the teachers construct cultural links between schools and the home communities of students. Ladson-Billings describes how the teachers’ recognition and identification with students’ home communities opens up spaces to affirm students’ cultural identities thus validates students’ “prior knowledge to make sense of the world and to work toward improving it” (p. 14). The study points out how teachers can create academic possibilities for African American students to work against assimilationist teaching practices that deny African American students’ there role as subjects and authors of cultural knowledges.
Howard (2001a) illustrates the culturally relevant practices of African American teachers who incorporate academic as well socio-psychological, cultural and emotional issues/needs of students to create a cultural comprehensive teaching practice. The study describes the significance of teachers’ use of culturally relevant language to communicate (Black English Vernacular) with students since “not only does language have implications for academic achievement but sensitivity towards linguistic differences also has direct consequences for cultural identity” (p. 199). Within the study, teachers’ emphasize skill-building activities as well as create demanding academic environment since “cultural connection between student and teacher alone does not dictate student success” (p. 198).14

Summary

In this chapter, I analyzed scholarship that speaks of how Asian immigrant/Asian subjects are represented by dominant discourses as well as how Asian immigrants speak back. I argued how dominant practices of orientalism, imperialism and model minority are inter-related discourses

14Although my study does not address students’ perspective on teachers practices, Howard’s (2001b) useful study provides students’ perspectives on teachers practices.
that effect Asian immigrant identities. Such representations, as I illustrated via relevant literature, how Asian Americans/immigrants are perceived and marginalized within the schooling terrain and which undermines Asian subjects’ cultural identity positions. The scholarship that I have reviewed are relevant in my research since I highlight the ways in which Asian immigrant teachers negotiate identities within school as well as within U.S. society. My research describes the heterogeneous ways in which Asian immigrant diasporic identities are performed in response to dominant notions of Asian/Asian American identities. The enactment of identities, as I posit, reveals how the hybrid orientations of Asian immigrant teacher identities negotiate local as well as global cultural formations and which intersects with U.S. racial formations. Similarly, to trace the kinds of pedagogy Asian immigrant identities can enable, I have analyzed research in relation to practices of teachers of color and studies on pedagogy that speaks of incorporating students’ cultural practices and languages within the classroom. As I pointed out, the studies outline how cultural relevant teaching practices can make connections or complicate the disjunctions between what students know
or have experienced and what schools expect students to know. I argue in subsequent chapters that immigrant aspect of pedagogy enacted by the teachers infuse students cultural knowledge and create learning spaces by assisting students who have academically struggled in the schools. And that research in relation to cultural relevant pedagogy within the context of Asian America context is needed. Immigrant pedagogy illustrates ways in which the teachers invite students to participate in classroom discussions, enable students to conduct research and infuse minority knowledge to differently learn the curriculum content. Next, I describe the methodology aspect of the research that traces how the study was formulated and enacted.
CHAPTER 3

DIASPORIC METHODOLOGIES: UNLEARNING FROM FIELDWORK

This chapter traces the methodological terrain of research in which I detail the ways in which I have participated in this qualitative inquiry project. The chapter addresses my investments in diasporic paradigms and epistemologies to (re)writing culture (See Chapter 2) and the decolonization projects it may unveil to decenter the entrenched positivistic traditions within educational research. Within the discussion, I elaborate on the research design of the study and the inherent complexities of doing qualitative research. I describe the following themes relevant to research design (1) situating the self epistemologically/paradigmatically (2) research questions (3) knowledge/data sources (4) research methods (5) data analysis/collection (6) observation, interviews and fieldwork (7) interpretation, data trustworthiness and writing culture.

Situating the Self Epistemologically/Paradigmatically

I begin this discussion within the frame of diasporic methodologies and possibilities it offers in the decolonization of dominant paradigms and its forms of knowledge. My own
identity status within the U.S. is that of a diaspora, a Third World racialized Asian immigrant heterosexual male within U.S. racial formations. I was born in Kathmandu, Nepal and, compared to a majority of people in Nepal,\(^1\) I grew up in an economically privileged family. I attended an elite K-10 school that provided me with the knowledge to access (even if partially) the worlds outside of Nepal.\(^2\) Because of my upbringing in Nepal as well as my residence in U.S. (and the privileges of my university affiliations), the convergence of Third World and U.S. immigrant aspect of identities produces hybrid lenses to charting research designs. The ways I see/read the worlds has influenced how I have interviewed and observed in the field, analyzed the data, and written about teachers’ identities and practices.

The investment in decolonizing aspects of cultural epistemologies of research serves as useful paradigmatic and methodological passage. As Fanon (1963) suggests, decolonization is an uncertain yet an urgent cultural project that cannot be undertaken “as a result of magical practices, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding” (p. 36). Fanon urges that projects of decolonization be enacted to “discern the movements which give it historical form and content” (p. 36). Working for the need for a radical present in

\(^1\)United Nations ranks Nepal as one of the economically poorest countries in the world (See United Nations World Report, 2000).
\(^2\)On the other hand, due to the largely European orientation of my education, the school curriculum rarely emphasized the
light of that past of colonialism, as Fanon has articulated, the paradigmatic orientation, the methodologies and the specific methods deployed in this research project has the explicit goal of decolonization: to move away from the dominant paradigms of research and to produce knowledge that can enable social change. As Smith (1999) describes within a Maori context, projects of decolonizing methodologies do not reverse the binary of civilized and uncivilized or west or non-west but create spaces to reverse the cultural fragmentation wrought by neo/colonialism. The decolonizing research practices woven within this study recognize the ethics and the responsibility of fieldwork and actively work against research violations to create possibilities for alternative modernities within culturally/economically oppressed communities.

By politicizing the struggles of the marginalized for social and economic justice, the theoretical investments and the diasporic methodologies infused within this discussion describe the tensions of doing fieldwork within economically/racialized underprivileged communities. The diasporic paradigmatic design of research asks: What are the ways to engage in research practices within economically marginalized geographies? In what ways do the nature of observation, interview practices, data analysis and notions of validity, and writing change within such cultural history or politics within Nepal.
research terrain? What are the methods of engaging in non-coercive research practices? What are the productive tensions of working with people we identify with? I have often asked where are the educational theories for such diasporic work and, similar to Hermes (1998), “I am still trying to sort out exactly where the ‘methods’ are” (p. 155; cited in Lather, 1998, p. 3).

**Multiple Homes of Epistemologies**

Informed by politicized hybrid theories of difference, from post-colonial to U.S. based theories of multiculturality, the paradigmatic trajectory of this discussion is situated to work against the larger knowledge violence of western colonialism. The lens deployed within the discussion moves away from the “methodology of imperialism” (Said, 1993) that has superimposed western science-oriented practices as the only legitimate and valid form of methods to be practiced within research (Stanfield, 1994). The reliance upon western science based research has produced not only metaphors of “discovery” but also foundational research cartographies that fantasize as well as appropriate the Other to claim the supremacy of western knowledge (Pratt, 1991). As Palumbo-Liu (1999) has suggested, western social science has yet to begin decolonizing knowledge produced via its violent encounter with the Other. Thus, this
project’s explicit aim is what Rabinow (1986) calls to “anthropologize the west... (to) show how their claims to truth are linked to social practices” (p. 241).

A diasporic framework offers a useful space since it reveals different ways individuals mediate their everyday lives, perform political communities and negotiate culture. Without romanticizing immigrant diaspora lives or creating salvation narratives via privileged travel methodologies, I provide a multi-layered readings of identities and offer alternative and competing meanings of agency, resistance, and the socio-political dimensions of doing qualitative research. The diasporic logic is a useful site since the research addresses the tensions of migration, movement of people and cultures, and the identities that are negotiated within the tapestry of being cultural immigrants within U.S. racial formations, including my own auto-biographical or auto-ethnographic mediations.

The paradigmatic trajectory of this research is situated within post-colonial theories that speak of diasporic Asian immigrant experiences as well as the heterogeneous cultural expression that are produced via multiple Asian encounters within U.S. racial formations (Lowe, 1998; Espiritu, 1992). Such cross-fertilization of theories offer catalytic dialogues within the interchange of racial, gendered, national and ethnic identities. I have benefited from research on cultural
epistemologies that advocates the responsibility domain of research and practices, as Dillard (2000) suggests, “that makes us accountable to the people whom we study, and their interests and needs” (p. 662). Cultural epistemologies are “not solely about racism, however; it is also about the nature of truth and reality” (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 259). Oppositional epistemologies of research, as Abdur-Rashid (1999) suggests within Muslim African American methodologies, recognize that “studying the subjugated involves a dangerous process of immersion” (p. 74). Such epistemologies ask: “What can be done to save our children, our communities and ourselves?” (p. 9). If cultural epistemologies interrogate dominant discourses, such epistemologies also create spaces of individual as well as collective self renewals and healings by negotiating spiritual identities (Dillard, Abdur-Rashid & Tyson, 2000).

CLR James (1963) suggests that it is not necessarily the arrival at a destination that marks the culmination of a journey but rather the ways in which the passage has been negotiated and how the journey has being performed. James writes:

Time would pass, old empires would fall and new ones take their place, the relations of countries and the relations of classes had to change before I discovered that it is not quality of goods and utility which matter, but, movement; not where you are or what you have, but where you have come from, where you are going and the rate at which you are getting there (cited in McCarthy, 2001, p. 86).
By resisting the romanticization of movement of people, James’s argument invokes a useful research purpose since it re-positions the meaning of doing field work, the meanings of formulating relationship in the field, the pace and the directions of doing research as well as the writing of research. Such passages of research is a “voyage in” (Said, 1993) that creates grounds to re-imagine fieldwork within unfamiliar terrain, to re-think ways of visualizing the field, and to unlearn the ways we observe, and write the Other in our texts.

My argument is that methodologies that explicitly address projects of decolonization allow alternative lenses to conceive the idea of field and doing educational qualitative research. Moreover, such research acts have the possibilities to re-draw multiple power lines embedded within the fieldwork and to articulate the idea of field as an uncertain as well as a materially real political location. Such interpretations of fieldwork interrogate the seemingly familiar or sure gaze of the ethnographer and the very vein of the researcher’s organized knowings. Such research movements also produce positions of what Lather (2001) has called “getting lost” that offer spaces to perform or activate research uncertainties. As Fine (1994) has suggested, the methodological frames incorporated in this research works to politically negotiate the hyphen between the self and the other and to “rupture the textual laminations within
which Others have been sealed” (p. 71). Recognizing its hybrid cultural formations, the diasporic aspects of epistemologies enable spaces to negotiate multiple homes of epistemology thus to practice non-coercive, open and responsible research practices.

**Research Questions**

As I described in Chapter 1, the research was initiated due to the dearth of studies in relation to identities and/or pedagogy of Asian immigrant/American teachers. My study was guided by two interrelated questions: (a) What is the nature of Asian immigrant teacher identities (b) What kinds of pedagogy do such identities enable.

**Knowledge/Data Sources:**

I followed four Asian immigrant teachers for an eight month period in a U.S. midwestern city (See Appendix D on the profile of teachers). Three of the teachers taught within economically underprivileged settings (See Appendix C for information on school locations/demographics).\(^3\) In the beginning stages of the research, I compiled a list of Asian immigrant teachers by contacting public and private schools. The contacts gained by my writing or calling school districts were rarely productive since most school districts did not employ Asian immigrant teachers. Thus, via official sources rarely was

\(^{3}\)I have detailed the context of each school later in the chapter as well as in Chapters 4-7.
I able to find the whereabouts of Asian American teachers. However, the very presence of Asian American teachers within schools is often constructed as an absence thus rendering the identity of Asian Americans as anomalies. The denial of their cultural identities was invoked during one of my phone conversations with a school official:

Binaya: I am calling to see if I could obtain a list of Asian, Asian immigrant or Asian American teachers within the school system?

Official: Well, I don’t know if we keep it... can you hold for a minute... I am not sure we have Asian American teachers here. But we do have a couple of Asian teachers (p. 2).

A few weeks later when I met the teachers that the official had described, both identified themselves as second generation Asian Americans. Such forms of identity erasure were quite common during the search process in which the “American” aspect, whether the teachers identified with it or not, were summarily denied as if the subjects did not belong with/in America. The teachers were constructed as “foreign” (or from Asia) and in temporary residence within the U.S. and were not necessarily recognized as Asian Americans. I uncovered the possible whereabouts of the teachers through word of mouth or rumors from teachers who knew or had heard of other teachers in schools in the city. Local Asian American cultural, political and religious organizations provided contacts on teachers recognizing that my research might be of importance to Asian
American communities. Ohio State’s College of Education’s Office of Diversity was of much assistance in suggesting names of teachers since a number of Asian American/immigrant teachers participated in urban teacher initiatives that were organized by the office.

Research Methods

Research methods within this research included: observation of classrooms, interviews with teachers, field notes taken in schools, my journals and via documents (lesson plans, responses to my queries, etc) provided by the respondents (See Appendix E on the time-line of research). I have addressed the research methods relevant to the diaporic aspect of methodologies and research design in Section I, titled Observation, Interviews and Field Work Identities, which includes the following themes/sub-categories: (1) selection and preliminary interviews (2) request to participate (3) access to the school setting (4) research with Asian immigrants (5) observing the other (6) fieldwork identities and power (7) the performances of “giving back” (8) hybrid interviews (9) the politics of asking and telling (10) tales from the tape (11) border crossing? tensions of research.

Data Analysis/Interpretation

Data has been analyzed via constant re-reading of data to look for emergent themes and patterns. Similarly, I have
situated discussions of data validity and data analysis within the context of the ethics and politics of writing representation. I elaborate the complexities of interpreting/writing culture in Section II, titled Interpretation, Data Trustworthiness and Writing Culture, which includes the following subsections: (1) data analysis: negotiating themes and patterns (2) data trustworthiness: politics and ethics (3) theories of writing culture (4) representation: politics and ethics (5) ethics of writing (6) the crisis of writing: writing in reverse. Next, I begin with the research methods aspect and to the selection of teachers and preliminary interviews.

I. Observation, Interviews and Fieldwork Identities

Selection and Preliminary Interviews

My ways of doing interviews followed a non-linear trajectory. Kvale’s (1996) illustration of thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying and reporting was useful in conceptualizing non-coercive interview engagements. For the preliminary interviews, I met participants at my home, their homes and at various public school locations. Gatherings outside of the school often became a place to not only discuss my research intentions but they offered sites to talk about school politics and politics within Asia immigrant communities. Similarly, the preliminary interviews were
helpful in my beginning understanding vis-a-vis the complex, multiple and contested identity locations of teachers.

The meetings with potential participants were not only personal engagements but were often group cultural interactions. Often I met spouse, family or friends of the teachers who were supportive of the teaching profession and recognized the social responsibility of being an educator. Yet occasionally there were individuals who would make remarks such as: “I do not know why you want to get into teaching. There is no money in it.” Within such conversations, I was often advised to turn into lucrative positions such as computer science or engineering. Occasionally, the field of political science or economics was suggested as fields to study “to help people back home” since, as one spouse commented, “we need real democracy back home.” In two meetings, there were sentiments of, as one family member put it, “we are doing better than others in this country.” Another family member could not quite fathom why their spouses or daughters were working within impoverished schools. Such unmediated positions often revealed the class dynamics of privileged immigrant arrivals and the non-recognition of racial politics within the U.S.

I assumed that the voicing of myopic sentiments were not only effects of not recognizing prejudice or racism within the U.S. society but that individuals translated prejudice
differently by noting the possibilities of overcoming racism via embracing romantic notions of upward economic mobility. Often there were veiled self-serving sentiments of Asian “progress” and the language of: “Look at us, we have made it here,” was once evoked by one male subject to insinuate the seemingly unreachable hands of racism that had failed to touch his life or infiltrate his version of community. The metaphor of “we made it here” was voiced to suggest the overcoming of racism via the ascendance to a particular economics class: the middle class landscape within the proverbial American dream. I resisted reading such identity formations as simply immigrant middle class aspirations but more of an attempt to escape from economic realities of Third World by simultaneously running away or refusing to examine the deeper layers of “savage inequalities” (Kozol, 1991) effected by racism within U.S. societies. As one family member pointed out, “we have seen enough,” referring to grinding poverty and the relentless competition for jobs back in South Asia. In spite of selectively remembering (but not necessarily unlearning) the subaltern struggles in Third World, for some, the journey from the space of Asia to the Americas was simply a move from one middle class space to the another.

During my preliminary conversations with potential participants, there were affinities that were forged, however imagined, of being South Asians or Asians in America. Such
partial identifications often became a starting point to speak about diasporic lives in the U.S. or the politics “back home”. The participants as well as their relatives (and friends) particularly connected with forms of my Nepali identity in relation to Nepal’s association with Hindu and Buddhist traditions and, most saliently, via the mountainous landscape of Nepal. Occasionally, there were orientalist imaginings of Nepal via “you have a lot of mountains there” or “I have seen your country on discovery channel.” How does one interpret such orientalist thinking within minority communities? Do we find such speeches more accepting or condoning since it is filtered through non-white communities?

As Appadurai (1990) points out, ethnic and national tensions within the Third World are not always effects of western imperialism although such struggles are often influenced by policies and the exercise of power by western societies. Such cross-cultural differences play out in immigrant communities, as Espiritu (1992) suggests, thus revealing the tensions within the desire to form pan-ethnic Asian communities yet also exposing the limits of negotiating inter or intra ethnic/national forms of solidarity. My conversations with potential participants of the study, their family members and friends revealed the cross-cultural-national strains effected by histories or contemporary politics whether
within India-Pakistan, Nepal-India, Filipino-Japanese or within the larger Muslim-Hindu-Christian contexts. Nor were the teachers always willing or eager to participate. Two teachers noted that they would not be able to participate in the study after our first meeting because of time constraints. Another teacher provided a different reason to not be considered as a participant,

I have some idea about what your research may look like. Hope you don’t mind but I would feel uncomfortable being part of the research. It is not about time but I don’t feel comfortable having you in class for that extended amount of time (p. 6).

Another segment of Asian immigrants that I spoke with came from “lower” economic class and their travels into the geographies of U.S. coincided with suddenness of arrival effected by political and economic state of emergencies, often a result of U.S. or European military, political or economic interventions in Asia. The identity arrival was as refugees, as “low-skilled” workers and such individuals were without the formal education, which limited their options for employment. The people I interviewed were mostly men who worked for the public school system and occupied the rather nebulously designated status of “teachers’ aide,” who were neither a teacher nor a full-time employee of the school system but were only hourly workers. They often worked with white ESL (English

—I interviewed twelve teachers of Asian descent for the study. }
as a Second Language) teachers in underprivileged schools that housed a large number of immigrant students of color. The teachers were of Laotians, Hmong and Vietnamese descent (as well as Somalis and Ethiopians).

These Asian immigrant educators/workers played a crucial role in helping students through a maze of course work: translating English to native languages and vice versa, assisting with one-on-one tutoring that included endless hours of unpaid labor in preparing students for proficiency exams. Two of the individuals I spoke with had been working as teachers’ aides for more than ten years. None of the aides that I interviewed had formal education beyond high school education diploma thus the possibilities of becoming an “official” teacher was foreclosed. As one aide noted, immigrant workers were neither assisted in ways to continue education for teacher certification nor included within the track to become full-time employees. Often their role was socially constructed as disciplinarians who would impose “order” within classrooms since immigrant students were often perceived as needing to be disciplined. As one school official pointed out to me in reference to “classroom management” regarding immigrant students: “We have to deal with them since they are here now. We are getting overwhelmed.”
The teachers’ aides that I spoke with recognized their locations within the school as dis-enfranchised subjects yet resisted their marginalized conditions. Being denied the institutional codes of power, the aides negotiated unofficial power networks by serving as liaisons between schools and economically marginalized communities. For example, two of the aides organized weekly English language teaching sessions for immigrant communities by inviting volunteers from local communities to teach English. Many of the aides that I spoke with played in city soccer leagues and worked towards developing inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic relationships with other minority communities. Although the individuals did not participate in this formal study, my conversations with the aides were crucial in crafting an understanding of school-community relationships and the complex location of immigrants of color within public schools.

Request to Participate

The sample was purposeful and geared towards “selecting” teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds who negotiated complex, multi-faceted and non-synchronous trajectories of identity. To diversify the sample, I spoke with teachers from multiple nationalities, ethnic groups, gender, class and age.

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5 This was largely because the aides did not always play the part of an “instructor” but often worked with students in one-on-one setting. On hindsight, it may have enriched the study if I had included one or two such participants who would have provided
Similarly, I also conversed with teachers who taught in economically marginalized as well as privileged schools and also the diverse subject each taught. This study utilized elements of “case study” (Stake, 1994) research and emphasized comparative analysis within the cases. Moreover, attempts were made to include a more diverse sample of gender of the teachers and those who worked with various ethnic populations and within diverse geographical settings. To uncover the cultural meanings anchored within such purposeful yet a non-synchronous samplings, emphasis was placed on teachers who recognized the relationship between teaching and social justice and who were committed to working towards students’ academic success. My failure to include a representative sample of male teachers is itself an effect of the larger political discourse of U.S. immigration in which selective individuals become eligible or allowed to cross borders (mostly privileged men) into the U.S. I have addressed such politics of arrival in Chapter Eight.

After preliminary conversations with teachers and the observation of how each incorporated cultural elements within the classrooms, I requested four teachers to participate and all three women teachers and one male teacher agreed to be part of the study (See Appendix D for profile of teachers). Kiran, a fourth year teacher, was born in Pakistan and taught English as a Second Language in a high school that housed a large number different insights on being Asian immigrant “teachers.”
of immigrants of color (Somali, Mexican, Hmong, etc.), African American and working class white students. Rabin, the only male teacher, was born in the United States and had been teaching science at the urban high school for the last six years in which ninety-eight percent of the school population comprise of African American students. Yolanda, who was born in the Philippines and had been teaching in U.S. public schools for the past twenty-five years, taught language arts and social studies at a middle school. Students in her school are mostly African Americans and immigrants of color (Hmong, Chinese, Vietnamese, Laotian, Mexican, Somali, etc). Mira, a sixth-year teacher, was born in India and taught language arts/social studies in an elementary school that included mostly economically privileged white students.\textsuperscript{6}

\textbf{Access to the School Settings}

The official access to the schools was negotiated via the institutional channels by completing formal applications to research within public schools. First, the university (via the Institutional Review Board that oversees issues of human subjects) then the public school system, and finally the individual schools approved the entry into schools. Prior to completing the three-tiered application processes, I negotiated the possibilities of research with the teachers by recognizing

\textsuperscript{6}I have detailed the experiences of the teachers as well as the context of where each teaches in Chapter 4-7.
the sensitivities of researching within classrooms. The teachers verbally (and in writing) approved my research intentions by signing a form that approved my presence in the classroom. During my first day at each school, each of the teachers introduced me to the class and noted my research purpose. In two classrooms, students asked if I would be using tape recorder or video camera. I pointed out that only tape recorder would be used and that students would not be identified by name.

The entry, observation, interview, exit and writing within or about marginalized people cannot ignore the “human rights” (Stanfield, 1994, p. 176) aspect of research within economically dispossessed communities. As Ladson-Billings (2000) has suggested, researchers’ notion of “fieldwork” is often associated with property rights and the notion of “work” (within field work) is an effect of privileged definitions of labor since the “work” rarely describes the “real” labor of marginalized people in the fields. Researchers speaking about the ethics of entry or exit often callously proclaim that “any space” can be researched or that “any method” can be deployed to research within or on such communities. Such incomprehensible generalizations not only conflate ethics of fieldwork to “flexible” research designs but rarely heed the
multiple layers of power and politics that influence field experiences within underprivileged spaces/locations of research.

As Pratt (1987) has noted, ethnographic works have often rendered marginalized societies invisible by privileging colonial/neo-colonial assumptions of space via the metaphors of “discovery.” Such interpretations impose a form of geographical colonialism in which the researchers’ entry into a specific locale is often claimed and sold as “rights.” Dominant research designs or paradigms succumb to the framework of imperial or “imaginative geography” by casually indulging in the “act of geographical violence” (Said, 1993, p. 225). Such neo/colonial methodologies mythically exercise ownership of space by asserting claims (whether political, cultural or physical) over research locations. Thus, the research field is rendered as a mere physical space bereft of subaltern entities/cultures by not recognizing what exists beyond the privileged ethnographic I/eye. Often the “seeing-man” (Pratt, 1992) attempts to represent what is partially seen of the Other: as deviant or as opposite to the eye of the ethnographer. Such representations operate to negate the Other to speak or through the “denial of coevalness” (Fabian, 1983) that refuses to recognize the Other as subjects of knowledge.
Researching Asian Immigrants

As I have suggested, my ties with the four teachers were forged largely via racial or ethnic immigrant identity affiliations. I speak of my associations with the participants as “cultural affiliations or identifications” since such fashioning of relationships does not claim romantic or unrecognized, essentialist associations. If the affiliations reveal certain shared experiences of being Asians in America, certain collective histories effected by colonialism or as racialized Asian immigrants of color with the U.S., claims of the teachers being part of an unmediated “research community” is still problematic even though Asian immigrant solidarity was formed during the research associations. The relationships negotiated were on the terrain of pan-ethnic mediations in which individuals negotiate their collective as well as self-described formations of identities (Espiritu, 1992). If national communities are imagined forms of communities “conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson, 1983, p. 7), panethnic communities are often performed in resistance to racial violence and “to mobilize diverse peoples and to force

7 My own ethnic background, brahmin, loosely merged with two of the teachers’ ethnicity, who were also raised in brahmin families of Indian ancestry. With the Pakistani teacher, research relationships were forged largely via our South Asian identities, the common language of Hindi we spoke, and through conversations of “back-home” politics. With the Filipino teacher, the relationship developed via our Asian identity and our interests in colonial/neo-colonial formations of identity.
others to be more responsive to their grievances and agendas” (Espiritu, 1992, p. 7). In my research contexts, the performances of such panethnic affiliations, with its own sense of difference and collective experiences, provided spaces to negotiate “affiliate solidarity” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 230). I suggest that often such inter-ethnic identifications allowed locations to re-think identities and communities, to revolt against racism and discriminations, and to politicize racial/ethnic platforms by recognizing the heterogeneity of Asian immigrant experiences within the United States.

As Smith (1999) suggests, despite the differing cultural experiences, there are spaces on which individuals cross over not to empathize but “to belong partly” (p. 35) in other worlds. Such paths of partly belonging, as I imagined within my fieldwork, are neither romantic nor unrecognized celebratory moves but spaces that enable cross-fertilization of ideas to practice “research as praxis” (Lather, 1984). The performances of such traversing of boundaries enact fertile discomforts within identity negotiations only to reveal how convergence of gender, class, race/ethnicity and nationality within field work complicate what it means to become a cultural researcher. Here, Espiritu’s (1998) formulations on the political trajectories within border-crossing research is useful:

and history.
I am trying to think about how scholars of color can expand upon the premise of studying “our own” by studying other “others.” For example, as a Vietnam-born woman who studies Filipino Americans, I come to the research project not as an “objective” outsider but as a fellow Asian immigrant who shares some of the life experiences of my respondents. I do not claim that these shared struggles grant me “insider status” into the Filipino American community. But I do claim that these shared experiences enable me to bring to the work a comparative perspective that is implicit, intuitive, and informed by my own identities and positionalities. These implicitly comparative aspects are important because they permit us to highlight the different and differentiating functional forces of racialization (cited in Gergen & Gergen, 2000, p. 1032-1033).

What Espiritu suggests is the formations of research relationship within Asian cross-cultural frameworks serve as a terrain to negotiate meaningful cultural relationships. Such comparative relationships are neither constructed via insider or outside boundedness but as “in-between” identities or positions that are often based on interpretations of certain shared immigrant experiences. Such research recognition allow for the emergence of differences as well as collective spheres of struggles via the mobilization of cultural/political identities within the larger discourse of what Omi and Winant (1994) call “racial formations” within the United States.

Observing the Other

If observations are always layered with surveillance and are effects of power relations, how does one negotiate observations within spaces that are economically and culturally
marginalized? And how does one not claim total observation yet work towards observation in ethical ways so that it does violate the other? The methodologies that claim of complete observation are a white mythology since acts of “seeing” are never complete or final and as Minha (1989) suggests, the question of “how (much more) total can (my) observation be... remains unanswerable” (p. 63). How does one disassemble the observing colonial eye/I that continues to appropriate the Other, in which, as Pratt (1992) describes, “imperial eyes passively look out and possess” (p. 7). By complicating the gaze from the proverbial tent of the anthropologist, Clifford asks (1997): “Who exactly is being observed? Who is localized when the ethnographer’s tent is permitted in the center of a village?” (p. 20). A related question, as Clifford asks, is when the ethnographer is placed “in the fishbowl, under surveillance... what reverse appropriations many be going on?” (p. 20)

The discussion of how marginalized geographies of research effect observation requires analysis since it speaks of how I observed and was simultaneously observed at various schools. If researchers are to work against the eye/I of the imperial observer, one must complicate, as Bhabha (1994) suggests, “the drive that represents the pleasure in ‘seeing’” which drives relentlessly to possess “its object of desire (p. 76).” As Bhabha goes on to describe, such possessive “seeing”
not only “locates the surveyed object with the ‘imaginary’ relation” (p. 76) of the Other but also appropriates the knowledge of the Other for the material profit of western knowledge systems.

Complicating the unmediated imaginary relations in the field, my observations were contingent upon what I could partially see and what I was shown. Such controlled passages of observation offered invitations to observe “anytime” each week yet participants suggested suitable times to observe relevant lessons or classroom discussions. The guided observation formats invited me to the classroom yet strategically signaled me not to over-observe. Such practices attempted to caution against the research imposition often associated with constant observation in which the presence of the researcher, however meaningful the intentions of the research, becomes a burden for the classroom (I address the issue of over-observing later in the chapter).

The idea of a researcher constructing his/her role as an integral part of a research setting via “natural” observation is impossible since is assumes (for the dominant mind) that what is observed is a “natural” act devoid of history and culture (Angrosino & Perez, 2000) and such practices can violate the ethics of not forming coercive relationships. The idea of rendering the self “invisible” within the field is impossible
since the researcher is always visible yet often neglected by participants (Clifford, 1997). For example, often times students and teachers in the classroom acknowledged my presence in the classroom and went about doing every day work as though I were not in the classroom. Thus, I attempted to negotiate my role within the field experiences not as a romantic embodiment desiring to be an integral part of the classrooms but through the recognition of research differences (economic, cultural, etc) that layered the daily research interactions. In other words, I was a transient researcher, moving in and out of the classroom, working a nomadic status, always “new” to the classroom yet somewhat familiar. Although occasionally I was of use in relation to helping students with classroom assignments or helping teachers with lessons, I was not accepted as a figure of redemption. Due to my weekly visits and my “outside” status within the classroom, I was part of the classroom occasionally yet often apart.

**Field-work Identities and Power: The Politics of Contribution**

Aren’t research spaces replete with jarring moments in which a researcher self-questions his/her desires to “participate” within the domain of participant-observation? Or is the category of participant-observer, as Behar (1996) suggests, an oxymoron? What I suggest here is that there never
is a boundary, a mark that separates strict observation and 
participation but both are conjoined, inter-related, which I 
illustrate next.

I point out that my participant-observer status was 
unsettled via non-synchronous power operations in which I wrote 
and was written, I observed and I was observed and I asked and 
was asked. For example, often the questions that I raised to 
respondents were returned to me to respond thus complicating the 
very meaning of “respondents” (for example, how I negotiated 
identity, my schooling experiences, how I worked the tensions 
of living in the United States, etc.). In such interchanges, 
power operated in unconventional ways in which there were 
maneuvers to make meanings of our exchanges. These interactive 
relations to “capture, recast, and re-write each other were for 
us product of understanding, and were, existentially, 
alternatively wrenching and fulfilling” (Kondo, 2000, p. 17). 
Such relationships of power were enacted during fieldwork in 
which my participant-observer status was reconfigured thus 
leading to a certain “fragmenting of identity” (Kondo, 1990, p. 
14). Such a questioning of research identities was effected by 
the recognition that the teachers 

were hardly inert objects available for the free play 
of ethnographer’s desire. They themselves were, in 
the act of being, actively interpreting and trying to 
make meaning of the ethnographer (Kondo, 1990, p. 
17).
For example, in-between classes or during lunch recess I sought responses from teachers on what I was seeing and not seeing to complicate my own seemingly panoramic sense of observations. If I was often a silent “invisible” observer writing “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1983) or attempting to paint a portrait of what was taking place in the classroom, my silence was often questioned since during the earlier phases of the research I was not contributing to the class. My observations were not only punctuated by students’ occasional gazes of what I was writing but also by the unspoken words of students that demanded that I unlearn the subaltern struggles within the classroom. Thus, my sense of “invisibility” mocked me. I need to change my position from a presence hidden in the text, to a new visible entity. I needed to decenter myself...to become a partial observer...(within) the tensions involved in being a participant and observer (Jones, 1992, p. 19-20).

The interrogation of my often “silent” observation, the supposed exuding of impartiality or the claims of non-involvement, demanded I listen to students’ silences. In other words, I was asked to relinquish the all-knowing observer status and was interrogated to rethink my pre-conceived interpretations of participant-observation identities in which “I became ‘the Other’ in my mind, where the identity I had known in another context simply collapsed” (Kondo, 2000, p. 16).
If “all social research is a form of participation” (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 249), how does one participate meaningfully while recognizing that the very idea of participation evokes historical and contemporary memories of research colonization (Said, 1979; Pratt, 1992). Research acts to participate (to “help” the other) are not innocent, as Kishwar (1998) argues, since “well intentioned effort at social change based on inadequate understanding of social reality” (p. 193) lead to further violence in fieldwork. Thus, recognizing subaltern struggles for survival, how does one practice in “learning to take people seriously” (p. 193).

The detour from voyeuristic observer status and the move to “learning to take people seriously” was culminated by my formative understanding vis-a-vis teaching challenges within economically underprivileged settings in which a majority of students were struggling to read and write. Thus, within such contexts, my silence or “not-participation” itself became a form of participation that did not contribute towards meaningful social transformations. If I had certain conceptual yearnings to contribute, I was uncertain when such possibilities would arise. The everyday subaltern conditions of students revealed the “the impossibility of being a distanced observer” (Jones, 1992, p. 20). I recognized that many students could not graduate from middle or high school because of their academic struggles.
Thus, my early hesitations to “participate” because I feared redemptive gestures were methodologically disturbed. My role shifted towards academic contributions or from simply “pursuit of knowledge...to duties, responsibilities” (Kondo, 1990, p. 14).

If researchers have the intentions and the theoretical desires to contribute, how does one enact meaningful participation “to learn to listen to what the Other has to say without the mutuality presumed by empathy” (Lather, 1998, p. 4). Reflecting on my own experiences, the crossing of the thin line or the hyphen between participant-observation is not necessarily researcher initiated but is often effected by visible and invisible demands that are woven into the specific subaltern conditions within the field. If I was haunted by the inability to meaningfully contribute and deeply agonized by the contagious disease of “researcher guilt” (due to my privileges), my “seeing” as well as partial recognition of everyday underprivileged conditions opened up spaces to enact non-coercive contributions that transcended the erstwhile demarcated boundaries of research. In other words, my participation was demanded yet not as an effect of my potential

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9See Popkewitz’s (1998) useful argument on the limits of contemporary research practices that promises “empowerment and emancipation” and argues for a “rethinking of the politics of knowledge by historicizing the overlapping of the culture of redemption with the social administration of research as freedom” (p. 27).
savior role but because I had often become a useless observer. Hence, “I was allowed—or rather--forced--to abandon the position of observer” (Kondo, 1990, p. 16). I consider my earlier prolonged uncertainty over contribution as an epistemic failure that speaks of my inability to uncover locations to perform research responsibilities despite my theoretical recognition of students’ academic struggles.

In the ESL classroom that included immigrants of color, I was “invited” by students to assist in their writing, reading and math assignments after I began to volunteer with students’ class assignments. I was perhaps more utilized in the ESL classroom because students recognized I was an immigrant of color, had an accent, and perhaps could contribute in reversing, even if partially, their academic struggles. Similar to students’ struggles within similar marginalized settings, the demands within an ESL classroom were multifaceted (See Chapter Four) and it was often impossible for one teacher to work with multiple needs of students that ranged from assisting students in deciphering how math questions were worded to advising students on writing a paragraph in English. In what follows, I further explain how the politics of contribution was negotiated.

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9 I have elaborated on the struggles of ESL students in Chapter Four.
The Performances of "Giving-Back"

If the question of research or researcher responsibility includes meaningful ethics of giving-back to communities where one researches, how are such "givings" performed? In the first month of research, my participation was limited within the spheres of assisting teachers to making copies of handouts, helping with the transportation of TV/VCR, etc. Nevertheless, such contributions had yet to be translated into meaningful participation. The teachers understood the roles I could possibility play in the classroom but were often "silent" about suggesting certain tasks while occasionally opening up space to negotiate contribution via statements such as, as one teacher pointed out, "whatever you want to do to help the students". I interpreted the silences as well as such open-ended statements as invitations to ethically (by not playing a savior role) participate in the classroom and thus to go beyond the role of a knowledge thirsty, data hungry researcher.10

10 Nor was my role within such spaces a romantic one. And the extent of my involvement varied depending on the school and the nature of the class itself. For example, my role within the science classroom was limited since I had partial knowledge of what was being talked about in the class. I often contributed by asking students to read a paragraph and discussing the meanings the words and sentences evoked in students minds. Not every week was devoted to working with students but often the interactions with students became a location to learn about the performances of identities and pedagogy within the classrooms. The relationships that were being forged became a useful space as the state proficiency exams neared and when students began
If my formative unlearnings in the research fields opened up new geographies to rethink, re-question or refashion the researcher role within the classroom, the question of possible meaningful contributions to the marginalized public schools had been previously raised by the public school review board, which had requested that I provide a copy of my findings to the board. However, the topic of meaningful participation that would also effect meaningful education change within specific locations was often raised in informal settings within two marginalized schools. For example, one of the participants introduced me to school officials early in the research and two school officials were interested in the outcomes of the study. “We are always looking for ideas to include that can help the students,” noted one official during an informal hallway conversation. The high rate of school failure (drop-out, absenteeism, low reading and writing skills, etc) among students and the low performance in state proficiency exams were often cited as continuing challenges.

A cross-cultural element of research included my interactions with students who came from multiple ethnic, racial and national backgrounds. How can one ignore the historically sedimented and contemporary socio-political issues that have shaped Asian or Asian American identities in relations to other marginalized groups? If I was viewed as a person of color within
marginalized geographies who identified with the struggles of subaltern students, it is possible that my South Asian identity was constructed as an “outsider” since, as Kim (2001) suggests, Asian cross-cultural tensions with other racial groups are not uncommon. Nor are the strains of such cultural relationships limited to local histories but are effected by global, cross-national formations (Asian-African identity locations in Africa, etc.) that converge within immigrant U.S. spaces (May, 1999).

Similarly, the attempt to schematize a seamless colonial romantic association between the university researcher (a person of Nepali descent) and marginalized subjects runs the risk of further violations in the field (Minha, 1989; Chow, 1993). Narayan (1993) suggests that if the university researcher claims the identity of an unmediated “insider,” the question of “how native is the native anthropologist?” is a relevant query since it opens up possibilities to unpack the power and privilege elements within research acts. If the unproblematized “insider” status is impossible, how do “outsiders” mediate certain affiliations or identifications with those who are dispossessed?

Although I partially recognized the educational struggles of students, I was an outsider, a university-based researcher who had limited cultural ties to the daily struggles of the communities. As Mitchell (1982) argues, often researchers’
linguistic and economic identities reveal the differences of economic privilege (and perspectives) between a university researcher and research participants despite the cultural links that suggests the formation of certain research dialogues. The entry into subaltern spaces with university identifications often evokes suspicion since, as Stanfield (1993) points outs, universities often impose a “legal ethical behavior” to forge coercive partnerships with disenfranchised neighborhoods (for the economic benefit of the university). Stanfield further suggests that researchers of color often find themselves in contradictory positions in which they negotiate their links with the university as well as their cultural relationships with marginalized communities. During my fieldwork, not surprising, none of the high school seniors that I spoke with were planning on attending the university that I was part of. Nor were the students contacted or recruited by the university. I often heard of the local communities’ opposition to university’s claims of “eminent domain” to annex marginalized areas in order to gentrify local communities. Despite the rhetoric of community building, the university was rarely interested in forming meaningful, non-coercive relationship with marginalized communities. Hence, it is not surprising that struggles of the marginalized are not heard within privileged walls of the university since universities continue to function as
"institutional constellations of power/knowledge that create and sustain subalternity" (Beverly, 2000, p. 562).

Similarly, if I was viewed as an outsider or/and as a researcher who could enact meaningful contributions within the schools, my identity was also often appropriated. For the profit of dominant society, as Villenas (1996) suggests, marginalized scholars are often "co-opted to be like a colonizer" (p. 727) in the field and pressured to act as oppressors against the communities the researcher identifies with or is part of. Often, I was positioned in the "middle" by dominant members of society as if I were dis-associated from the larger discourse of multiculturalism via questions such as, as one administrator put it, "not being an American...what do you think about all these multicultural issues..." For many people in the field, I was simply a foreigner from the Third World: one who had no local roots but only a far-flung non-western, deviant global identity. I often heard the apparent empathetic statements such as: "I tell students that your part of the world is like medieval Europe" or "the most exciting part of teaching about Asia is the wars. You know, Vietnam, Korea." If such sentiments are evoked to create spaces of meaningful dialogue, it only further violates the already fragile cross-cultural relationships revealing dominant obsession with invasion, occupation and continued thirst of the Other.
Hybrid Interviews

If the term "interview" has its genealogies within the formal standard English language that suggests a formalized nature of verbal exchanges (and its possessive intentions), how do we begin to re-think of interviews that opens sites of knowledges that have decolonizing intentions? Recognizing ways of asking or that the language of interviews is not innocent, how do we begin to conceptualize interviews that are non-coercive? As Minha (1987) points out, within her criticism of anthropological knowledge, "questions are always loaded with questioner’s prejudices" (p. 62). Arguing for the need to depart from “get information” or “find out what is in and on someone else’s mind” approach to interviews, Scheurich (1997) suggests that interviews be situated within heterogeneous terrain which “exceeds and transgresses our attempt to capture and categorize” (p. 73). For Scheurich, there is a demand to “highlight the indeterminacy of interview interactions, ways that allow for the uncontrollable play of power within interactions” (p. 74). Hidalago (1999) suggests the need to make the language of interview situated, cultural, as well as to constantly revise questions to make the questions meaningful to participants. Similarly, I posit that interviews not simply be positioned as only operating within dichotomies of formal/informal
communications but as fluid interchanges that enable possibilities to articulate the interactions of power, difference and identity within fieldwork.

What does the nature of interview suggest the kinds of knowledge being articulated? In my field work, the conversations with teachers varied in the sense of time and the space, in which the interviews lasted from three minutes to two hours during each of the visits to schools. Most interviews took place in hallways, in-between classes, gymnasiums, in the car, at teachers’ lounge, cafeteria and during the walk towards the parking lot at the end of the school day. On several occasions, discussions took place outside of the school in a nearby restaurant. For the eight months I was in the field, I wrote field notes on the conversations (and often recorded the exchanges) and reviewed the notes with the teachers the following week.

Rarely were the interviews formal via point-by-point question/answer format or as the colonial methodology of “function of stimulus and response” (Guha, 1999, p.1) or in the sense of its disciplined and overly formalized etiquette of sitting across the table from one another. During conversations, topics quite often shifted to related topics and such digressions did not necessarily interrupt our larger conversations on identity and pedagogy but often moved into

\[11\] Yet often wondering: “Who is actually the author of field notes?” (Clifford, 1988, p. 45).
inter-related terrain. For example, the discussion on early schooling experiences of participants (and mine also) often moved to the domain of our early intimate experiences or encounters with Hollywood movies, memories of schooling experiences in Asia, etc. If the term digression means to shift from the topic at hand, such diversions afforded spaces for a complex articulation of lived experiences that informed the fluid (and political) constitution of identities. Such non-standard deviations from topics often set the stage for the performances of casual conversations that did not demand the formality of traditional interviews and offered spaces of cross-cultural interactions without being burdened by the thing called “formal interview.” During the time I was present at a particular school, the participants and I conversed on and off throughout the day thus rarely was there a need to set the time and place for interview. Yet, the interviews were rarely romantic mediations, which I elaborate next.

The Politics of Asking and Telling

To become a decolonizing social, cultural and political art, interviews need not be used as a coercive machine that extracts knowledge of the marginalized. Interviews have a more useful role in uncovering what Foucault (1983) calls “subjugated knowledge” when we ethically reflect on the question of “how can I reconstruct the original story told to me by the interviewee
into a story I want to tell my audience?” (Kvale, 1996, p. 282). Thus, how do we learn to interview to decolonize and to travel into spaces where we have yet to learn from instead of asking what we think we may hear or desire to hear?

As my research continued, my ways of asking questions detoured largely due to the informal meanings participants attached to my questions. If my early formal attempts were to gather stunning quotes or fantastic revelations on identity and pedagogy, the banality of such questions (often the formal questions that I had typed) indeed had to take a deep fall. My first foray into generating the proverbial data followed the standard procedure of providing the preliminary questions to the participants. The questions included what is known as “open ended” questions such as “describe your schooling experience” or “how would you describe your first year experience in the United States?” or “how do you identify yourself?” In the beginning stages of research, I set up formal time for interviews regarding the questions that I had provided to the participants and asked feedback on the questions. These early interviews were rather uncomfortable encounters not only because of my deployment of formal language within the questions itself but also as an effect of the formal verbal tones that “contaminated” my questions. Fully recognizing my unseasoned questions, one participant interjected by speaking Hindi.

Given the language of the feedback, both the cultural medium (via a “third” language) and the message on the need to develop informal relationships, I renegotiated my deployment of speech, recognizing the questions needed to be culturally situated. The subject’s use of an alternative language was itself a sign that unsettled my formal forays into research and was also a sign (for me) to rethink ways of asking questions and negotiating research relationships. Such moments opened up spaces to rethink how to ask but not to question, recognizing that participants resist our benevolent encroachments.

As I continued to develop post-observation questions upon reading and re-reading data each week, the language as well as the expressions of asking the questions had to be revised. I am not suggesting that there developed an anti-formal yet homogenous architecture of questions but that the formality of questions beginning with “how, what, when, who” had to fall. For example, the traditional ways of framing a question: “What is the rationale of this lesson?” or “How do you think students responded to the lesson?” had to be rethought and re-arranged. For example, I re-framed the first question from “what is the objective of this lesson?” to “to what extent do students have

12 My translation: “You are making this too formal. Why don’t we make this a little bit relaxing? You can put away your notes.”
to know the history of Ohio?” Similarly, I re-framed the question of “how do you think students responded to the lessons?” to a statement: “Students seemed quite eager to talk about civil rights.” The transition to the domain of informally offered alternative grounds to seek knowledges that are less likely to “question” participants. As I have suggested, the idea of seeking participants’ response does not always have to be raised as a question but can be evoked as a statement that would make researchers unlearn their not knowing via the knowledge articulated by the narrators.

The ways we ask questions during interviews are not innocent. Although one may not recognize it, the ways and the kinds of questions we ask to participants are political questions that often serve our research/career interests. Yet such methods of asking questions must not violate the ethics of requesting perspectives so that we ask but not question in coercive ways. What if there are no responses from the narrators or what if the answers are intentionally vague thus to complicate the definition of answer itself. The kinds of questions that I posed to participants were “open ended” with the intention of finding out more about what was taking place in the classroom and the ways the teachers negotiated their identities. As I have
pointed out, participants' effected the move towards less formal conversations recognizing their ambivalence towards my hurling formal questions.

I suggest the term "interaction" to describe my conversations with teachers since the questions operated both ways in which I asked questions and was simultaneously asked questions because of my questions. And participants were more interested in hearing "what I had in mind" and questions were returned to me to respond. For example, during a conversation about immigrant social justice advocacy, I had asked a question about ways to mobilize immigrant teachers for political initiatives. Two of the four participants asked me how I would start a project such as the one I had queried about. Close to the end of my research I felt that my questions were becoming (at least partially) less pre-meditated, less surgical and less strategic via a consistent will to learn from what was said or not said in the field. Similarly, interviews were rarely one-sided or within the narrow definitions of question-response formats and neither were all of my questions answered or responded to since responses are often partial and selective.

_Tales from the Tape_

Subjects' reluctance to be tape recorded during research interviews is not new (Abu-Lughod, 1986; Visweswaran, 1994). My own sense of "storing" data was complicated by the divergent
perspective evoked by the narrators in relation to my use of the tape recorder. I utilized the tape recorder since it afforded opportunity to diligently listen to the conversation again. My forays into the realm of “permission to record” the conversations for transcription met the reluctant looks of two teachers who hesitated being recorded by suggesting their preference that I take notes. As one participant pointed out:

I don’t feel comfortable talking with the tape recorder on. It is too formal. And it is unnerving feeling to have your voice recorded when you are talking about personal topics. A lot of times I talk a lot but it feels strange to have things you should not have said recorded when you realize that you could have said it differently. You know what I mean? What do you think? (p. 13).

Another teacher noted the following:

I know you will take out the sensitive things I say about certain people. I am not sure I want it to be recorded. Recorder may work better for you. Hope you understand I am uncomfortable with it (p. 11).

Often the recorder is an emblem that captures voices in a particular time and space to be analyzed and played for the ethnographic imagination (Visweswaran, 1994). If the recording allows for the imaginative replay of what was told to the university researcher, in the above noted scenes, the very symbol of recorder (or recording) is viewed as formal, unfamiliar, and as a possessive instrument. Thus, the recorder not only formally archives speeches but also violates the spirit of speaking by capturing or chronicling the voices in uncertain
times in which, as one participant pointed out, “it feels strange to have things you should not have said recorded.” As the narrator suggests, certain words are spoken that are not meant to be told even if the words will be erased from the transcripts. Similarly, the questions of “do you know what I mean or what do you think?” interpellate researchers to complicate their pre-meditated designs of storing and translating data. Such questions also invite researchers to be part of certain dialogues with participants to unsettle the “truths” of doing ethical research.

My method of remembering the knowledges spoken during interviews was through diligently writing notes, particularly when the conversations were not being recorded. After typing the notes the following week, I asked participants to verify if my interpretations somewhat resembled what they were speaking about. Occasionally, the teachers made changes by adding or deleting words. And, often when the conversation was being recorded, teachers would suggest that I delete certain statements spoken (such as the tensions between teachers and administrators). If the recorder is to be translated as an instrument that arrests voices in a fictional, arbitrary time frame, it is also a medium by which certain stories are enacted for political projects. As one participant noted:
If it helps you in your research, you can record. I will let you know what to take out. I am telling you this because it needs to be said (p. 18).

The teacher’s perspective reminds us that if one is given the permissions to record, it serves a particular purpose. The tellings are itself selective in which the subject will notify the researcher on “what to take out.” It also speaks of why one speaks since “it needs to be said” recognizing that such speeches or knowledges are often not heard.

Borders Crossing? Tensions of Research

As I have suggested earlier, I have interpreted the inroads taken in this research as a cross-cultural research in which I attempt to complicate the possibilities and impossibilities of border-crossings within the fieldwork. If the participants and I shared certain cultural memories of Asian immigrant experiences, the heterogeneous experience of travel, of dislocation and of migration, it also speaks of the difference within the immigrant experiences. Furthermore, as an effect of our being educated in different geographies (or “systems”) of the world, the intersection of our histories and identities produced a particular space that both recognized our similar cultural experiences as well as the differences within our experiences. For example, conversations with various participants were often mediated by mutual interests in contemporary immigrant experiences, encounters with English
language and U.S. cultures, “growing up” experiences in Third World, Asian relationship with other racial/ethnic groups, cooking ethnic food, immigrant politics within the city, etc. Such interactions registered locations to converge, to create partial dialogues and to conditionally relate to what the other was speaking about.

I have attempted not to describe research relations as unproblematic community or unmediated reciprocity since such formulations are often fantasies of qualitative research. If reciprocity means, “the exchange of favors and commitments, the building of sense of mutual identification and feeling of community” (Glazer, 1982, p. 50), there is a larger need to unthink such relentless and perhaps coercive desire to form “mutual identifications” and “the feeling of community.” Are such facile languages of mutual belonging or the descriptions of unproblematized relationships within the field (research sites) even possible? I suggest the larger need to reexamine such romanticism of dualistic models of researcher-researched co-existence since such architectures of affair neither exists during fieldwork nor are such imaginings ethical since it celebrates the research process without recognizing the burdens imposed on those who are included (and excluded) within the research. Needless to say, such fictional accounts of Arcadian relationships built within the field succumb to celebratory
moods and fails to recognize the ethics and the responsibility of doing qualitative research. Similarly, the demands for social responsibility within educational qualitative research invites us to: “interrogate what we do, what we chose not to report, how we frame our data, on whom we shed our scholarly gaze, who is protected and not protected as we do our work (Fine, Weis, Waseen & Wong, 2000, p. 123). Such questions ethically invite us to work against neo-colonial practices that attempts to re-colonize participants as well as those who reside within the dispossessed geographies of field work.

Thus, the much neglected topic of “research as a responsibility” (Dillard, 2000) within qualitative research demands shifting from privileged notions of border crossings that implies everyone has the access, means or is allowed to cross borders (I address the complexities of “border-crossing” in Chapter Eight). Here, I have attempted to unlearn from my fieldwork and to depart from simply writing “how I messed up stories,” in order to reclaim ethnographic authority by seeking data-friendly voices or by randomly creating categories without the feedback of participants. My move is to see my own research failures “as a means of pointing out the difficulties in our own epistemological assumptions and representational strategies” (Visweswaran, 1994, p. 98). In other words, the passages towards self-reflexivity and auto-criticism resists possessive desires
for coherent answers and yet such moves are “neither paralysis nor endless self-probing, but about opening new sites for work, a reflexivity that is about relational engagement rather than hermetic self-absorption” (Lather, 1997, p. 19).

As I have suggested earlier, my research relationship with participants were largely forged via the underlying cross-current of immigrant experiences, Third World struggles, contemporary racial formations within the United States, and the larger talk of social justice within the schooling contexts. As I have described, such shared yet differing immigrant experiences opened multiple cultural spaces to negotiate cultural identities. However, the disjunctions within our interactions revealed the contingent aspect of “collaboration” effected by heterogeneous cultural/national identities, gendered experiences, and differing perspectives on social inequalities. Despite the common experience of ‘Asians’ in the United States, gender, age, ethnic/nationality differences often complicated ideas of community that was imagined.

If our heterogeneous cultural backgrounds as well our somewhat familiar (in certain aspects) experiences as immigrants and with Third World colonialism and post-colonialism created spaces to negotiate cross-cultural relationships, our differing views on social justice, race and the legacy of colonialism allowed productive differences to
emerge and to contest dominant narration of the homogeneity of Asian immigrant experience and perspectives. For example, one of the participants did not use the term race or racism to describe her experiences in the United States. On the discussion on western colonialism, the same participant asked: “Can we simply blame British for what has happened to us?” Similarly, if English language and the occasional use of Hindi language served as a meeting space to negotiate research relationships, the deeper meaning of language affiliation that anchor cultural memories and everyday practices were often absent within the interactions. I did not speak Urdu, Arabic, Spanish or Tagalog. Despite our fluency in English language, the idea of conversing in standard imperial language (with its history of colonialism) remained ironic. Within such contexts, quite often I was not told certain stories. I describe the strategically not telling aspect next.

Anthropologists speak about the “lies” that “natives” invent; however, the discourse of lies or falsifications has rarely examined individual as well as communal defense strategies by which marginalized people tell stories to stem further anthropological encroachments (Visweswaran, 1994). For me, a close reading of data allowed sites to re-think ways in which narrators negotiate the politics of speaking: the ways to speak, when to speak and how to speak recognizing that speaking
is often about performing identity. Hence, in my research, the responses or silences of teachers were often enacted to preserve their identities as teachers as well as via a certain exercise of power (over me). What I describe next is not necessarily about "lies" but speeches of participants that partially reveals the maneuvers of not-speaking or selectively speaking acts. Such speeches functioned within the gender context of interactions, which selectively negotiated what was spoken, how it was spoken and why it was spoken. Such strategic speaking performances were often displayed when participants spoke about their gendered experiences yet often hesitated to elaborate on particular themes. For example, remembering the early experiences in the U.S., one participant spoke about the tensions with her son’s father (former husband) and yet noted: “Let us leave it to that since I am not ready to talk about it.” Later, the teacher briefly noted that the marriage had resulted in her abuse but did not elaborate on the topic. Another teacher briefly spoke of her work with marginalized women within immigrant communities, particularly those who were in “not desirable marriage or other problems.” Another teacher briefly spoke about her work within a women’s group that looked out for economic and psychological needs of underprivileged Asian women in the community.
Similarly, the same participant briefly spoke about the tensions within her extended families yet did not speak extensively about the topic.\footnote{The two other, a male and a female teacher, spoke extensively about their family members.}

I have interpreted such partial articulations as being effected by gender as well as ethnic identities in which the narrators did not wish to further speak about particular topics. Although possessive practices of interviewing may suggest differently, I felt it was ethical not to broach the topic recognizing the sensitivity participants placed on issues. As Kondo (1990) argues, the ways in which participants tell or not tell speaks of how power operates in alternative ways to reveal how participants exercise power over researchers. Foucault (1980) illustrates how power relations are exercised "through a net-like organization" in which "individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing or exercising this power" (p. 98). Working the corridors of power, as I described earlier, the teachers often strategically invited me to see (however limited) what was transpiring within the fields. I argue that such maneuvers guide researchers within the intricate contours of the field to expose locations erstwhile unnoticed or unseen. Yet the "seeing" aspect often remains a partial exercise for researchers: often unable to see, often unwilling to see. Such
conditional nature of research work recognizes that within cultural translations “any attempt to interpret or explain another cultural subject, a surplus of difference always remains, partly created by the process of ethnographic communication itself” (Marcus, 1994, p. 566). In what follows, I address issues of data analysis and writing.

II. Interpretation, Data Trustworthiness and Writing

Data Analysis: Negotiating Themes and Patterns

I have incorporated elements of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) to locate themes and patterns that emerged via constant re-reading of data and by examining specific scenarios spoken by participants (Patton, 1990). Although the standard approach to data analysis may suggest an uncomplicated trajectory to uncovering themes and patterns, the identity differences or the differentiated ways participants responded to my questions relay a more nuanced and unconventional scene of how themes or patterns are written. What are the possibilities to loosen the rigid boundaries of describing themes and patterns since the coding of data is subjective and often remains a secret practice?

My practice of formulating themes and patterns operated within the following circuits: First, all my teachers suggested that they preferred (mostly due to time factors) that I analyze
the data and suggest the themes that emerged (for the teachers to respond). Two of teachers noted that they would rather see a narrative rather than raw data or themes or patterns within interview transcripts (I have elaborated on this topic later). Due to the heterogeneous identity and practices of teachers, multiple patterns and themes were generated in each case and which was submitted to teachers feedback. Furthermore, in the context of generating collective themes that could relate to all of the teachers’ experiences and teaching practices, I submitted to the teachers the themes/patterns generated from each case and asked each teacher the themes he/she considered significant. First, three teachers emphasized extensively about the category of arrival in/within the U.S. and the fourth teacher noted that it would also fit her story as well. Upon the suggestion of one teacher, I coded “arrival stories” as a recurring theme in the discussion since all of the participants spoke of their arrival tales into or within the United States. Three of the teachers suggested teaching of diversity issues (both in relation to U.S. and international) as a possible category (after pondering for a day, the fourth teacher suggested teaching of multicultural issues as well). Three teachers spoke extensively about the encounters with dominant as well as marginalized cultures within the U.S. but one teacher felt that that was not a major issue in her case yet noted that it could be a category since it was
common among three teachers. All of the teachers suggested their relations with (a) their cultural communities (b) teachers and students within the school (c) their ways of inviting students to participate in the class as categories. Hence, the common categories of data analysis, as noted by the teachers, includes the following (which are consistent within Chapter Four-Seven): (a) schooling and “growing-up” experiences, (b) how the teachers perceived the U.S. or the early experiences of teachers in the United States, (c) how each formed relationship with their cultural communities in U.S. (d) relationship with teachers as well as students in the school and (e) ways of teaching particular subject areas, particularly in relation to cultural issues.

What I suggest here is that within each category there are heterogeneous and hybrid stories of teachers. For example, within the category of “arrival stories,” each teacher spoke differently about his/her passages into specific geographical or cultural spaces and the meanings that layered the arrival (into U.S. or within urban communities) and departure (from Asia or rural Midwest) narratives. The category of “arrival stories” is not only the act of entering a physical space but also mediating the arrivals into and departures from certain cultural spaces or identities. Arrivals negotiate, as Alexander (1994) suggests, the logics of arrivals as well as departures in which
arrival is a form of departure from somewhere else. Thus the category of "arrival stories" does not lionize arrival narratives but locates the non-synchronous patterns of arrivals and departures that are mediated by multiple histories, un/lived experiences and cultural epistemologies. For example, I asked each teacher vis-à-vis the nature of their experiences in the United States. The responses from the teachers, as can be expected, are varied (as I have noted in each teacher’s narratives) and speak of the heterogeneity of Asian immigrant experiences. Yet, a common theme (however broad) of being cast as an outsider or perpetual foreigner repeatedly emerges within the teachers’ stories. Similarly, as I have argued, the ways in which the teachers resist such discriminations and create possibilities for themselves speaks of their resistance to cultural identities.

**Data Trustworthiness: Politics and Ethics**

What are the alternative and ethical ways to work towards data trustworthiness that goes beyond thinking of data validity outside of the multiple means of collecting data? What are the ways to practice the ethics of collecting, analyzing and writing qualitative research that works for more trustworthiness rather

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14 Celebration of arrival narratives can be limiting since, as Pratt (1986) points out, arrival narratives of colonial ethnographers often served as a mode to secure ethnographic authority.
than less? Are there possibilities to expand the idea of “member check” (Lincoln and Guba, 1984) beyond its contemporary usage?

Scheurich (1997) suggests the need to move beyond the binaries of Same/Other approaches to validity discussions and argues for the need to address the project of data trustworthiness as “many sided or multiply perspectival, as shifting and complex” (p. 88). Arguing to complicate his “transformational yearnings,” Scheurich is “deeply troubled by the anonymous imperial violence that slips quietly and invisibly in our (my best intentions and practices)” (p. 90) yet sees new possibilities in re-thinking validity as being currently circulated by erstwhile silenced perspectives. For Richardson (1994), there is a need to “crystallize” rather than triangulate data in a move to examine multiple ways of investigating a particular topic. As Richardson suggests, such a trajectory “combines symmetry and substance, transmutations, multidimensionality, and angles of approach” (p. 522). Lather (1993) suggests a transgressive orientation of data trustworthiness that evokes localized and heterogeneous ideas of validity. Lather (2000) also speaks of the “validity impasse” among scholars and suggests “conjoint representation” to allow for a less coercive relationship between the researcher and
participants “in which the line between the researcher and the subject is blurred, and control over representation is increasingly shared” (p. 1035).

Following Lather’s (1997) call to hold on to the term of validity to “circulate and break with the signs that code it” (p. 1), I suggest the larger demand to expand the meaning of data trustworthiness since the concept of member check needs further ethical expansions. This is particularly useful in line with the “experimental” or alternative writing approaches (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Visweswaran, 1994; Lather and Smithies, 1997; Dillard, Abdur-Rashid & Tyson, 2000; Dillard, 2000) that speak of the productive spaces created by multivocal texts, which recognizes that data collection, data analysis and the acts of writing research are incomplete processes. What I argue is that, along with the need to write experimental or non-traditional narratives, the larger demand for social responsibility within research practices warrants that researchers ask participants to read/analyze what the researcher has written beyond the typed interview notes or transcriptions (I address the topic of ways in which participants read my interpretations of their stories and experiences later in the chapter).

I argue that if university researchers are to engage in projects of decolonization, the “member check” needs further scrutiny and such a rethinking member-check move attempts to not
ly seek participants’ perspectives on transcribed interviews, by the researcher) but requests narrators to examine what and how the data has been analyzed and interpreted. Ladson-Billings (2000) argues within her research context that narrators’ examination of interpretations allows possibilities to read the gaps between how the participants and researchers have told the stories. Similarly, my argument here is that the act of analyzing researcher’s written interpretations not only interrogates researcher claims of knowledge translation but also reveals the differences within representational practices. Hence, participants’ reading our cultural interpretations allow us to partially depart from the secrecy that often shrouds writing of qualitative research. Such an ethical practice resists considering the writing of the research as separate from the fieldwork as if our writings are “pure,” “personal” or inaccessible to the participants. If we are asked to perform as a “vulnerable observer” (Behar, 1993) in the field, why not become a vulnerable writer? Or perhaps resist assuming that participants can’t read the way we write? In what follows, I will describe a teacher’s request to read the data analysis/interpretation portion of the writing that allowed spaces to re-read or to rethink the discourse of data trustworthiness and authorship.
In my research, all of the respondents suggested changes to the transcripts as well as within the emergent themes/patterns within the study. One teacher’s ambivalence towards interview transcripts offered possibilities to rethink the member check aspect of research. As the narrator pointed out:

The interview pages are quite long. It is not like a story I thought it would be. By the way, how is your writing coming? Do you mind if I look at the final writing about me. That might make more sense (p. 12).

(A month later) When can you give me a copy? I would like to keep one. That will be a gift from you to me. I may eventually write a book on what I do in the classroom. Your work will be helpful in that way (p. 20).

Here, the participant evokes her ambivalence towards the interview transcripts and attaches more meaning to the final analysis of data or the final paper. In other words, the interview transcribed is neither viewed as “final” nor “reads like a story I thought it would be.” If the interview transcript is long, it is not as cohesive or yet remains to be a meaningful narrative. Despite the number of pages included within the transcript, the documents revealed little to the teacher about what had transpired in the class or how the identity aspect of discussions had been told. The purpose of asking for a final version of the paper is not necessarily to examine or to investigate what has been written, not written or how the voices have been represented (although one cannot discount such
scrutiny). Here, the request for the “final writing” is framed as a question and evoked as gift or an ethncial obligation of the researcher to the participant. The subject also suggests the written analysis of possibly being useful to the respondent’s writing a book. The participant was supportive of my work throughout the year and asked me about the status of my writing every month. One day in late spring, the teacher advised me: “You should be finished with your writing for your degree and do some real work.”

Not all of the narrators were interested in the reading the data analysis chapter. In the earlier phases of the research, one teacher had pointed his curiosity in reading about the linkages between identity and pedagogy. Another teacher was ambivalent: “I was telling my husband about what you would write about me. I hope you don’t get me fired.” Similarly, yet another teacher was not sure if she wanted to see what I had written.

I may not be able to take it. It is difficult when someone writes about you and then you read it. I know you have good intentions but it still makes it hard (p. 16).

Here, the subject suggests the complexities of reading works about the self that has been authored by someone else. Whatever the “good intentions” the work may include, the reading of the narrative is not necessarily a facile performance. My argument here is that the ways participants negotiate the readings suggest the ambivalent meanings participants attach to
examining what has been written about their identities and practices. In what follows, I describe the politics of writing culture and its effects on my attempts to write ethical diasporic narratives.

**Theories of Writing Culture**

As I have outlined, this study delves into the Asian immigrant teacher negotiations of cultural identities/practices within U.S. racial formations. The Asian/immigrant teachers in my research are not subaltern yet I have utilized the possible productive mediating role of a somewhat differently “privileged student” to interrogate bourgeois U.S. society vis-a-vis the conditions within marginalized schools and the operations of U.S. racialized discourses.\(^{15}\) To re-represent the specific experiences, memories and conditions of teaching, I have provided ethical descriptions, utilized extensive quotes from narrators and also provided my interpretation of their narration to invite readers to engage with the context of dispossession as well as resistance articulated in this discussion. To have readers partially enter such local, global and diasporic aspect of stories, experiences and practices, I have benefited in incorporating theories of writing culture or writing from the margins that invites as well as interpellates readers on the conditions of U.S. subalternity.

\(^{15}\) See Murillo (1999) for different forms of privilege embodied by scholars of color.
and racial formations. For example, I have benefited in thinking through the writing strategies within the genre of testimonio, in which, as Beverly (2000) illustrates, researchers serving as interlocutors, record stories relayed by subaltern narrators that narrates both individual as well as collective cultural identities and political struggles against domination. Within testimonio, narrators speak with the intention of invoking everyday “emergency” conditions to effect the re-education of privileged members of particular society. For Beverly, the writings, rather than erasing the voices of subalterns narrators or subsuming their speeches, attempt to register speeches “in the form of an I that demands to be recognized, that wants or needs to stake a claim on our attention” (p. 556). Beverly suggests that such forms of writing is “a speech act that sets up special ethical and epistemological demands..(and also) interpellates the reader” (p. 558). Within testimonio, as Beverly illustrates, the stories narrated have explicit political intention of decolonization and the researcher mediates the relationship between subaltern people and local/global bourgeois audience.

I have similarly attempted to write this research as a form of story (re)telling since Asian American stories have often been mis-represented. Recent works on critical race

*Historically, Testimonio has been largely invoked within the context of Latin America.
theory has advocated writing approaches that interpellate readers on oppressed human conditions against the backdrop of historical and contemporary racial violence and its “politics of dispossession” (Said, 1993). Writings based on critical race theory, Ladson-Billings (2000) explains, foreground racialized experiences as a legitimate space of study since ‘racism is a permanent fixture of American life’ (p. 264). Critical race theory emphasizes stories and story telling, and such ways of speaking incorporates “experiential knowledge, drawn from a shared history as ‘other,’ with their ongoing struggles to transform a world deteriorating under the albatross of racial hegemony” (Barnes, 1990, p. 264; cited in Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 264).

I have also borrowed narrative styles infused with auto-ethnographic writings in which marginalized subjects perform alternative political forms of self-representations. For Pratt (1992), auto-ethnographies are enacted when “colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer’s own terms” (p. 7). As Pratt argues, such modes of representation appropriate hegemonic discourses and are constructed “in response to or in dialogue with” (p. 7) dominant societies. Similarly, auto-ethnographies complement the genre of magical realism in which, as Alexis describes (1956), cultural performances of marginalized
cultures expose alternative practices of everyday life. Such writing formations open up “different” cultural and artistic possibilities, and are designed to describe, as Alexis suggests in the context of Haitian performances, “the imagery in which a people wraps its experience, reflects its conception of the world and of life, its faith, its hope” (cited in Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin, 1995. p. 237).

Thus, (this) diasporic aspect of writing is not autochthonous forms of representation and does not necessarily rely upon dominant representational practices yet it articulates its difference by appropriating hegemonic forms of writings and complicates the gaze of discrimination. Diasporic writings trouble homogenous notions of identity and allow sites, as Chow (1993) points out, “to unlearn that submission to one’s ethnicity” (p. 23) is not always liberating. Furthermore, the art of writing diaspora, as Chow goes on to suggest, allow grounds to “juxtaposing a range of cultural contradictions that make us rethink the current dominant conceptualizations of solidarity themselves” (p.23). In this writing of research, diasporic writings raise possibilities to articulate the teachers’ pedagogies and/or protests, arrival stories and mediations of identity and pedagogy. For me, the investments of writing within the diaspora framework open up alternative political performance trajectories that demand a critical
“reevaluation of the binarisms around race and the West/non-West” (May, 2000, p. 144). Hence, the meanings sedimented within the performances of the marginalized are not orientalist displays but a shift towards politics that demands decolonization within marginalized locals and globals. Within such writing spaces, one is forced to recognize not only how data is represented (and the politics of data representation itself) but also the larger politics of writing research in which the researcher is always demanded to think about decolonization. Thus reminding us that one must ask not only about whom is the research, but also for whom is the research. The question of for whom is not merely advocacy, but rather about who is capable to act and demonstrate agency (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 267).

Next, I offer some possibilities and tensions within diasporic methodologies of writing.

Writing Representation: Politics and Ethics

I followed what Richardson (2000) calls “writing in context” (p. 924) in which evocative representations invite readers to explore a differently “worded world” (p. 923). Richardson has asked “How do we create texts that are vital?” (p. 924) and which allows spaces to narrate beyond the “science-writing prose” (p. 929). The intricacies of writing representations played out in one particular context after I had provided each teacher with the copy of the data analysis chapter
that described the circulation of identity and pedagogy within the subject’s classroom. The possibilities and limits of textual representation were evoked by a participant who registered uncertainties over the portrayals of her voice within the form of poetry. The ambivalence was relayed in a brief yet poignant response that was followed by a question.

It sounds a little different. I first thought it was me and then I said this is not me. Is it? (p. 25)

What I argue is that such articulations reveal the tensions within the ways researchers organize textual representations and how research subjects translate our attempted interpretations. Here, my own desire to work via the performance of data through poem meets the uncertainty of the narrator to reveal that “performing” someone else’s lives are always conditional. Here, the teacher remains ambivalent of the poem representing her identities and is somewhat reluctant to have her perspectives being framed within such poetic representations.¹⁷ My argument here is that neither is traditional exposition of data inculpable in comparison to the experimental representations via drama or poetry. In other words, there are always tensions (and ethics) of deploying textual forms of representation since such displays are not innocent.

¹⁷ This is not to be conflated with not-recognizing such practices of representation since the participant often
The three other participants “approved” the textual representation modes that I had utilized in describing identities and teachings and such “approvals” were conditional as well. One narrator noted, “you made a poet out of me.” Another participant, who had often asked me the status of my writing, even handed me a copy of a poem she had authored about her immigrant experiences that spoke of encountering difference in U.S. What I suggest is that the medium by which researchers represent data may not be the representative perspective of how participants read their voices and identities. Subjects’ reading of our portrayals allows sites to rethink the way we think of representation and data trustworthiness.

My move to submit the individual writings for intense scrutiny of participants is not to be conflated as a retreat towards romantic interpretation but “to participate in a more self-revealing, vulnerable way” (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 268). I agree with Fine’s (1994) call to not indulge in romantic writings recognizing that even within the “ethically democratic, sometimes feminist methods, there is subtle, growing withdrawal from interpretation” (p. 81). Yet I have resisted writing stories that “have potential to become ‘bad data’ to buttress stereotypes, reaffirm the ideology and rhetoric of the Right and re-inscribe dominant representations” (Fine, Weis, Wessen, Wong, 2000, p. 17). Thus my translation is utilized poetry and drama as forms of pedagogy in the classroom.
partial, non-innocent, and the act of interpretation “is a liberating act...it is a means of revising” (Sontag, 1966, p. 7).

Along with the difference in researcher-participant interpretations, I have asked: What are the tensions between data validity and questions of authorship? What are the politics of data trustworthiness and the usage of pseudonyms that allow spaces to complicate boundaries of authorship? The data analysis writings, which also sought to further obtain feedback from participants, contained the pseudonyms of teachers that had initially been suggested by participants. One narrator offered the following response after reading the chapter:

You might as well use my real name. This is about me and what has happened so far. And what you have seen in the class. Whatever I have said did happen and is my view. I want other people who read this to know that it was part of my story. This tells you an Asian immigrant’s work (p. 25).

I have interpreted the suggestion of “you might as well use my real name” as a means by which participants index ways of speaking or speaking out to the potential audience of this discussion. “This is about me and what has happened so far” suggests how boundaries of authorship can be re-negotiated. Despite the researcher’s (my) re-writing of the narrative, as the teacher suggests, the writing is still “part of my story” and points out that I utilize the real name since it “did happen
and is my view." How does a researcher negotiate the complex boundaries of writing that neither attempts to "give voice" nor deny what is being spoken since such Asian immigrant teachers' articulations are rarely recognized within the dominant society. Or how does the researcher ethically re-write the names so that participants can speak (however partial via the researcher) as well as remain anonymous subjects since there are always possible implications (or even retributions) on what each has said/done or not said or not done. Here, the researcher faces the ethics of including and also not-including since the inclusion of names can have undesirable consequences. Due to limited number of Asian immigrant teachers, such "dangerous" practitioners can be easily dismissed from teaching as in the case of one participant, which I elaborate next.

**Ethics of Writing**

My own thinking on writing representation has traveled in a different trajectory since one of the participants lost her teaching position. The teacher had only been teaching for two years at the school, and after an interview (for a possible renewal of contract), a letter was sent indicating that the teacher’s contract would not be renewed. “I am actually surprised. But you never know what people are thinking. They are letting me go,” noted the teacher. The participant is the only English as a Foreign Language certified teacher in the school
and the only teacher of color who teaches immigrant students. After several interviews, as per our last e-mail exchange, the teacher still has not been hired back and currently works at a clothing store. I have often reflected on my own, however limited or not limited, complicities on the subject’s not being hired back. Although my association with administrators was limited to the occasional, awkward hallway greetings, one cannot neglect how the presence of an outsider researcher of color can arouse suspicions within a school setting where immigrant students are marginalized. I sensed that the participant’s ways of teaching, within the racial formations of U.S. schools, effected tensions that often worked against the teacher. This was particularly evident because of the teacher’s mediating role between immigrant students/communities and the school.

I have reflected on my own research trajectories and wondered if I could have done research differently that would have had a different outcome in the teacher’s case. In what ways are researchers like me inextricably tied to the political unfolding within the school? For the narrator, the non-renewal of contract itself signified an abrupt official act that terminated the desire to work with a particular group of students. As the teacher noted to me, such sudden demands to depart from the school are psychologically as well as economically disenfranchising. The forced departure raises
question vis-a-vis the effects of teacher identity within the minority context and the irony is axiomatic since there is a larger demand of ESL teachers within the city yet a very capable immigrant teacher is denied a teaching position. Recognizing that fieldwork always has consequences, my argument is that the teacher’s departure interrogates the need to rethink the researcher responsibility terrain that ultimately interfaces the writing aspect of qualitative research. Can this happen to someone else because of the ways I write or represent participants? In what follows, I describe the socio-historical context of writing representations and its implications to my diasporic writing strategies within the framework of “writing in reverse.”

The Crisis of Writing: Writing in Reverse

If there is a scholarly movement to re-think over what Marcus and Fisher (1986) call the “crisis of representation,” the questions over the politics of writing research and how it must serve projects of decolonization is yet to be sufficiently articulated. The proliferation of writing cultural representations has addressed ways to write the Other yet, as Said (1989) suggests, often such representations privilege aesthetics over cultural politics by subsuming the historical as well as contemporary material conditions of the oppressed. If the performance of data offers (via poetry, art, drama, etc)
avenues of re-representation or self-representation, it also
evokes tensions within our well-meaning attempts of cultural
translation. In the context of this research, I argue that one
cannot avoid that the ways of performing data are inextricably
tied to the larger histories and contemporary practices of
orientalism which desires to display Asian immigrants and their
cultural knowledge for the profit of dominant society.

Thus, how does one unlearn and recognize that within the
obsession to package (and to appropriate) minority cultures, the
marginalized are often “discovered” and consumed by
researchers. In such power-laden encounters, the displayed
becomes “known” and the researcher is promoted to the
copyrighted authors of knowledges collected in the fields. Fusco
(1995) writes:

Performance arts in the West did not begin with
Dadaist ‘events.’ Since the early days of European
“conquest,” “aboriginal samples’ of people from
African, Asia, and Americas were brought to Europe
for aesthetic contemplation, scientific analysis, and
entertainment (p. 41; cited in McCall, 2000, p. 42A).

If the field of western performance has its moorings within
colonial fantasy, social science disciplines such as
ethnography and sociology have been particularly complicit in
violently inscribing the Other for the expansion of western
points out, western anthropological research, and particularly
ethnography, operated side-by-side with colonial expansion “to make anthropological study accessible and safe” (p. 16) and the encounter that gives the West access and historical information about the societies it has progressively dominated, and thus not only generates a certain kind of universal understanding, but also reinforces the inequities in capacity between the European and non-European worlds (and derivatively, between Europeanized elites and the “traditional” masses in the Third World) (p. 16).

Marginalized people’s suspicion towards dominant research practices are effected by historical and contemporary representational practices of “salvage ethnography” (Lomawaima, 2000) in which, as Deloria (1969) has suggested, the colonized are appropriated as “objects of experimentation, for manipulation, and for eventual extinction” (p. 81). Neo-colonial representational practices often operate to secure corporate intellectual property, often backed-up by international agreements, thus dispossessing and appropriating the knowledge of marginalized communities in the frantic transnational “global hunt for new knowledges” (Smith, 1999, p. 25). Such neo-colonial research practices are effected by commodification of cultural knowledges and the “consumer cannibalism” (hooks, 1992, p. 31) that launders knowledge from marginalized communities only to be gratuitously consumed by dominant society.

By recognizing the politics and the violence of writing culture, my investments in “writing in reverse” (Guha, 1983) is
influenced by genres of writing strategies that interrogates the totality, linearity and rationality of dominant western writings. The expressive modalities of such writings intersect multiple epistemologies within post-colonial theories as well as competing theories within U.S. multiculturalism to chronicle resistant conditions within specific local as well as within global spheres. I suggest that the discourse of orientalism and its deviant representations often violates the experiences of Asians and Asian Americans. And within this cultural palimpsest of writing, the meaning of language, representation, politics, and ethics carve out differentiated meanings to resist concealing the ambivalence of writing representations. A move that I make in the diasporic writing-in-reverse process is the incorporation of extensive quotes from teachers to enable the teachers to be heard (even if partially). The writing strategy also includes narrating stories of marginalization as well as resistance that enables readers (which includes me) to unlearn about conditions of dis-enfranchisement. Similarly, I separate individual stories (in each chapter) by simultaneously attempting to re-write diasporic aspects of, what Richardson (1994) calls, “collective stories” in the final chapter. Within such performances of collective stories, we begin to ask, as Visweswaran (1994) suggests, “how are identities of self related to the mechanics of memory, and the relevance of the past” (p.
68). Such formations, Visweswaran goes on to note, opens sites to recognize that “the work of the subject is inevitably the work of the collective” (p. 68). Similarly, the writing methodology to separate each story/chapter (per participant) as well as to not include published citations (in Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven) was effected by the concern of one narrator who, after reading an “integrated” chapter that included all four participants’ voices, noted the following:

It is difficult to understand if what you are saying is taking place in this class or in a different school... I can’t even tell if it is this class or some theory you are talking about. Sorry but this is confusing to read (p. 26).

Recognizing such tensions, I have separated the chapters as an ethical move to resist conflating meanings that are woven with each story and to similarly avoid conflating educational theories to the practices of teachers. In other words, the four chapters need to been seen as “member check” as well since the drafts of the chapters were reviewed by narrators. In the final chapter, I converge theory and individual cultural practices to narrate immigrant/hybrid performances of identity and pedagogy.

**Summary**

In this discussion, I have charted my theoretical investments of research and the ways I have negotiated educational qualitative research. I have described the tensions of doing research within cross-cultural contexts and within
marginalized geographies in which the meanings of interview, observation and writing of research circulate a different meaning to reconfigure the terms of doing ethical qualitative research. I have also articulated the contested meaning of data trustworthiness, ethics and politics of writing representation within cultural research mediations. Next, I begin with data analysis and writing aspect of this study. First, I describe the negotiations of identity by an immigrant Pakistani woman and the practices of the teacher within an immigrant classroom.
CHAPTER 4

IMMIGRANT IDENTITY AND PEDAGOGY WITHIN AN ESL CLASSROOM

I wanted students to talk about the rural aspect of women’s lives and about gender in general because that issue is not very emphasized. And I would like to make comparisons of gender here as well as around the world tomorrow and ask them to be in small groups and talk about it (p. 16).

The area surrounding Davidson High School is inhabited by whites and ethnic minorities (African Americans, Latinos/Latinas and Asians) and recent arrival of immigrants from Asia (Laotians, Hmong, etc.) and Africa (Somalia, Ethiopia, etc) into the community has contributed to a more multicultural school population. The school was constructed in the 1960s and the population of the school has double within the last twenty years. After taking a series of left and right turns on the long, narrow hallways on the second floor of Davidson (the building has four floors), I finally managed to find Kiran’s classroom, located on the northern side of the school building. The classroom is situated between a movable iron-gate and a rarely used staircase that leads to the first
floor. With high ceilings and large windows, the classroom exudes a Euro-classical architectural look. Often Kiran leaves the windows slightly open to let the air into the room so students can escape the stifling heat of winter months. Kiran mentioned with a smile, "the heat is on during all hours since there is overheating of the pipes in the building." The walls of the classroom are peppered with student-authored poems and information on class and homework assignments. A world map, photos of the desert in Algeria, pyramids of Egypt and women working in the rice fields of Vietnam on the wall give the class an international ambiance. Similarly, articles taped on the wall such as "Women in Islamic Society" demonstrate the culture-political aspect of the classroom display. This is where Kiran, a Muslim, Pakistani woman, a fourth-year¹ teacher, teaches her English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

Kiran’s desk is at the rear of the room in the opposite side of the chalkboard. There is a wide passage from the desk to the chalkboard and to the left and the right chairs are set-up facing the chalkboard. Next to the chalkboard is another desk that is occupied by the Teacher’s Aide who works with Kiran. Within the school, aides were often called “permanent substitutes,” an hourly worker, who is neither a “teacher” nor

¹Prior to teaching at Glanville, Kiran taught ESL at a middle
a staff but nevertheless assists ESL instructors each day to tutor students. During my research, a Somali man who had worked in U.S. schools for six years and a Laotian man who had similarly been employed as teacher’s aide in schools for twenty years tutored students and taught classes when Kiran had duties outside of the classroom. Often by conversing with them, I began the task of putting together the complex layers of culture, identity and pedagogy that circulated within this ESL classroom. The location of such immigrant educators is marginalized and rarely have efforts been initiated, as the aides noted to me, to make them full-time, permanent teachers.

The classroom space is somewhat removed from the flows of student traffic due to its isolated geographical location. Although I was only at Kiran’s classroom once a week for eight-month period, I recognized two teachers (one Spanish and the other an English teacher) who came to say “hello” to Kiran on a couple of occasions. Often other teachers stopped by to speak with Kiran when the class was in session. Although I was never part of the conversations that took place between Kiran and the teachers, I gathered from Kiran that the discussions were largely about the academic or personal difficulties of ESL school for a year.
students. As Kiran pointed out, the interruptions did not
bother her but often times it disrupted the flow of what was
taking place in the classroom.

All of the students in Kiran’s classes are students of color between the ages of 15 to 18. There is an equal balance of gender in each of the four classes except for the fifth period in which women favor men by a three to two ratio. As Kiran noted, all of her students come from economically underprivileged backgrounds. One half of the student population in Kiran’s class are students who have newly arrived to the school (within the last five years) from Somalia, Ethiopia, Mexico, Liberia, etc. The second half of the students are Asians (Vietnamese, Hmong, Laotian, etc.) who were either born in the U.S. or raised within the U.S. since childhood. Within the last year, Kiran’s classes have included students who are in the third or the fourth level of their ESL courses (after the fourth level students are not required to attend ESL classes in the district). Every month one or two new students joined the class either as new arrivals to the country or to the city. With the exception of one student,

2 ESL Students were of following ancestry: Laotian (seven men and eight women), Hmong (five men and three women), two Liberian women, Somali (seven men and eight women), Mexican (three men and one woman), Argentinean (one man), Vietnamese women, Cambodian (four women and two men), Eritrian (two men and two women), Ethiopian (two men and one woman), Turkish (one man), Armenian (one woman). Two Ethiopian and one Somali student had
all of the students were attempting to pass reading, writing, science, citizenship and math sections of ninth-grade state proficiency exams in order to graduate from high school. Kiran describes her class:

Despite the hecticness, I like being in this classroom because this is where I feel home. And the classes are very diverse. The students that I have here are not a priority for most people. I try to make this class a place to talk whether students talk to me or to other students. I am trying to make this a comfortable place to recognize where student are and it takes time to make things possible (p. 3).

Kiran’s statement of “trying to make this a comfortable place” does not signify a desire to make the class a privileged space but a location of possibility in often difficult circumstances. In order to articulate the class as a place “to make things possible,” as Kiran’s points out, as a “home...a place to talk...to recognize...a priority,” I will describe how Kiran negotiates her identities (and attempts to understand her students) and performs teaching practices that enables spaces for students’ academic success.

I begin this chapter with the topic of cultural identity to situate Kiran's complex location both within and outside of the school. The identity stories tell us the fluid ways individuals narrate their lives, move in and out of identity not attended school due to civil war in their countries of birth.
categories and exhibit the complex meanings of becoming a multicultural immigrant teacher within U.S. schools. In relation to Kiran’s identity, I address the following themes to narrate the diasporic, hybrid terrain of cultural identity: (1) arrival and dual life: belong in both places (2) Islam and identity (3) don’t I look like a teacher and (4) making home visits. Secondly, to describe the kinds of pedagogy such identities can enable, I address the immigrant aspect of pedagogy within the following sections: (1) students’ silences (2) and through writing students are speaking (3) speaking and constant talking climate (4) research and a chance to talk (5) the local and global pedagogy and (6) comparisons and interpretations of freedom. Next, I examine the identity aspect of discussion by narrating Kiran’s experiences in Pakistan.

Arrival and Dual Life: Belonging in Both Places

Here, Kiran narrates her experiences in school:

I was born in Pakistan and went to school there until I was in fourth grade and then my family moved to Libya because of my father’s job with the government. I did not go to Libyan school because it was not English medium and it was mostly in Arabic. The Pakistani school (that was in the embassy) was quite limiting and isolating from what was taking place in Libya. But being in Libya was helpful in seeing Pakistan from the outside. You know, you think about difficulties of your country and about poverty or societal issues. When I returned to Pakistan after eight years, it was another transition but the experience made me open
about issues. But I still lived in protected areas like the suburbs here and as you know there are a lot of difficulties in rural areas or in the city itself.

I started learning English when I was five years old. The amazing part is that there are a lot of similarities of what is taught in the U.S. and what is taught in Pakistani private school like math, science, English. In rural areas, which I don’t know much about, it is quite difficult in terms of resources and education.

There is the British colonialism and it is still felt in the country, whether in education or in the cultural sense like fashion, music or dance. The question to wonder is what kind of influence it did have or it does have in Pakistani life? And there is the religious aspect and most people try to separate the religious and what might be western. My feeling is that you can be Muslim and an English speaking Pakistani at the same time. Like me. For most people Islam is very important and the idea of giving Islam for western things is difficult. It may mix up here and there but it is hard to give up things you have cherished for so long.

On cultural identity:

I call myself Pakistani, of course. I often get identified as Indian and sometimes Hispanic. I have lived here for more than ten years and there is also the American aspect. I am very much connected to my Pakistani roots whatever that may mean. It is a dual life and it is confusing a lot of times. After you move somewhere for a while, it is not the same. I think about where I belong and I know that it is belonging in both places but there is always a feeling of incomplete.

A lot of times we don’t fit here and we don’t fit back there. It is never the same. Wherever you go a part of you is always missing. When I went back to school that I graduated from in Pakistan it was an odd feeling. I knocked on the door and went in. I did not know anyone there. The old people were all
gone. That old community was gone. When I was a kid, I used to run around there. And it is same issue here. I ask myself how do I balance it. Look at your life. Look how you dress. I should be speaking Urdu now and you should be speaking Nepali. But we survive.

On teaching intentions:

I did not go into teaching right away. I got married in Pakistan and came here and raising my child was important so I took a few years off and then started college. While I was taking classes, a professor suggested about becoming a teacher. That is how it started and the idea of working with bilingual or immigrant population appealed to me. I had background in literature since that was my field in Pakistan (p. 7-12).³

I have included this extended interview with Kiran because it conjoins issues of migration and negotiation of diasporic identity. Kiran was educated in economically privileged schools that opened up educational possibilities for her. She also tells us about the neo-colonial aspect of education in which she witnessed striking similarities between U.S. and Pakistani curriculum in English, science and math. Although the neo-colonial aspect of education in Third World is not the purpose of this paper, one can speculate the impact of colonialism and neo-colonialism in the formation of curriculum in both private and public schools thus offering (in a strange way) economic mobility for privileged people. The

³ See Appendix B for a sample of questions I raised during the interviews.
“class” aspect of access to education cannot be forgotten since the rural population of Pakistan is largely left out of educational opportunities. Often the lack of access to English leads to school failure for most rural (and urban) students. The irony of English should be taken seriously particularly in how “English” serves as a gatekeeper and remains an inaccessible language for a majority of population. The discourse of English language reveals how privileged people having access to the language often gain educational (thus economic) opportunities.

Kiran’s perspective on the interactions between Islam and larger issues of western knowledge (both in the U.S. and in Pakistan) reveals the hybridity or the not so rigid separation between being a Muslim and Kiran’s location within the U.S. In other words, one takes up both forms of identities in which one does not reject one for the other. Her articulation of “dual life and...belonging in both places” needs to be understood as a life of a new diaspora and the identities that are formed through migration. The travel and living in the U.S. re-configures old forms of identities and suggests new possibilities in constructing the self. “Dual life and belonging in both places” are not binary identities but identities that are interactive, often complimenting the multiple old(s) to the new(s). The feeling of incomplete, not
fitting here or there, as Kiran describes regarding her visit to her old school, reveals the changing nature of communities. "It is never the same. Wherever you go a part of you is always missing." The "missing" aspect is not a loss but a movement, how newness enters the world and how one looks for new meanings. The missing and incompleteness are signs of re-emergence of new selves. Thus we see multiple forms of old identities interacting with new identities that are constructed by multiple U.S. formations of race, gender, class and nationality. In order to situate the location of Kiran within the school, I elaborate on the gendered and spiritual aspect of identity.

**Islam and Identity**

I am a Muslim woman and that is a very important part of my life. It is a philosophy of life and that is really important to me. Being a Muslim is understood very differently here and as you know mostly in negative terms but Islam is different than what is talked about. In my situation, it becomes a little bit more different (p. 13).

Here, Kiran places particular emphasis on being a Muslim woman. Kiran also tells us the complex location of a Muslim woman in U.S. context in which Islam is seen "differently" or as difference. As Kiran suggests, being Muslim is a way of life, a form of being or philosophy. In order to situate the Muslim aspect of identity, one needs to frame Islam as "different than
what is talked about” and beyond stereotypes and misconceptions. The part about “my situation” requires a little bit more explanation because, as Kiran reminded me, “I am divorced mother of a son. A single mother. And that is different than being a man.” Kiran points out further,

I don’t want to talk about this too much but the divorce part creates problems here and in Pakistan. People gossip. Some are superficial. Some people are supportive but at the same time it becomes a difficult situation. It is the society that makes up the rules and not the faith. You become isolated. But I am used to it now (p. 6).

The aspect of being “isolated” reveals how elements within multiple communities interpret the idea of divorce, thus creating its own dominant frameworks (later I illustrate how issues of family and community play out in teaching practices). However, we cannot simply ground the complexity of the isolation within the stereotypical view of Islam or as being effects of practices within Pakistan. What needs to be understood is how Kiran shifts within and outside of the discourse of divorce, first suggesting it as a problem of people’s myopic perception (where the larger society is complicit) and also not wanting to talk about it (to me). The statement of “some people are supportive” and “I am used to it now” tells us how Kiran has been able to move within/beyond particular forms of marginalization. However, we cannot dismiss but learn about the
discourse of marginalization that operates against a divorced woman (and a single mother), both within situated immigrant and in Third World contexts.

The spiritual dimension is of particular relevance in the classroom context because close to half of Kiran’s students are Muslims. Often during the month of Ramadan, Kiran’s class became a space where Muslims students would converge to pray and rest thus creating alternative spiritual spaces. The classroom was transformed into a supportive environment that was more commensurate with the needs of Muslim students. Often students avoided the cafeteria when fasting from sunrise to sunset. I asked Kiran how it felt to teach during the month of Ramadan,

It is different and I have less stamina and energy but still teach like usual. In some ways, I am in a different state of mind. There is the lack of energy, it makes you feel good, patient. And a lot of the Muslim students are in similar situation so there is the understanding about this month. But it certainly creates new challenges in being in school in terms of the daily teachings (p. 11).

The teaching experience that Kiran speaks of during the month of Ramadan needs to be understood both within the demands of teaching and the spiritual aspect or the state of being during the period of fasting. Kiran maneuvers within multiple spaces
of teaching and “different state of mind” by letting “things flow” and being fully aware that students “understand about this month.”

The time aspect is useful to articulate cultural differences since the time of Ramadan (within Islamic calendar) and the time of the school calendar are not synchronous. The school calendar does not allow spaces for students and teachers to engage with the spiritual dimensions of Ramadan. For example, the state proficiency exams were scheduled during the day of Id. Similarly, in Kiran’s case,

I was actually asked by school official to get a letter from the mosque to get a day off during Id since in my culture Id falls a day after the regular Id. The office wanted the letter to have a seal of the mosque to explain that it was a religious day. I had to prove that this was really happening (p. 14).

What we witness is a disjunction of cultures in which “differences” of minority cultures are read as marginal. In Kiran’s case, the burden is placed on the minority to prove that this was a time of cultural significance and to demand to reveal in the official way of the letter and a seal. I was particularly interested in how Kiran had framed the “my culture” aspect of Islam and I asked her about the nature of difference within the faith itself,
I come from a minority aspect of Islam.⁴ We have been persecuted all over the world and particular in Pakistan and not being given jobs or not having economic opportunities. I go to the mosque here quite often and we have a group that often gets together there (p. 3).

Kiran did not speak about the details of the minority aspect of Islam and I sensed that it was largely due to the sensitive nature of the topic and at the time of the question I had only known Kiran for about three months (even in subsequent months, she was not interested in talking about the issue). However, I asked about the minority theme and how it played out in the U.S. since Kiran had mentioned Islam being seen “differently” in the U.S.

It is a challenge to be a Muslim woman in the U.S. and how you are perceived. Islam has a negative meaning in U.S. you know people think we are backward or something. Then people think Pakistan is real violent. Here, I have felt being minority in that sense. The other thing is learning about the other minority aspect of U.S. like about African Americans, Asians or Latinos and Native Americans (p. 7, 8).

I had assumptions and thought that everyone was rich here and I was surprised to see the extent of prejudice against minorities. And I was surprised to see homeless people since I thought everyone was well off. And then you see how Asian people get treated. Then I think of my students and their academics (p. 12).

⁴I have not noted the particular branch of Islam as per request of Kiran.
Kiran defines her minority identity within the context of being a Muslim. Islam is constructed, as Kiran suggests, as “difference” in the U.S. or as “backward” and similarly Pakistan is portrayed as a space of violence, as Anita suggests. Here, we begin to see how a person’s identity is defined from the “outside” whether through the stereotyping of a religion or the Othering of a nation-state as a place of crisis. Similarly, Kiran’s travel to U.S. has been a passage of un/learning about inequalities and the intricate ways inequalities are produced whether seeing the “homeless” or learning about the socio-economic inequalities.

Don’t I look like a Teacher

If Kiran engenders meaningful learning spaces (which I elaborate later in the chapter) within immigrant, post-colonial classrooms, her identity location within the school or outside of the immigrant classrooms remain ambivalent.

There are teachers who are helpful or are friends but it is hard to find who are supportive. And that makes it difficult sometimes. I wish there were support for teachers like me who don’t quite fit in an environment like this. Or a support network would be helpful or even mentoring by sensitive and experienced teachers in the school. I enjoy the classroom part with students but outside of classroom I wonder where I belong (p. 3).

If classroom is a space of cultural engagement, the larger identity location remains an ambivalent site to “wonder where
I belong.” Kiran speaks of the friendships negotiated with teachers yet points out the dearth of supportive environments in which “teachers like me who don’t quite fit in.” Kiran often speaks about the lack of meaningful engagements or conversations with teachers “to talk about what is happening in the school.” What Kiran suggests is the ambivalent space occupied by teachers like her who remain an “outsider” yet work within the school for benefit of minority students.

In between her “regular” classes, Kiran and another teacher supervise a study room each day in which students are asked to work on their homework and reading assignments. The uncertainty of identity or identifications was nowhere more apparent than how Kiran was identified by students within the study room. Kiran speaks of her cross-cultural experience:

Study hall is different because students are busy doing their own work. And I wonder how students see me. The other teacher and I were in the study room the other day and she left to go to the main office for a minute or so. After she left, one student said he wanted to “ask a question to the teacher.” Then another students asked: “where is the teacher?” I said, “I am the teacher.” Then the students said “the real teacher.” Then I wonder how I am seen outside of my regular class. This is not the first time I have been asked if I am a teacher. Don’t I look like a teacher? (p. 13).

The study hall scenario evokes the “looks” as well as the speaking dimension and how one is perceived as a “real” teacher. Within the classroom, Kiran is not assumed as a teacher but
someone else. The question of “don’t I look like a teacher?” interrogates ways one imagines or visualizes a teacher. Recognizing her own invisibility, Kiran intentionally shifts to the space of immigrant classrooms, as she noted to me, “where students recognize that I am a teacher.” By reading her own identity positions, Kiran creates spaces to recognize (even if it is partially) students’ marginalized identity locations and works toward meaningful teaching practices that can engender students’ academic success. In what follows, I will situate Kiran’s efforts to learn about her students via making home visits.

Making Home Visits

During our discussions, Kiran often spoke about the need to recognize students’ out of the school experiences and its implications to students’ academic struggles. Kiran suggests the need to read the often “invisible” nature of students’ cultural identities and the challenges faced by students,

The students don’t see people like them on TV. As role models. If that happens, it happens rarely. You know they are hardly visible including in books and this affects the students and what they want to do or be in the future. Plus, most of the students work odd jobs and parents work at odd hours and students take care of brothers and sisters at home and this is particularly true for girls. Students come from economically poor backgrounds and have real responsibility at home. Since their education so far has not been very good, outside distractions do not help their studies. I began to learn
about this through their classroom writings. I am not saying not to have relationships, but without going into detail, the ups-and-downs of relationships really takes students’ time and they get occupied. Then as in some of my students’ cases, they get pregnant and that creates more challenges in a very young age. As teachers we have to create time for students (p. 14).

One cannot avoid the discourse on the invisibility of immigrant selves whether within curriculum or broader societal context and its implications to students’ cultural identity formations and academic achievements. Often immigrant representations are either omitted or rendered negative thus to further marginalize immigrant identities. Kiran reminds us that students’ academic life intersects with socio-cultural-economic domains thus not only having “real responsibility at home” but through relationships that often “distracts....takes students’ time and occupies them.” We cannot avoid the multiple issues students negotiate and the “time” aspect of student life. By time, I am referring to the amount of time parents work, the time of students’ coming of “age” and, as she suggests, the need to “create time for students.” To better comprehend students’ identities and to enact meaning classroom practices, Kiran suggests the possibilities opened up by her interaction with parents.
When we\(^5\) had parent-teacher conference, the parents did not show up. No one showed up. As a teacher, I began to realize that I am part of the big picture. And I only had forty minutes with the class everyday and that was not enough. That is one of the reasons we started making home visits. We wanted to gather information here and there that would help us work better with students (p. 16).

Kiran’s statement of “the parents..... did not show up” is a sign of the broken relationship of school and community. The forty minutes that Kiran speaks of not only does not allow adequate time to work with students but does not offer spaces to meaningfully interact with students to assist students with academic needs. The next move for Kiran is to cross not only physical geographies from the school to communities but also cultural geographies, a meeting of peoples and cultures, thus disrupting the site of the conference, the school, as a privileged space. The home visit is an attempt to understand the cultural context of students’ lives or “the big picture.”

This was my first time going to students’ homes. We went all around the city. Most students live on the east-side of town because the housing is cheap there. One student, we went to her house and the student was taking care of her brother and sister and the parents were not home. I asked and she said that both of the parents were at work. The same with ...family, the father worked in the evening and the mother worked till late in the evening. In some cases, mom worked the morning shift and the dad did the evening one. And students have real responsibility at home like cooking,

\(^5\) Both Kiran and Mr. A (teacher’s aide) visited parents together.
cleaning or taking care of their brothers and sisters.

We went to ...house and mom was ready to go to work. he did not speak English. But the mom knew what we were taking about. Some people ask me how do you communicate with parents who don’t speak English? It is one of those things which is difficult to explain. You meet and there develops a language. Sometimes it is English and sometimes it something else. If we had not approached the parents, there would not be any meeting. So we talked for fifteen or twenty minutes and she was glad that we stopped by. Most parents feel uncomfortable about coming to school because the genuine invitation is not there. Sometimes it boils down to not having a car or a ride or not knowing how to drive.

I talk about the progress of the students and where they were and where they are now and where they need to go. This visit was more of an introduction. Most of the time we stood at the door, like halfway, and we said that we were just visiting to say how students were doing in class and we did not want to impose any further. The door chat was a get to know kind of a meeting and an update of what was going on at school. One of the parents insisted that we come inside the house and we chatted for a while. All the parents were very thankful. Most parents don’t have a formal education so they want their children to do well in school. This was my first home visit. It was an experience for me.

The people in the ..... told us not to make an appointment because they said that if you make an appointment, the parents will not be there. Isn’t that obvious? If you contact them only when there is a problem then anyone would have suspicion or apprehension. So when we stopped for a visit, the parents were surprised. Just stopping by may work once in a while but that does not work in the long run. It is about respect (p. 16-19).

Kiran describes her visit as moments of learning for a teacher who is making efforts to understand the cultural context of
students’ lives. Kiran tells us that “if we had not approached the parents⁶, there would not be any meeting” or “no one showed up” is a vivid reminder of that abyss, the gap between the schools and cultural communities. The invitation to parent-teacher conference may have gone out but it is interpreted differently by parents (or communities) who recognize the schools rarely serve the cultural needs of students. As Kiran reminds us, the formal invitations are not really request-to-visit because “a genuine invitation is not there most of the time.” Here, I don’t think Kiran is dismissing the important work of many school officials who make sincere efforts to work with parents but too often such invitations to “dialogue” rarely address how students are marginalized within school settings.

The “introduction” that Kiran speaks about is the initiation of meaningful dialogue with parents. If the “door chat” was an opening, it also serves as a cultural site to further mediate the possible affiliations between the teachers and students (and also parents). Thus the first visit to students’ homes becomes an attempt to create academic possibility for students thus inventing a new language to talk despite the apparent language barriers. Here, we can interpret

⁶ The parents were of Somali, Hmong, Vietnames, Mexican,
the teachers’ role as cultural translators who are initiating cross-cultural dialogue. Kiran’s statement of “I began to realize” can be read as a sign of a cultural learning by beginning to understand the “suspicion or apprehension” of parents towards the school.

One cannot neglect the inter-cultural and cross-cultural aspect of dialogue that opens up possibilities by developing introductory cross-cultural understandings between teachers and parents. If the parents were surprised to see the teachers, there were also signs of cultural invitations by the parents: “One of the parents insisted that we come inside the house and we chatted for a while. All the parents were very thankful.” However, as Kiran suggests, there is the larger need to understand the “surprise” of parents and the need to develop community respect and relationship that genuinely invites the Other for partnership. What Kiran saw in the homes of the students is the working lives of the families, the responsibilities of students and the investments parents have towards education. If the teachers went to the homes for a “progress...update on what was going on at school,” one cannot underestimate the role of the cultural mediators in crossing the cultural and physical geographies that separate communities

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Ethiopian, Laotion, etc., background.
and schools. There are reasons to believe, as Kiran suggests, the parents were “thankful.” In what follows, I will trace specific pedagogies that are enacted within the classrooms that may allow us to address how Kiran attempts to recognize her students and simultaneously deploy meaningful cultural teaching practices. I begin with the topic of silence.

**Students’ Silences**

Some students are silent. I am trying to find out why they are quiet. Some of it is getting used to the language but there is more than that. I am trying to get students to talk in different ways (p. 13).

What does silence mean? What are the cultural interpretations of multiple silences that allow possibilities to read silence as an alternative mode of expression? The recurring theme of silence in this discussion is a move to unearth ways of translating silences that circulate in/outside of the classroom and the relationality of in/outside silences. My multiple encounters with silences in Kiran’s classroom are different from the ways a dominant teacher may silence his/her students. However, what I am interested in is how she worked the complex meanings of silence to recognize the students thus allowing possibilities for a culturally liberatory pedagogy.

I begin with the subject of reading and writing within the classroom to return to the topic of cultural expression and
cross-cultural dialogue. Reading and writing has a particular meaning within Kiran’s classroom not only because students are tested for the ninth grade state proficiency exams but for other reasons that I will explore. However, the testing aspect was not taken lightly. A month preceding the "proficiency week," Kiran placed particular emphasis on preparing for the test since “most of my students have not passed the test and in order to graduate from high school, they need to pass all ninth grade exams.” The testing reality that Kiran illustrates is of particularly relevance within the classroom since only one of her students has passed all subjects. Thus reading and writing has a particular currency since the students speak "the other tongue" and have limited proficiency to reading or writing the standard English language. Nor can we underestimate the politics of testing (the “gate-keeping” aspect) that has kept students from graduating. During the last period of school day, a number of students who had already passed twelfth grade (but had not passed ninth grade proficiency exams) came to the class for tutoring. And there was particular emphasis on “reading and writing aspect so students understand what is being asked like science equations or geography maps.” Next, I explain how Kiran engages within both cultural and academic terrain as complementary trajectories for minority educational practice.
And Through Writing Students are Speaking

To deploy culturally meaningful teaching practices within an immigrant classroom, Kiran places emphasis on students' speaking and writing in the classes. One aspect of the writing domain included, as Kiran put it, "to write down everything you did not understand." Writing included, as Kiran told the students, "words, terms, sentences, names, anything that does not make sense to you and as a class we will go over it." The reading aspect largely included "reading particular paragraphs to the whole class, reading with a partner within a small group or by yourself." The larger purpose of reading, as she pointed out to me, was "not simply to read for the sake of reading but to understand what was going on...but reading two or three times to really understand what is happening and talking about it in class." If the overarching purpose of reading and writing in a minority classroom is to produce meaningful ways of "mastering" the language, comprehending the context and to pass the exams, one has to ask a relational question of how this is performed in the classes. In what follows, I contextualize the cultural location of such practices and examine the possibilities created by such immigrant pedagogical movements.

First, I situate Kiran's emphasis on the writing
component within the class and its implications for speaking. The informal writings that were assigned to students are largely meant to elicit expressions and writing has been helpful in talking about what is going through students' minds or dealing with issues students that students may have seen or encountered. Topics like academic struggles at school. Some of the hardships within the family or the family expectation part. In many cases, there is the expectation of family and how students respond to that.

This is not true for many students but there can be cultural factors at home in terms of what parents or grandparents think what a young person should be like. For example, parents may disapprove of wearing certain kinds of clothes that is seen as too American or certain expectation to be part of the old culture that the students may not be familiar with like the parents are. Being in two or three cultures is a challenge and this comes out in students' writings. And that helps me understand some aspects of their life.

There are some students who are very good at expressing through poetry and within the last year, I have tried informal writings to see if students express what they are thinking and feeling. And through writing they are speaking. Not all but some of the students are talking. There are some students who speak less in class. For example, ... rarely speaks and is quiet in class but she writes a lot of poetry. And since many of them are writing, it is helping me to know their needs or who they are (p. 18-21).

For Kiran, assigning informal writings creates spaces for students to speak about issues in alternative ways. If some students are silent in class, poetry becomes a way of expression, a method of speaking. Students write about what is
taking place outside of the school (at home) and inside of the school thus negotiate their multiple identities. The informal writings have yet another meaning: helping Kiran understand her students better. "It is helping me to know their needs and who they are." In such contexts, writing becomes a way of speaking or speaking out.

Writing Autobiographies and journaling projects enable informal writing spaces within the classroom. For the first three weeks of the semester, students write and discuss their autobiographies within the classroom. Kiran believes that the autobiographical project helps emphasize the reading and writing aspects of the class from the beginning of the year. Kiran elaborates the meaning of autobiography in the immigrant context,

A lot of times it is about remembering and finding or finding more about your self. Many students said that it was useful to remember again how they left their towns or countries and what has happened to them since then. And also what has been the experience being born and growing up in the U.S. as an immigrant. Students said that the writing and talking about it helped them process it more and to speak their views. It is also about gaining confidence and learning to know more about yourself. It is having a sense of who you are now (p. 13).

If the meaning of autobiography is to remember, re-discover and trace back the journey of "what has happened... or what has been the experience," it is also a process of getting to know the
self by writing and speaking. Kiran is suggesting not only the importance of the past but also how one defines the identity aspect in the present or “having a sense of who you are now.” Do such moves open spaces for the past and the present to intersect? As Kiran points out, the students’ speaking of their work becomes a way of expressing and negotiating identities—“gaining confidence”—that validate one’s past and present journeys. Here, the discussion becomes a way to speak thus making writing and speaking as a double practice of re-representation.

Similarly Kiran experiments with classroom journaling as a form of informal writing in which students spent the first five minutes of class composing a narrative. This project “a good kind of routine” was “something of their own....creating something that is personal and you did not have to read a book to come up with it.” Kiran suggests that the time of journaling was more of “time to reflect...that allowed students to think about a topic in detail.” The topics for journaling ranged from self-selected topics to suggested topics (by Kiran) such as describing a particular event, plans for winter break, etc. Kiran found the journaling methodology particular helpful not only because this was helping students to “develop complete sentences....but was becoming a good way to begin discussions
in class.” Kiran explains,

In the beginning of the year, a lot of students were not talkative. Many of them were just getting comfortable with the language and the journaling part helped in having constantly talking climate. A lot of times those who rarely spoke before began to speak about what they had written (p. 18).

Kiran believes that journaling allows possibilities to create an open discussion climate. In such contexts, the “not talkative” and “rarely spoke” aspect is re-channeled and seemingly quietness of students’ is unlearned. Here, writing is not a substitute for verbally speaking but a complementary element or a starting point that leads to speaking or expressing in the cultural sense. Next, I address the speaking/talking aspect of pedagogy and how it unveils meaningful learning communities.

**Speaking and Constant Talking Climate**

Kiran places particular emphasis on students’ reading various texts in class. The reading (or “speaking” as Kiran

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7 As Kiran mentioned to me, there is flexibility in selecting texts for the classroom readings based on students’ needs. There is no “fixed” textbook for an ESL class. Kiran largely utilized worksheets from different books to improve students’ writing skills and particularly grammar and sentences structures. The reading for the class included various articles in class including reading segment from novels such as *Children of the River*, *A Grain of Rice*, *Onion Tears*, *Shadow of Dragon*, *Shabanu* and *Our Own Stories: Reading for Cross-cultural Communication*, etc. Most of the short stores and novels dealt with either in the international or within immigrant context.
called it) aspect of the class either followed a sequential order (from the front of the class to back or vice versa or from one side to the other) or operated within a voluntary basis of reading paragraphs or certain sentences in which students would follow one another without any pre-arranged order. Occasionally, students who did not want to talk would note their preference not to read at a particular time. The not-speaking aspect also has to do with "being comfortable in class and trying to be comfortable with the language." And, "for a majority of students, this means taking the time to read and finding the right moment to read." My thinking is that the desire not to read is more than a form of resistance to reading in class although one cannot dismiss the moves to resist (or discomforts with) standard English. The desire not to read, as Kiran suggests, is also a passage re-discovery, which I elaborate a little bit later.

Kiran’s open classroom pedagogy engenders spaces for students to verbally express or culturally communicate. In cases of absence of certain students’ participation, Kiran would often ask the student "can you think of a word or sentence related to that?" The question posed is not a request for an

As Kiran pointed out to me, the books were all distributed through the ESL office for the use of teachers and students with the flexibility of its use. Teachers can also request specific
extended verbal response but an invitation to talk. I offer an example of the dialogic nature of “talk” in one of Kiran’s classes that reveals the conversational approach to teaching. The following is Kiran’s “voices” after students read the first chapter from New Kids in Town, a collected auto-biographical stories of immigrant students in the U.S.:

Give me a big picture of what happens in the story?..That is good. What else?...Can you tell us more? ....What do you think?.....Yes, that is right...Ok....Who wants to explain it?....Go ahead, tell us more?....You think so?.....I should explain it more?.....Go ahead and explain that.....What else?....What does that mean?.....Tell us something more....Does anyone know what it means?........In that paragraph, what is going on? What is the imagery like?....What does the narrator mean?.....Yes. Please write the word down....What do I think of it? (p. 19).

What I learned from her ways of setting up questions (which took place in a fifteen-minute discussion) is the performance of cross-cultural methods of speaking or “constant talking climate” which is like noise, a cultural noise, chatter. This approach is a hybrid cultural pedagogy that moves within the fault lines of questioning students and being questioned by students thus shifting from the “big picture” to the details of “what is going on...what is the imagery like.” It is also a pedagogy of cultural interruptions performed by both students books for use in their class.
and the teacher that combines questions and short responses often replete with validations that suggests movements towards more discussions. There is a re-definition of the meaning of interruptions or noise.⁸ Recurring open-ended questions such as “what else?” or “can you tell us more?” offer possibilities to move into an open space, a dialogic space, a creative space that seeks more cultural dimensions of teaching and learning than what might be available in other classrooms. However, such questions are not simply poised by the teacher. Questions such as “I should explain it more?” or “what do I think?” suggests the reverse nature of questions raised by students thus destabilizing the traditional ideas of teacher-student relationship. The gaze is not only placed on the students as locations of cultural knowledge but also on the teacher by the students. Here, Kiran is being requested to “explain it more” and asked to provide her version of knowledge. Next, I read the pedagogical relationships between research and speaking.

Research and A Chance to Talk

As I have noted earlier, the emphasis on questions and “constant talking” also meant creating a useful location to re-present oneself. A related re-presentational or

⁸As in most classrooms, there were classroom management issues of occasional classroom distractions (students not being on task during group work, etc). Yet, during my observation, there
re-creational aspect was performed during a student-authored research project that addressed topics of politics, history or contemporary events. After two weeks of research, students presented their work on topics such as nomadic groups around the world, rights of women in various countries, and the location of Third World countries in world politics, etc. When I asked Kiran the purpose of the research, she responded,

With the exception of one student, this was the first time students had participated in a research project or presented in class in the formal sense. The group work is also about gaining confidence and having the support of your friends. I am not sure my students get the chance to speak in other classes the way we do here. I think having a class like this gives students a chance to talk about issues they have worked on. It is about building confidence (p. 17).

To present in the classroom setting is, in other words, a process of re-creation. As in writing as a mode of expression, the speaking aspect becomes a re-presentation of self. This form of expression is “speaking” not only within the strictly linguistic learning sense but also within its cultural frameworks. The student presentations or performances cannot or should not be interpreted as an essentialist display or exhibition of diverse cultures but as a cultural movement of “building ..or gaining confidence.” Kiran points out the rationale for the larger purpose of such a class:

were no disciplinary issues that demanded Kiran’s attention.
Students tell me that most teachers in the school talk too fast. If you look at the books for Social Studies or Science it is too heavy, not to mention students have a hard time relating to what is written in the textbooks. The school virtually never has cultural events that students can be part of. If there is one that takes place, it is formal events like world something day or something like that that has little to do with my students. And not having that cultural aspect in the school makes it difficult for students. That is the reason, many students want to transfer to other schools that may have more of a cultural environment. Students life is somewhat different from what goes on in school here (p. 14).

There is a cultural disjunction between what is taking place at school and the cultural context of students’ life. The formalized nature of curriculum (“too heavy, not to mention students have a hard time relating.”), teaching, and events in school offer limited opportunities for a “more of cultural environment.” To gain partial understanding of Kiran’s observation of “students life is somewhat different from what goes on in school here” we need to shift to the terrain of identity. Such a move may allow possibilities to situate Kiran’s pedagogical maneuvers to contextualize the complex circulation of cultural meanings within the classroom. This means going “outside” of the classroom to locate the relationality of identity to students’ academic work “inside” the classroom. The idea here is not to romanticize cultural identity but to look for ways ethnic, racial, national and
gendered identities interact with what takes place outside and inside of classrooms. My larger argument here is that understanding the cultural context of pedagogy requires looking at cultural identities at play within/outside of classroom. In the next section, I look at the enactment of pedagogy that addresses issues of local and global issues.

**The Local and Global Pedagogy**

As I have noted earlier, the circulation of multiple identities within the classrooms create productive challenges for Kiran. This was nowhere more apparent than in the identity sphere in which ways each student identified himself or herself. During classroom conversations, students articulated their identities often by locating a particular nation-state or spiritual identities as points of reference. For example, students would point out: “I am from Somalia and I am a Muslim” or “we came here from Mexico.” When the Asian students identified themselves the “American” aspect of their identity was sometimes absent and students would often suggest their identifications as arriving from Cambodia, Laos or Vietnam. When I asked Kiran about the pedagogical challenges in working with students within such a diverse classroom setting, she outlined the complexities,

I am thinking about my Asian students, except for two, all were born here. And they two came here when
they were children. So the idea of “back home” is quite fuzzy because most of them have not gone back. I am trying to find ways to work with them since their needs are different. We have students here who did not go to school for a few years because of being moved from their towns and countries. There are Muslim students from Ethiopia and Somalia who are in situations like that and getting used to U.S. schools is yet another issue. First, the students have to learn the language then they have to work on the content (p. 18-19).

Identity remains a complex phenomenon within the classroom in which issues of nationhood, religion and gender intersect with the politics that engender movements of people. As Kiran describes, students “being moved from their towns and countries” evoke a different meaning of migration. Similarly, the idea of making a particular nation-state a point of reference in developing pedagogies is limiting since the “back home is quite fuzzy” and the U.S. born students do not necessarily identify as “Americans” or as “Americans-only.” Recognizing the complex nature of identity circulation, how does one enact pedagogy that infuses with classroom curriculum. Kiran explains:

I use a lot of examples to explain certain topics. For example, if we are talking about certain concepts or terms we go around the class and compare it. And students share what they have seen or learned and what that means in the cultural aspect. For example, in one of our lessons we were comparing clothes from different parts of the world. One student spoke about a kind of clothing called lungi which is a thin outfit that men and women wear in
certain parts of the world because of hot and humid weather. And we found out that it is worn in Somalia, Vietnam and also worn in Pakistan and India although it has different names in all places. Some students were saying that it is also worn in the U.S. in certain immigrant communities. And the clothes make it easier to work in the fields or to move around and is not expensive. And we compared on how it is worn and what names it has in different parts of the world. And who wears it? Maybe not the rich people (p. 14).

What emerges from Kiran’s teaching strategy is a particular kind of pedagogy that attempts to balance both the local and global aspects of cultural knowledge. It frames multiple ways symbols and traditions are interpreted within cross-cultural contexts thus situating lungi within multiple cultural frameworks, in immigrant as well as within Third World contexts. The example of lungi may appear to be a simple clothing article; however, it articulates the nature of cultural practices and the deeper meaning of work or physical labor that is associated with it. The “cheap” and the question of “And who wears it? Maybe not the rich” interrupts the visualization of clothing simply as a mere aesthetic commodity thus introducing its political and economic manifestations.

If there is a complex international aspect to the topics discussed in class, Kiran also situates discussions within U.S. cultural formations. The comparative orientation of class was particularly helpful in discussing local and global aspects of
issues since the students have international yet local heritage. Such a teaching approach, as Kiran puts it, did not support the stereotype that they are only international since “many were actually not born in the United States.”

I had to do my own learning since many students that I have are as local as most students in the school. So to treat them only as international does not make sense. Of course, they are international but also they are from U.S. although they may not identify as Americans. They were born here and raised here (p. 14,16).

Only the international context of teaching, as Kiran suggested, made the assumption that the Asian students would talk about cultures within Vietnam, Cambodia or Laos. In other words, only the “international” aspect of learning reinscribed the immigrant students as “outsiders” whether born in the United States or outside of the U.S. The usefulness of Kiran’s pedagogy is that it blends the local and global relationality of histories that effect identities. On the other hand, only the local ways of translating identity (“American” or “Asian American”) does not adequately explicate the political and economic formations that are global (“Asian”) is scope.

In order to understand Kiran’s pedagogical move (in the example of the case of lungi), we have to return to Kiran’s earlier statement of “I use a lot of examples to explain certain topics then we go around the class and compare it….. to find
meaning.” My argument here is example-oriented pedagogy, which are culturally situated, create academic possibility for students. In other words, such a pedagogical move does not isolate “cultural identity” within its boundaries but connects it with its academic corollary. I briefly offer an example of such a pedagogy enactment to argue such hybrid performances of teaching activate academic possibilities.

As I had mentioned earlier, there is a particular emphasis on speaking (both within reading and writing) in Kiran’s classroom in which both the teacher and the students continuously interact. Often Kiran asked questions after reading and discussing certain paragraphs: “what does the sentence mean?” or “can you give me an example?” In other words, in order to make meanings of certain concepts or words, Kiran often used specific examples and then asked students to comparatively frame it with examples students’ apriori knowledge. The hybrid aspect of pedagogy (for example) compared the architecture in various countries or gender related articles from the local paper and compared that to students’ knowledge of national or international gender issues. For example, in one class students compared the architectures of mosques and temples in Somalia and Cambodia. The differences and the similarities of architecture of mosques were discussed
to reveal the cultural and historical nuances within a particular society. Furthermore, the significance of art within particular geographical space was discussed and its relationship to similar geographical/cultural locations. Another example discussed was Somali and Ethiopian dietary practices within the frames of Islam to make meanings of how people in different regions culturally interpret food. In what follows, I illustrate the comparative and example oriented nature of hybrid pedagogy that speaks of gender, ideas of freedom and Kiran’s attempt to connect the topic to students’ everyday lives. Kiran and the students in the class made considerable cultural investments within this particular discussion.

Comparisons and Interpretations of Freedom

In one of the classes, Kiran asked students to read the first chapter of *Shabanu*, a novel written by Suzanne Fisher Staples, that explores the life of rural Pakistani women. Students read the first chapter of the book that introduces the location of gender within the larger framework of local traditions, family and rural life in Pakistan.

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*Kiran points out that her interest in using the book was largely due to the book’s emphasis on issues of gender, economic poverty and culture within a rural setting within the Third World. The books was made available by the district ESL Office for teachers use.*
discussed the context of living in rural areas and made comparison to city life and issues of lack of water resources and transportation. Moreover, comparisons were made between Muslim traditions in Asia, Africa and North America and particularly the commonalities and differences of cultural practices. At the end of the class, Kiran pointed out that the next day students would be working in small groups to compare gender relationships within societies. After the class, I asked Kiran about the larger purpose of the class:

I wanted students to talk about the rural aspect of women’s lives and about gender in general because that issue is not very emphasized. And I would like to make comparisons of gender here as well as around the world tomorrow and ask them to be in small groups and talk about it (p. 16).

The following day Kiran distributed a worksheet that asked students to make comparisons among various women by “thinking about what you saw, heard and learned when you were growing up.” Five minutes later, Kiran assigned students into groups of three and distributed a worksheet. Kiran pointed out to me that small-group discussion was helpful in this case because students would be using a lot of examples.

Sometimes I assign groups and mix gender or students’ cultural background. And a lot of time I let students work on their own. A lot of students are learning to work in small groups since many of them are not used to it. Slowly students are getting used to groups and are expressing a little bit more.
I wanted to get the point across that we can learn a lot from each other when we exchange information (p. 18).

During the class, discussion focused on women’s diverse experiences including the positions of women within cultural contexts. A recurring theme related to the nature of “freedom” of women in Africa, Asia and within U.S. One student suggested that perhaps there was more freedom to work for economic gain for women in the U.S. than in Somalia. Another student argued that: “You can choose your own wife or husband here.” Another perspective was: “My mom works all the time. Is that freedom?” Often during the discussions, Kiran would ask questions such as: “Can you explain further your argument?” or “can you describe the meaning of “choose?” or “good question. What is the definition of freedom? Let us go back and talk about the main purpose of this chapter.”

In discussing ideas of freedom, several students pointed out the limitations of (as discussed in the novel) being arranged to be married at the age of fourteen. One student offered alternative question: “is it always bad to be married at that age? What if the girl has a better life at her new home?” After more discussions, Kiran asked each student to think about two questions: first, the similarities and differences between Shabanu, the narrator of the novel, getting married at the
fourteen in Pakistan and students “getting ready to have babies here in Columbus at the same age.” Similarly, “how there are some women well-off in U.S. and some are not and what are the reasons for this?” Kiran elaborates on the class assignment.

The assignment helps students understand societal issues better since they can relate in their own ways. When we talk about marriage here in the U.S., I ask students to talk about the kinds of marriages they have seen or gone to. So it helps them to make sense. Regarding the case about women around the world and also in the U.S., I wanted students to think about in the economic sense or who has power in the society. And also the different experiences of women they are familiar with and also the difference in women’s lives within America. The case of girls in Shabanu and the students of my class is very different but I wanted to point out that freedom here is not necessarily as it seems. If you have children at an early age don’t tell me you have freedom to finish high school or go to college. I spoke about the pregnancy part because that is one of the reasons some of my students are not here. They have dropped out of school or many are having babies at an early age and that creates problems since they are not economically strong. And the boys in the class have to know this. They are part of it (p. 21).

The classroom discussion not only allows students to speak of their experiences and knowledge but also allows them to meaningfully (and ethically) compare experiences within similar cultural context. The classroom discussion of “freedom” complicates the meaning of freedom and resists conflating freedom to simply living in the U.S. “My mom works all the time. Is that freedom?” is one reminder of the complicated nature of
freedom discussion. Another student’s question of: “Is it always bad to be married at that age?” is yet another example of how experiences need to be understood within situated cultural spaces. Here, we also need to heed the earlier discussions of students’ lack of academic achievements, and its relationality to Kiran’s move to accentuate the need to be responsible in the “sex” aspect (both for boys and girls) since their academic trajectories can be affected. Similarly, the seemingly formal nature of questions that Kiran was raising in the class (such as “how would you describe” or “what is the main purpose?”) has a purpose.

I raise a lot of questions in the class, sometimes formal and sometimes informal, and ask students to think not only in right or wrong terms. And also at the end I want students to come up with their answers. That matters because they have to take the proficiency test. I want students to understand how the formal questions in the test are being raised and how to answer them. If you look at proficiency tests, it is mostly about summarizing and trying to understand what is being asked. They need to know what Venn diagram is that asks about similarities and differences. A lot of times you are asked to explain the difference between fact and fiction or fact and opinion (p. 18).

The seemingly formal nature of questions that Kiran raises has a deeper meaning: to further reveal (to students) to the politics of how questions are raised in tests. If the questions raised during readings, writings and discussions have a cultural meaning, then it also has the corollary purpose of
acquainting students with the test. Furthermore, the questions raised within the double strategy of utilizing examples and making comparisons not only looks at the cultural realm but also within academic arena: “To know what Venn diagram is.” The test aspect is of particular importance since except for one student, the rest of the students have not passed the exams. Similarly, Kiran is interested in the kind of teaching that does not confine issues within right or wrong or a dualistic sense. Yet, there is also emphasis in teaching particular “skills” that can enable students to do academically well in schools (for example the Venn diagram, the teaching of similarities/difference, etc.).

**Summary**

So far, I have described ways in which Kiran negotiates identity both within and outside of the school. If Kiran’s diasporic, hybrid nature of gendered Muslim immigrant identity is silenced, she resists such marginalizations by recreating cultural possibilities for the self. Within the pedagogical realm, Kiran crafts academic/cultural possibilities within the classroom recognizing the academic struggles faced by her students. In this discussion, I have resisted writing utopian scenes of pedagogy and have attempted to narrate the story on the academic struggles of students and Kiran’s role in opening academic-cultural possibilities as a teacher. The act of being
a teacher in such a classroom is that the teacher is not only helping students in one particular subject but in many areas (science, math, citizenship, writing and reading). Thus, as Kiran notes,

Stress is real. The proficiency is certainly a work because students have not done well in the past. You know how it goes, they have to pass it to graduate from high school and to go to college. I take the challenge (p. 6).

Next, I describe the identity and pedagogical mediations by an Indian immigrant teacher within an urban science classroom.
CHAPTER 5

IDENTITY AND PEDAGOGY WITHIN AN URBAN SCIENCE CLASSROOM

Teaching here a lot of times is building relationship with students and the communities that students are part of and recognizing where students are coming from (p. 13).

"It is about developing language with students," points out Rabin as we walk towards the parking lot of Central High School. "It has a lot to do with learning to interact and also respecting your students." Rabin had just finished his gym duties and we had decided to go to lunch during my first day of observation in mid-September. The drive was slow due to the heavy rain that had flooded parts of the street leading to downtown. That day we stopped by a small restaurant in the downtown area between Rabin’s block classes. And eventually the restaurant became the location where Rabin and I would often converse about his teaching times at Central. Rabin continues as we begin to eat.
I have no secrets of teaching here in the school. The classroom is quite open. I did not want to teach as profession only. I don’t want to simply teach. I have reasons to be here. It is a responsibility. Teaching science is very important and teaching here lets you work on your views and not in the superior way but you begin to see angles here and there about life and society (p. 3).

The responsibility component being evoked has multiple meanings. If Rabin feels he is contributing to students’ academic success, the school environment also becomes a useful location to teach, to belong and suggests his comforts of teaching at Central and not somewhere else. Neither is the responsibility aspect of teaching a secret embedded within arcane or mysteries teaching vocabularies. Instead, it is the “quite open” aspect of the class that suggests the everyday condition of teaching that frames the importance of teaching and learning about science within the school. The responsibility component of teaching is located in the desire to teach but not to “simply teach” or to “teach as profession only”--it is something more, something more than ordinary teaching itself. Rabin identifies his work at Central as a deeply meaningful experience that has opened up his insights of reading ways of society and world. Before I move into the terrain of identity and pedagogy, I will describe the
geographical location of Central and which may enable us to locate the complex intersection of identity and pedagogy within the classroom and within the school itself.

During my first day at Central, it was impossible for me not to notice the photos on the hallway walls that lead to Rabin’s classroom. The snap-shots of faces of senior class covering the walls of Central High School evoke an intricate story often played out in urban schools. A racial story can be constructed by reading the photographs in which a multi-racial school in 1940s and 1950s became a school mostly of African Americans in the late 1950s. The change of color within the portraits overtime is a sign of segregation. The 1961 graduating class of Central High School is predominantly African American thus signaling the era of segregation and White flight from adjacent neighborhoods. The school’s current population is 98% African American. The rest of the students are White and Asian Americans.

Located on the heart of a mid-western city, the school sits beside a busy street. On the northern section, there is a small hospital recently purchased by a nearby university to apparently serve inner city population. From the front terrace of the school, the skyscrapers of the central business district are visible as reminder of the economic distance between two
uneven territories: so close yet so far away. Five blocks to the east, two private college preparatory schools make their homes to serve an elite clientele. These locations demonstrate powerful economic differences across the city’s neighborhoods. The two schools with their well-manicured lawns, pruned trees, recently painted buildings, stand in sharp contrast to Central’s large un-renovated building thus evoking scenes of structural inequalities between the two different and separate worlds.

“Our school is all about culture and tradition,” Rabin points out as we walk around the building. During the tour, Rabin introduced me to Mr. Harris and Ms. Sharon, both in their late 20s. Mr. Harris teaches World History and African American Studies and Ms. Sharon teaches English at Central. Mr. Harris’s classroom is located on the third floor, right above Rabin’s classroom. Ms. Sharon’s classroom is located three doors to the left from Mr. Harris’s classroom on the same floor. Rabin, Mr. Harris and Ms. Sharon often get together (both are African Americans) informally within the school and during gatherings outside of school.

Rabin’s classroom is located on the second floor of the building, six doors east of the main office, and is site of constant flow of traffic during class recess. To the right of
the class are student-lockers and to the left is a staircase that leads to the eastern parking lot. Rabin’s desk and chair are located approximately two feet from the chalkboard and faces the students. On the desk lie three biology books, scattered papers of lessons, past quiz questions, student drawings of human heart, a plastic model of heart, a wooden sculpture of Gandhi and a wooden map of India. Right above the chalkboard is a collection of colorful student art works describing the stages of ecosystem and ecological relationality among plants, animals and humans. On the closet door adjacent to the desk is the photo of basketball player Michael Jordan, a newspaper article with the headline: “A Young Doctor Comes Home” and several fliers on information on tutorial for college entrance exams. On the left wall is a bulletin board that contains several photos of African American scientists and their biographies. A copy of World History book sits on top of the table that is located adjacent to the right wall. On the table also stands a black and white photograph facing both Rabin and students. The photograph becomes immediately visible as one enters the classroom. The writings on the bottom of the photograph reads: “Presented in the memory of..John Williams..A True Friend. Thanks for Everything.” “This classroom tells a lot of things about me,” points out Rabin.
If the presence of the many visuals that I have described suggests Rabin’s location as a biology teacher, it also reveals his other identities. What I argue here is that the representations in the classroom articulate a particular cultural text that transcends the simple exhibitionary orientation of visuals. The illustrated vocabulary evoked in the class is not a decoration or an embellishment to beautify the class. It is more than aesthetics or symbolic representations. Rabin elaborates,

I posted the photo of Michael Jordon because of dreams. I am also a big fan of MJ. It says: “Dream you are on fire. Dream you can soar.” It is about shoes and Nike but it also has a message that is important for students about academic soaring. The statue of Gandhi and map of India is about part of my history and where I come from even though I was not born in India. I brought the map and statue from India when I was there a couple of years ago. The newspaper article is about family and my brother Finishing medical school and going back to the town where he was born. I use the World History book often to talk about history with students. Mr. Harris and I speak at each other’s classes. I go to Mr. Harris’s class to talk about India and Asia. Those are the photos of Black scientists. In books, you only read and hear about white scientists like the photo of Einstein everywhere. Last but not least this is the photo of my mentor (John Williams) who passed away a few years ago. When he died, it was a big loss for me and the school. He started African American Studies here in school was also the football coach. He is my mentor and he helped me a lot to become a teacher and a coach and it was a big loss for the community (p. 8).
The writings in the newspapers and books, the multiple photographs, the map and the statue tell us the multi-layered meanings anchored within the classroom. By pointing out the newspaper article of his brother, Rabin describes the location of his family within the classroom context thus making the familial aspect a critical component of classroom cultural display. If Michael Jordan is about dream and fire, it also conveys a message (despite its corporate affiliations as Rabin indicates) of “academic soaring.” Here, we cannot neglect the discourse and the practice of re-appropriation of Nike and corporatism to suit the classroom thus suggesting the location of athletics as a metaphor for academic achievement (which I will elaborate later). The visuals of Black scientists become re-representations of a “different” science and as Rabin reminds us, “you only read and hear about white scientists...like the photo of Einstein everywhere.” For me, the photos of Black scientists became a visual curriculum that unsettled the image of science as white thus re-framing the discourse of science beyond its white mythologies.

The World History book, the wooden map of India and the statue of Gandhi tells us the local and international dimensions of cultural identity and the affiliations one has to certain geographies (both physical and cultural) and the knowledges
that are recognized from such spaces. Gandhi and India as “my history and where I came from even though I was not born in India” has a complex meaning of how one identifies one’s location and cultural affiliations despite one’s being born in a “different” space. The displays cannot be simply interpreted as an essentialist and romantic lines of association but as signs of cultural affinity with related identities (in other places) and as symptomatic of the dis-affection with U.S. racial formations. If Gandhi becomes a political figure of reference and India is situated as a cross-national turn of identity association without being “born” within India, the photos of Michael Jordon and African American scientists indicate a different affinity or cultural relationship. Similarly, the photo of John Williams and its location within the classroom suggests the nature of respect displayed for his mentor and its implications to Rabin’s becoming an urban teacher. Thus, via the classroom visuals, Rabin has partially divulged the complex yet inter-related aspect of identities that circulate within the classroom. Similarly, the students’ artwork serves as visual knowledge in the local cultural context and suggests the circulation and validation of student-authored knowledge.

Before I describe the performance of pedagogical dimensions in teaching science within an urban context, I
contextualize the identity terrain to situate Rabin’s location within the school. Such a trajectory serves to uncover “why people do the things they do.” The classroom representations become an overture to trace the genealogical dimensions of identity, the passage to becoming a teacher, and the teaching times within an urban school. First, I address the immigrant aspect of identity within the following section: (1) the only minority (2) Brown-Black consciousness (3) arrival and the walk on fire and (4) learning about students. I explore the pedagogical possibilities created by such immigrant identities within the following titles: (1) began to talk (2) a meaningful science (3) science is quite white (4) the interactions (5) making it familiar (6) practicing to run on the track and (7) the outside learnings.

The Only Minority

Rabin coaches track at Central yet it is the space of basketball court where his teaching career tips off. I examine recent history to uncover how he began teaching at Central and the beginnings of his cross-racial identity formations. It began with growing up, as Rabin describes, in “a small white town.”

It was a small high school. I was the only minority in the school. Can you believe that? We were the only minorities there. My father came to the area from India about thirty years ago to practice medicine from a small village in South Central
India. He had difficult childhood in terms of coming from an economically poor family of farmers. But he worked to medical school. In the town I grew up, we did not have much contact with other Indians because we were not in a city. White people in the town liked us. They needed my father. My dad took care of people in town and he handled medicine from the back-home kind of way. Not prescribing a lot of medicine but more counseling, therapeutic way.

In school I did not have problems getting along with people...I did not have any choice being the only minority. I was race conscious in childhood and felt that our family’s skin color was different. Being the only Brown kid in the school meant people will call you names. But I got used to it. I always felt that I was Indian but never really knew what it meant. Our part of the world was never part of the curriculum and when I worked on a short independent project about Gandhi in fifth grade. Then it started to sink into my head a little bit (p. 9-10).

Rabin grew up as the only minority in the school, the only minority family in the town and the cultural “separation” from other Indian communities. The son of a struggling farmer, his father worked towards medical school. Then there is his movement from a village in India to a small town in the U.S. Rabin also explains the complex interactions between his father and the town people. If we read “they needed my father” and “my dad took care of people” only within the frames of doctor “serving” his patients, we erase the complexities of how the “serve” aspect is being performed. The doctoring or the medicining takes a cultural, the “back-home kind of way” thus shifting from prescriptive to the personal level.
Rabin also speaks of growing up in the geographies of small town, white America. The bus ride, a Brown within Whites, serves as a scene of occasional isolation to describe his being discriminated against due to skin-color difference and also his resistance to interpellations of being constructed as a negative difference. The idea of “getting along” is strategic in the sense of being a minority with the majority or as Rabin puts is “I did not have any choice.” The moments of recognition of being Indian “but never really knew that it meant” opened up identity possibilities and, as he puts it, “it started to sink into my head a little bit.” Gandhi or India as a location of radical global learnings was not possible through the regular curriculum. The early nebulous affiliation with the Indian identification created a cultural curiosity that leads to alternative learning spaces via a short research project. Here, the independent project offers the introductory spaces to negotiate the boundaries of cultural independence.

Brown-Black Consciousness

In what follows, I will suggest two more movements of identities and the nature of cultural affiliations it suggests. I move into the arena of Rabin’s college experience to uncover the minority maneuvers of identity. Here, he discusses his college experiences and then the decision to be a teacher,
During undergraduate, I met and hung out with Black students and felt that we were talking similar language and I was influenced by the Black activism of the eighties....Malcolm X. There were not too many minorities in college and hardly any Indians. In graduate school, through Asian organizations, I met a lot of Indians and other Asians and it was the first time I really had associated with people who looked like me. I was like a kid in the candy store. I rarely had that kind of experience before. Of course, classes never did really help and it was all European or white. The outside of the classroom interaction was meaningful. In college I found a different part of me. A different kind of a discovery (p. 4).

Rabin describes the cultural passages negotiated outside of his upbringing or the limited cultural experiences of high school. Along with affiliations with African American students, Black cultural, political activism becomes a space to identify with (however partially) and to re-negotiate his minority identity. His thoughts on the commonality or “talking the same language” suggest a movement of cross-cultural association as a minority in a majority school. The experience in graduate school suggests the Asian or the Indian aspect of affinities. Within such contexts in mind, one must read Rabin’s statement of “kid in the candy store” as speaking of culturally based alliances (however sentimental) and new cultural experiences that are generated from such interactions and, as Rabin points out, “in college I found a different part of me.” A new domain of relationship is suggested via the informal cultural
relationships and not through classrooms but within the outside scenes. Moreover, he speaks of the curriculum politics of classroom as “European and white” thus suggesting the largely “western” epistemologies that often shape university curriculum knowledge.

I need to shift to the basketball court to uncover the mediations to becoming a teacher. The decision to teach is not found in the moment of working a theoretical framework in a classroom or reading a book but within a seemingly ordinary basketball coaching experience in a summer basketball camp during his senior year in college.

I was coaching in a high school basketball camp. One day, all of a sudden, I felt like a teacher. I found myself guiding students about basketball and about college and how it impacts your life. I was groomed to be a medical doctor but my parents understood it. And when the time came where I wanted to teach, I knew that I wanted to be in an urban school. I felt that is where I wanted to be and would feel comfortable and thought I could contribute. It has been a learning experience teaching here (p. 6).

The recognition to be a teacher is found in the suddenness of moment and on the floor of a basketball court during a summer day. The identity of becoming a teacher is “discovered” when coaching the intricate jumps, dribbles and passes involved on the court and with a desire to guide students towards college and beyond. As Rabin suggests, the move in not studying
medicine and the passage towards becoming an urban science teacher came “all of a sudden.” Rabin’s decision to teach within certain physical and cultural spaces is strategic and stems from his political and cultural intentions to associate with minority groups (particularly African Americans). The decision to be within a particular locale is not claims of a “total” or uncritical connection to urban, underprivileged communities but more of a cross-cultural affinity. It is not an essentialist desire to “give voice” to students but more of a desire, based on certain comforts, to associate via self-reflexive intentions of working within a particular terrain.

Arrival and the Walk on Fire

The complex cross-cultural association requires a little bit further explanation to contextualize the locations of identity. For Rabin, the cross-cultural Black-Brown or Black-Asian affiliation lies in history or more specifically within Third World decolonization movements and within recent U.S. immigrant history.

Since that fifth grade project and then having conversations with my parents, I have always had a certain respect of Gandhi’s politics against the British. And then later I had the same feeling towards Dr. King and Malcolm X here. I saw the commonalities among them in fighting prejudice. You know that white people would not have let us into the country. So the civil rights is an important
time for us and how my parents came here since our kind of people were not allowed to enter easily before the passing of civil rights laws. I take a lot of pride in being a person of Indian heritage just because that is who I am. There is a connection between India and a person like me. My family roots are from there and I am part of it. The trip that I took two years ago was very meaningful in seeing some of the commonalties between the village my father grew up and this school or the neighborhoods around here. Because you see inequality and lack of resources (p. 4).

I see certain cross-cultural political relationships being formulated and negotiated within Rabin’s transcultural and transnational understandings. The mention of Gandhi, Malcolm X and Dr. King suggests a kinship of “fighting prejudice” that Rabin traces to both Black America and India. The connection is sought between the histories of two political entities, one decolonizing against whiteness of Britain and the other the whiteness in the U.S. The political affiliation is then connected to the civil rights movement and the subsequent legalization of entry of Third World people into the U.S. and its relationship to Rabin’s parents’ move to the U.S. The civil rights movement of 1960s is a critical historical moment since, as Rabin reminds us, if not for the political struggles during the period “white people would not have let us into the country.” Similarly, in describing identity, Rabin does not place emphasis on the rigid “American” aspect of identity but speaks of “who I am” as being a person of Indian heritage to situate
his identity(ies) beyond his country of birth. He describes his cultural and political association (however tenuous) with his father's village in India thus suggesting similar economic struggles within India and urban communities that are adjacent to Central where he currently teaches. Here, Rabin formulates connections within the basis of "inequality" between India and Black America, both within historical and contemporary contexts.

If there is a certain cultural dialogue that is being constructed between urban America and India, we have to also uncover how Rabin translates the South Asian immigrant experience that he is part of and his cultural relationships with diasporic Indian cultural formations within U.S. What I wish to suggest is that Rabin is part of an Indian community\(^1\) but his ethnic/racial affiliation goes beyond the Indian aspect of cultural community. In other words, his association is not based on romantic cultural ties but a relationship that often operates within a hybrid terrain. Rabin explains,

I go to Indian gatherings because it is part of my Identity. But our community here needs to be political within U.S. and be out there. We have a lot of cultural events but is that enough? Some

\(^1\) The analysis of the India aspect of community is beyond the preview of this paper. The Indian community in the U.S. is quite diverse (similar to India itself) and includes numerous language and cultural groups. Nevertheless, immigrants from India often identify as Indians as one of their identities.
people who migrate here also bring and hold same kind of prejudice from back home. I am thinking of skin color and how darker people within our community are perceived and treated. Of course, this happens in India too and people say he is light skinned and he is good-looking. That kind of thinking is so ingrained and a lot of times when certain immigrants come here in the new country, they think it is like what is shown on American or British TV programs back home where dark people are shown as criminals or entertainers. Many Immigrants have the assumption that America is a melting pot. So this can lead to not helping making connections with other minorities like African Americans. Then some assume that they are not discriminated against. Like feeling of making it here and get caught up in their suburban lifestyle (p. 5).

Rabin suggests the cultural aspect of Indian culture (and his identity locations) within the community and describes its limiting political motives with U.S. context. His question of “we have a lot of cultural events but is that enough?” suggests the cultural motive of the community but also its inadequate political formations. Instead, a more “public” politics is suggested and the need to “be out there.” Rabin also describes the “traveling” of prejudice from one location to the other and how the “color” dimension plays out in the Indian immigrant community. However, the discrimination aspect is not limited to U.S. but also situated within India in which the color of skin plays a similar discriminatory role. Rabin also describes the proliferation of western media and how it constructs or (mis)represents people of color within the frames of
criminality or as objects of entertainment and its implications to pre-arrival immigrant mis-education. As Rabin suggests, the pre-arrival immigrant mind often translates U.S. as a democratic space, a melting pot, in which immigrant dreams automatically flourish. Such pre-conceptions, as Rabin points out, limit the building of political alliances with people of color within the U.S. Rabin also suggests the tendency of certain immigrants to have the post-arrival internalization of being immune to discrimination or the assumption of the hypothetical feeling of “making it here” thus simply existing within privileged economic landscapes.\(^\text{2}\)

Neither does Rabin romanticize minority or cross-cultural relationships such as Asian American or African American tensions. For Rabin, “Asians need to work with African American and other groups since we have to be more political.” “I think of Asian grocery stores inner cities and some sell liquor and that does not help form useful relationships.” Similarly, for Rabin “Asian people and particularly Indians who live here need to be more open since we have our own prejudice towards other racial groups.” If there is a certain criticism deployed in describing one’s association with the Indian community, there is also the element of recognizing and self

\(^{2}\) The dream of “making it here” does not flourish for most immigrants of color, particularly those who enter the country with limited formal
critically positioning one's affiliations with one's ethnic or cultural locale. This is particularly evident in how Rabin recognizes the location of Indians or how the larger discourse of India operates within the United States. This includes, a Rabin explains, how Gandhi is constructed within the U.S. as a "skinny guy who made his own clothes." Such a representation paints Gandhi and "places like India like something really strange." Rabin pointed out to me that since his high school days white people have often asked him about the "mysterious dot on the forehead," the caste system or the dowry in India. "Those are the only topic people ask me about." If Gandhi/India become the bizarre scenes in the dominant imagination, it also effects the representation of diasporic Indians. For Rabin, there is the need to understand the stereotypical representations of India and how Indianess is constructed in the U.S. And such Othering practices operate largely because of Ignorance and there is more ignorance. People here have been so used to seeing us as something they think is not normal. After one of our Indian gatherings last year, we went to a local restaurant. We were wearing Indian clothes. We heard White people in the restaurant making real stupid remarks. People asked if we had been to a costume party. If you ask most people in this country what they really think of us, they will ask you if you have snake in your house as a pet or eat cow or if you can walk on fire or if you can eat fire (p. 7).
One must ask why certain Americans translate a cultural gathering as a “costume party?” Rabin elaborates the construction of an image of spectacle via the question of “if we had been to a costume party” as a stark reminder of the difference of culture or the cultural difference between two separate knowledge domains. The donning of cultural clothes is interpreted as artificial or as a sign of entertainment of a different kind. Here, the ignorance is quite evident. The question of “what they really think of us” also suggests the deeply layered intentions to inventing Indians as the Other in White America. Rabin also suggests the un-problematized, stereotypical construction of India and the fictional imaginings that produce the category of Indians in the U.S. Following Rabin, I suggest that the description of the dominant imaginations of India and Asian-Indian America within the stereotypes of snakes (thus dangerous and poisonous), cow (the apparent bizarre practice of spirituality) and through the culture of fire (thus deadly) essentializes and mis-represents complex cultural and historical practices.

For Rabin, the arena of politics or the need to politicize Asian struggles is critical. If dominant society

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3I use the term “Asians” and “Indians” interchangeable since Rabin uses both of the terms to speak of his identities (see
intentionally neglects or refuses to listen to the voices of Asians or if the larger dominant discourse misrepresents such subjects, there is also the need for Asians to further politicize their struggles in a public way that calls attentions of their struggles in America.

Some times we don’t want to seek attention but we have to be political. Or some times we don’t like to create a scene. But we have to create a scene and go out there. We can be who we are culturally but we also have to be out there. We have to be someone else some times. Asians are not all same and some of us don’t come out of the shell (p. 12).

The need to politicize cultural struggles within Asian America is suggested as a mode of resistance. Such public nature of struggles, as Rabin suggests, is coming “out of the shell” to “create scene...to seek attention.” Here, public appearance in the open is not simply for the sake of presence but for strategically positioning identities for political struggles. Such a movement of identity places struggles “out there” and the becoming “someone else some times” is not the displacement of self but the movement within the political arena by re-positioning one’s identity for cultural struggles for equality. Thus, “to go out there” means entering the U.S. racial politics to constantly politicize struggles via local cultural formations, which I address next.
Learning about Students

So far I have situated Rabin’s complex cultural identity formations and teaching intentions thus locating his affiliations within Brown & Black America as well as his ties to the complex Indian aspect of identity. In what follows, I elaborate Rabin’s location within the school and link the performed pedagogy to cultural context of schooling at Central. Such contextualization examines the relationships between identity and pedagogy circulated in the classroom.

Rabin points out that his college education was limiting in providing insights on teaching at an urban school like Central. “You know, when I was at the university, few people talked about diversity or about students that I have now. It is a big secret.” Rabin suggests that learning to teach at Central emerged via observing and talking to teachers (or mentors) like John and Tony⁴ who “were very helpful in showing me how to reach out to students.” There is a particular relationship articulated between learning to be an urban teacher and the mentoring that Rabin often speaks about to describe the context of the supportive space of teaching. What emerges from the discussion is a relationship between mentoring and its implications to Rabin’s teaching formations. First,

⁴ Tony recently retired from Central as a teacher. Similar to John, Rabin suggests that Tony was very helpful in mentoring
it might be useful to situate the tensions of wanting to teach in an urban school and the educational reality that he encounters at Central. For Rabin,

It was a challenge. You know what I learned was that there was a difference between what I thought I knew and what was I seeing. I had to learn as I went along. I could not see what the students did not have from the outside. It seemed to me that I was telling students what to do and but I was not listening and I was not asking questions that I needed to. Many students work late at night in their jobs and some take care of brothers and sisters when parents are working. The whole experience was new to me (p. 10).

Rabin’s description traces the complexities of teaching at an underprivileged urban school and his own self-reflexive moves to reformulate situated teaching practices. Rabin’s mention of “what I thought I knew and what I was seeing” indicates the challenges of learning to teach and the experience is suggested as being different from previous cultural or minority interactions. Here, Rabin speaks of the disjunctions between perceived “knowing” or the “seeing” of inequality and the difference of experience in teaching at an underprivileged school. His learning to teach within an urban school was a new experience and which helped him unlearn the realities of social inequalities. What I am not suggesting is a binary of knowledge and experience but, as Rabin reminds us, having certain
knowledge of social inequalities does not lead to an automatic transition to teaching at a particular location and that structural inequalities effect everyday school practices. Furthermore, his not growing up in an urban neighborhood and not having the experience of working within urban contexts (particularly with African Americans) limited his knowledge of urban schooling issues. For Rabin, the knowledge of the local context of students’ lives and the community dimensions became interrelated factors in his attempts to understand the teaching context at Central.

I point out that there is also a formation of supportive network of teachers and its relationship to recognizing students’ academic status. I often saw constant interactions among a group of teachers and the informal gatherings took place in venues like cafeteria, hallways, classrooms or after school meetings in restaurants. Rabin elaborates the significance of such informal meetings

Many of us here work together and we support each other in the community. The support that I received and continue to get has been very helpful. I learned to be an urban teacher here. We support each other and talk about students and where they are and what we need to do. I have been here for six years. Teaching here a lot of times is building relationship with students and the communities that students are part of and recognizing where students are coming from (p. 13).
Rabin sees the congregation of teachers as a space of learning and as a supportive location within which he began to understand the larger context of teaching at Central. An element within the teaching community that Rabin notes is the relationship between the teachers and the supportive climate within the school. The relationships between teachers are constructed not only with the desire to “support each other” but also by emphasizing the need to “talk about students” and the teachers work with students. Such a movement recognizes the academic needs of students and the role of teacher in “what we need to do.” In other words, the “talk” between and among teachers offer spaces to move within the trajectory of academics and “in building relationship ...and knowing where students are coming from.” Here, an inter-related meaning of community is conceptualized “as students and the community they come from” thus forming a critical relationship with home communities. In other words, both communities (school and the cultural locations that surround the school) are posited as inter-related parts of a larger community. As Rabin explains,

As you have seen, we see each other everyday. We talk about all kinds of issues. About what is going on in town, news and politics. We get together for social events outside the school once a week. If one of us is absent, the other teachers monitor the class to make sure students are given the assignment. We exchange notes about students’ academics a lot times and see how one student in my
class is doing in Ms. Sharon or Mr. Harris’s class and that makes sense to see how students are progressing or who is not coming to school. And a lot of times, when the new year starts, I have an idea about who some students are when they come to my class (p. 4, 8).

The network or support that Rabin speaks about has a particular cultural pedagogical dimension. The daily interactions among teachers suggest a sense of collective academic purpose and the continuation of supportive affiliations. The gatherings, whether outside or inside of the schools, become locations to, as Rabin suggests, “to exchange notes about students” and to talk about their progress. Rabin also places emphasis on the usefulness of such discussions not only in the context of “what is going on in town, news and politics” but also learning about the students who might be enrolled in his class in the future. In other words, these informal meetings of teachers also become locations to trace students’ academic progress whether within the class or regarding the absence of students within the school. Thus, as Rabin suggests, the supportive channels function during the absence of a teacher at a particular day to insure the continuity of learning.

Nor does Rabin avoid the linkage to the ‘outside’ community domain to situate his teaching at Central to suggest

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5 I am referring to 4-5 teachers that Rabin often affiliates with (including Mr. Harris and Ms. Sharon).
the relationality between learning about the larger community and its implications to meaningful teaching. The interaction element that I have described and the academic possibilities it suggests lead to the development of a symbiotic or syncretic relationship with the community in relation to the school. As he suggests, students’ community

is right here, two blocks away and it is not in the textbook and it is not way out there but it is around here. You can walk around or drive around everyday and see lives there. You see parts of the economic situation as well (p. 9).

Here, Rabin speaks of the need to recognize the localized aspect of community and its meaning to teaching at Central. However, community is present in the everyday sense, particularly within the cultural and the economic context of urban living. It is neither in the textbook nor “way out there” in a romantic “community” sense but within the economic manifestations and within the proximity of the school. Similarly, Rabin’s partial understanding of the localized nature of community is a knowledge derived from working with students that suggests community as a culturally situated space that intersects with economic, cultural and political issues. The students who attend Central

come from around here which are disadvantaged areas and their economic status is low. The issue a lot of times is that students have not been helped in
school from the beginning whether elementary or middle school. Recognizing this helps me understand where students are coming from (p. 9).

For Rabin, understanding the community context of schooling means situating the local context of economics and the lack of educational or economic commitment from outside sources. As Rabin suggests, the economic and politics within society has implications to students’ schooling from an early age. In sum, Rabin’s interpretation of the community-school relationship delineates his certain understanding vis-a-vis the complex play of socio-economic-cultural issues. Nor is Rabin's understanding extensive in the sense of “knowing” the community\(^6\) despite his relationship with students and the school. Perhaps his knowledge can be interpreted as “beginning” and partial since in many ways Rabin operates within an in-between or from a middle space, neither an “outsider” nor an “insider.”

The structural context of inequality is directly related to or is manifested within school context. Although Rabin is often critical about the lack of adequate resources or facilities at school, he points out that “having resources would help but having resources does not mean you can teach well...just look at the professors in the university.” In other worlds, as Rabin argues, resources do not always equal

\(^6\) Rabin often makes home visits and values the relationships he
meaningful pedagogy. What concerns Rabin is that students at Central do not have access to resources compared to students in other school districts. As Rabin suggests, this not-having or being openly denied of opportunities creates a particular tension. He points out:

Look at this on the psychological level and the stress involved.. and this not having access creates stress. And when there is racism involved and who has resources and who does not and why and when you see what you have or where you live and what is in the other side of town. And of course students known this. Students live in it (p. 10).

The psychological domain is suggested as a site of tensions and its relationality to economical inequalities. Thus to understand the social context of schooling at Central, as Rabin points out, it is useful to examine the roots of inequities and its implications to teaching. The inequality of conditions is not only limited within school geographies but also within students’ home communities or as Rabin points out “students live in it.” The effects of such inequities engendered via U.S. racial politics are present in everyday lives and the psychological tensions it evokes. In what follows, I describe ways in which Rabin interacts with students to develop meaningful relationship with students.
Began to Talk

“I have loyalty here. I learned to be a teacher here and learned about respect,” suggests Rabin about his teaching experience at Central. If the idea of loyalty suggests his affiliation with the school, the idea of respect that he often speaks about articulates the “becoming a teacher” dimension and its significance to learning to teach at Central. Rabin elaborates,

I learned that if you respect students then students will appreciate what you are doing. When you don’t act as culturally superior person then you can start something. And people like John and Tony used to tell me about this all the time. They would say ‘go around the neighborhood and see what is going on, go to the games, hang out with students. Mingle and get to know the students and where they come from and the community part. In the beginning I was only in the classroom and I was missing the rest of the story. You know then I began to listen and then students began to talk little by little (p. 12).

Here, the meaning of respect meanings learning about someone else and learning to understand (and to recognize) that someone else. As Rabin suggests, such a mode of pedagogy does not claim a sense of superiority in the cultural or intellectual sense. Thus teaching is more than the presence of the teacher or the proverbial “good teaching” in the classroom. The meaning of presence is not only being visually present but being within locations such as (along with classrooms) neighborhoods or

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school events to develop possibilities to visualize “what is going on.” Such responsible mediations reveal possibilities to constantly educate the self and to re-channel derived knowledge into practice. Thus, such informal spaces become locations to “hang out with students” and “to get to know them and where they come from.” Rabin emphasizes the learning possibilities within informal or outside the classroom domains so that “the rest of the story” is not neglected.

What I suggest here is that if the teacher respects and culturally recognizes the students, there emerges the possibility of a new relationship or an exchange or transaction. Here, the exchange or transaction is not suggestive of one giving (in the material sense) something to the other and to expect something else in return but as an attempt to develop mutual recognition that suggests the beginnings of a cultural dialogue of learning. My idea here is not to romanticize the concept of exchange within utopian lines or to suggest that respectful interchanges automatically lead to mutual recognition and to meaningful learning possibilities. As Rabin suggests, respect or recognition without the “act as cultural superiority” suggests the start of a cultural relationship (however partial) in order to translate the relationship towards creating academic requirements thus to engender
academic outcomes. Such a pedagogy of requirement (via respect) shifts beyond the artificial construction of respect (that excludes cultural contexts) within student-teacher relationships. Thus the pedagogy of respect is translated to “expecting assignments to be completed and trying your best in the test.” In other words, the idea is not to create false scenes of respect produced by cultural coercion or acting cultural superior but the kind of respect that recognizes students’ cultural knowledge and as sources of knowledge. In other words, it is not the kind of respect couched within the traditional language of respect that evokes uncomfortable and racist intentions of cultural dominance. The dimensions of respect that Rabin is articulating is not based on the artificial language of “must” or “have to” but more on developing certain understands between students and a teacher and working a particular language with students. The re-definition of respect that develops between a teacher and a student does not rely on the “title” of a teacher to demand authority but a form of respectful requirement that begins to emerge within everyday interactions. The creation of mutual dialogue based on respect and recognition offers possibilities to create alternative pedagogy. As Rabin describes, understanding the multi-layered context of teaching requires one to listen (and to learn) from
the students. Thus listening and teaching becomes a synchronous practice leading to students speaking a "little by little" (I will return to the language and speaking aspect later in the chapter). The kind of speaking that Rabin is referring to goes beyond the "expected" conversations between a teacher and a student but towards dialogues that mutually recognize each other.

One cannot underestimate the locations of such interactions or speaking since it accentuates the informality appended to the relationship. Rabin’s conversations with students take place not only within classrooms but also outside of the classroom whether in the hallways or in the parking lot. The larger purpose of such interactions, as Rabin suggests, is when you interact with students in the hallway or gym or cafeteria then you learn to work with students on a different level and that helps you in the classroom. I am not suggesting that I interact only for classroom reasons but I enjoy to just talk to see how things are going in general. And that is not about science (p. 13).

Rabin points out that such interactions with students offer spaces to learn more about students and the conversation outside of classroom invites students to similar exchanges within the academic contexts. However, the interactions cannot be simply read within classroom terms but also within Rabin’s desire to "just talk" with students beyond the domain of science. In
what follows, I will elaborate the teacher-students talk or the speaking grounds of teaching within the context of crafting a more meaningful science pedagogy.\textsuperscript{7}

**A Meaningful Science**

In this section, I use scenarios to illustrate the pedagogical dimensions or approaches to teaching science. I argue that dominant aspect of science curriculum is unsettled via the teaching of science in culturally situated classroom. Even though the official curriculum of textbooks spoken in the classroom is a dominant form of knowledge, Rabin’s teaching of science re-translates the meanings embedded within the foundational knowledge of science. The alternative science knowledge that circulates in the classroom functions by re-inventing or localizing the meaning of science itself. If the meaning of science is to simply frame science within the narratives of discoveries and inventions found within the endless volumes of equations, formulas, nomenclatures, one will find a different kind of science knowledge in the class. Such a “science of difference” (my term) operates within complex cultural milieu.

Rabin’s two-hour first block (Unified Science) included twelve African American men and fourteen African American

\textsuperscript{7} The design of this research does not include interviews with students; however, the pedagogical study of the classroom cannot neglect the role of
women. Rabin’s two-hour second block (Biology) included fourteen African American men and thirteen African American women. The classes comprised of students who excelled in science and a number of students had already passed the ninth grade science proficiency tests. At the same time, there were students in the classroom (particular in the first block class of Unified Science\(^8\)) who have had difficulties with curricular science. What I suggest is that because of the limited preparation for science prior to high school, the teaching and the learning of science becomes a complex enterprise in an underprivileged school such as Central. For this reason, instead of romanticizing the narratives of teaching science, I suggest that we read the details of pedagogy that I have described as practices that attempt to engender academic possibilities by simultaneously recognizing the complexities of teaching curricular science. My intention is to articulate strategies that enable spaces of possibility to move beyond the building of comfortable pedagogy or the construction of pedagogy that posits an unrestrained or teleological relationship between curricular science and the cultural element within the classrooms. My attempt is not to elide the

\(^8\) Unified Science includes the teaching of biology, physics and chemistry.
ambivalence of science-culture discourses but to suggest that the unsettling of traditional science from its foundations takes a cultural turn in the class to make the learning of science important yet open to interpretations and cultural interventions. If the dominant language of science can be rendered unstable, we should ask a related question of how it is creating academic possibilities for students.

**Science is Quite White**

Rabin’s classes quite often begin without curricular science. The reason for beginning classes without science has less to do with avoiding or rendering dominant science invisible (which would be a grand mistake for Rabin) but to talk or begin with “something else, local issues or about news or what is taking place around school.” For example, in one class, Rabin had invited Mr. Harris to speak about a documentary, *Bamboozle* (directed by Spike Lee) that had just opened up in theaters. During the class, Mr. Harris provided the historical context of how Black faces have been portrayed on television, comic books, textbooks and the negativity attached to such representations. Students’ pointed out how whites have often played or performed as Blacks in movies and the stereotypes that have been created. The class also discussed the contemporary issues of Black representation, particularly the portrayal of African Americans in the media. During my observation, Mr.
Harris stopped to discuss various African American historical topics and about contemporary Black issues. Is there a relationship between science and African American history being constructed? Rabin elaborates on the possible relationship.

Science is related to it. Science as you see, science is quite white. All the scientists are White on textbooks. But it does not have to be that way. When we discuss African American issues, it tells you about history and how we got here and where we need to go. In this class, talking about Black faces tell us about history. And science has a history of its own and why science is the way it is (p. 12).

Within the discussions of history and the present, we see a particular linkage being developed between the larger theme of history (and the present) within a science class. What Rabin suggests is the complex relationship between history and science or how science has been produced in the past (similar to the representations of Black faces). The description of curricular science as White and “why science is the way it is” leads us to the nature of knowledge included within the disciple of science. Following Rabin, my argument here is that since there is the politics of knowledge that informs science curriculum, we should also read its exclusionary politics. As Rabin suggests, the domain of minority history (specifically

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9 Rabin pointed out to me that he also went to Mr. Harris’s class to discuss issues about Asians or about India in the World History class.
African American history within this classroom discussion) adds a different dimension to science. I suggest that such formulations reveal the intricate relationality between both past and the present and complicate the rhetoric of objectivity that is often assigned to science discourses. Here, Rabin speaks about the limits of the knowledge of science by contextualizing it within past and present African American representations. In other words, the knowledge of science and the representations of African Americans tell us about “how we got here and where we need to go.” Similarly, the arrival of Mr. Harris in the classroom and also Rabin’s visit to Mr. Harris’s class is symptomatic of the collaborative relationship (that I described earlier) and exchange of knowledge for the benefit of students. The presence of Mr. Harris in the classroom suggests the significance placed on the relationship between African American history and an urban science class.

The discussions of history and issues of Black representation also need to be understood within the context of the location of the school. To speak of African American history is also to talk about the school itself. Rabin re-introduces the topic of the documentary in the class the following week to see if students have had the chance to watch it. Six students raise their hands. Rabin continues:
As Mr. Harris told us last week, this is all about history and what is happening now. The topic is very important but most classes in this area do not teach or even talk about Black history. In suburban schools, they rarely talk about people like Malcolm X and we have African American history class in this school. Those who go to other schools get left out (p. 12).

To speak of Malcolm X (or the African American history class) is to suggest the location of Central as a place of both academic and cultural possibility. The statements on the cultural location of school or the school pride aspect must be contextualized as emphasizing the important educational space that Central occupies. Rabin describes a particular body of knowledge (African American history) to separate the school from other schools and students who “get left out” of such learning opportunities. The emphasis placed on the cultural attributes of the school has a larger meaning that describes the need to academically excel in school. The purpose of such discussions in a science class needs to be understood within the larger context of schooling at Central. Rabin describes its implications,

This school is known for its traditions. There are lot of people who made it out there who graduated from here. Wherever you go to town and you mention to people that you are part of this school, they will think of history and tradition. We are not at the same level we used to be in terms of academics but we are getting there. I constantly speak about graduating from high school and going to college and
that this school has the largest number of African American teachers and teachers of color (p. 5).

The purpose of talking about the past is not to uncritically romanticize the past but to speak of what it may offer in the present to open up academic possibilities for students. The mention of the largest number of African American teachers or teachers of color suggests the multicultural context of school teaching population. Rabin conveys the existence of a particular kind of community in which the cultural context of teaching and learning is emphasized. Thus the critical importance of Central and the trajectory towards going to college move in parallel directions. The nature of school pride evoked is not a “feel good” or self-congratulatory gesture but as a “pedagogy of hope” that contains the language of academic urgency. “We are not at the same level..but we are getting there” speaks of that urgent possibility or the achievements that are imminent. Next, I will shift to the domain of curriculum and practices being formulated that can engender a meaningful science teaching.

The Interactions

If the teaching of science in the traditional sense occupied an “objective” pedagogy that rarely explained what science really is or was or what science really meant, I argue that Rabin’s approach suggests a more “open” science that
attempts to release curricular science from its abstract “western” interpretations. Such a re-constitution of science takes place not only within the everyday teachings of science within inside the classroom but also within the outside scenes. I offer the discussion on the concept of isotope as an example of a culturally situated science teaching practice. If isotope is an alternative form of element as described within the annals of science, how one explains the concept within the classroom requires elaboration. Rabin elaborates:

I emphasize the detail in talking about the concepts since, for example, only talking about isotope as a kind of carbon is not complete. You have to question or to go deeper and look for more meanings. This means interacting with students about the concept of isotope. What does isotope really mean and explain how it can be understood (p. 6).

Here, Rabin describes the interactional aspect in teaching science as a mode of opening up science “to question” and thus to interpret the meanings embedded with concepts. Such a movement of pedagogy suggests the need to “look for more meanings” than what is available in the traditional teaching of science. Interactions become useful strategies to shift beyond the constricting knowledge of science by recognizing how such knowledge can be unfamiliar to students. Rabin places particular emphasis on the term “meaning” thus to attempt to explicate what does isotope “really mean and explain how that
can be understood.” The idea of uncovering more meanings or “something more” on isotope requires going beyond the limiting definition of isotope and moving towards the details to understanding the concept. In other words, to further elaborate or to detail the meaning of isotope is to interrogate that uncanny aspect of science via raising questions and moving towards a pedagogy that emphasizes alternative ways of understanding the term. Rabin begins with a question.

What is isotope?...Yes, it is a kind of an element. Can someone read me what it says in the book? .....Good. Isotopes are elements having the same number of protons but that have different numbers of?...Yes, neutrons. You should all write this down (draws how isotope forms on the chalkboard) Did everyone see what happened here? O.K. Does this make sense? All right then. I have a question for you. Can anyone tell me what are isotopes used for? ..Nice work. It is used in radiation. Does anyone know who has or had cancer? .... Many of you .....You should check with the doctor periodically. This is both for men and women. And when someone is going through radiation doctors inject radioactive isotope to try to get rid of cancer cells. Imagine how they eliminate the blood cells that have cancer (p. 8).

If the discussion begins with the question about isotope and also asking students to read the textbook definition of isotope (thus underscoring the importance of textbook), there is the corollary element in emphasizing students need to write the definition of the element. The seemingly arcane nomenclatures of neutrons and protons within isotope may take
readers to the world of “high” science" of western knowledge. However, the question of "did everyone see what happened here?" suggests the use of an alternative methodology that works the visual domain to further describe the workings of isotope. The utilization of such pedagogy attempts to re-arrange the language of science by posing the question of "does it make sense?" Questions such as "does it make sense?" or "did everyone see what happened?" must be read as a way to elicit student responses to the discussions vis-a-vis the topic of isotope. The emphasis is also placed on the usage of isotope and its function outside of the textbook thus channeling the discussion to the field of human medicine. There is a certain immediacy invoked in shifting the discussion from strictly a definitional aspect to the realms of health education in which the realities of cancer and cancerous cells are offered as examples to suggest its usage and relevance in everyday life. What I suggest next is that the inclusion of culture within the discourse of elements silently shifts science from its abstract reasoning to a familiar or intimate level. Such a teaching practice connects what is in the curriculum to medicine (or science) and to the domain of local culture. As Rabin describes,

It may seem like a digression from the topic but it is not really. We need to know how isotopes work in real life and how it affects us. The terminology can be complicated and that’s why I try to break
things down. Cancer is real and there is the need to check periodically for lumps. Students talk about doctors and how they get treated in the hospital. Like a second-class citizen. And how they may not get good treatment (p. 6).

What I have suggested is that Rabin places particular emphasis on explaining the applications of isotopes in class. The seemingly academic digression become ways to delineate or to “break things down” thus suggesting the relationship of isotope to cancer and to individual lives. The brief description of students’ experiences with doctors and hospitals illustrates the tensions between science and minorities (in our case, African American population). The visit to the hospital, the lack of treatment and how mis-treatments can evoke suspicions towards medicine and towards the larger field of dominant science. Similarly, there is emphasis placed on the health education realm suggesting the need to periodically examine personal health. In sum, the discussion moves from biology/health education and to the discriminatory aspects of hospital visits thus revealing the contested links between science and culture.

The classroom discussion of mitosis offers another example in relation to the science-culture unease within an urban science classroom. During the class, Rabin described mitosis as the splitting or the doubling of cells (called
“replication”) in which the newly produced cells retain the chromosomes and nucleus of the original cell. As Rabin pointed out in class, the chromosomes carry genes that contain DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) and protein that suggests certain movements (or transfer) of human information. Then the class briefly talked about the historical and contemporary racist arguments on white claims of superiority of genes and intelligence. Lastly, health issues were incorporated within the discussion to discuss medical issues facing African American populations. There are reasons, as Rabin pointed out to me, to

be careful when talking about genes and DNA. The class discussion is useful since there are racist people who still argue that whites are more intelligent because they have better genes. I emphasize health related issues of sickle cell, diabetes or high blood pressure and certain health conditions that are common within minority groups (p. 14).

Here, the teaching of mitosis as the reproduction of cells and the traffic of genes is described in cautionary tones. If we are learning the academic description of mitosis as the production of cells and the transfer of genes, one cannot ignore the construction of racist connections between a person carrying certain types of genes and its relationality to intellectual capabilities. Instead, there is an attempt to
interpret the discussion (thus to deconstruct racist interpretations on brain, genes and chromosomes) within the health domain that has relevance within African American population. The shifting of discussion from categories or scientific appellations to the cultural context of everyday lives addresses the relationship between health issues and culture. Rabin does not avoid science but that the classroom discussion takes science to a different space where the dominant discipline (and pedagogy) of science refuses to enter. In other words, the classroom discussion emphasizes genetics in the curricular context but at the same time a cultural pedagogy is circulated to re-contextualize the topic within cultural and everyday terms.

What are the ironies of science or the disjunctions between the image of science as “objective” or benevolent and the tensions that are evoked by the claims of science as objective? I will suggest a related example on science-culture tensions that was articulated in the classroom discussion on blood circulation. To frame the contradictions we need to shift to the terrain of mid-twentieth century U.S. history that describes the scene of profound contradictions within U.S. racialized science formations. The class conversations on human blood circulation reveal the locations on which science
(and the field of medicine) meets its Other and where we begin to see the ironies that I have described earlier. The blood circulation discussion contextualized how blood moves from one organ to the other and how it circulates within the body. The life of African American scientist and surgeon Charles Drew was also discussed to point out the contributions of Dr. Drew in inventing blood banks to store blood plasma.10 During the classroom, one student brought up how Dr. Drew passed away thus revealing the critical problematic within the historiography of science/medicine. A portion of the biography posted on the classroom wall includes:

Dr. Charles Drew (surgeon) created blood banks to store blood plasma that is widely used nowadays. Today organizations such as Red Cross utilize the technique pioneered by Dr. Drew. Dr. Drew died at the age of forty-six (in 1950) due to the injuries suffered in a vehicle accident. Dr. Drew was denied admission to a nearby hospital. By the time he reached another hospital he had already lost enough blood to not regain consciousness (p. 15).

The passage reveals the tensions of history and an episode of racial violence in which an African American scientist is denied treatment because of his racial background. The biography discloses one case in recent history in which despite inventing

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10 African Americans scientists are often included within classroom discussions (including the works of Percy Julian, Meredith Gourdine, Ernest Just, etc).
the process of storing blood, the inventor is denied the possibility to live. In other words, the very possibility the invention offered is negated for Charles Drew. If the innovation that created ways to storing blood suggests a breakthrough within the annals of medicine, it also discloses the prevalence of White racism in which the denial of entry to a geographically closer hospital serves as a critical race moment. If the refusal of access into the white-only hospital suggests the profound and cruel dominant racial architecture and the racialized aspect of science discourses, how does one speak of this tragic history within the pedagogical sense or within the discussions of blood circulation? I asked Rabin the question vis-a-vis the academic implications to discussing Charles Drew’s biography. Rabin points out that, the biography tells you about what has happened in recent history and the important contributions of Charles Drew. And their is also the irony and tragedy. Here, he is the one who came up with the way to store blood and he is not let into the White-only hospital when he was loosing blood and by the time he was taken to the other hospital he had passed away. We talked about Dr. Charles Drew because of his contribution to science. And at the same time to talk about what has happened in history and if it is different now. This is the history of medicine and when talking about the inventions of African American scientists students feel it and this can become a motivating factor in learning more about science and to go to college to be a scientist. Sometimes I hesitate to bring up the death part. I am not talking about avoiding the issue but how to bring it up and talk
about it so that students become more interested in science as opposed to being frustrated by it (p. 16).

The above noted paragraph frames a recent historical irony and the contradictions within the field of medicine and science. The purpose of discussing the event is not only to recall the history but also to uncover some academic possibilities for students and also to emphasize the critical contributions of students’ cultural knowledge within the classroom. Such a pedagogy juxtaposes the works of African American scientists within the history of U.S. race relations and the field of medicine (and science) thus revealing the challenges faced by African Americans and its relevance to contemporary practices or “if it is different know.” For Rabin, the discussion aspect needs to be situated to effect academic possibility within the classroom. Bringing up (whether by students or Rabin) the history and the violence of racism is not to resist science but to confront its history. In other words, the contributions of Charles Drew are channeled towards its academic domains in order to engender science related academic trajectories. Rabin also speaks about the complexities (in the pedagogical sense) in confronting such historical roots of science and its psychological implications and possibilities of students being “frustrated by it.” However, such a pedagogy does not avoid
histories but avoids being confined by it and looks for academic possibilities that may open up learning about science. As Rabin suggests, the discussion of the death aspect is not always emphasized to not reverse the learning of science.

So far I have examined some aspects of the cultural context of teaching science in the classroom and the relationality between curriculum knowledge and cultural knowledge. I have suggested that alternative pedagogical maneuvers offer a more flexible science teaching that reveals the much-neglected cultural meaning embedding in science pedagogy. However, the teaching of science evokes its own sense of contradictions and ambivalence. Is the practice of framing pedagogy of science within the contours of culture always possible? What are the tensions in connecting science to the domain of culture? The example that I will describe illustrates the need to recognize the difficulties of uncritically connecting the two domains. In other words, culture and science do not necessarily intersect (within the epistemological sense). Einstein theory of relativity offers one such example of science-culture contradictions. Rabin explains,

We talk a lot about equations in the class. For example what does it mean by E=MC²? How would we explain E=MC² within cultural terms? I emphasize the need to understand what equations or terminologies mean even though the terms can be
quite complex. The idea of connecting science to culture is important but can it be linked like that so easily to the science content part. To simply try to say it has to be cultural sounds awkward. I am not sure if connecting it like that works. Like forcing it to make sense but science has to be intimate or personal so students can make sense of it (p. 11).

Here, Rabin suggests the complex knowledge relationship between academic science and the cultural context of teaching science. The pedagogical dilemma is revealed with the example of an equation: “how would we explain E=MC² in cultural terms?” Rabin places particular emphasis on learning the content aspect of science and suggests the challenges of connecting textbook science to minority cultures. The complexities of making meaningful science-culture inter-relationships is noted so that a facile link between equation such as E=MC² and culture becomes contested. Neither can one ignore the difficulties of constructing relationships between the two domains recognizing the epistemological differences and the appropriating intentions of science towards the spaces of minority culture. Rabin describes more of an ambivalent relationship between culture and scientific equation in which E=MC² is strategically positioned as knowledge that is important for the academic success of students. By emphasizing the location of E=MC² within the larger academic world, Rabin also describes the politics within the language of science and how language needs to
re-invented within the framework of an “intimate” science pedagogy. In what follows, I will elaborate on how Rabin suggests possibilities to undo the language of science and to make science education intelligible yet intimate in order to expose its academic possibilities.

Making it Familiar

Rabin’s everyday science pedagogy circulates within a series of consistent practices that are organized around students’ completing and submitting portfolio at the end of each week. At the end of each chapter or approximately every two weeks, Rabin designs a review of lessons followed by a quiz. The first section of portfolio includes what Rabin calls “journals” in which students answer two questions everyday that are written on the chalk-board suggesting the broader themes of discussion each day. The idea behind the journals is “creating your own word or language in defining certain words or equations” and “also summarizing what we have gone over during the week.” The second section of the portfolio contains what Rabin terms “getting notes” to write notes in class about the concepts and terminologies discussed. The third aspect of the portfolio includes completing “worksheets” by answering questions that Rabin distributes or completing suggested questions from the textbook.
The three movements that Rabin utilizes are a form of pedagogical triangulation that advocates the delivery and circulation of the science curriculum from three separate yet interrelated fronts. Journals, class notes and answering questions from the worksheets serve as a template, as Rabin points out, to “understand concepts and equations.” As Rabin elaborates,

The idea is that when students work on the portfolio students write about the concepts we have been talking about in class. What I don’t mean is simply talking about what is in the book but by using your own language. It is also about making connections among concepts to make it familiar for yourself. I assign students a lot of writing to get accustomed to the meanings of science terms and this also helps students’ writing of sentence structure and grammar (p. 13).

The three-pronged writing approach that Rabin speaks about is not a redundant activity but a strategy that accentuates science concepts. The emphasis is placed not on verbatim or rote memorization but an alternative pedagogy on re-contextualizing the topic by first introducing a concept and then periodically revisiting the topic during the week. Here, the idea of revisiting or repetition suggests its own rationale or as a practice of re-reading and simultaneously writing what is read and not as an endless recitation activity performed without pedagogical rationales. For example, during one week, discussions were organized to interpret ways of preserving food
as well as how humans, plants and non-living organisms exchange chemicals. Classroom discussions focused on the production and circulation of phosphorous, nitrate, carbon dioxide and water in the environment. During Monday, phosphorous and nitrate cycles were discussed then followed by carbon dioxide and water cycles on Tuesday. On Wednesday, food preservation techniques were discussed along with the similarities and differences among the four cycles. During all three days, emphasis was placed on the term “cycle” or the circulatory aspect of each element’s movements by drawing arrows to point out the relations within the stages of each cycle. Furthermore, two guiding questions for each day were periodically re-visited to address the larger themes of discussion. Similarly, Thursday was devoted to students’ completing “worksheets” from the book and reviewing previous week’s notes as well as summarizing themes discussed during the week. On Friday, Rabin further detailed how phosphorous circulates and how humans acquire phosphorous (phosphorous is produced when rain or water erodes phosphorous from rocks or stones to plants/vegetables thus making phosphorous available for human consumption). The second half of the class on Friday was devoted to quiz then followed by the review of the quiz. At the end of the class on Friday, Rabin also collected portfolios to make comparisons between students’
portfolio work and test work. As Rabin points out, the portfolio helps “me to see where students are in learning about concepts and particular topics.”

If the function of pedagogy is to place emphasis on review or repetition, there is also a “shifting” element to the discussions that moves towards cultural conversations. For example, during the discussion on food preservations the class discussed how milk is protected from bacteria (pasteurization) and how anti-oxidants preserve cereal from reacting with oxygen. I noticed that during these conversations, topics often shifted from, for example, sources of contamination of food within dairy farms and bacterial enzyme activity in milk to the lack of fresh food (as one student suggested) in the local grocery store. Or, in a related segment of discussion, the conversation moved from freezing, drying and canning as a method of food preservation to the lack of food in certain places in the world and issues of hunger strikes. During this discussion, figures like Gandhi, Mandela and King, Jr., were evoked, as Rabin describes, to understand “food a little bit differently.” Whether the discussion vis-a-vis the lack of quality food locally, the lack of availability of food in certain geographies or hunger strikes, these corollary elements were not discussed extensively but were invoked sporadically to interpret larger
meanings of food preservation. As Rabin pointed out to me, this was to briefly talk about that food is not same everywhere...the part about hunger strike and Gandhi, Dr. King and Mandela was not planned....but when the Derek\textsuperscript{11} mentioned the local grocery store then I remembered the hunger strike part and then we talked about people not having enough food or quality of food (p. 11).

The shift of discussion is not to be understood as a neglect of curricular science but something included to the science. Even the brief discussion that Rabin suggests did not extensively deal with the broader discourse vis-a-vis the politics of food but created a pause, a gap in the sequence of curricular science. One may look at the inclusion as a politics of interruption since such moves complicate the teleological narratives of science without compromising the content aspect of curricular science.

A related element is also the spontaneous aspect of the discussion and how the perspective of a student changes the direction and context of the discussion. Similarly, the discussion also evokes the deep cultural meanings that often and suddenly arrive within the boundaries of official science and its politics of knowledge. If discussing science aspect of food is learning about pasteurization and preservatives, there is also the domain of minority politics of food and

\textsuperscript{11} Derek in a psuedonym
protests that one cannot ignore. In such unplanned and seemingly scattered moments, curricular science reveals its own contamination and its limits. For me, the occasional, brief and random interruptions articulated the politics of culture thus “taking” science to a different, unfamiliar (for some), and unpredictable locations. One would wonder if science could ever escape minority cultures.

If there are barriers imposed by societal structures (and the larger discourse of science curriculum), so far I have described alternative classroom pedagogies to move beyond the claims of objectivity and neutrality within science discourses. Can outside-the-classroom interactions assist science learning in the classroom and beyond? What I attempt to elaborate that the pedagogies that are developed outside of the classroom has implications to science classroom. The mediation of such pedagogy relies on informal associations to find ways to reach out to students and the need to motivate students about science. I am not talking about four-step motivation that is created by a White guy who sits in his office all day and also not the feel-good kind of motivation. For me, being an educator is not only about science. Science is a big part of it but it is more than that (p. 13).

There is a particular emphasis placed on the complex linkages and the gaps between the field of science as conceptualized in curriculum and the possible grounds on which to situate or to
perform the motivation aspect of pedagogy. The meaning of motivation, as Rabin describes, is different from traditional definitions of motivation. Motivation is not to be conflated with dominant four steps to motivation but as a practice that is anchored within the cultural contours of an underprivileged school. The alternative motivation is grounded as being within and outside of science and is inter-connected to reaching out to students. Thus, as Rabin notes, “being an educator is not only about science ...but more than that.” I suggest that we re-read “not only...but more than that” to examine the alternative methods and practices of motivation to look for other possibilities for students’ academic success since the science classroom is part of the story but not necessarily the whole story. Here, we shift to the ground of informal pedagogy that suggests the creation of outside learning spaces for both students and also for Rabin.

**Practicing to Run on the Track**

The alternative learning location that Rabin speaks as an area of significance is the domain of athletics partially due to his own involvement with the track team as a coach. What I wish to elaborate is the relationship between athletics and science and its potential for academic success in school. Here, Rabin elaborates the location of track within the larger framework of schooling.
Coaching track gives you a different way to mentor and learn. And it is informal and there is discipline involved and it is team oriented and we work towards a goal. I am not talking about winning but it is about self-esteem and not about feeling superior but for your own self and to interact with friends for a common purpose. To participate in track is not necessarily about running and passing the baton but it is like academics and you need to focus (p. 15).

Rabin articulates a distinct possibility offered by the participation in athletics. The track metaphor is extended to the classroom context thus describing the education that takes place on the playing field and its applicability to classroom learning. The comparison between track and science education suggests a similar trajectory in which participating in track is not necessary running only but developing skills to organize and to focus. Running towards a destination becomes more than winning. Thus being part of athletics becomes a space that is more than passing batons, and the participation itself can become a location to re-affirm the self to focus on academics. Similarly, the notion of sprinting on track has a double meaning: on the field and also towards academics. As Rabin suggests, the idea of working with students in “classroom and in track meetings are different but I am trying to use techniques I am learning in athletics in class.” Rabin elaborates:

I think of group motivation a lot of times. And that has helped me in trying to do more group work in my
class so that students are constantly working with each other and have the goals and the desire to do well similarly to during track. I am learning and the academic track is the key and not to forget, a lot of times athletics becomes a way to get a scholarship to college and college opens the door that you and I have gone through (p. 12).

If the term “track” becomes a possibility after school as a terrain to learning skills within and beyond science, the metaphor of track also suggests the critical importance of being on academic track. The double movement is experimental that Rabin continues to explore and which has possibilities for students’ academic success in high school and beyond. Here, Rabin also suggests the emerging strategy of group or collective motivation in his science courses. The idea collective motivation largely, as Rabin describes, is generated from his experience working with students during track practice. Such a definition of motivation radically differs from de-contextualized and generalized (the four step, etc) approaches to motivation but focuses on the local cultural milieu. Furthermore, there is also the element of collective work that serves the common purpose. Thus interacting collectively for a desired purpose suggests sprinting towards a location of possibility. The motivation to perform is not about claiming a superior identity but about re-configuring the relationships between athletics, school curriculum and

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developing particular skills. The purpose of participation is not necessary about winning but to shift towards learning about ways to participate within and outside of track. Thus, the practice after school in track is suggested as a practice for academics as well as an academic opening for the future. Particular emphasis is placed on attending college thus to “open doors” since athletic scholarships can be a useful vehicle to secure entrance into college.

Within the outside informal contacts, athletics often became a location of possibility to learning the gender\textsuperscript{12} dimensions of working at Central. Rabin pointed out that he had limited knowledge working within the gender context of education, particularly with African American women. Thus track afforded opportunities to meaningfully connect with women in the classroom.

I did not have much contact with African American women before. Learning to work with women in comparison with men is different. So working with the students during our practice helped me to work with women in the classroom. I began to see here and there the lives of the students whether about students going to work after school or learning the type of music students listen to. Or the issues students care about and generally about what their life is like (p. 11).

\textsuperscript{12} My move here is not superficially “add” gender discussions at this state of discussion but to highlight Rabin’s emphasis on how the space of athletics became a location to learn about gender issues and its implications to his classroom practice.
What Rabin suggests is how coaching track afforded possibilities to learn about students’ lives thus allowing possibilities to gain some knowledge in relation to the gender context of schooling. Learning about gender context of identity allows spaces to recognize students’ everyday life and interests in an effort to make connections to students’ academics. The informality of out of the classroom experience via interactions during practice becomes indispensable locations to educate the self about gender/culture. In what follows, I expand further on the possibilities created by outside the classroom learnings.

**The Outside Learnings**

During my observation, as I followed Rabin from cafeteria to gymnasium to parking lot to the library and as we walked along the wide hallways of Central, Rabin and students often participated in casual conversations. These informal talks were not necessarily about academics but more on non-curricular topics (movies, athletics, homecoming parade, etc) and often the talks lasted for a minute or two. There is a certain spontaneity attached to these conversations that suggests its unplanned intentions. “It is going with the flow and there is nothing planned about it.” If the informal inter-communications are anything but formulaic or is unorganized, we cannot dismiss its academic possibilities. As
Rabin describes, the idea of interacting with students is about teacher responsibility and "it is not a new idea and is very basic and you will probably will not get to know students if you don’t do it." In some ways, these scattered exchanges whether filled with smiles, laughter or somberness, afforded possibilities "to talk about things we don’t get to talk about in class...like how is work going....what are the plans after graduation or how life is in general." What Rabin suggests here is the possibilities the dialogues\textsuperscript{13} create in speaking about informal issues whether related to academics or "life in general." The idea of the presence of the teacher or being present at certain location offers possibilities to converse about issues that are within and beyond the domain of curricular science. Rabin continues,

\begin{quote}
Not that my being visible in the games or talking to students in the hallway always helps but it gives me a chance to talk to students and I get to listen to students. I have learned by listening. There are students who prefer to talk and those who don’t in class. For me, it helps to get to know the students and students to know me. Some students struggle with biology or science and are quiet in class and some are quiet but do well in test. For me, the important part is how you talk or tell students. What I mean by tell is not like a lecture but suggesting and at the same time expecting the work from students. How you say or tell certain things makes a difference. For me, it is all about talking that goes both ways and to develop a language to
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{13} As I have suggested earlier, the language use is both formal and informal and often utilized aspects of BEV.
start something. I raise a lot of questions in class to talk about science. For example, when I go around the class, I look at where students are in terms of understanding concepts and then I ask students more questions to challenge and also to validate them. If a student misses a class, I ask “where were you” or I say “you were missed in class.” I ask students to do work hard in learning science and not to miss class (p. 11).

16).

Simply being visible or conversing with students itself does not assure learning about students and neither does it necessarily translate into academic success. Neither is Rabin romanticizing the presence of a teacher at a particular location or the interactive elements and its academic possibilities. There is a particular emphasis placed on the “listening” component for Rabin’s own education within the school.

Similarly the validation of students’ perspectives and raising questions creates spaces to develop a language with students. For me, what Rabin is suggesting is that one has to be present at multiple locations without coercion and with the desire to get to know the students and, most importantly, to “listen to students” and then to learn from such experiences. Similarly, the outside of class talks is interpreted as spaces to create a medium or a language between a teacher and students. However, the investment placed on interacting with students is noted as meaningful acts thus shifting away from cosmetic or superficial aspects of interactions. In such contexts, learning is
translated as moving in both directions: from students to
teacher and from the teacher to students.\textsuperscript{14}

In order to further explicate the “outside” locations
of learning and its implications to academics, I move to the
scene across the street from the school. Here, Rabin describes
his biology classes traveling to the nearby hospital each week
to observe the activities in the hospital.

It was like an independent study or like a project.
For example, seeing what is happening about biology
outside of the class and understanding the
application aspect. Students had the chance to
interact with African American doctors and nurses
who work there and that helps in developing the
motivation for the field. And also seeing the
practical aspect of biology just across the street
whether how the hospital works or how it is like to
work in the hospital. And we discussed each week
what happens in the hospital. For example, about
cancer, tumors, blood circulation. Then guess what?
A number of students went to study biology and
nursing in college. One student is studying
medicine at the university (p. 14).

By referring to the project “like an independent study, “ the
informality of the experience yet its academic designs is
articulated. The interaction is not only between students and
the larger field of science but also within the frames of

\textsuperscript{14} During my observations, I noticed that the conversations with
students were often preceded by handshakes or speeches of
greeting (“how is-it going,” etc) and Rabin made sure that I
was introduced to the students and never neglected to mention
that I was finishing college. The emphasis on college suggests
the academic trajectory to follow upon finishing high school.
cultural contacts with African American doctors and nurses and its implications to generating students' desire or interests in the field biology. The significance of such learning experiences is noted as an extension of biology classes, is made relevant to formal curriculum context and suggested how such experiences led students to select science related subjects as a career. Similarly, there is emphasis placed on experiential aspect of learning, and post-visit discussion is accentuated to talk about what was learned at the hospital.

Summary

In this discussion, I have described the hybrid aspect of Rabin's identity and how he negotiates identity both within the school and outside of the schooling context. I have pointed out that Rabin negotiates identity within Indian communities as well as within African American communities. Within the teaching context, Rabin seeks pedagogical possibilities in relation to science curriculum and students cultural knowledge to make science pedagogy intimate. Similarly, Rabin recognizes the challenges of teaching science at an underprivileged school such as Central. The impediments faced by Rabin (and teachers

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15 Rabin was unable to continue the partnership with the hospital this year due to the hospital being under the new management of a local university. Rabin points out that the new administrators were not interested in the kind of program that had helped the students before.
are Central) are many, including the structural issues
(resources, curriculum, etc). In regards to contemporary and
future challenges, Rabin is self-reflexive on his limitations
and points out his

need to focus on proficiency exams early enough and
work on practice exams. I need to be more creative
in developing lessons. I need to work on interactive
and group work. I have been working on emphasizing
artwork in teaching science (p. 14).

Here, Rabin looks forward to teaching at Central yet recognizes
the challenges ahead, including students' encounters with
proficiency exams. The sphere of state mandated exams cannot
be neglected since it often serves a "gate-keeper" in opening
up (and not opening up) academic possibilities. There is also
emphasis placed on working on his teaching strategies,
particularly within student learning in group contexts and
visual aspect of learning. As I described in the chapter, Rabin
also recognizes the possibilities he can/must create within
science classrooms for students to academically succeed.

Rabin will be teaching (along with Mr. Harris and Ms.
Sharon) ninth-grade science, which is proficiency test grade
in the state. All students must pass ninth grade proficiency
exams to graduate from high school. Next, I describe ways in
which a Filipina teacher negotiates identity and teaches social studies within an international school.
CHAPTER 6

LOCAL AND GLOBAL PEDAGOGY WITHIN AN URBAN-SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM

Close to the end of my research, Maria handed me a copy of a poem she had authored. The poem reveals the complex formation of epistemologies and ways in which immigrants perform cultural identity and resist dominant representations. The title of the poem is "The Philippine American View of Cultural Difference" and it reads as follows:

We believe in freedom of silence. You believe in freedom of speech.

We lapse into meditation. You strive for articulation.

We marry first, then love. You love first, then marry.

We like to contemplate. You like to act.

Our love is mute. Your love is vocal.

We try to conceal it from the world. You delight showing it to others.
We are taught from the cradle to want less and less. You are urged everyday to want more and more.

We delight to think about the meaning of life. You delight in physics.

Maria teaches at Verdes Middle School, an alternative school that emphasizes international education. “The reason I teach here is because this is an international school and it is diverse,” points out Maria. Her rationale for teaching at this particular school is motivated by its internationally oriented curriculum\(^1\) and due to the school’s cultural diverse population. The school population is comprised mostly of students of color: African Americans, Somalis, Hmongs, Laotians and Mexicans. Students are selected by lottery system in which students apply to enroll at the school for the academic year. Located within an urban neighborhood and within a fifteen-acre property, the building is one-large structure constructed in the 1970s. A large blue colored globe sits on the right side of the main entrance as one enters the building. Approximately twenty feet to the left is a large open space where students

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\(^1\) The school has its own supplemented global curriculum that addresses topics of culture, migration, local-global relationships, etc.
converge during lunch. Flags of various nation-states hang from the ceiling thus evoking the spirit of internationalism within the school.

Maria’s classroom is located on the second floor off a hallway which is peppered with visuals of global maps and framed photographs of various countries. Adjacent to the left wall of the classroom, four computers are placed for students’ use and national flags of various nation-states are positioned on top of the computers. On the wall, maps of United States and the world are posted that shows the distribution of natural resources and population. Student-authored essays on “I have a dream” are posted on the wall adjacent to the window that faces the door along with rectangular shaped papers containing words such as define, know, classify, debate, analyze, question, etc.\(^2\) The chalkboard is located on the right side of the door and Maria’s desk and chair are approximately three feet from the chalk board facing the students. On the desk, there are copies of practice proficiency tests on citizenship, students’ drawings on longitude and latitude, and copies of lesson plans on step-by-step approach to constructing a paragraph. Above the chalkboard are photos of children

\(^2\) I will elaborate on the rationales for the postings later in the chapter.
reading books in schools in Kenya and the Philippines. There
is a wide walking space from the chalkboard to the far-left
wall thus creating a walking corridor from one end of the
classroom to the other. On each side of the open space
student-chairs are placed facing each other.

I have asked: What do the classroom visuals speak
about the cultural as well as the political aspect of
knowledge and identities? There is both multicultural\textsuperscript{3} as
well as global aspects of knowledge displayed in the
classroom. The posting of students’ essays of “I have a
dream” suggests the circulation of students’ cultural
knowledge within the context of Black political struggles
and the larger context of civil rights movement.
Similarly, the map of the world and the map of the U.S.
suggests the emphasis placed on both local and global
dimensions of geography. There are no animal photos being
constructed as a space of culture or country. “This is not a
zoo,” remarks Maria humorously about the classroom visual
displays. “I don’t put animals on the wall to talk about a
country...or like a bullet train for Japan.” The Filipino
aspect is largely reflected via the photo of children
reading books. Often during the school year, Maria referred
to the photograph as a location of where she was born.

\textsuperscript{3} I am using the term multicultural to denote the U.S.
context of cultural diversity.
Similarly, the arrangement of the chairs suggests the design to facilitate conversation as students on one side of the class often respond to students on the other side. The open passage between the two student-sections allows Maria to move back and forth from one area of the classroom to the other. As I will elaborate later, a particular relationship develops between the practice proficiency tests placed on Maria’s desk and the rectangular papers that are posted on the walls that contain words such as “explore,” “identify,” “contrast,” etc. The classroom is a space where nineteen African American (nine men and ten women), two Somali (both men) and one white Canadian (man) enter everyday to learn about social studies. First, I address the diasporic, immigrant aspect of identities and how Maria negotiates identities within society and school by tracing local/global formations of identities. I describe the performance of hybrid identities within the following sub-sections: (1) house of Spain (2) the arrival: perfectly democratic (3) welcome to America (4) forever foreigners (5) culturally friendly and (6) learning about the system. Secondly, I illustrate the kinds of pedagogy such identities enable within the following sub-sections that allows us to conceptualize meanings of democracy, geography and history within alternative terrains: (1) what does apology mean (2)
immediate feedback (3) the meaning of democracy (4) geography is tricky (5) family and community (6) cross-cultural dialogue (7) international travel and (8) mini society.

House of Spain

We were under Spanish rule starting in the 1500s. Spain colonized us. That is how we learned Spanish language. Then there was the Filipino-American war and that is how U.S. occupation began in early 1900s. During World War II, we were under the Japanese then under the American influence and U.S. military bases were built. And there is also Chinese culture because a lot of immigrants from China own businesses. Sometimes there are problems between rich immigrants and local people. We have local Filipino culture and there has been emphasis to use the traditional language Tagalog in schools. For those reasons, we have had a difficult history but people have survived. The society is quite mixed.

I was raised in a Catholic family and because of Spanish rule we have a lot of Catholics in the country. ...I remember when I was little, there used to be this white American guy who used to pick us up in the neighborhood to take us to church. He would bring a big bus and we would go to church. When I was growing up there were missionaries everywhere (p. 4-7).

Maria frames the complex historical and contemporary configurations of Filipino cultures within the intersections of Spanish, U.S., Japanese, Chinese and indigenous cultural formations. Thus, the project of contextualizing Filipino
identities addresses colonial and the neo-colonial dimensions of history and the effects of such cultural contacts. She emphasizes how centuries of Spanish colonial rule influenced people’s language and culture within the Philippines. Maria argues for the need to recognize the significance of Japanese and U.S. colonial influences and its effects on local traditions. The advent of Filipino-American war led to the development of American colonial relationship with the Philippines. Japanese invasion during World War II and the post-war built-up of U.S. military bases further undermined local cultural practices and traditions. Maria also suggests how Chinese influence within the economic context has heightened tensions between wealthy Chinese immigrants and the local population. Maria describes the Philippines as a “mixed” society and describes its “difficult history” due to its multiple colonial histories. The continued re-surgence of Tagalog and the Filipino negotiation with multiple historical and contemporary arrival of people and cultures is emphasized. Maria also traces the relationship between Spanish and American colonialism and its influence within the religious

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4 Although Maria sees some economic benefits due to the presence of the military bases, during our conversation, Maria was often critical of the cultures the military bases produced, such as prostitution of local women, the “Americanization” of local area and the cultural effects of the bases on the Filipino psyche.
sphere. If the arrival of Catholicism is linked to Spanish occupation, the white American missionary man driving a bus in the neighborhood serves as a neo-colonial agent of conversion.

The colonial or neo-colonial formations are critical terrains to trace identity formations since Maria places particular emphasis on the colonial dimension of Filipino heritage. Here, Maria elaborates on the colonial influence within education and her educational trajectory to becoming a teacher.

The whole colonial experience changed our educational system. For that reason, our education was both in Spanish and English. I started learning English when I was three years old in Manila. We learned Tagalog here and there but English were more emphasized. For a lot of people, education is the only inheritance so that they can make a living. And there is a lot of competition for jobs. I went to teaching because my mom suggested that teaching might work for me. At that time, the curriculum was learning women’s skill development like sewing or cosmetology. That was seen as women’s occupation. Like an identity (p. 9-10).

Maria traces the relationality of colonialism to the educational sphere via Spanish and English to contextualize the language dimensions of knowledge production and dissemination. In such educational arrangements, largely a

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5 The complex question of why post-colonial societies continued to use colonial language is a complex question and is beyond the purview of this discussion.
product of neo/colonial ideologies, local languages (and its cultural features) become often absent within educational practices. Maria also points out to the contemporary competitive nature of society the post colonial experience has produced, both within the sphere of education as well as in the larger societal context. Within the post-colonial educational backdrops, Maria touches upon the gendered educational trajectory (and the embedded curriculum knowledge) of her own early education and the social construction of teaching as a gendered practice or “like an identity.”

Maria started teaching when she was nineteen years old and taught science, math and English language in both public and private schools in the Philippines. With her husband, Maria moved to the U.S. in the late 1960s with “a couple of hundred dollars in my bag.” Maria reflects on the arrival and the departure.

It is difficult to leave the place where you grew up. Leaving was a new experience for me. Home is a place you will always miss. Now home is here. Home is also there (p. 3-4).

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6 The meaning of post-colonial is not the end of colonialism but a condition within a nation-state after the declaration of formal independence from colonizing powers (after World War II).
7 One school included Montessori.
The Arrival: Perfectly Democratic?

If the departure is filled with nostalgia, memories and a desire to return, one cannot neglect the post-arrival stories, identities, and the ambivalence of living in a new geographical space. The tensions of being an Asian immigrant began to surface during the first year of arrival. Maria details her experience:

When I was in the Philippines everything in the U.S. was shown as perfectly democratic...everything was shown as good here but I guess there was more to it. It was nice on TV but when I saw some neighborhoods and after reading in the newspapers, it was a different story.....then I noticed that people saw me differently.....things like, people would ask if we ate dogs. And when we invited people for dinner, people would suspiciously ask you what kind of food it was. You knew what they were thinking about. My husband and I used to get so mad about that. You know there are so many stereotypes about Asian people (p. 8).

Maria describes the disseminated media images of U.S. (in the Philippines) as a utopia construction: a location of perpetual stability and a "perfectly democratic" space. Learning or unlearning about the intricate socio-economic and political issues within the United States takes place after the arrival: "a different story" is visualized via seeing and reading about impoverished geographical locations. This is also accompanied by a self-reflexive move or recognition of the Filipino self in the diaspora and how one is viewed as an immigrant Asian. The dominant question of "if we ate dogs" suggests stereotypical construction of Filipinos/Asians as deviant or uncivilized.
Maria’s example of guests’ scrutiny over the served food reveals the suspicion leveled over the nature of food offered thus highlighting dominant society’s prejudice towards Asians.

In relation to identities, how do we begin to explicate the identity aspect of this discussion recognizing the traveling of cultures, traveling of identities and the newness that is created due to trans-cultural movements? The diasporic experience offers alternative grounds to re-negotiate identities. Maria elaborates,

I am always a Philippine and that is something you can’t forget and that is important to me. We have mixed with other cultures here in the United States but we are still Filipino. It is like taking what works or is useful to you. I am a Philippine. I am also a Filipino American, an Asian, an Asian American and when it comes to voting I am a U.S. citizen. And it depends on who is asking. A lot of times when you say or write Asian you don’t get anything (p. 9).

Here, as Maria argues, her identity is always within gender context thus it is always Philippine. However, it is also Filipino American, Asian and Asian American. Similarly, the travel aspect and the cultural experiences in a new geographical space adds newness to identities thus making identity fluid and also selective in its expression. The statement of “depends on who is asking” suggests how (and to whom) identity is spoken since identity can also be created
or invented by someone else. The post arrival identity formations thus negotiate the contours of U.S. cultural scenes neither forgetting old identity affiliations nor completely acquiring new cultural features. Instead, as Maria suggests, one appropriates both old and new elements of identities “taking what works or is useful to you.”

A related component of identity formations is the cross-cultural tensions, as Maria points out, on how immigrants negotiate identities and its relationship to how immigrant selves are represented within the dominant imagination. In other words, as Maria argues, there is a particular relationship between how the nation-state of the Philippines is constructed in the dominant imagination and how Filipinos are seen and identified as within the United States. Maria explains:

People used to ask me and some still do. “Why are there so many problems in the Philippines?” You would think that educated people you meet would know but the educated ones are the most backward. How do you deal with such people because of the narrow mind-set they come from? They think their house is the center of the world and there are some that think they know everything about Asia. I have to watch what I say or people will assume that all Filipinos are same or all Asians are like me. Then how do you talk to people? How do you explain about where we come from? Then some people tell me to go home and change things. I tell them they should travel to the Philippines to educate themselves but they say they want to go to France, Germany or England. I ignore people who think like that (p. 13-15).
If U.S. is fantasized as an idealistic space of democracy and freedom within the dominant imagination, the other side of the world—the Philippines—is a space of crisis. Maria describes her conversations with “educated” people, including the self-proclaimed experts on Asia and the unease that develop during such inter-communications. The practice of translating cultural issues becomes a difficult act recognizing the homogenizing tendencies of the dominant party. Maria’s questions of “how do you talk...explain about the Philippines?” reveals the difficulties of communicating when the dominant party is unwilling to listen. Thus, the idea of “I ignore people who think like that” becomes a strategy of resistance. As Maria points out within the context of travel, the dominant imagination does not desire to travel to unlearn from locations such as the Philippines but wants to, once again, travel to Europe to make Europe the center of knowledge. Next, I elaborate ways in which Maria negotiates identity within the school and describe the kinds of pedagogy Asian immigrant identities enable.

Welcome to America

Maria started teaching within public schools the first year of her arrival in the United States and the early years were particularly challenging times. In what follows,
Maria elaborates on adjusting to U.S. cultures and also to the cultures of schools.

When I first started teaching, schools were being desegregated and white teachers were leaving a lot of schools. They said they needed diversity and hired me and I did not know what was happening. I knew that there was just a lot of hatred in society. I used to carry a dictionary with me wherever I went. I needed to improve my English and it was a quite a transition. The first few years were hard you know. How you dress and what you bring to lunch made a difference. Everything here was about time. Fast life. I was trying to understand the curriculum and also who the students were and the parents (p. 9, 14).

If the civil rights movement opened the doors for Asian immigrants to enter the country, the continuing desegregation of late 1960s opened teaching possibilities for Maria. As Maria points out, she had limited knowledge of what was talking place other than the racialized hostilities. The fear of racial co-existence results in white flight from schools. Maria elaborates vis-a-vis the negotiation of cultural dynamics as a recent arrival in which the dictionary serves a way to work the English language. She describes the socialization process as challenging and that required not only learning about the politics of schooling but also negotiating the sphere of time, food and clothing.

Maria’s first teaching assignment was at a suburban school. Here, an analysis on the language dimensions of
teaching and the description of a particular classroom scenario may allow us to contextualize the challenges faced by an immigrant Filipino woman. This example also narrates how the discourse of racism operates within U.S. schools. Maria explains:

I remember the time when so many parents would call me to check if they could understand how I spoke. They would complain about my accent and would say that they wanted to make sure that students were understanding me. What does that mean? People are used to hearing in a certain way and when you speak to them differently they don’t like it.

In the school, I talked about my family. And one time I was telling how I was trying to open up a business to support my family and that I would hire my brothers and sisters and train them. Next thing I know I have a white parent calling me to tell me how prejudicial I was to hire my own. I tried to explain but it was no use. And there was another time when parents complained because I was using the term “happy and gay” in my class. They told me not to use the word “gay.” At that time, I knew English but I did not know how to talk the language. Then the principal told me to take a class on multicultural issues. I was going to file a grievance but I did not have much support and not being from this country I was worried about not having a job. One parent told me “we are paying you to teach” and some even came to observe my class. Then they would be surprised to see how I taught. They would say “you do a good job.” I told my self ‘welcome to America.’ I asked for a transfer. That was the end of suburban schools (p. 7, 9, 11).

The passage reveals the tension of negotiating teaching and identity during Maria’s early experience within a U.S. school. The call by parents is not to thank the teacher for teaching but to examine if the teacher can speak according
to the dominant definitions of language use. One cannot avoid the racial dimensions of this interaction and the relationality between how one speaks (thus a person’s identity) and how one is viewed, treated and spoken to. As Maria points out, there is resistance to listening alternative forms of speech thus non-recognizing the voice or the accent of the teacher. As Maria argues, the disbelief of parents on how Maria taught and the response of “you do a good job” can be read as a complimentary statement yet it is symptomatic of the dominant suspicion that rarely respects the knowledge/pedagogy of a minority teacher. The parental response to the usage of terms such as “hiring your own” and “happy and gay” describes the deeper knowledge difference that undergirds across racial lines in which the statement of Asian immigrant teacher is viewed as deviant or as a threat to the educational order. Thus, Maria’s desire to hire her family members becomes a discriminatory gesture to white America and the use of “gay” is viewed as the promotion of gay/lesbian discourses. The burden is placed on the teacher to educate herself via taking a course on diversity in order to shift the responsibility from white America that apparently remains innocent and non-discriminatory. Maria’s intention of not pursuing the matter further (in the form of filing a grievance) is
neither ignoring what had taken place nor accepting the outcome of the cross-cultural clash. The decision to ask for a transfer from the suburban school is a movement of immigrant survival in order to seek support somewhere else by recognizing the need to make a living in a society where one is represented as an outsider.

If there is non-recognition of immigrant teacher’s perspectives, are Asian immigrant teachers credible sources of knowledge or reliable teachers for the dominant imagination? Maria pointed out to me that many parents were surprised to encounter an Asian women teaching a content area course like social studies or language arts.

A lot of times, people assumed that I teach languages. Are immigrant teachers not credible? I would love to teach a language like Spanish or Tagalog but people get surprised as though if I am not qualified to teach social studies or language arts. Whenever I tell or when people see what I teach, they get surprised as though if I did not have any credibility to teach the subject. When I tell people I teach American history and American government, some people get suspicious. They probably think I am not American enough to teach those subjects (p. 6).

As Maria explains, there is a false and a racist perception of an Asian immigrant teacher being unqualified to teach a content area. An Asia immigrant teacher is constructed as only being qualified to teach languages thus working with the assumption of language teaching as an innocent act without its own politics. The discussion suggests how the
politics of credibility constructs certain individuals as being disqualified to teach a particular form of knowledge. Thus, Maria’s teaching of American history, government and literature becomes a suspicious act within the dominant imagination. An Asian immigrant teaching a content area subject becomes a surprise issue thus conjuring up the thoughts of the teacher’s subversive intent to the U.S. nation-state.

**Forever Foreigners**

Maria’s decision to enroll into a local university “to find out more about this society” provided alternative spaces to negotiate identity. Maria points out that the writing opportunities via the university class offered possibilities “to express myself.”

I began to write to let people know what I thought about society and my experience here. An Asian response to white society. Whenever I talked about racism or prejudice, the audience in the class said that they did not know that is how Asians felt. That tells you how a lot of people think of us. They think we are all quiet...not political (p. 5, 9).

Students response to Maria’s view of cultural difference suggests the difference of epistemologies and the way pre-conceptions guide the view of the ethnic other. Here, the not-realizing or the surprise element evoked within the classroom suggests the way Asians or Philippine Americans

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8 I will return to the expression aspect later in the
are perceived by the dominant society. As Maria points out, the silence of the audience is followed by reserved responses revealing the uncomfortable boundaries in which cultural differences come into contact. The speech of a Filipino American unsettles stereotypes and pre-conceptions within the dominant imagination that portrays Asian as silent or "all quiet and not political." The silence of the audience is a different kind of a silence that develop during instances of unlearning and often during moments of epistemological crisis that calls for immediate reflection of the self and the other. For Maria, a university classroom becomes a location to talk of alternative worldviews and also to uncover more about white America. Here, the speaking and writing within a university class becomes a time for rebuttal or a response to misleading views about Asians and interrogates the "did not know" statement of many students.

If Asians are treated with suspicion and if the racialized treatment undermines the identity and perspectives of Asians, Maria points out for the need for Asians to learn more about the United States and "see what is really happening here." The reflective move becomes necessary since this allows for the formation of alternative communities and identities that are not necessarily
associated with dominant paradigms. Maria describes:

Most people don’t believe in us because we are always seen as forever foreigners. Then we try to prove ourselves of what we can do. I think a lot of times, Asians are in the middle here between whites and other minority groups.....this country has a lot of resources but a lot of people here don’t have access to resources and there is inequality here and immigrants need to know the history of this country......the Japanese internment or Native American reservations or the slavery part. I have always wondered you know there used to be two separate black and white schools, where did Asians go since there was no brown or yellow schools or even bathrooms.....My thinking is that whites want to associate with us compared to African Americans and we have to connect with African Americans and other minorities.....We cannot put ourselves in the middle and immigrants need to emphasize their differences (p. 14-16).

As Maria points out, the location of Asians is often in the middle or within whites and other minorities. For immigrants, as Maria argues, learning about minority history offers a cultural trajectory to understand the deeper layers of prejudice that is inextricably tied to the history of Asians in American and to other minority histories such as slavery and the development of internment camps and reservations. Maria’s question vis-à-vis the location of Asians within the pre-civil rights context is critical to uncovering the cultural as well as political spaces Asians historically occupied and also within the contemporary
contexts. If whites feel more comfortable with Asians in comparison to African Americans, Maria suggests the need for Asians to connect with Black and other U.S. minority experiences. If Asians are positioned in the “middle,” as Maria suggests, “they cannot afford to be in the middle.” Thus, there is emphasis placed on the need to voice the difference of Asian immigrants since being in the middle does not always offer possibilities for liberatory political actions.

For Maria, the growth of Filipino community in the region assisted in “getting used to American life” in order to navigate spaces that are culturally meaningful. As Maria suggested to me, her participation within the community was useful ground in re-thinking her own identity and cultural work within the United States. I asked Maria the role of the Filipino community organization and her role within it.

Maria replies:

We ask politicians to come to our meetings or events. They need votes and we need their support in talking about our interests. Our organization needs to be more politically active. There are some people who are from back home who ignore the organization. Our people here work too much. Work day and night for other people. We are told to get an education and I don’t know where that leads to a lot of times. Everyone is so busy. My husband and I run a Filipino American community center. It is a place people come together and talk...it also becomes a place to eat our kind of food since there are no Filipino restaurants here in town. I have been active in teaching citizenship tests and helping people learn English. We also try to raise
money, books or clothes to send back home. There is also a Filipino women’s organization that I am part of that looks out for the interest of Filipino women (p. 12, 14).

The act of convergence or the gathering of people to form a community becomes a necessity within the immigrant or the diasporic experience. As Maria argues, the local Filipino cultural formation via the development of an organization becomes a terrain to re-negotiate identities as well as to create alternative cultural spaces within the diaspora. If the purpose of the organization is to re-group, the collective work functions within and outside of the organization to promote politics with politicians as well as to mobilize within the community to accentuate Filipino interests. As Maria suggests, the mobilization aspect is not to be understood as idealistic since not all members view the political aspect as critical. Maria also speaks about the “work” aspect of Filipino lives that is often associated with Asian immigrant struggles. “Working for other people” is the labor in which white America disproportionately benefits. Maria also describes her own work within the community in which the community center becomes a location to convene for cultural food, to talk cultural politics and to work towards local as well as back-home community needs. Similarly, the teaching of English and the tutoring for citizenship tests serve as spaces of
immigrant education in the diaspora. The emphasis on gender work and securing economic resources for disadvantaged people back home are critical immigrant political maneuvers. In what follows, I describe the teaching context at Verdes and the ways in which Maria works with her students.

**Culturally Friendly?**

When Maria started teaching at Verdes fifteen years ago, the school population was mostly white. Now the school population comprises mostly of minorities: African Americans and immigrants from Eritrea, Somalia, China, Laos, Cambodia, Mexico, etc. If the student population is culturally diverse, the teaching population is overwhelmingly white. Maria explains:

There are no African American, Native American or Hispanic teachers. There used to be an Asian teacher who she just retired. We have some teachers here that I work well with. They have traveled and lived in other countries and they relate to some of the issues we have. Then there is Mr. Diop who is from Kenya. We are the only minority teachers here. We connect on how we think because we have learned from colonialism which is about invasion. He reminds me that I graduated from the House of Madrid. We talk about how to make sense of what has happened in history and why things the way they are (p. 7).

If students are largely of color and the teachers are largely white such formations reveal the cultural

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9 Maria points out that her husband and Mr. Husa often get
complexities of teaching and learning at Verdes. In the above quoted passage, there is also the description of relationships that have been formed with teachers who are committed to multicultural issues. Maria also suggests her affiliation with Mr. Diop suggesting certain historical commonalities of colonialism that allows spaces to build cultural coalitions in the U.S. teaching contexts. Such similar historical experiences suggest, for Maria, the formation of teaching relationships that are based on certain ways "how we think." Here, the history of invasion via western colonialism becomes a sphere to understand the politics of knowledge and the school politics to interpret "why things the way they are."

What Maria has described so far is how a number of teachers share certain cultural philosophies thus allowing them to work together within the school. If there is the existence of a small teaching community within the school, Maria remains ambivalent of her relationship with other teachers. I asked Maria about her relationship with teachers at the school. Maria replies to my question by providing an example of her attempted relationship with a new teacher.

It is like when you talk to some teachers, they really don’t listen to you. There was a first year together and talk politics.
teacher who was working with me since I was helping her during first year of teaching. Then the next think you know she wants to work with another teacher who has only been here for a couple of years. The teacher was acting like if I was not qualified to guide her and I have been teaching for thirty years. The teacher did not seek my suggestions. You have to wonder what happened here. I think it has to do with language and also prejudice. You know we speak the language and we know how to write it. But there is the thinking that they are better than you are and don’t want to listen to you. I was not born here but I tell them that they were not even born yet when I came here. A lot of teachers are not interested in learning what we have in mind. It is like a wall (p. 7-8).

The discussion suggests the difference of worldviews or epistemologies between an Asian immigrant woman and the larger teaching context at Verdes. Maria’s attempts to mentor a first year teacher and the ways in which the teacher spurns Maria’s advice reveals the non-recognition of an Asian immigrant teacher’s perspectives. As Maria describes, the exchange also suggests the not-listening to certain ways of speaking since the teacher refuses to recognize the way Maria speaks the language despite her twenty-five or more years of teaching in U.S. Thus, the cross-cultural interaction “is like a wall” and is symptomatic of teachers’ “being not interested in learning what we have in mind.” As Maria describes, one cannot ignore the larger discourse of prejudice and how it operates to marginalize an individual’s culture and language use.
If there are barriers or cross-cultural tensions, how does a immigrant teacher negotiate ways of speaking? Here, Maria elaborates on her learning the political ways of speaking the English language:

A lot of times when you talk to people, people don’t want to relate. When you say something, people will say “what?” as though if they did not understand you. They are always looking for clarification as though if it was strange to them and people look at you as though if you had said something really bizarre. They say “I don’t know what you are talking about.” But we know what they are talking about. It is so difficult for them to listen as though if they would feel inferior. Then how do we talk to them? We often feel we have to prove ourselves over and over again (p. 10).

I realized that I was the only one explaining things and people would question me what I had just explained. Nowadays, I ask questions to hear what they have in mind so that the responsibility is not only mine. So the burden of explaining does not fall on me. They have to do their explaining and that helps them speak more about what they are uncomfortable with. For example, when it comes to discussion about prejudice I share my views but it is also their responsibility to share how does it feel to be a white person and their views on what has happened in this country....how do they see Asia or Africa? (p. 14)

As Maria describes, often times the dominant person claims not-understanding what the other party is explaining. The not-understanding dimension or the pretension of looking for clarification is often a non-willingness to recognize the language of the other party and a form of resistance towards
the unfamiliar. Within such interactions, the dominant person shifts the responsibility by saying “I don’t know what you are talking about.” For Maria, there is also a sense of denial in the non-willingness to listen as though if self-reflection or language vulnerability would lead to feeling of loss or inferiority or encumbrance created by the exposed not-knowing.

Maria points out that learning to speak the language means not only speaking one’s thoughts but also asking questions to the other party on their views. Such a move, as Maria points out, reconfigures the meaning of cross-cultural interaction by encouraging the other party to speak. In such contexts, the responsibility of speaking or explaining is “not only mine” but also that of the other party who becomes obligated to speak about issues one is “uncomfortable with.” Thus, such a mode of exchange allows multiple views to emerge on the topic such as prejudice, racism, minority histories and dominant imaginations vis-a-vis Asia or Africa. Such a method of interaction, as Maria suggests, does not place the burden of explaining on the immigrant subject or to be negatively questioned for their views. In other words, the other party has to explain his/her epistemologies.

So far I have suggested the identity aspect of the
discussion and the location of Maria within the school and the larger society. In what follows, I will shift to the discussion of Maria’s relationship with students and the pedagogical movements that may allow us to frame the relationships between identity and pedagogy.

Learning about the System

People who are discriminated see the importance of education in a different way...this is true in the Philippines and here. Once you are colonized for so long, education becomes your hope and survival (p. 3).

There is a certain inter-relationship, as Maria suggests, between those who have been discriminated against and the meaning the discriminated attach to education. By comparing U.S.-Filipino colonial context of education, Maria describes the “hope and survival” aspect of the educational philosophy oppressed people embrace as a trajectory of economic and cultural liberation. If Maria understands, in some aspects, the historical and contemporary context of minority struggles within the U.S., she recognizes the challenges faced by the underprivileged students in the classroom. Maria explains,

There is a lot of opportunity in this country but there is also a lot of inequality...and some people don’t get the opportunity. A lot of African American students who go to school here come from neighborhoods around here. You have to wonder why schools have not been beneficial for many students...and a lot of times what is talked about in the curriculum is quite different from what students
know and have gone through. You have immigrant students and it is hard for them to understand the system here. The Somali students are learning English, the culture here in the country and also subjects like social studies and language arts that I teach. Same with Laotian or Mexican students who go through a difficult time. I try to understand what students are going through and learning about the system and also learn how to help your students since school is a different environment (p. 14).

If there are opportunities in the country, for Maria, that option is not often extended within minority contexts thus revealing the uneven equalities between the haves and the have-nots. Maria also describes the need to recognize the larger socio-economic context of society and its implications to schooling of disadvantaged students. There is a particular importance placed on the need to learn the diverse cultural paths students have taken whether locally or within international contexts since there is larger disjunction between curricular knowledge and what students know and have experienced. The “how to help” your students is also accounted for thus placing emphasis on the urgent need to learn about the “system” to open up academic possibilities for students. Furthermore, struggles of

African American and immigrant students are described within the context of language barriers, culture of the school and the curriculum domain.

In such cultural spaces, how does a Filipino woman
negotiate her teaching within a multicultural class? What are the pedagogical strategies that enable academic learning within the cross-cultural settings? If there are cultural difference between the students and the teacher, the difference itself becomes a location to create academic possibilities. As Maria points out, her own immigrant experience becomes a useful space (however partially) to form cross-cultural learning possibilities within the classroom. And

as an immigrant I share a lot of my stories in the class...how I got here and what I thought about America. I am a Filipino. I am an Asian. My students and I come from different parts of the world. I had formal education when I came here and that helped me. Students accept me for who I am. When I see students not doing well in academics, I am very direct with students. I tell them the way it should be about getting good grades to go to college. I remind where students need to be academically. I see myself between students and the system. My job is to open doors for them (p. 17).

If there are cultural similarities and differences between students and the teacher, Maria recognizes her role as a teacher who is there to “open doors” for her students. Neither does Maria not recognize her privileged status and who entered the country with formal education. As a teacher, Maria speaks of her own struggles as a minority Asian immigrant woman to her students and recognizes the cultural background of her students. The idea of “sharing a lot of my stories” is not to be interpreted as a cosmetic
method of developing empathy that seeks students’ attention but more of an approach that de-centers the role of a teacher. Thus, the telling about her own minority struggles (yet how she continues to overcome such marginalization) creates a cross-cultural opening in the class in which a teacher’s immigrant narratives engender cultural spaces to develop teacher-student relationships. Moreover, the move of decentering the self allows Maria to re-position her role to be “direct with students.” The idea of being direct is not to be directive (in the authoritarian sense) but more of an approach to providing academic directions to students within the schooling context. In other words, being “direct” also serves as a reminder “where students need to be” in order to work towards academic achievement.

What I am not suggesting is that Maria relates to her students’ struggles simply because of her being an immigrant Filipino woman. Her commitment to the struggles of her students need to be understood within the larger context of her cultural identities/epistemologies, her experience in working with minority students and her location as a cultural teacher within the school. For this reason, Maria often locates herself “between students and the system.” I offer an example regarding the academic struggles of a
Somali student that may allow us to understand the cultural location of Maria in relation to her students. During my observation, I had noticed that a Somali male student had been absent from the class for close to a week. Maria elaborates on the absence:

His parents were at the meeting that I was asked to attend because I have spoken to the parents about the progress of the student. The student was doing fine here. He was improving his work. He had been in my class since the last two months because of mis-communication in the other class. In the meeting, his father explained how the son had always helped in taking care of family business back home where he took care of livestock. For a lot of immigrants the transition from there to here is difficult. In the other class, it became a disciplinary issue because the student was using certain words in class that he was not suppose to. The teacher’s job is to help students through that instead of saying ‘don’t come here again.’ I suggested that I would work with the student. But the parents did not want to deal with it anymore and wanted to take the student to another school. And the student said he did not feel comfortable in classes. Then it puts teachers like Mr. Diop and me in a different position because we want him here because he was improving his work. I am not Somali but I try to listen to what the student and parents are trying to say (p. 14, 15).

Here, the theme of cultural dislocation is invoked suggesting the difficulties of immigrant educational trajectory. The cultural tensions between home-school is revealed in which a Somali student finds it difficult to adjust to the norms of the classrooms. Cultural misunderstandings between the student and the teacher lead
to the parents’ decision to enroll the student into a different school. As Maria pointed out to me, she found herself eager to work with the student yet she understood the perspectives of the student and the parents who did not want to further deal with such issues. If Maria was invited to the meeting because of her relationship with the student and as an advocate of immigrant students, the case shows the often-difficult scenario Maria negotiates with. Most importantly, it reveals the tragic case of the Somali student who leaves the school because of cultural mis-match within the classroom context. In what follows, I describe the classroom pedagogical dimensions that may allow us to understand the complex cultural context of teaching and learning within the classroom.

What Does Apology Mean?

What would one see or hear if one entered the classroom in a regular day? Maria often begins the class with announcements that include information on school events, upcoming proficiency examinations, school policies, upcoming field trips, etc. After announcements, Maria collects homework from students and students are asked to turn to a particular page of the textbook and then students take turns to read to the whole class. As Maria pointed out to me, if the majority of students are academically
struggling, the accentuation of reading and writing becomes an unavoidable practice for students’ academic success. Although students are assigned writing projects to complete at home, reading and writing becomes an everyday practice within the classroom. The performance of reading is organized in a sequential order so that every student has the opportunity to read. The content of the reading includes materials from both the text-book as well as supplemented readings. During students’ reading of particular passages or lines, vocabulary learning is emphasized and the meanings embedded within a sentence or paragraph is discussed. Often, prior to the readings, Maria asks students to write down the meanings of the words that have been written on the chalk board or words that are written on the rectangular shaped paper (posted on the walls) which include words taken from Bloom’s taxonomy (such as contrast, summarize, describe, etc) that are often utilized in proficiency exams. Maria elaborates on the larger meaning of reading practices,

What I am finding is that a lot of times students have the sense of what the story is about in a paragraph but they have difficulties in answering questions related to the paragraph in the test. The question might say “synthesize the story” or “infer from the first paragraph.” If you don’t know what synthesize or infer means then it becomes difficult to answer question. For that reason, learning vocabulary and leaning the meaning of the word and how to use the word in a sentence is important to answer the questions. For example, we practice how to use the word from Bloom’s taxonomy posted on the
wals... to use the words in a sentence or paragraph. Words like analyze, contrast, conclude, infer... also the meaning of terminology like metaphor, simile, and personification... and then we discuss what is the plot of the story and how it is written... like finding the sequence or what the timeline is like. Who are the characters? What is the setting like? What is the author trying to describe in the story? What happens at the end of the paragraph... like problems or solutions? How would you summarize it and understand it from your viewpoint? (p. 17-19).

What we see here is the implementation of a kind of pedagogy that not only emphasizes the details such as understanding the meaning of a particular word but also the larger context of how the story begins, further develops and how it is concluded within a narrative. Here, Maria identifies the need to focus on the particular needs of students in order to teach specific approaches to read questions. Enable a process to approach particular questions within a paragraph or a story. Even if students understand the story, for Maria, the ways in which questions are structured may impede students' understanding of what is being asked. Thus, there is a particular emphasis placed on comprehending the vocabulary in order to discern the meanings embedded within questions. If there is emphasis placed on reading each day during class, the practice of recognizing the meaning within a sentence or a paragraph becomes a useful practice of reading in order to raise a series of questions vis-a-vis a particular story. Maria argues that nor can the vocabulary
aspect be divorced from the context of how a particular story is framed, how the plot unfolds, the role of actors, authorial intentions, the context of the story, the way the story is concluded and how the story can be summarized. Furthermore, there is emphasis placed on how each of us can understand the story from a particular vantage point.

If there is a routine involved in reading that allows each student to read (and to speak) from the textbook, the content aspect of reading from the textbook is quite non-routine and selective. In other words, Maria is quite intentional of what students read thus quite often placing emphasis on multicultural aspect of reading in class.\(^\text{10}\)

The rationale for such a mode of pedagogy is quite strategic since “students respond to ....and relate to cultural issues in a story.” In what follows, I elaborate on a classroom discussion that may allow us to contextualize how reading and discussing particular themes allow for the enabling of learning of particular skills.

In late November, students read a work of literature titled Bracelet (which was included in the textbook) that addresses the experience of Emi, a seven-year-old Japanese-American girl, during World War II when Japanese Americans were being sent to concentration camps. In the story, Emi

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\(^{10}\) However, rarely was there any neglect of dominant ideas within the textbook. As Maria pointed out to me: “Otherwise
and her family are evicted from their home, are rounded-up and taken to a camp because of white American fear of Japanese American disloyalty to U.S. state. After students read the narrative in the class, Maria asks:

Can someone explain what happened in the war? Yes...this was during the second World War. Who are the characters in the book?...Good?....and what happens in the beginning? .....why is Emi’s family being forced to go to a prison camp? ... How does Emi react to what was happening to Japanese Americans?...yes, she was scared. And Emi is terrified when she sees soldiers with guns.....then what happens in the story....yes, the family is given a number and sent to a prison camp and the father is sent to a different camp as a war criminal.....and what is the living condition in the camp?....you are right, it was a horse stable......what happens at the end?.....the family is then sent to Utah and the family looses their house and belongings in California. What caused this to happen to Japanese Americans?....go ahead,....this is about prejudice and racism. There was an apology for what happened... should there be apologies for other experiences like this ...yes......now you all need to write what is the cause and effect in the story and also write the sequence of what takes place in the story... write in complete sentences... and also compare and contrast with other events that you know about to develop a sequence for your example and the time-line (p. 19-21).

The series of questions raised in the discussion attempts to situate the larger cultural context of the narrative. The emphasis is placed on understanding the role played by Emi’s character in the story to frame the historical setting of the experience. The nature of questions evoked suggests the “sequence” approach in which the unfolding of the narrative...
is tied to questions such as “what happens in the beginning” or “and then what happens” or “how does the story end?” A inter-connected relationship is formed between the war and the imprisonment of Emi’s family and the incarceration of Japanese Americans. The discussion reveals the imprisonment and the loss of property of the families effected by racism and prejudicial treatment towards Japanese Americans. The question of if apology has been offered to other groups is raised to link the discussion to similar historical events. Then students are asked to explore their self-selected examples of historical event and to elaborate on the sequence of events and the time-line associated with it. Maria describes the larger meaning of the discussion. 

It is a useful story because it talks about history and what happened to Japanese Americans and it is about a seven-year-old girl and what she goes through during the ordeal....I include this story because students relate and respond to it and it is similar to what has happened to other minorities. Then students can write about their examples and talk about what it means when the government offers an apology or does not ....it deals with the separation of family...identity issues of not being seen or trusted as Americans even though Emi was born here ...... and I wanted to talk about the time-line of what happened and when it happened so students get a feel of the time frame of when this event was taking place...and this helps them develop a sequence of the story.... how it begins...what is discussed and what happens at the end...the characters of the story and about history...and cause and effect...(p. 21).

If the narrative links the relationality of history and
literature through the trials of a seven-year-old child, as Maria illustrates, it also engenders particular response from students via the injustices spoken in the story. For Maria, such multicultural readings offer possibilities to discuss “what has happened to...minorities” within the narratives of racism and prejudice of not being recognized as Americans or being constructed as being non-trustworthy. The conversation is also linked to the issue of redress or apologies of past injustices. In other words, multicultural readings become useful spaces to talk about past and present injustices and also become sites to understand concepts such as sequence, time-line, the role of particular characters and the meanings of concepts such as cause/effect. I suggest that the idea of explaining historical time-line or sequence not be interpreted as a linear or teleological way of understanding history. Neither is teaching about cause/effect or contrast/compare an exercise in binary logics. I point out that teaching about sequence, time line or cause/effect topics are more oriented in teaching students specific strategies to comprehending textbook terms, both for students’ own knowledge and as a preparation for exams. For example, Maria argues, the sequence dimension suggests a particular way to read a story that assists students to constructing their own stories. The
methodology of sequence offers an approach to author or develop a narrative by identifying the characters involved, developing the plot or how the story unfolds and finally situating how the narrative ends.

Immediate Feedback

If reading and discussing are critical parts of the class, I noticed that the writing component has its own meaning and is inextricably linked to the larger pedagogical scenes within the classroom. For example, Maria constantly walks around the classroom to examine students’ progress and students are required to submit Maria their class work prior to leaving the classroom for lunch. Maria explains:

There is the expectation that students need to do the work and do it in a complete manner so that they understand the subject matter. I look at every student’s work before they leave the classroom. I have been known to follow and look for students in the cafeteria if the work is not completed (smiles). Looking at classroom work helps me give students immediate feedback and that helps students see how they are progressing with the classroom work...and also students take their work home and work with their parents. And I have asked parents to see what students are doing in class and their homework and to write comments on it....that helps all three of us work together (p. 11-12).

The time dimension is a useful space to work the pedagogy since it suggests not only completing the assignment prior to lunch but also fully understanding what is written. In other words, students’ classroom work allows Maria to
examine students’ academic progress, to give appropriate and immediate feedback, and to create a mutual understanding that the work will be examined prior to leaving for lunch. Such a timely pedagogical strategy, as Maria suggests, not only assists students but also helps Maria examine students’ progress. The mention of Maria’s “looking” for students’ work in the cafeteria suggests the importance Maria places on classroom work and the expectations that are created via classroom assignments.

Similarly, the writing dimension is extended to home communities where parents become integral part of students’ classroom work as well as homework. If there is a particular relationship being forged with parents via students’ writing projects or as Maria suggests “three of us working together,” it suggests the importance of working with students’ home contexts to enhance students’ academic success. However, students’ works are not simply a “show” to parents but a way to receive parents’ feedback on the projects during the course of the year. In other words, students’ written work serves as a medium of communication among students, parents and the teacher. Maria elaborates,

When there is already this kind of communication with parents then when we meet then we talk about students’ progress since all of us have been their all along. So this way, we are communicating and we all become aware of students’ progress in class....I
like to talk to parents in person and that is more meaningful to me rather than on telephone or email (p. 12).

Here, students’ writing becomes a space to enact introductory relationships among students, parents and a teacher. Such beginning relationships being negotiated offer possible spaces of contact that are critical to students’ academic progress and the everyday work students perform within the classroom and at home. I suggest that such communications intentionally undermine the surprise dynamics (often relayed via an “important” telephone call to parents) that often develops between parents and teachers vis-a-vis students academic performance. In what follows I will elaborate on specific pedagogical scenarios within the classroom that may allow us to examine the cultural context of teaching social studies. Such a move describes the terrain on which identity and pedagogy intersect and also the contacts between dominant knowledge and the cultural translations of such knowledges. I begin with the discussion on democracy.

The Meaning of Democracy

How can ideas of democracy be understood within a multicultural classroom? What are the uneasy moments within the talk of democracy that allows us to understand democracy in a complex way? I point out in this discussion that the
cultural conversations vis-a-vis the notion of democracy complicates traditional notions of democracy as conceptualized within the discipline of social studies. In late October and in early November, classroom discussions focused on national elections and which dealt with the views of presidential candidates and the post-election discussion on vote fraud, miscounts and recounts of votes. The election or post-election debate often complicated the often-celebratory meanings attached to concept such as “right to vote” or democracy within the curriculum. Maria’s questions vis-a-vis the difference between Democratic and Republican party lines (utilizing the Venn diagram\textsuperscript{11} format) evoked fruitful discussion on the perils and promises of democracy. Students in the class unanimously favored Democratic Party’s political and economic positions. In what follows, I will elaborate on the tensions evoked within the broader discussions of democracy within the classroom that may allow us to frame cultural context of democracy conversations.

In the second week of November, classroom discussions centered on the typologies of governments within the U.S. (national, state and local) and its relationality to federal, executive and judicial branches of government. The

\textsuperscript{11} Venn diagram is formed when two overlapping circles are placed side-by-side to describe commonalties and differences
role of Congress (Senate and House of Representatives), Supreme Court and the President was discussed and compared with local/city governments. Maria begins the discussion.

Y-Let us look at the question on page eighty-two. What kind of democracy do we have? (silence) Look at the other question. Do we live in a direct democracy or indirect democracy? (silence) Can people vote in this country?
S-Yes.
Y-What happened in Florida this month?
S-In Florida, some votes were not counted. It was in the news yesterday. Gore could have won if they had counted the votes.
Y-Do we still need to vote? What happened here in the city election a couple of years ago?
S-New Mayor....the first Black mayor was elected.
Y-There will always be barriers but we must always vote. As we talked about last time, minorities and women could not vote for a long time. We don’t have African American, Native American or an Asian or Latino or women presidents but voting gives the chance to elect people. Getting back to my earlier question, so what kind of a democracy are we? (Bell rings). We will go over this topic again tomorrow. Remember to bring your homework tomorrow (p. 17-19).

The above noted discussion suggests the contested notion of democracy discussion within the classroom and the difference of perspective between dominant textbook notions of democracy and the cultural meanings of democracy as interpreted within the classroom. Here, the textbook offers the selection between direct and indirect democracy and the United States is suggested as a direct democracy in which representatives are suggested as being directly elected by people. The silence of students to the textbook questions between two concepts or ideas when making comparisons.
itself signifies the abyss between what is inscribed in the textbook and the cultural interpretations of such questions. Maria’s question of the voting case in Florida offers a different space to discuss dominant notions of direct democracy in which, as a student pointed out, a number of votes were neglected during the counting process. Maria nevertheless emphasizes the importance of voting (example is local mayor’s election) since minorities and women have long been denied the right to vote. Here, Maria suggests to me the larger context of teaching ideas of democracy:

The textbook answer is that we are direct democracy because most of the time we elect people directly. How directly is open to debate. I think the meaning of democracy is unclear. The book talks about some countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America not being democratic...and is called totalitarian....but as we talked about voting here in this country..look at what has happened in this country...racism, discrimination...who has privilege in this country (p. 22).

As Maria points out, the extent to which or to whom the idea of democracy applies is contested. And the notion of “direct democracy” is itself disputed since the meaning or the extent to which the idea of direct is universal is questionable. If the dominant interpretation of democracy, as Maria suggests, is aligned with U.S. ideas of government, it refers to non-western societies as non-democratic or having totalitarian forms of government. However, as Maria
describes, dominant notions of democracy is based on privilege and often operates within discriminatory dynamics that denies certain people the very ideas of equality and freedom enshrined within the concept of democracy.

**Geography is Tricky**

Neither is the paradox of teaching concepts such as democracy itself isolated since Maria suggests similar contradictions in teaching geography. She provides an example vis-a-vis the complexities of teaching geography within the context of teaching geographical terms such as east, west, south and north on a map. Maria explains:

I was giving students suggestions on how to understand terms like east or south. So when you see a flat map of the United States from where we are, we see New York in the east and California in the west.....Then I always ask the question of “what direction does the sun rise from?” One student said it is hard to tell, another said everywhere and another student said east. If you really think about it is not exact because sun does not rise or set on the same point...(p. 13).

Here, Maria emphasizes the importance of recognizing the elements that are included in a map and the ways to read a map. Similarly, Maria describes the need to examine a flat map and visualize New York as east and California to the west (within a U.S. map) from a central Midwest city. However, Maria is self-reflexive vis-a-vis the “not exact” aspect of maps. As Maria points out, the multiple directions
from which the sun rises and sets suggest the complex ways geographical directions work. Maria elaborates further on the curriculum aspect of geography.

Teaching geography is tricky like teaching democracy ...and what is written on the book can be quite isolating for those who see society differently. The curriculum focuses on the Middle East but we include countries in Africa like Madagascar, Somalia and Ethiopia and we have students who came from there. I explain to students that map is a personal point of view and in Ethiopia or China people have different maps to see the world differently. North Pole is not on the top of other maps. I try to teach students to remember maps but at the same time be open about what is in the maps or how a map is drawn. I want students to be able to read a map and find where things are and how far they are...what countries are included in the map of the Middle East? Where is Jordan? Is the country near an ocean? What is the latitude or longitude of a city? What in the physical geography like? Who lives in the country? (p. 14-15)

If there are ambiguities on how to teach geography as explained in the book, Maria suggests the need to know what are included within the map of the Middle East as well as expand the often rigid ways physical as well as cultural spaces are organized within such a map. Thus, if the curricular maps of the Middle East does not include places like Ethiopia and Somalia, spaces beyond the Middle East are talked about within the classroom. Furthermore, Maria suggests the need to read maps as a personal point of view since maps are subjective. If map is political as well as a cultural perspective of the world, the pedagogy involves
asking students to remember how maps are drawn, to recognize the physical as well as the cultural geography of a particular space, and to learn how to read dominant curricular maps.

If Maria recognizes the disjunction between curricular knowledge and what students know or how dominant knowledge can be “isolating for those who see the society differently,” there is also a self-reflexive element in teaching and a deeper sense of questioning one’s own pedagogy when teaching dominant forms of knowledge. “I wonder a lot of times if the topics that I teach are ethical since the curriculum is so different from what it should be,” points out Maria vis-a-vis what is inscribed in the curriculum. What I suggest is that the self-reflexivity vis-a-vis the ethics of working such curricular knowledges often leads to culturally oriented teaching practices. Therefore, if there are inherent paradoxes in dominant ideas of history, politics and geography and if such knowledge often silence students, the emphasis is placed on supplementing minority culturally oriented knowledge in order to create alternative spaces of learning curricular knowledge. As I elaborate, Maria focuses on students’ participation in research in which students develop projects during the course of the year. As Maria pointed out to me,
the research aspect of class allows students alternative spaces to understand the curriculum, offers possibilities to be an active participant in class, and provides opportunities to learn specific skills and knowledges for students’ academic success. By emphasizing the content of classroom curriculum, four different research projects are explored to examine alternative meanings of history, geography, government and culture within a multicultural context. Next, I detail the four separate yet inter-related terrains of research that addresses themes of autobiographies and biographies, cross-cultural issues, international travel, and community development.

Family and Community

The autobiographical and biographical aspect of research includes investigations of personal history as well as the cultural context of identity. This dimension of research is organized to writing book reports, interviewing family members and writing about family history, and writing journals and autobiographies. The project also emphasizes extensive reading, writing, and student presentations within the classroom. Here, Maria speaks on the meaning of research:
The autobiographical writing is for students to write about family and students get to work with their parents and relatives and this is about family history. I ask students to write journals on special topics like how they spent a certain holiday or festival or what they do after school or in their free time. In the biography part students read books about people they find inspiring or want to know more about. Students get a chance to research and read about sports people, actors, singers or political leaders. I ask students to bring family photos to class and to write about the photo...describe it...and write a paragraph or two. And this helps me to see where students are in their work and to learn more about students (p. 20).

The pedagogy enacted suggests the incorporation of the cultural context of students lives within the classroom. It involves students’ authoring their life history by consulting their families and communities. Similarly, there is also the component of linking students’ academics to the larger context of everyday life such as writing about daily events and cultural functions. The cultural aspect of research also addresses the importance of reading biographical works of students’ interest that allows possibilities to investigate historical and contemporary genres of music, dance, athletics and politics. For example, prior to working on the biographical project, the class talked about the life of Bill Cosby and Dr. King and their involvement in community activities. Within the research, there is also emphasis on the visual aspect of learning in which students construct narratives by closely
examining family photos. The cultural context of research thus emphasizes the relationality of students’ cultural knowledge and the multiple cultural expression it engenders via the writing and presenting or performing within the classroom.

Cross-cultural Dialogue

The second domain of research is organized to enable cross-cultural learning via working with students from different cultural backgrounds. The project is designed to engender cultural relationships among students by exchanging knowledges with each other. As Maria argues, the cross-cultural aspect of research is more than simply a transfer or communication of information between students but more of a formation of inter-cultural dialogue to develop further cultural relationships. Prior to embarking on the cross-cultural project, Maria draws a Venn diagram on the chalkboard to elaborate on the idea of cultural commonalties and differences as a prelude to explaining the details of the research project. Maria asks students to write about the differences and similarities between Asians and Blacks in the United States. The class briefly discussed the similarities as: minorities, non-white, some religious commonality of being Muslims, some Asians live in ghetto, and some Blacks and Asians are immigrants, etc. The
difference included: speak with different accent, dress differently, different culture and history, different dietary practices and live in different areas of town. Upon completing the Venn diagram exercise, Maria explains the larger purpose of the cross-cultural discussion within the classroom:

Many of you have told me that you want to know more about Africans and Asians. This is a new section on culture and each of you will talk to one or two students in the school. You can talk to anyone who is from a different cultural background who is not part of this class. Mexican, Somalis, Chinese,... set up a time with the student and talk for half an hour. Then you need to talk to the student again in a couple of days or next week. You should ask questions that you want to know more about...yes, you can ask about Ramadan...culture, history, beliefs...why women wear veil and men don't... for example, why do people have different calendar years or why people are vegetarian in certain cultures...you will be writing about your meetings and you will present it to class and this will give you an idea of what you have in common as well as difference with other students. If you have prior assumptions, this is the time to ask. Now remember, if you want to know about Somalis, ask a person who is from Somalia otherwise you will get a different information. The second part of the research is to let the other student ask you questions about your cultural background and let them know about stereotypes (p. 23-34).

The cross-cultural research is a project that attempts to connect two or more cultural formations within the suggested meeting of students. As Maria argues, the communication of students’ views become locations to learn about each other
since there is a larger need for conversations about cultural knowledges. Students are asked to exchange knowledges about topics such as cultural notions of time (referring to calendar), cultural oriented dietary practices, cultural rituals, gender issues, and topics students are interested in learning about. There is also the suggestion on asking questions to Somali students regarding Somalia since, as Maria points out, one might get a different perspective on a particular issue from a non-Somali. The pedagogy of cultural exchange is not simply one party asking the other party for information but more of a dialogue between two parties to learn about one another. Maria elaborates on the rationale of such inter-cultural learning,

The example of Blacks and Asians was useful to begin with to give an example of what we may find when students talk to each other. As you heard, there are some differences and some similarities. My thinking is that when we talk about topics most people don’t want to talk about then we can understand where each of us is coming from.....when you have such a mixture of racial groups of students, we should learn about each other because we all grow up with stereotypes. A lot of times, in the school students have not been introduced to each other. I don’t think it is the language barrier because even if you know some English you can talk....once you know about each other then you can start to speak with each other. So the research gives that opportunity to talk about that students would not normally get a chance to talk. Often students find that they have a lot in common than differences and as minorities they need to work together...... and students write about their
experience and this helps students writing, too. And we discuss issues in class to see what we have learned (p. 16-17).

What Maria suggests is that the interactions between students create possibilities for a cultural dialogue since the occasions for such conversations may not be always available within the schooling context. Such contacts become starting point to develop relationships among students and allow sites to move beyond the stereotypes that exists about various minority cultures. Whether via a Black/Asian discussion or through the cross-cultural exercise, Maria emphasizes the critical importance of minorities learning about each other since it provides spaces to create understandings since there are commonalties as well as differences between various ethnic/racial groups. Such a pedagogy undermines the often generalized, stereotypical assumptions of language barriers since, as Maria describes, even limited proficiency in English allows possibilities to begin conversations. If there is emphasis placed on learning from each other, as Maria points out, one cannot neglect the political aspect of working together as ethnic minorities within U.S. society. The research project allows possibilities to improve writing and also creates discussion oriented climate within the classroom to learn from such inter-cultural experiences.
International Travel

The third aspect of research addresses Verdes’s global curriculum by integrating global context of learning history, politics, economics and geography. Maria calls the global aspect of research as “partly imagination but it is realistic” since it allows spaces to address global realities. The first part of the research includes constructing a travel-oriented report that details each student’s planning and organizing a six-week trip overseas. For example, students’ develop a travel plan by researching about the geographical, historical, cultural and economic context of a nation-state. This includes writing the names of continents and oceans in a world map, calculating the distance and the time-difference from the point of departure to the point of destination, and the directions (north, east, etc) of the travel.\footnote{Students are asked to provide an introduction and one page information on history, government, geography, language, etc.} The planning includes creating a budget that includes purchasing an airline ticket, calculating the price of meals per day by converting U.S. dollars to local currencies, and estimating costs for local transportation. The record keeping includes developing a financial balance-sheet to update each day’s expenses. Students complete a passport application and the necessary travel requirements (such as obtaining a visa) to depart.
from the United States. During the trip, students develop a country report that contains information on: (1) form of government (2) language (3) education (4) currency (5) religion (6) and food. Similarly, students describe places they plan to visit; write an itinerary for each day; and draw physical and political maps of the country noting elevation of the city to be visited. The final section of the report includes a bibliography of the textbooks and websites utilized to write the report. Maria describes the importance of the research project:

First, the whole class works on a sample project on Egypt since students are interested in learning more about Egypt....and then students design their own projects and select their own choice of country. And there is geography, history, economics, government, religion and math involved in this....this is a practice of what they have learned from the textbook and how to use it in a project. ....the research is quite flexible and it is up to students to search what they are interested in finding....and it helps to learn by actually researching it. And students have to research in the library and in the internet to find information. I emphasize this project because you can’t find this in curriculum....and this kind of travel is not about going to the beach in the Philippines or to a national park in Australia....most students have not had the chance to go overseas. Students can’t afford it. Most students focus on the continent of Africa. This project gives them the opportunity to research the international part of their personal interest or personal history. And this helps students to think about going to a country and the way to plan or organize it (p. 26-27).

The global aspect of learning, as Maria describes, attempts
to connect (as well as supplement) with what students have learned within the curriculum. According to Maria, the project offers spaces to learn more about the global aspects of knowledge and how to utilize the learned knowledge into practice. For Maria, the project is a multi-disciplinary activity that integrates diverse fields such as economics, math, history, politics and geography within the research thus allowing students to enact or creatively address cultural topics. The research also becomes an alternative way to understand fields such as geography, history or political science by designing a project in which students become primary investigators and also the authors of knowledge. As Maria describes, the project also allows students to design their own global diasporic interests and to reflect on the cultural context of their identities since curricular knowledge offers limited routes to engage in such educational trajectories. This means learning about the Middle East aspect of geography, history and politics as well as expanding beyond the official geography of the Middle East to connect with students’ cultural interests. Such a pedagogy suggests a cultural method of teaching global issues by creating spaces for students to explore their diasporic interest within the cultural context of geography, history, and politics. A related aspect of the
project is to practice the detailed component of what it
takes to travel to another nation-state. As Maria suggests,
the "how to do it" component addresses math, accounting, map
making, library research, etc., and avoids the exoticism and
tourist voyeurism that is often associated with travel. The
teaching research has a particular meaning in the classroom
since the economics of travel is often out of the reach of
students.

Mini-Society

The fourth case of research includes small-group
projects in which students' create "mini-society" based on
their idea of community by developing symbols, currency,
name of the community and learning to trade within and
outside of their communities. During the project, students
negotiate a lease to establish shops within the community,
decide the types of goods to exchange, and develop posters
to promote their ideas. Furthermore, students establish
roles (shopkeepers, treasurer, etc) and assign specific task
within the community for the everyday functioning of the
group. Similarly, the communities interact and exchange
their goods with other communities that are formed within
and outside of the class.\textsuperscript{13} Maria describes the rationale
for the research project:

\textsuperscript{13} This project was a collaborative work with another sixth-
grade class.
The idea is to have students work together to work on their own communities and to create their economic and political systems. Within their society, students exchange resources with other societies and look at what each group’s needs are... the research and the actual taking part in the project gives students the idea of how societies work and how they can take part to build their community... it is also being on leadership role in the community, being in a responsible role and taking part of what is happening in their community.....a lot of times, students create what they have seen and what they want to happen and it helps them to work together for the benefit of their community (p. 27-28).

As Maria points out, the idea behind the mini-society is to create alternative communities and the formations of such societies are neither romantic nor superficial. As Maria suggests, the development of such societies reflect the cultural knowledge of students and the way students imagine the idea of community. The creation of a society is an expression, as Maria points out, of a local world and how it relates to the larger society. If the formation of a community suggests the imaginative expression or cultural perspective of students, it also allows students to practice specific practical skills thus opening spaces to perform leadership roles and work with various individuals and groups for the daily functioning of the community. This includes taking part in specific investments, negotiating a lease, constructing small business enterprises, exchanging goods for the benefit of the community, developing a
financial plan and making decisions within the community. As Maria points out, such group works allow students to interact and speak with each other to determine the needs and the directions of the community.

In sum, what I suggest is that the student-research practices allow for the utilization of students’ cultural knowledges to create alternative curricular imaginations. If students are silent or if the curriculum is far removed from students’ lives and histories, the research provides possibilities to move within and outside of curriculum and offers possibilities for students to be actively and culturally engaged within the learning process. The investigative dimension of research is particularly important since it offers grounds for multiple cultural contacts not only within the classroom itself but also with students outside of the classroom. The performative aspect of interactions creates spaces to exchange cultural knowledges and allows for the enabling of particular roles that assists students learning specific skills. In other words, if the interactive dimensions allow spheres of cultural self-expression, it creatively offers sites to alternatively learn about curriculum knowledge.
Summary

As I have suggested in this chapter, Maria negotiates her hybrid Filipina identity by recognizing how dominant discourse works against Asian and Asian immigrants. If Maria is marginalized due to her race-gender-class-nationality affiliations, she resists such marginalization to not only challenge dominant discourses but creates alternative immigrant cultural spaces for herself. Through more than thirty years of teaching experiences, Maria recognizes how discourses of racism and prejudice often discriminates minorities and economically underprivileged students within schools. Due to her supportive relationship with progressive white teachers and her commitment to teaching students at the school, for Maria, Verdes has become a meaningful educational space to teach. Maria negotiates her political identity within the Filipino American community and recognizes how politics shapes the making of curriculum, teaching, and proficiency exams. Within the context of immigrant teaching practices, Maria emphasizes multicultural issues since students relate to as well as speak to such knowledge. For her, teaching social studies accompanies its own sense challenges and ambiguities due to the disjunctions between dominant knowledge and cultural knowledge of students, particularly in relation to
teaching themes of geography and democracy. Similarly, the immigrant aspect of pedagogy emphasizes research that allows students alternative ways to conceptualize and investigate knowledge. The auto-biographical/biographical aspect of research emphasizes reading and writing to further explore the cultural context of personal and ethnic/racial histories. The cross-cultural aspects of research allow students to interact and learn from other minority students within the school. The rationale for such cross-cultural mediations is also grounded to forming cultural-political relationships within cross-racial terrain. Similarly, the global aspect of knowledge spoken or discussed in the classroom radically defers from the traditional ways of speaking about local and global issues. The local and the global negotiated within the projects emphasize the cultural context of struggles and evokes alternative forms of internationalism. Such a pedagogy de-centers western notions of international and reveals the complex ways local-global relationships form and are affiliated with each other. The travel orientation of research allows possibilities to explore global as well as diasporic interests and enables students to practice skills within areas of geography, math, politics, art, etc. Similarly, the group research project on mini-society offers spaces to
create and to express ideas of community in the cultural contexts. In what follows, I describe the identity and practice of an Indian teacher within a suburban elementary school.
CHAPTER 7

THE PEDAGOGY OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE:
TEACHING ABOUT COMMUNITY & PREJUDICE

I ask students to think about what difference means to them? Does difference mean just to tolerate people? Can we talk about prejudice and community by talking about difference in the class?

Mira teaches fourth-grade social studies and language arts at Glanville Elementary School, a public school of a large urban school district. Nestled within a quiet residential neighborhood, a majority of students who attend Glanville live in close proximity to the school and come from economically privileged backgrounds. Approximately ten percent of the students within the school are students of color, including Asian Americans, Arab Americans, African Americans and Latinos. The school houses a recently established English as a Second Language (ESL) program because of the increased number of students from Somalia, Mexico, China and Pakistan. The school has performed well in recent state proficiency tests.
As one enters the main entrance of the school, students' artwork is immediately visible on the hallways leading to the classrooms. "There is emphasis on the performance aspect like drama and music within the curriculum," suggests Mira as we tour the school during my first day of observation. Mira's classroom is located in the northeastern section of the one-floor building and is in close distance to the main office (approximately fifty feet). The cluster of classrooms within each section of the school is partitioned by three-foot high plastic dividers to offer a partial view of adjacent classrooms. Such constructions create an open ambience by blurring boundaries of separation yet provide a sense of privacy within each classroom. "The classrooms are quite open and don't have the doors you may see in other places," points out Mira as we pass through a rectangular "shared" space that borders Mira's classroom. Autobiographies of students, which incorporated students' writings (on life histories) as well as artwork, are displayed on the bulletin board adjacent to the "door" that leads to the classroom. As one enters the passage towards the classroom, the open yet organized settings become visible. Mira's desk is located on the far right corner, adjoining the window that overlooks the east-side of the school. Mira's son's photo sits on the desk.
along with copies of social studies classroom assignments on modes of production in Ohio. On the wall facing the entrance, maps of continents containing names of nation-states, are posted. Six computers are placed adjacent to a long rectangular chalkboard that faces Mira's desk. Several books that have been read or are soon to be read are in front of the chalkboard. Six rectangular shaped tables, with four chairs on each table, are placed within a U format facing the chalkboard thus creating an open ambience where students converge for discussions each day. Mira elaborates on students' gathering:

It is almost like a routine and this is an important time and place where students listen, reflect and then speak. A lot of times morning is an appropriate time to start discussion on thought provoking or introducing new themes. When all students sit down on the floor, it creates a different environment. It is a time when students come together as a class. Like having something in common. Something to work together or struggle within discussions. Like a community (p. 3).

Mira describes the time dimension of the discussion and suggests morning as a useful time for conversations and the U-shaped geographical space is noted as a critical location to listen, reflect and to speak. The floor space also becomes a point to converge as a larger class or "like a community" and such meetings offer ways to construct relationships within the class. Such a confluence not only
opens possibilities to exchange perspectives but also allows occasions to "struggle together within discussions." Before shifting towards the intricate community formations aspect of the discussion, I elaborate on the identity dimensions of this analysis that may allow us to contextualize the kinds of pedagogy such identities can produce. First, I address the hybrid, diasporic formations of identities by examining ways in which Mira negotiates identity within and outside of school within the following sub-sections: (1) will take you somewhere (2) it can be fragile and (3) I had to be on the move. Secondly, I address the immigrant aspect of pedagogy within the following titles: (1) why should we have it (2) fall through the cracks (3) voicing their opinion (4) what you don’t know (5) where does tolerance fit? (6) to ask questions (7) not yes and no (8) who is the “we?”

**Will Take You Somewhere**

Mira grew up in Delhi and the family moved around the country often since Mira's father served in the Indian military. The movements within India, as Mira pointed out to me, allowed her to recognize the diversity within national borders and "to see the country differently." If travel and living in different geographical spaces offered meaningful learning possibilities, Mira remains ambivalent about her formal education:
Our education system was competitive and very formal. English was like an official language of the school. Maybe because of what the British did to the system. Of course, we had to read English literature. In a country like India, education is important because millions of people in India cannot read or write. When I was growing up, a lot of learning was based on memorization of dates or concepts, and from my own experience, the teacher talked and the students were to only listen. And there was rarely any interaction between students and teachers. We were taught from childhood that you had no choice but to educate yourself. The thinking is that if you are formally educated, it can take you somewhere. That kind of thinking also creates a very competitive environment like I am better than you are attitude. And the idea of teachers validating students was often lost. But it also instills in you a sense of discipline to pursue your dreams (p. 4).

Mira describes the formalized nature of her education within India and describes the pedagogy of memorization, the dearth of meaningful teacher-student interactions, and the often-competitive conditions such educational practices reproduce. The British influence within the educational system is pointed via the inclusion of English "like an official language" and the required readings of English literature. The critical importance of education in a geography such an India is evoked due to the significant portion of population being unable to read and write. Thus, formal education, as Mira discusses, becomes an urgent passage to undertake that "can take you somewhere."

However, the effect of such disciplined conditions also
opens up, as Mira points out, possibilities to imagine and work towards academic achievement (and employment possibilities).

During our conversation, Mira often spoke about her own upbringing and the political context of pre-independence and post-independence India. Mira begins by talking about her father:

My father was active in nationalist movement during Indian independence from British. That is how I learned about Gandhi and Indian nationalism. As we were growing up and in our education, it seemed that we were somewhat cut-off from the movement or what had taken place before. It may sound strange but it seemed like the movement ended after the independence in 1948. My father used to say that things changed quickly in India. There was more emphasis on industrialization. I grew up in a well-to-do family and in a lot of ways we were isolated from what was taking place in India. You know, there is a difference between living in the streets and living in a comfortable house. As you know, economically India is very poor and life is quite difficult for millions of people (p. 5).

A different political scene is described for those who negotiated identities and histories within the post-1948 context. Mira describes the ways in which the post-independence generation was being educated to differently remember the past or like being partially severed from what had taken place in the pre-independence context. Mira's description of the movement as if "it was over" suggests the move towards the post-independence national trajectory of
industrialization. Drawing upon her experience, Mira also frames the privileged aspect of her upbringing and points out to the dire economic conditions within much of India. A comparison between economically underprivileged street life and comfortable living is offered as an example of India's economic divide between the have and the have-nots.

**It Can Be Fragile**

After completing her Bachelor's degree in a private college, Mira along with her husband arrived in the U.S. in the early 1980s for Mira's husband's education. The family spent three years in Wyoming, three years in Utah, then moved to the Midwest. "We first came to a small town and it was a difficult transition in terms of getting used to life here," points out Mira.

I did not know what to think about the country. I was not prepared to live in a small town that was not cultural in our sense. When we came to the U.S., it was awfully lonely since my husband and I did not have much support but we put things together. If there is loss in one way there is also a different kind of gain. A lot of times you are neither here or there. It is like being back and forth....our coming to this country is different because we came here formally educated somewhat and that opened opportunities for us. We could read and write and speak in English. At the same time, there are many Indians who live in cities who are economically quite poor. About history of this country and about minorities, I slowly learned about it (p. 9).
If the arrival included negotiating cultures, learning histories of the new geographical space, such directions of living lead to diasporic beginnings. Such immigrant conditions reconcile what was lost and what has been gained during the transitions from one geographical and cultural space to the other. Neither is the movement from India to the United States a romantic immigrant journey but often carries the feeling of loneliness fostered by departures and arrivals. However, the loss of interactions with everyday communities back-home is, as Mira suggests, negotiated via the attempts to create new lives in the diaspora with the feeling of "neither here or there." Mira also describes the difficult yet somewhat privileged aspect of the family's immigrant life largely due to formal education that opened up employment possibilities. Yet, the difficult lives of Indian communities around the country are also pointed out to refrain from generalizing Indian communities as being economically privileged.

Within Mira’s story, there is also the element of learning about new histories and new multicultural formations via living in the diaspora. "I learned what groups like African Americans and Native American had gone through and it is different than what Indians have gone through in this country." Mira elaborates:
And then there is India which is also, like America, a fertile ground for discriminations. Our cultures in India are not by any means pure without any problems as some may claim. There is a particular bias of being identified with another groups like Madrasi in South India or Dalits, Sikhs or other ethnic groups. Unfortunately, some people bring the same kind of prejudice here from our part of the world. All we have to do is look at how we treat people who are not of the same ethnic background or who are divorced or widowed here in the United States in our supposed community (p. 8).

If Mira recognizes the minority context of lives within the U.S., there is also comparison made to India and the nature of prejudice that exists on multiple levels. As Mira suggests, the claims of purity of Indian cultures is often a fiction since it hides the discriminations within the society based on ethnic affiliations. Moreover, such discriminating perspectives often travel to new geographical spaces due to migration of people. Thus, immigrant life is not immune to back-home aspects of discriminations such as the cultural stigma that carries (and is labeled) in being divorced or widowed. Mira elaborates on the "supposed community" aspect:

This may sound philosophical but a lot of times community does not exist the way we think of it whether here for us or in India. For that reason, whenever someone says community or Indian community, I wonder what that means. The idea of Indian community is important because of where we come from and our ways of thinking. I am proud to be an Indian. But a lot of times community is forced upon. Some are not allowed to say a whole lot within the community. If your community is hierarchical in nature or if your whole family system is superficial
then those who are on the bottom suffer in silence. A lot of times, there is also gender factor since men are usually assigned leadership roles. Community has to be built and nurtured otherwise it will crumble (p. 13).

We know some Indian families here in town and having a temple in town helps since it brings people together. And there is a sense of community there but you always wonder what that community means since it can be fragile (p. 14).

Here, by framing the intricate features of Indian community in the United States and the ideas of community in India, Mira offers alternative definitions of community in which the idea of community is suggested as an entity that "has to be build and nurtured otherwise it will crumble." In other words, the notion of community does not exist in a void since communities are often hierarchical and silence the voices of individuals. Neither is Mira's intention to dismiss the idea of community since, for her, the idea of Indian community remains culturally and politically significant. Yet, for Mira, the notion of community can be often imposed or "forced upon." For example, as Mira argues, the family aspect of community can often be rigid since it often operates within strict traditions to often marginalize certain individuals who thus "suffer in silence." Furthermore, communities often include male leadership thus rarely recognizing speeches of women.
Mira points out that the temple within the town often serves as a cultural location that brings people together. "The temple is helpful because people can gather in a place to be part of events that you have been part of for years." The temple thus becomes a cultural geography where, despite ethnic differences, diasporic Indians gather to "be part of a community." If the idea of community is complex, what are the ways to identify the self both within individual and also within certain collective identity contexts? For Mira:

I tell people I am from India. More specifically, I am from Delhi. I am an Indian. I am also an American citizen and live in the U.S. Even though we change once we live here for a while like speaking English. But I don't think we become someone else in a drastic way. If you said you were only American, I would wonder. For me, I don't feel like I need to wear a sari to school to be an Indian or have an Indian flag in my house. Sari is an important symbol of identity for us but I don't feel I need to display it for others and wear it here at school. Identity is quite personal for me and I don't talk about it as some people may (p. 6).

Here, identity is linked to geographical spaces of India as well as the United States. The self-identification is spoken within the national identity context of being an Indian. Similarly, the legal relationship of American citizenship, and the residency arrangements within, is also evoked as an identity. Moreover, if Indian flags and sari serves as forms of identity, Mira suggests the displaying of identities depends on specific contexts. In other words, how
and when one talks or performs such identities are political and are selective form of expression of identity. For Mira, identities cannot be fashioned or formed to only claim one form of identity: to "be someone else in a drastic way" in which histories or cultures that have intricately shaped the present are discarded. In what follows, I will address the trajectories towards becoming a teacher to contextualize immigrant teacher identities.

I Had To Be On The Move

For me, raising my children was very important and I wanted to stay home until they started school. You know how it goes back home. Things work out in a spiritual sense. A few years ago I was teaching English as a Second Language at a Honda plant and then a close friend of mine told me about teaching opportunities for minority students to get back into work force.

I looked at it as a challenge. I needed a different kind of identity and not necessarily outside of home but something that would take me to a different area where I would be able to grow. Then I enrolled at the university. College was very helpful because I developed friendship with people of my age who were returning to work force. Our graduating class was quite diverse and some of us still get together often to chat about our lives. In college, I particularly remember the time when we had quite a tense discussion on the similarities and differences between slavery in the United States and Jewish holocaust. I wish the discussion was better moderated and the professor could not channel the emotional issues that came out. People were saying one was more important than the other. And we all left the class unable to make meaning of what had happened since the discussion became disorganized. It was a good lesson for me on how not to design a class discussion on such complex issues (p. 10-11).
In the statement above, Mira elaborates on her desire to stay home (in the cultural sense) to raise children then to move towards an alternative space of growth. The intention to negotiate another form of identity is not necessarily to work outside of home but a move to open spaces to "take me to a different area." The enrollment at a university to become a teacher offers alternative terrains of personal fulfillment. The relationship forged via the university connections also becomes an area to learn and negotiate within the U.S. context of multicultural scenes. The example that Mira provides vis-a-vis the discussion on African slavery and the Jewish holocaust not only becomes a space to read contested views on history and its meaning today but also offers lessons on ways to organizing classroom discussions.

Mira was offered her first teaching position at Glanville upon completing the pre-service teaching at the same school. Mira points out that the teachers at Glanville and the principal was very supportive during her early years of teaching. "It was the support from the principal and the mentoring which really helped me during the first couple of years." Mira also attributes her decision to continue to teach at the school largely due to the relationships she has built with a number of teachers at the school.
Teaching offered me directions. It helped me to reshape my views and perspectives about society...about diversity and generally about education and about working for equal opportunities. And also articulating my thoughts in English, which is important for us in the society we live in. At the same time, teaching as a profession also takes a lot out of you. There is a responsibility in what we do and students depend on us. And there was a different kind of challenge from students and parents and I felt that I had to prove myself that I was qualified and could do the work. I had to be on the move. I question issues that I am skeptical about and I am quite vocal whether people like what I have to say or not (p. 13).

If teaching offered alternative passages to negotiate or identities, it also opened up spaces to continue to reconfigure ways of reading society. For Mira, teaching offered ways to interpret the social context of education and to begin to understand the inequalities embedded within the U.S. educational process. Teaching became a location to work the English language, which Mira attributes as being important for immigrants. Neither is teaching romantic since it "takes a lot out of you" recognizing the responsibility terrain of teaching. Teaching is also a time of challenge in which Mira often had to prove that she was qualified and able to teach. Next, I will elaborate on Mira’s work with students and parents that may help us better understand the relationship between identity and pedagogy.
Why Should We Have It?

During my observation, I noticed that parents often stopped by to talk to Mira about students' academic progress. "Some parents are more interested than others about what I do. And I have tried to build bridges with parents." Here, Mira suggests an approach to working with parents:

Students self-evaluate their work and every week I evaluate students work. Then each week, I have asked parents to look at the evaluation and make necessary comments and to sign it. This also makes parents responsible on how their students are doing in school. Some parents resist it and tell me that this is too much work. But it boils down to parents' responsibility at home and some parents feel they are being questioned on what the students do or don't do at home. Some parents ask why I am giving so much homework or why their child is not doing well. Some like to demand why that is happening. For me that is often shifting responsibilities (p. 4).

Mira describes a method of working with parents in which alternative relationships are formed among students, teacher and the parents. Such a move invites parents into the domain of everyday schooling and the invitations are also linked to the domain of responsibility. Yet such relations are occasional resisted by parents who negatively question, by shifting responsibility, the lack of academic progress made by certain students. The practice of making a teacher, student and parents involved within the weekly evaluation
process serves as a passage towards students' academic success.

A related way to form relations with parents is via functions within the school. One such occasion, other than the designated parent-teacher conference, is the Cultural Exchange Day that Mira and a kindergarten teacher organize each year. She speaks about the event:

Parents have different views about having diversity or cultural events in the school. Some ask, why should we have it? Other parents suggest the kind of topics that should be talked about, which are often times religious in nature. Then there are some parents who are quite committed to supporting cultural events through plays or music.

As teachers, we wanted to have an informal day to promote multicultural issues. Parents of ESL or minority students or other supportive parents come and that becomes an appropriate time to get to know the parents. It is not like that is the only cultural event of the year. The Cultural Exchange Day is more of a formal event when parents are invited and they get to see what the students are doing and we get to talk in an informal way (p. 10-11).

Mira points out the contested views of parents and ways parents interpret and voice their input vis-a-vis cultural events held within the school. The parental evocation of apathy, resistance, selective input, and active support suggests the competing interests that underlie the performance of diversity events. Such occasions, as Mira suggests, become locations to work with parents,
particularly those who are interested in cultural diversity. As Mira points out, the cultural events are not to be understood as the only cultural occasions that take place in the school but more of a function in which parents are invited thus to strategically translate such occasions as informal gatherings.

If Mira continues to build relationships with parents and is committed to working with parents for students' academic success, nor are such relationships romantic. Occasionally, as she details, "you wonder what some parents are thinking."

A while ago, one student was struggling academically and the parent questioned by accent. The comment was if my British accent could be a hindrance for students to understand or learn in class. That was really questioning my ethnicity. It was about respect for me as a teacher and who I am culturally. That was an excuse and about not taking responsibility as a parent (p. 7-8).

The perspective of the parent, as Mira suggests, reveals how ways of speaking are interpreted to be unintelligible. Thus, the supposed use of "British" accent is translated as detrimental to students' education. Mira suggests such a response as not only questioning the ethnic, cultural context of being but also shifts parental responsibility. Here, the logics of respect are rendered invisible by making a discriminatory statement that faults a teacher for
parental neglect. In what follows, I will elaborate on Mira's relationship with students, which may allow us to read the pedagogical movements within the classroom.

Fall Through The Cracks

When I was growing up in India, I remember the stigma that came when someone failed and had to repeat a class. It is a similar situation in this country. Some students get left out. Often times failing a class means not being counted. Can you imagine the psychological aspect of repeating a class or dropping out of school and being seen as a failure? I have several students in my class who are struggling. I try to learn more about the students in order to work with them so that they don’t fall through the cracks (p. 12-14).

Here, the psychological impact of being marginalized within the educational setting is connected to the limited academic performance of students. Mira recollects the educational context within India, and now within the U.S., in which academic failure stigmatizes or effects student identities thus to "fall through the cracks." The deep scars etched by academic failure, as Mira points out, often leads to "not being counted" or being "left out of the system." Such a thinking recognizes that the repetition of classes or the drop-out of students from school is often interpreted as failure by society.

The statement of "I try to learn more about the students in order to work with them" serves as a useful trajectory to examine Mira's relation with students. The
fourth grade social studies and language arts classroom comprises of one female Korean American, one Korean male, two female Arab Americans, two male African Americans, one male Sri Lankan, one female Mexican, one white South African female, eight white males and nine white females. The students from Sri Lanka, Mexico and Korea attend English as Second Language (ESL) reading classes an hour each day. Mira talks about the academic needs of her students:

The ESL students are learning English and are slowly beginning to understand and speak in class. I often read with them separately and a supportive environment helps. I asked them one time if each of them understood the book that they were reading. All of them said "No. Mrs. ......." And that was very important for me because they were very candid on what worked for them and what did not. The students are quiet because they like to listen more than to speak. They may not be able to speak in complete sentences and people assume that when someone does not speak English, they can't understand what is going on. I asked them to read together and summarize what they have read so far (p. 9).

I would like to say that I validate all students, whether students speak a different language or talk with an accent, wear non-traditional clothes or when students bring up non-conventional views in the class. Often times, schools have not been supportive on such topics (p. 10).

Mira elaborates the diverse interplay of cultures within the classroom and the emphasis placed on the need to affirm students' identities: whether their silences, their cultural knowledges or their needs since schools often overlook
students' cultural identities. Within the context of ESL students, the need of a safe space is suggested to learn to read and comprehend what is read. As Mira argues, not speaking in class in not necessarily a desire to speak but a desire to listen. Nor is non-speaking of English an effect of not understanding English. Thus, classroom conversations offer possibilities to affirm students' voices yet it also becomes a location to discuss alternative perspectives. Mira articulates the larger purpose of talking about cultural issues within the language arts and social studies context:

Learning is personal and I ask students to look deeply at how they interpret issues. I am thinking about affective change. This means deeply personal change and learning to think on your own and also to think beyond facts and fractions. The topic of culture or diversity is important because it exposes them to a different world and students begin to think about where they are and what they need to do (p. 5).

Mira describes the need to engender affective change via the discussion of diversity topics. Here, affective change is a process that deeply examines the self and offers alternative spaces to read society. Such transformative methods enable personal shifts in how one examines the world thus to open possibilities to not resist previously unrecognized knowledges. Hence, such cultural conversions allow grounds to examine how one reads the world and "what they need to
do." Next, I will elaborate on the ways of circulating the affective aspect of pedagogy that undergird discussing difference.

**Voicing Their Opinion**

While Mira takes attendance in the beginning of the first period, students work on small projects such as solving math equations, writing a short essay or elaborating on a science question. Upon completing their projects, students converge on the "center" location of the class: the U-shaped carpeted floor. Then, upon hearing students' voices, Mira reads to the class. The readings are often works of literature, and occasionally, a guest speaker or upper-class students participate in reading to the class. Following the reading, Mira raises questions about the book and student raise their hands to speak. Mira is actively involved in soliciting responses and generating more discussion via students' statements.

I am quite involved in the discussion so that everyone gets a chance to speak. The discussion needs to be somewhat organized so students are not always interrupting each other otherwise those who are less likely to speak will not talk in class. This is a time when students are beginning to feel comfortable about voicing their opinion to a larger group on more serious topics. Students who usually don't talk begin to raise hands and talk here and there. A supportive environment helps students speak about what may seem like a controversial issue or a topic we as a class have not talked about (p. 16).
If there is a certain "order" circulated in the class such as not often interrupting or the need to raise hands to speak, such methods of teaching are practiced to enable a supportive ambiance. As Mira argues, an organized yet fluid environment allows students to speak their views yet recognizing that other voices desire to speak as well. There is also the recognition on the relationality between the comfort level of speaking in class and its effects on students' voicing opinion on social issues. Thus, the ways of discussions are organized can effect what is spoken in the classroom and how it may impact students' identity formations. I will elaborate on a classroom discussion that may allow us to stage the complex articulations of student identities.

After a weekend or a long holiday, Mira often begins the class by asking students to share the events that transpired during the past week. During the discussions that I observed, students spoke about the trips they had taken, relatives that had visited the family, sporting or movies watched, etc. The speaking of weekend or weekday activities often offered students occasions to speak about their involvement or to voice what had taken place. Often such expressions included describing the participation in a cultural event or pointing out the significance of certain
cultural practices. One such expression included two students’ speaking about the significance of the month of Ramadan and the spiritual meanings that undergirded the practice of fasting, including refraining from eating from sunrise to sunset. The invocation of Ramadan, and particularly students’ fasting during the period, led one student to inquire about the Muslim practice of wearing hijab (a head-scarf worn by mostly Muslim women). Mira elaborates:

For some students the topic is new. And when students talk about their background it becomes a learning experience for other students who are trying to understand, for example, the meaning behind refraining from eating from sunrise to sunset. The question about Muslim women wearing scarf came up since one of our student proudly wears it and she talked about it as being part of her culture and as a symbol of pride and identity (p. 11).

My role is to see how students are trying to understand the topic and to see that no one is making stereotypical assumptions about someone else. I emphasize listening skills and ask students what they have heard so far. As a beginning, I try to get across the point of needing to respect other cultures since it is quite common to talk such customs as bizarre or in a negative way (p. 13).

For Mira, students’ speaking about their experiences and traditions becomes a ground to express cultural perspectives. The learnings that take place via such conversations, as Mira argues, allow introductory understandings on topics previously unfamiliar or
unrecognized. The Muslim students' fasting during Ramadan and wearing scarf is discussed as a form of cultural practice, as a "symbol of pride and identity." Emphasis is also placed on the listening dimension of conversations and questions are raised on what was heard or not heard during the discussions. Such a pedagogy, as Mira points out, enables students to question their views by reflecting on the need to respect cultural practices recognizing that marginalized cultures are often mis-represented as different and contradictory to the mainstream norms of society. In such transformative aspect of pedagogy, Mira positions her role as a mediator who guides her students to interpret cultural topics without succumbing to stereotypes or cultural superiority. In what follows, I will examine specific pedagogical practices that may allow us to contextualize the cultural aspect of pedagogy engendered within the classroom.

What You Don't Know

An element of teaching cultural topics includes incorporating current events which is divided into two inter-related segments. First, each week students discuss current events within the classroom by reading local or
national newspapers, *Time for Kids*, etc. If students self-select articles to read, there is also emphasis placed on often referring students to read specific articles on national or local elections, historical topics, environment, etc. The second component of learning about current events includes students presenting a current event topic of their interest to the class each month. During the presentations, students described ways of speaking their native languages by connecting the language lessons to the events in their "old" homes; spoke about topics on local work of Mothers Against Drinking and Driving (MADD); Jewish holidays; significance of Martin Luther King Day; pollution in the oceans; Gore-Bush elections, etc. One student spoke about the impact of flooding in Afganistan in which village homes had been swept away by the rising water. In relation to the flooding, students raised questions such as: "Why do people live in houses made of mud? Do people really live in such houses? Do the houses get flooded every time it rains?" Mira elaborates on the larger purpose of discussing current events:

Current events introduce students to a different world in the sense of what is happening locally and globally. Students select topics they are familiar with or are least resistance to. I ask students to go beyond where or how they are brought up and to think

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1 *Time for Kids* is produced by *Time* magazine and is widely distributed to schools.
beyond what you are comfortable with and to read articles that you have not read before and be aware of what you don't know. The discussion of village houses being flooded makes students look at what is around the world and face issues to learn from it. This is when stereotypes about cultures come out.

I emphasized the need to think about what happened, when it happened, how it happened, and where it happened and finally to think about why it happened. The presentation about monthly current events is a research project and students report to the class. That gives students a chance to focus on events they find meaningful whether culturally or by strong interest. I ask questions and I want students to raise questions too so that as a class we can struggle with the questions. For me, how to pose questions to students has been a learning experience (p. 13-15).

If the purpose of current events is to expose students the local and global context of events, it also suggests the need to face and learn from the unfamiliar or the seemingly strange knowledges one is uncomfortable with. Such an inquiry allows one to read and write about "what you don't know" thus allowing possibilities to encounter issues and to learn from knowledges one is resistant to. As Mira suggests, the assignment invites students to investigate issues of their interest as well as offers spaces to speak about the details of the events. Next, I explicate on "how to pose questions" dimension that may allow us to interpret ways multicultural topics are discussed within the classroom.
Where Does Tolerance Fit?

A critical aspect of cultural learning within the classroom is engendered via the incorporation of multicultural literature. Supplementing resources is unavoidable since the curriculum speaks only about, as Mira pointed out to me, the "contribution of minority people but rarely emphasizes issues in detail." The cultural passage of learning, thus, as Mira argues, is woven within the larger reading, writing and discussion component within the classroom. The classroom readings also include "mainstream" readings yet the cultural context, and particularly the ethnic/racial aspects, is provided its own space. Mira elaborates on the pedagogical intent of the readings:

I utilize children's literature because it is told through the eyes of children and it deals with history and today's society. And students relate to it to a certain degree. When we talk about cultural issues in the class, I emphasize what it means to live in a community to discuss commonalities and also differences. Can we or how do we develop a community within the classroom? And we hear about tolerance a whole lot and where does tolerance fit when we talk about community and prejudice. And how do we think about diversity so that we are not simply talking about tolerating someone in a superficial way. Or not to simply talk about all of us being human beings or living in planet Earth but about cultural difference and also the similarities we have. And to get away from labels which is quite common (p. 10).

Mira incorporates children's literature since such works speak about histories and contemporary affairs via
children's perspectives thus opening up possibilities to talk about ideas of community and prejudice. As Mira points out, there is emphasis placed on speaking about commonalties within human experiences yet the discussions accentuate elements of cultural difference that address the diversity within experiences. Similarly, the mode utilized to discuss the idea of community also speaks about Mira's ambivalence to fashion the discussions via the concept of tolerance since it can be associated with "tolerating someone" in its pejorative sense. For Mira, the concept of tolerance can be interpreted as a de-politicized concept that does not seek social change but simply seeks status quo via tolerating the other. Similarly, the idea of building community via literature addresses the larger discourse of prejudice in society and its relationality to individual lives.

Each week at least one children's literature book is read to the students, followed by a conversation of the reading. During my observation, the readings included Yoshiko Uchida's The Bracelet, Deborah Hopkinson's Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt, Robert Li's Baseball Saved Us, Eve Bunting and David Diaz's Smoky Night, S.L. Oppenheim's The Lily Cupboard, etc. Mira describes the larger meanings that undergird the discussion:
It is not about students finding out what is right or wrong but more on how each student understands what is talked about. That way we can speak about how we treat other people or how certain people are treated differently because of perceptions. The affective aspect is important. So if we discuss issues of prejudice in the literature and in our lives then it may help us understand what it means to live in a community. That is where the part about cultural difference is important to talk about history and about today's society (p. 15).

The discussion elements are organized to address not right or wrong dimensions of the readings but how each student interprets the narrative of the story. Such a pedagogy accentuates the need for self-reflection to unlearn prior mis-perceptions. The classroom discussion, as Mira illustrates, attempts to link themes of prejudice within the readings to students' lives thus exposing alternative spaces to think about interpretations on what constitutes a community(ies). Such classroom conversations on community and prejudice address issues of cultural difference and discussions are connected to history and contemporary social issues.

Since Mira emphasizes the affective aspect of pedagogy, it is useful to elaborate on how such teaching intentions are performed within the classroom. If students discuss the themes evoked within the literature verbally, a related affective corollary of expression is the field of students' "perspective writings." Thus,
The conversation about the book goes back to the students. When the discussion slows down often it is a useful time to move to writing. I think writing helps to describe how we think and some students prefer to write since it is personal. And some students might be rethinking about issues after hearing other views. When students close the book and write on their own, a different kind of learning takes place. And often many students are dealing with issues for the first time. I want students to write in complete sentences and to take time when writing their views and to read carefully before handing me what they have written (p. 16).

Mira describes the realm of self-reflection in which writing is evoked as a form of expression that complements verbal classroom conversations. Self-reflective writing is also explored as a space where a "different kind of learning takes place" in which students negotiate their personal views on cultural topics discussed in the classroom. If writing offers intimate spaces to rethink views on culture, Mira recognizes the complex endeavor of writing culture since students are encountering such issues for the first time. There is also emphasis placed on the methodical and diligence of writing: to take time writing, to write in complete sentences and to re-read what one has written.

**To Ask Questions**

If the larger purpose of writing serves the affective purpose to learn about cultural difference as read and interpreted in the class, there are organized yet flexible
ways in which students are asked to express their perspectives. In other words,

    The questions that I provide students have to be meaningful for students to write what they think. I am learning how to ask questions (p. 16).

As Mira suggests, by selectively staging questions, meaningful spaces are enabled for students to reflect on socio-political, cultural issues. For example, during the lessons of 2000 Presidential elections and World War II, Mira asked students to explore their perspectives on the following questions:

    Do the confusing results of this election reinforce the message that every vote counts? Why or why not?

    How do you think war effects families of soldiers who fight in wars? (p. 16)

The questions posed neither seeks right or wrong answers nor are the answers based on memorization of certain facts but the questions are designed to elicit students' perspectives on socio-historical issues. The question on voting was infused within the writing context after students discussed the controversy over how people living within marginalized geographies were not allowed to vote within the last presidential elections or that votes from within certain districts had not been counted. Such questions invite
students to re-consider "the meaning of voting in a deeper way and about fairness in society." Similarly, the second question asks not necessarily where or how the war was fought but "what happens to families when their children, parents or relatives go to fight a war." For Mira, the questions invite students to re-think about "emotional part of war" thus asking students to imagine beyond "dates and places."

The pedagogy that emphasizes posing critical questions is similarly incorporated within the context of multicultural readings. Thus via posing questions, students are asked to delve into the multicultural reading domain and to question previously held assumptions about prejudice and community. Prior to introducing the first book, Mira asked students to respond to the following questions:

Have you ever-experienced prejudice? Write about your experience? How did you feel? How did you respond? How did it affect you or how has the experience changed you? What questions do you have for people who have experienced prejudice? (p. 17).

The series of questions posed invites students to describe if and/or how students have experienced prejudice. Students are asked to draw upon their past experiences to (re)think about discrimination and how each responds or negotiates past encounters with prejudice. Questions are also raised vis-a-vis how particular incident(s) impacted students or
effected their views on prejudice. The last query asks students to reflect on questions that they would like to ask individuals who have experienced prejudice. In other words, questions are raised to generate more questions within the classroom. Mire elaborates on the larger discourse of questions:

The questions introduce students about cultural difference and help them understand what is prejudice. This will help students to think about the different kinds of prejudice and connect with the issues discussed in the book. I also want students to think about history and how the group and individual experiences are talked about in the book. If you are being teased for having red hair and someone is not given a job because of her accent or the color of her skin, I ask students to talk about the difference (p. 18).

If the questions serve as introductory writings to understand the meaning of prejudice, it offers possibilities to address issues of cultural difference. Similarly, the historical context of prejudice is evoked to establish the relationality between past and present discriminations within the context of individual as well as collective experiences. Here, the idea of being teased due to a person's red hair is quite different than someone being denied an employment position due to the color of skin or accent of an individual. The differentiation between two forms of encounter is critical since it paves the way to discuss themes of prejudice and community.
The day following the writings on prejudice, Mira asked students to describe prejudice via visuals. The project, as Mira noted, asked students to create artwork "from your perspective to describe a photo or art that tells us about prejudice." During my observation, I noticed that students' work captured not only their own sense of being discriminated against but also described how others were or had been discriminated against. The portrayals included: scenes of being isolated because the way one spoke and dressed in school, a student being told to "go home" due to one's cultural background, an art work of Dr. Martin Luther King speaking to a crowd, etc. Mira defines the significance of infusing art to speak about prejudice:

Art brings a certain passion or feeling about issues. I find it less formal. Some of the students may not express it in writing format so creating visual adds a way to talk about what students have in mind. It is also about how one remembers and wants to talk about it. For example, one of the students drew a bowl that contained fruits of different colors and variety that was placed on a table. She then isolated one pear on the far end of the table and it seemed like it had reluctantly fallen off the bowl. She told me that is how she felt about going to school when she was young. Now, that is quite meaningful and complex. The art aspect adds so much to how we talk about a topic, particularly when it has cultural meanings embedded within it (p. 18).

As Mira describes, art offers alternative ways of expression, is less formal and allows one to incorporate creative elements in speaking about complex issues. As Mira
explains, the visual expression also becomes a useful mode of articulation since a number of students are learning to write the English language. The expressions embedded within an art are also about how one remembers an episode of prejudice and decides to display the work. As Mira describes, the artwork of a pear separated from a bowl of fruit reveals the complexity of human expressions as well as of cultural difference. It also suggests how individuals speak of a particular theme to evoke complex and selective meanings or interpretations on culture. In what follows, I describe the use of literature in teaching of cultural issues.

**Not Yes and No**

Following each multicultural readings, Mira asked students to reflect on the themes raised within the book. Here, I will elaborate on the cultural questions vis-a-vis three readings/discussions of literature: *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt*, *Baseball Saved Us*, and *Smoky Night* since Mira placed emphasis of the books since it addresses cultural issues relevant to children. The discussions on the books offer useful spaces to understand the multicultural aspect of the discussions and the complex questions it raises about prejudice and community.
Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt was discussed as a narrative told via the eyes of young Clara that proves a glimpse of harsh yet resilient Black life in a southern white colonial plantation. Within the narrative, Clara, separated from her mother to work in the plantation fields, gathers the geographical knowledge of the Underground Railroad. By weaving the directions within the freedom quilt, Clara sows the map towards freedom thus to escape with her family the life of southern slavery. Clara leaves behind the quilt in the plantation and the quilt becomes a map towards freedom for many African Americans. Mira points out the significance of reading/discussing the book:

The reading and the discussion provide students background on an aspect of African American, United States and Ohio history. I want students to understand what plantation means and slaves' work in the cotton fields and slave-master relationships. As we talked about last time, it is also about thinking again what we mean about community and the difference between master and slave communities. And about prejudice. I asked a question in the class discussion: Why was it necessary for Clara to run away from the plantation? And also the meaning of the quilt for Clara and African Americans. Plus the relationship to the Underground Railroad (p. 19).

Here, relationships between history(ies), the labor of slaves, the quilt and the role of Underground Railroad are constructed to contextualize the discussion. Similarly, there is emphasis placed on the nature of communities talked about in the book and the differences between white
communities and slave communities are evoked. The theme of prejudice is introduced to highlight the practice of forced labor within the plantation and Clara and her family's decision to escape the life of southern slavery. The historical meaning of the quilt is evoked to contextualize it with African American traditions.

Along with the discussion of the book, students were asked to reflect on their perspectives on issues addressed in the book, for example, by "looking at how swamp, North Star, river, birds, trees or roads are talked about." Such a classroom assignment offers spaces to think about the difference "for example between Big House of masters and the quarters where the slaves lived." The assignment on art work is significant for Mira since "art can be informal and students remember and relate more when art is included." The following day, Mira read the following questions for students to write during class:

It is a two-part question. First, from your perspective, what does freedom mean to you? And the second part you should explain why you believe the way you do and please provide examples. And not to write yes and no answers.

You should also think about what the books tells us about freedom and how it is different now. As we discussed last time, how does civil rights movement of the 1960s relate to this topic? (p. 19)
Here, the questions invite students to reflect on the meaning of freedom and its relevance to everyday life. Students are asked to expand beyond the yes/no statement and to offer examples on their perspectives of freedom by framing their responses in relation to the narrative. Furthermore, students are asked to examine meanings of freedom spoken in the narrative and how it is different or similar in the contemporary context. Similarly, the topic of civil rights movement is incorporated to historicize the status of freedom today.

*Baseball Saved Us*, the second book read/discussed in the classroom addresses, through the eyes of a young narrator ("Shorty"), the plight of Japanese Americans during World War II. During the discussion, Mira described Shorty's experience in the internment camp by highlighting issues of forced re-location, undesirable living conditions within the camps and how baseball becomes a useful passage to re-create a sense of community within the incarcerated experiences. During imprisonment, Shorty learns to play baseball; however, upon returning to school after the internment, the narrator is isolated by students in the school and hurled racial epithets. The baseball team in the school "accepts" Shorty's presence within the team, at least temporarily, because of his baseball performances. The narrator
challenges the discriminatory audience during baseball games by hitting homeruns. Thus, the hard-hitting baseball performance of a Japanese American becomes a location of intervention thus to question the nature of prejudice displayed against him. Mira poses the following questions to students upon reading the book:

How does this book make you feel? And why did it make you feel that way? Why was "Shorty" treated differently? What questions would you ask people about their experiences in the camp? (p. 19)

The questions assigned to students allow possibilities to examine the affective aspect of response. "How does this book make you feel?" deals with, as Mira pointed out to me, not only students' personal interpretations but also the deeper meanings that under-gird individual responses. The question of "why did it make you feel that way?" is also raised to uncover the layers of values and beliefs of students. Mira suggests that the question of why Shorty was treated differently is important because it allows students to internalize issues of prejudice and to examine the mistreatment based on ethnic/racial background. The last question incorporates an interactive element that asks students to develop questions to ask those who have experienced life in the internment camps.
The third book of discussion that I have included is *Smoky Night*, which describes the complex cross-cultural tensions as well as possibilities of community formations within a multicultural urban setting. Written against the backdrop of the Los Angeles uprising following the Rodney King verdict (which found white officers not-guilty of beating Rodney King), the books attempts to shed light on "what riots mean to the children who live through them --- and about what we can all learn from such upheavals." The narrative is told via the perspective of an African American child who witnesses through the house window, along with his mother, the looting of stores on the streets. The book describes ways in which the events effected Asian, Latino and African American characters in the book and suggests possibilities of organizing multicultural communities.

The classroom discussion of the book addressed the events that had transpired in Los Angeles and Mira asked students what they had learned from the narrative. Prior to the writing of perspectives about the narrative, Mira asked students to enact what had taken place by reading and performing the roles of the characters in the book. The characters included: young narrator, Daniel, and his mother, Gena; Mrs. Kim, the worker/owner of the store that is looted; Mr. Ramirez, a neighbor, and a "lady" who leads the
characters to a shelter after a fire breaks out in the apartment complex. The narrative describes the looting of Mrs. Kim's store and Daniel and his mother's ambivalence to buy at Mrs. Kim’s store. It is at the shelter that the characters get to know each other partially and decide to get together in the near future.

Several students volunteered to read and also performed the parts in front of the classroom. Later during our conversation, Mira pointed out that she was ambivalent on the student performance aspect since there was a gap between the performance and the cultural context of the book. Following students' participation, the class discussed what had taken place before the riot and what lessons students can learn from the book. Mira explains to me:

It is a complex book. I emphasized on history and what had taken place and about Rodney King since this is a new topic for students. There are two statements in the book that I wanted students to think about that talks about the looting of a store owned by an Asian woman. "Mama and I don't go in Mrs. Kim's market even though it's close. Mama says it is better we buy from our own people." It relates to the community aspect we have been talking in class and issues of misunderstanding. And how community is talked about at the end. Now the writing helps students to think more on the topic of cultural difference and community (p. 20-21).

Recognizing the intricacies of cross-racial or the inter-cultural themes, Mira suggests the need for a historical
understanding of the text. In order to re-frame ideas of community students are asked to discuss how ideas of community are talked about within the narrative and the relations among the various racial/ethnic groups. The discussion also focuses on the ambivalence of buying at the nearby store and how ideas of community are depicted prior and after the events. Following the discussion, Mira asked students to reflect on the following questions on cultural difference and community.

Write a letter to Mrs. Kim and the African American family the questions you have about what took place in the neighborhood. The second part is to write about what silence means to you. Characters were not talking to each other. Why are people silent in the book? Were people talking to build a community? (p. 21)

The writing assignment invites students to ask as well as to reflect on what had taken place during the uprising. Emphasis is placed on students' interpretation of silence of the characters within the story. Students are to reflect on the misunderstandings or "silent" dimensions between and among the characters to reflect on the aspect of "not talking to each other." Similarly, a relationship between the silence of characters and the limits and possibilities of community formations is suggested via the question of: "Were people talking to build a community?"
Who Is The “We?”

Before the end of the semester, Mira invited students to summarize some of the themes or lessons the books had provided to the students. Students noted the following concepts or lessons as gathered from the readings:

Courage of the characters.
The need to treat people the way you want to be treated.
To treat people nicely.
Not to judge other people wrongly.
We are all human beings.
It is what inside that counts.
Not to judge by how someone looks, speaks or by religion.

Students' response includes a variety of interpretations that focus on the ways of translating topics of cultural difference. Mira pointed out to me that discussing about prejudice and "what community means is not as easy at it sounds." If the pedagogy emphasizes the need to think beyond tolerance "or not to simply think as to tolerate someone," as Mira points out, teaching about prejudice and community remains an ongoing engagement. If the majority of the students interpret learning about difference within the spectrum of "the need to treat people the way you want to be treated" to "not to judge by how some one looks, speaks or by religion" it suggests certain possibilities opened up by reading, discussion and writing strategies. As Mira argues, it also points out to the continued challenges within the teaching of diversity and difference. Mira reflects:
Many students are struggling with the issue and that helps classroom discussion because students have been reconsidering their earlier view rather than simply offering quick a response. Some of the students in the class questioned if tolerance is the right concept to use. Does tolerance simply mean we need tolerance in society or we need to tolerate more to people who have differences? When we talk about tolerance are we simply talking about the need to tolerate and not change what or how the society is?

When we had the discussion on the internment of Japanese Americans, some students were suggesting that Japanese Americans should have gone to Japan and they were using a whole lot of "we think this and that." Then other students spoke out and said they disagreed and asked: "who is the we." Then there was a discussion on I and we (p. 23).

The multiple meanings or interpretations of tolerance are negotiated and the use of tolerance as a device for an affective pedagogy is itself questioned. As Mira suggests, students' struggles on interpreting social issues offer new possibilities in which "the need to tolerate" is rethought to move towards the need for social change. The perspectives of students on the internment of Japanese Americans describe ways students negotiate history, prejudice and community. The meaning of "we" is complicated by pointing out the limits and possibilities of "we" as a form of community within the classroom.

A related question one must ask is how are the issues of cultural difference connected to everyday realities of classrooms? Mira often spoke to students individually or in
a small group by gathering the students in a private space to talk "issues" that needed attention. As Mira pointed out to me, nor can a teacher not see, hear or not address the cultural encounters that take place in the classroom that can be affected by students' race, gender, language or nationality. "A lot of times it is between or among certain students," notes Mira about the occasional tensions. In one occasion, Mira spoke to the whole class on the need to extend respect to each other upon hearing students making statements such as "why don't you go to your own country" or when three students did not desire to include one student in a group project. Mira explains the realities of classroom:

We can all talk about the community issue on the theoretical or on the abstract level but in reality or on the practical side, there are always issues that take place in the school when some people treat others differently. We can talk all we want about community but if someone is not practicing then the talk has little value. A lot of times it has to do with students not treating other students with respect. If we have students who have different cultural background that does not mean that one is superior to the other. If someone is quiet or different that does not mean that a person should be neglected or be pushed around. As teachers, we have to listen carefully and look around what is happening because it often takes place in front of our eyes. The question is: are we willing to see it and talk about it? (p. 24)

As Mira describes, there are limits to imagining community and speaking of prejudice at a theoretical level by not recognizing its practical everyday contexts. Thus, talking
or performing community on the theoretical vein cannot neglect what actually takes place in the classroom. If teachers speak or talk of community in the classroom via the inclusion of multicultural books, one cannot not see or hear the encounters of cultural differences that take place in the classroom. In one occasion, Mira pointed out to the class:

Lately, I have noticed that some of us are treating others disrespectfully. This has happened several times. Remember what we have read and talked about so far? And look what is taking place in our class. In your small groups, we will discuss how we need to show respect to each other and treat each other fairly. We will discuss in small groups and come up with some suggestions for the whole class to follow (p. 23-24)

The discussion and writing allows students to reflect on the meanings of respect and ways to develop culturally meaningful relationships. Eliciting response from students allows possibilities "to come up with ideas that will guide students' language and actions in the classroom." Here, Mira suggests the need to craft a relationship between the multicultural readings and everyday issues within the classroom since classrooms often encounter issues of cultural difference, prejudice and community.
Summary

So far I have describe Mira’s diaporic and gendered aspect of immigrant identity and how Mira negotiates identities within school and in society. I have also illustrated the enabling of immigrant cultural pedagogy within the classroom that speaks of possibilities and challenges of incorporating minority knowledge within the classroom. Similarly, the pedagogy engendered within the classroom emphasizes issues of cultural difference and community to invite students to rethink their views on social issues.

In the "introduction" letter sent to the parents in the beginning of the school year, Mira notes her three goals as a teacher:

(a) Achieve academic success and personal growth for each child.

(b) Help students become independent learners and thinkers.

(c) Establish a classroom community where differences are valued and respected.

The goals outlined by Mira within the letter illustrate the meaning given to "become independent learners and thinkers" in which academic success is a passage that is inextricably linked to learning about community and difference. In such teaching formations, affective teaching practices invite
students to rethink their perspectives and to reach beyond their comfort levels. The immigrant pedagogy of cultural difference infuses discussions on issues of community and prejudice, history and contemporary social issues, and addresses cultural issues that are encountered within everyday classrooms. The discussion on issues of prejudice and difference allow possibilities to rethink the notion of tolerance and enables the to think of community in open and non-coercive ways. Next, I describe the "collective stories" of Asian immigrant/American identities and practices.
CHAPTER 8

ASIAN IMMIGRANT/AMERICAN IDENTITIES AND PEDAGOGY

When people talk about their identity, it’s a word which is so often used today that it has almost become a cliché, but it is nevertheless a very important concept (Achebe, 1997, p. 58).

In Chapter One, I described Asian immigrant teachers’ assumed identities and ways in which dominant representational discourse operates to consume minority identities by situating the movement of teachers from Third World to U.S. I argued that since Asian teachers are imported to teach on the basis of their apparent qualifications (as being “good” in science or math due to their Indian/Asian association), their negative cultural difference is evoked to illustrate their “foreign” and undesirable status within U.S. schools and the larger U.S. society. Such dominant modes of representation deny the heterogeneity of teachers’ identities, histories, experiences and conflate, following Britzman (1992), “teacher identity as
synonymous with the teacher’s role and function” (p. 23). As
I have illustrated in Chapter One and Two, a central problematic
within the representation of Asian immigrant identities remains
their uncertain identity locations within U.S. in which Asians
are selectively desired to serve the economic interests of U.S.
state but are rejected as legitimate citizens (Lowe, 1996). In
this chapter, I illustrate the multiplicity and heterogeneity
of Asian immigrant teacher identities and practices to re-write
ways in which the teachers are represented within U.S. society.
In a move to summarize as well as to further elaborate, to
complicate my own earlier readings and to invoke resistance
stories, I strategically repeat certain statements or words
from earlier chapters. Within such alternative writing
practices of repetition a “ritual charge” is evoked in which
readers may “return to a familiar ground only to find themselves
drifting somewhere else” (Minha, 1996, p. 12). Within this final
chapter, I narrate, via the strategy of repetition, “collective
stories” (Richardson, 1994) of Asian immigrant teacher
identities and practices to interrupt the orientalist
representations as well as to chart the heterogeneity and
hybridity of immigrant acts performed within the Third Space.
Within the context of education, the Third Space, “displaces
the histories that constitute it, and sets up...new political
initiatives” (Bhabha, 1990, p. 211). First, I theorize the performance of hybrid/diasporic immigrant identities both within and outside of the schooling context within the following sections: (a) diasporic identities (b) theorizing arrival stories (c) negotiating identity within schools and (d) the question of cultural affiliation. Second, I describe the heterogeneity of Asian immigrant teaching practices and the Third Space of immigrant pedagogy such identities enable within the following sections: immigrant spaces of pedagogy (b) spaces to speak (c) research terrain (d) the infusion of cultural knowledge (e) third space of multicultural pedagogy and (f) the ambivalence within immigrant pedagogy.

**Diasporic Identities**

The teachers’ performance of identities speaks of how Asian immigrants enact multi-cultural or diasporic identities to re-position their locations within U.S. racial formations. The enunciations of cultural identities are not performed within static frameworks but are negotiated practices that interrupt the binary opposition of “Us” and “Them” identities and opens up alternative political spaces of both individual as well as less romantic formations of collective identities. The identities are collective in the sense that “such identities

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1 Colonial constructions of dichotomous identities are addressed by Said (1978), Pratt (1992) and Fabian (1983).
are deeply integral to a person’s sense of self, defining ‘I’ by placing it against a background of ‘we’” (Appiah & Gates, 1992, p. 625). The teachers evoke the political and fluid aspects of teacher identities via statements of

Y²—I am a Philippine, an Asian and an Asian American, a Filipino American with a somewhat of a Spanish name and who speaks Spanish. We have mixed but we are still Filipinos. And it depends on who is asking.

R—I identify myself as an Indian. And I was born in Ohio.

K—I am a Pakistani, a Muslim, a woman.

M—I am a Delhiite, an Indian woman, also Asian American. A lot of times it has to do with whom I am talking to.

The enunciation of cultural identities speaks of the multi-faceted ways of performing the self within the matrix of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality and spirituality. Such identities cannot be simply isolated within categories of nationhood or gender or race or but are relational articulations from which multiple cultural identities are (re)positioned. Kiran’s self-identification as “a Pakistani, a Muslim, a

² I have utilized the first initial to narrate the voices of teachers (Y—Maria, R—Rabin, K—Kiran, M—Mira). See Chapters 4–7 for extended responses of the teachers. Similarly, the quotes and themes included in this chapter were consulted with the teachers (See Chapter 3). Similarly, I have not referred to the page number of transcript (from which the quotes were taken) since it has already been noted in Chapter 4–7.
woman" or Maria’s "a Philippine, an Asian and an Asian American, a Filipino American" speaks of multiple affiliations as well as the differences (of gender, nationality, etc) within the performed identities. Similarly, to follow Mira, such identity formations are not only "Indian" but nor are they strictly "American" but more of a syncretic production of identity that goes beyond the narrow scope of national identifications. The articulated identities are diasporic in that the desire to belong are channeled into multiple spaces and take inroads into the realm of "postnational identifications" in which "the idea of belonging is no longer organized around a homeland or a state" (May, 1999, p. 87).

The articulation of beyond-the-nation identifications are not romantic post-national identities but speak of the cross-cultural interactions among local as well as global geographical spaces: of Pakistan, the Philippines, Delhi, India and U.S. Yet, the articulation of cultural identities is also about speaking of nationhood; however, within such movements of identities, the idea of national identity is

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3 I address the issue of social class later in the chapter.
4 The idea of "Indian" (similar to Filipino or Pakistani) is a national identification that is heterogeneous in its formation and is an effect of ethnicity, gender, social class, religion, etc. The discourse of nationalism is beyond the scope of this chapter. For extensive discussion on the complexities of Third World nationalism see Fanon, 1968; Anderson, 1983; Bhabha, 1990; Chatterjee, 1986; Mohanty & Alexander, 1997.
pluralized. Thus, the performances of identities are not simply articulations of geographies (the space of India, etc) but speak of the diasporic domain or of hybridity: “Filipino American with a Spanish name...we have mixed but we are still Filipinos” or “an Indian woman, also an Asian American.”

Responses such as “it depends on who is asking” suggests the auto-ethnographic aspect of immigrant identities in which the performed identities are not “authentic” or autochthonous forms of identity self-representations but identity moves that include “partial collaboration with and appropriation” (Pratt, 1992, p. 7) of dominant discourses. Thus, “diasporic identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference” (Hall, 1990, p. 235). Such identities are not bounded within specific national grounds of birth but function via selective identifications or are mediated within/by specific cultural formations, as Rabin points out, in which “I identify myself as an Indian. And I was born in Ohio.”

The enactment of diasporic identities is about negotiating within and extending the boundaries of identities (both via identification and dis-identification) thus to create “the positions from which we speak and write” (Hall, 1990, p. 222). Similarly, the positioning of identity is not about
“thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact” but are about “production, which is never complete, always in process” (Hall, 1990, p. 222). In other words, the performances of hybrid immigrant teacher identities do not operate in homogeneous fashion but are often strategically evoked. The selective performances are conditional upon, as Mira suggests, “a lot of time it has to do with whom I am talking to.” Moreover, the move towards multiple identifications does not neglect cultural/political categories such as Asian American, Filipino or Indian. Such articulations of identity work via “ethnic hyphenation” to open up “double directionality: a here or the present home, and a there or the elsewhere in terms of which metropolitan contemporaneity can be interrogated and transformed” (Radhakrishnan, 1996, p. xxiv). Moreover, Kiran’s description of “I think about where I belong and there is always a feeling of incompleteness” speaks of how immigrant teacher identities are neither romantic identity belongings nor unmediated “floating” identities. Such uncertainty over identities registers the socio-political context of cultural identity production in relation to contemporary immigrant displacements thus evoking the ambivalence within immigrant belongings.
The teachers’ articulation of hybrid identities is also an effect of how teachers remember individual as well as collective histories, and how experiences are spoken and positioned. The act of remembering past experiences open up possibilities for alternative cultural identities of decolonization in relation to “history of subjugation and condescension, which continues today in revised but nevertheless recognizable forms” (Bilgrami, 1992, p. 836). The re-membering of experience includes:

Y-When I was growing up we would see white missionaries in our neighborhoods trying to convert Filipinos into Christians.

R-I was the only minority in my school.

M-We started to learn English early in life.

K-We were required to study English from pre-school level.

Kiran and Mira’s narration of learning English at an early age and the requirement aspect speaks of the dominant location of English language within Third World societies. Maria’s evocation of scenes of “white missionaries in our neighborhoods” describes specific encounters with neo/colonial missionary legacy in the Philippines. Rabin’s “I was the only

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5 I have elaborated on the politics of speaking and my partial uncovering of identity stories in Chapter Three.
6 I describe the neo/colonial context of identity formations
minority in my school" speaks of his specific location and experience within the school as the only person of color. The remembering moves illustrate how the teachers speak of personal histories and how contemporary identity spaces are performed in relation to specific experiences. Such perspectives resist positioning experience as "functioning as an unexamined catch-all category" and suggests the need to "historicizing and locating political agency" in conceptualizing experience (Mohanty, 1992, p. 75-77). Within such formations, the category of "cultural experience" becomes a site to re-present resistant Asian immigrant teacher identities.

**Theorizing Arrival Stories**

The diasporic aspect of identity is not to be romanticized since the teachers' arrivals into U.S. are often effected by their social class privilege (often mediated via formal education) which opened up economic or employment possibilities for the teachers. Kiran, Maria and Mira arrived into U.S. with their spouses since the latter were either invited or approved to cross-borders into U.S. to work (due to their "skills") or to pursue higher education. In Rabin's case, his father arrived into U.S. to complete medical residency. Here, one must not ignore how often certain immigrant arrivals into U.S. are facilitated by immigration legislations that later in the chapter.
selectively “invite” “skilled” or “qualified” foreign (male) nationals to “resolve’ the contradictions of capitalism with political democracy” (Lowe, 1999, p. 21). Within such economic logics, U.S. state selectively codifies immigration policies to import labor for the benefit of U.S. capitalistic formations which “discriminates, surveys, and produces immigrant identities” (Lowe, 1999, p. 18).

The “enigma of arrival” (Naipaul, 1987) of immigrant teachers into U.S. are neither celebratory nor romantic and within the context of such ambivalent arrivals, the teachers are immediately othered within U.S. racial formations. If border crossing into U.S. geographical spaces are effected by economic privileges, the arrivals and the subsequent racialized encounters that follow the entry(ies) speak of how teachers identify and simultaneously dis-identify with dominant representations of Asian as well as Asian American identities. The teachers’ articulation of immigrant identities are produced in relation to their interactions with U.S. racial formations that intersect with discourses of orientalism and imperialism. The encounters include:

R—Being the only brown student in the school means people will call you names.

M—We were part of the British empire for a long time. And the colonial experience changed our educational system.
R-When we wear our clothes, people ask if we had been to a costume party.

R-They will ask you if you have a snake in your house as a pet or eat cow. Or if you can walk on fire, eat fire.

Y-We were under Spanish rule starting in the 1500s. American occupation began in early 1900s.

Y-People would ask “why are there so many problems in the Philippines?”

Y-I noticed that people saw me differently. People would ask if we ate dogs. What do people think we are?

Y-Lot of people pretend to like Asians because they think we can be controlled for their benefit. I say stop pretending. How do you deal with such people and the narrow mind-set they have.

Y-They think we are not political. And some think that we are not discriminated against.

Y-I began to write to let people know what I thought about society and my experience here.

K-Being a Muslim is understood differently here and as you know mostly in negative terms. I don’t have to wear a hijab to prove that I am a Muslim to people here.

R-Lot of the TV programs are American or British TV back home and dark people are shown as either criminals or entertainers.

The close encounters with dominant discourse create spaces for the teachers to re-read ways Asia and Asian immigrants are
constructed within U.S. racialized discourses. If arrivals into U.S. enable sites of unlearning via the uncomfortable meetings with dominant representations, such experiences offer alternative ways to position identities. The re-negotiations of identity enable spaces to interrogate orientalist discourses filtered via coercive or violent questions of: “do you eat dogs?,” “eat cow?” or “if we had been to a costume party?” Yet the violent questions that attempt to disciple Third World (for example in Maria’s context) within the frameworks of “why are there so many problems in the Philippines?” are resisted via responses of “who do people think we are?”

The dominant representation of Asia or Asian immigrant teacher identities are effects of the larger discourses of imperialism whether in relation to American occupation of the Philippines, India and Pakistan being former colonies of the British empire or, as Rabin suggests, the contemporary neo-colonial discourse on the deployment of western media images into Third World. The recognition (however partial) of the violence of historical as well as contemporary cross-cultural encounters engender identifications as well as dis-identifications with identities recognizing, as Dillard

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7 As I have addressed in each chapter, the other side of arrival is unlearning their own stereotypes and biases. All of the teachers speak of their unlearning of the economic inequities as well as discriminations (and histories of such prejudice)
(2002) points out within African American contexts, U.S. racialized discourse operate through “what we are not versus about what we are” (p. 8). Thus, the dis-identifications with dominant identities are performed to de-stabilize neo/orientalist myths: “I don’t have to wear hijab to prove that I am a Muslim to people here.” Similarly, the self-reflexive articulation of “people saw me differently” enables a re-thinking of old and new identities and simultaneously enacts dis-identification in relation to dominant representation of identities. Hence, the dis-identification move “allows for the exploration of alternative political and cultural subjectivities that emerge within the continuing effects of displacement” (Lowe, 1999, p. 104). Such performances of alternative cultural identities interrupt representations produced in relation to the white mythologies of model minority discourse thus to question the attempts to “control us....to pretend to like Asians” or the stereotypes of Asians of not being racialized or as being non-political entities.

within U.S.

"The teachers do not speak of their being considered “model minority” (which positions Asian Americans as “better” than other people of color) thus revealing the fictions of dominant construction of model minority discourse (Palumbo-Liu, 1999). Similarly, the discourse of model minority constructs Asian immigrants as deviant foreigners who cannot be part of U.S. national identity or citizenship (See Lowe, 1996;).
As a move to dis-identify with dominant identities, the teachers’ interaction within diasporic Asian communities\(^9\) engenders survival/supportive spaces to belong differently in U.S. Kiran’s participation within the Islamic mosque, Maria’s work with Filipino-American political organizations, Mira’s association with Indian communities and Rabin’s cross-cultural mediation with African American and Indian American communities are alternative minority maneuvers within immigrant acts. Such diasporic associations or formations are effects of traveling of cultures and communities, to follow Said\(^{10}\) (1982), in which ideas and culture migrate to create alternative cultural practices in the diaspora. Yet, as the teachers argue, diasporic cultural formations are not utopian or romantic. Here, the teachers speak of the ambivalence and tensions of community formations and the difficulties of articulating or performing unified ideas of community.

\[R\text{- We have a lot of cultural events but is that enough? Is that political?}\]

\[M\text{- I am thinking of skin color and how darker people are treated within our community.}\]

\(^9\)As I have argued in each case study, the forging of relations with people of color is not an easy process. The teachers’ recognition of their own not-knowing(s) allow spaces to un/learn their identity locations and enables possibilities to work against dominant discourses.

\(^{10}\)I am referring to Said’s (1982; 1999) re-thinking on “traveling theory.” See also Clifford (1997) on “traveling cultures” within research/field-work contexts.
Our community is not political enough. Our organization needs to be more politically active.

M—Unfortunately, some people bring the same kind of prejudice here from our part of the world. All we have to do is look how we treat people who are not from the same ethnic background or who are divorced women or a widow here in our supposed community. I am proud to be an Indian. But a lot of times, community can be forced upon us. Community can be fragile.

K—I am a divorced woman and I get treated like I am an outsider. Some think that I have broken rules of the community.

If the teachers’ move into diasporic cultural spheres offers alternative cultural grounds of association, it also opens up de-romanticized and self-critical passages of cultural affiliations. The identity negotiations engender self-reflexivity and self-critical movements that interrogate the practices within one’s communities recognizing that “the historical source and function of one’s commitments can put one in an unreflective and uncritical state of mind about those very commitments” (Bilgrami, 1992, p. 836). Thus, the Third Space of identity performance is a double move: it advocates the need to be self-critical of one’s community(ies) yet simultaneously advocates the need to politicize cultural struggles from within the communities. The questions of: “We have a lot of cultural events but is that enough? Is that political?” demands the need
to politicize cultural practices to interrupt dominant displays of immigrant identities and advocates grounds to rethink, from within, the productions of “cultural event” that may offer limited political trajectories for meaningful social change. The ways in which teachers identify and speak of cultural communities does not lionize group affiliations but speaks of prejudice within communities vis-a-vis the context of skin color, perceptions of divorced women or widowed subjects, marginalization of women, etc. The Third Space of identity negotiations enable strategic affiliations and collective struggles yet such performances of identity also register contingency within the idea of belonging. Such a critical, cultural position is similar to what Said (2000) calls “exile standpoint” that negotiates a “median state, neither completely at one with the new setting nor fully disencumbered of the old... nostalgia and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or a secret outcast on another” (Said, 2000, p. 371). Next, I describe how Asian immigrant teachers identify with and simultaneously dis-identify with dominant discourses within the schooling context.

Negotiating Identity within Schools

Y-Parents would call me to check if they could understand me. People are used to speaking in a certain way and when you speak to them differently they don’t like it. Some
even came to observe my class. And they were surprised to see how I taught.

M-A parent questioned my accent. The comment was if my apparently British accent could be a hindrance for students to understand or learn in class.

Y-I was using the term “happy and gay” and parents complained. And they told me not to use the term ‘gay.’ Then, the principle says that I need to take courses on multicultural issues.

Y-People assume that I teach languages. Whenever I tell or when people see what I teach, they get surprised. Some people get suspicious. They probably think I am not American enough to teach those subjects.

Y-It is like some teachers don’t want to listen to you. They change subjects when I speak and I often get interrupted. It is difficult for them to listen as though if they would feel inferior. Nowadays I ask questions to hear what they have in mind. Their views on what has happened in this country. I ask how they see Asia and Africa.

K-The office wanted the letter to have a seal of the mosque to explain that it was a religious day for me to take a day off.

K-This is not the first time I have been asked if I am a teacher. I asked: Don’t I look like a teacher?

K-ESL does not get much support from other areas. Look at where we are located. But despite all that, to a certain degree, it is working out for us.

In the above noted passages, the teachers speak of how marginalization operates against women in relation to:
linguistic/speaking, visual, official procedures or directives and via dominant construction of specific identities or roles. For example, the linguistic (or accent) dimension operates regarding the dominant reluctance to hear what the Other has spoken whether in the realm of, as Maria points out, “parents would call me to check if they could understand me” or a parent questioning, in Mira’s case, “if my apparently British accent could be a hindrance for students to understand or learn in class.” The linguistic silencing also operates in relation to Maria’s use of terminologies whether in the case of utilizing the terms “happy and gay,” being constantly interrupted or people often changing topics when she speaks. The structural aspect of identity erasure functions via official directives on the: “need to take a course on multicultural issues” due to the use of terms such as “happy and gay” in class. Furthermore, the operations of discriminatory power functions in the context of institutional directives to follow certain procedures via, as Kiran points out, the demands “to have a seal of the mosque to explain that it was religious day for me.” In Kiran’s case, the institutional framework isolates the discipline of ESL and those who are within it, and the statement of “ESL does not get much
support... You can see where we are located” suggests the physical as well as intellectual/cultural segregation of ESL outside of the “normal” or regular academic discipline (English, etc). The ESL classroom is a segregated space in which only students of color attend (whether born in the U.S. or outside of U.S.) and the responsibility to “educate” immigrant students is placed on an immigrant teacher.

Similarly, the deviant representation assumes an immigrant teacher not “looking” like a “real” teacher or only as a “foreign” language teacher as if the teaching of language was an innocent act. Maria points out that some dominant members of society are surprised and get anxious upon hearing her teaching of social studies and language arts since “they probably think I am not American enough to teach those subjects.” Thus, for the mainstream society, the Asian immigrant subject remains an outsider, a perpetual foreigner who is destined to be disloyal to U.S. state. On the other hand, within a culturally supportive context, Rabin speaks of his meaningful relationships with teachers and administrators and does not consider himself disenfranchised within the school, which suggests the heterogeneous location of Asian immigrant teachers within U.S. schools. He speaks not of his invisibility but of the
dominant societal neglect of the school and the students particular in relation to the economic abyss between his school and economically privileged schools in the area.

If immigrant subjects are disenfranchised via institutionalized frameworks/directives that undermine their cultural identities, the multiple forms of discriminations are simultaneously disavowed revealing the agency within their practices. The teachers interrogate racialized discourses, as Maria suggests, via posing questions to dominant people’s “views on what has happened in this country” or “how they see Africa and Asia.” The return of the immigrant gaze unsettles the dominant party’s discriminatory speech that attempts to construct the teachers as the Other. The ways in which women’s immigrant knowledge interrupts the normative ways of speaking the English language in which, as Maria argues: “people are used to speaking in a certain way and when you speak to them differently they don’t like it.” Kiran’s statement of “despite all that, to a certain degree, it is actually working out for us” describes how possibilities are being fashioned in spite of cultural marginalization and how the space of the classroom is transformed as a cultural opening, a learning site, recognizing the educational impediments faced by immigrant
students. Such forms of resistance create “malleable forms of negotiations with structures of domination through a style of politics (that) creates informal avenues of disavowal and affiliation” (May, 1999, p. 144). Thus, immigrant teachers’ resistant practices are not articulated via large-scale political mobilization but via small yet significant acts that interrupt dominant gaze and simultaneously create “new” cultural openings and alternative teaching and learning practices. In what follows, I describe the identity possibilities created via border crossings as well as how meaningful cross-cultural relations are not always possible.

The Question of Cultural Affiliations

As I have argued, the hybrid, post-colonial immigrant teacher identities are “new ethnicities” (Hall, 1996) that interact with both marginalized local U.S. cultures as well as are produced in relation to engagements with dominant U.S. culture(s). As I have described, Asian immigrant diasporic moves offer alternative spaces to negotiate hybrid terrain of immigrant identities without erasing one’s “earlier” cultural as well as political commitments. As an effect of new cultural affiliations, such cultural/political identities enable passages to counteract discriminations and also create spaces for identifications with other cultural identities. If the
invisibility of Asian immigrant subjectivities is resisted via the performance of alternative identities, the nature of relationship the teachers craft speaks of their complex and heterogeneous immigrant identity locations within schools. Such affiliations offer grounds “to think through the politics of why we are here and to deliberate carefully about which America they want to identify with” (Radhakrishnan, 1996, p. 209). Consequently, the identity articulations open up spaces for the practice of “politics of location:”¹¹ the “historical, geographical, cultural, psychic and imaginative boundaries which provide the ground for political definition and self-definition” (Mohanty, 1992, p. 74). Rabin enables such locational practices via meaningful affiliations with African American and progressive white teachers (both men and women) within the school, and his identity movements within a supportive environment offer sites to craft identities within a cross-cultural, cross-racial terrain. The articulated cultural identifications are not identities of being Black or becoming African American since Rabin does not identify himself as African American but works the Brown-Black cultural formations or participates within inter-cultural negotiations to perform hybrid identities. Rabin is visible within the school

¹¹ Here, I refer readers to a useful work by Rich (1984) titled “Notes Toward a Politics of Location”
and his everyday interactions and associations engender environments that create intellectual and cultural spaces to teaching within the school.

Maria negotiates identities via selectively affiliating with a male teacher of color (of Kenyan descent) and progressive white teachers (both men and women) and resists being silenced whether being constructed as negative difference or, despite more than twenty years of teaching, as being translated as “not qualified” to teach. Her description of working/interacting with certain white teachers is “like a wall” in which teachers “don’t want to listen,” resist “hearing where we come from” and yet Maria creates cultural possibilities for herself by working with her students who are mostly African Americans and immigrants of color. Thus, within the international school setting, cultural spaces are created via locating the self, what Maria refers as being “between students and the system” (p. 20) to make the in-between terrain an oppositional middle position. Correspondingly, Mira negotiates identity within a privileged school setting (mostly comprising of white students) by resisting dominant ways of knowing and via working with progressive (mostly women) white teachers. Her affiliations with the two teachers of color within the school are limited
to occasional casual conversations. On the other hand, although Kiran interacts with teachers within the school, her location suggests that meaningful, supportive affiliations are not always possible: neither with progressive white teachers nor with teachers of color. If Kiran is a marginalized figure within the school, she re-creates possibilities in relation to her commitments to working with immigrant students. Thus, within Kiran’s context, the immigrant, post-colonial classroom becomes a location of culture where she re-positions herself to re-create alternative identity spaces. However, the non-renewal of Kiran’s teaching contract suggests the vulnerable location of an Asian, Muslim immigrant woman teacher. For me, her “dismissal” or departure from the school signifies a power-laden official act of violation that is acted upon an Asian immigrant woman teacher. In what ways do such official pronouncements of anti-immigrant acts reverse immigrant students’ education?

12 Although Mira often gets together with teachers of color (from the institution where she graduated from) and speaks of her informal associations with two teachers of color within her school, her everyday interactions are mostly with progressive white teachers. Her desire to remain within a suburban school (instead of teaching within a marginalized school) is motivated by the understanding that transformative teachings are also to be practiced within privileged schools. Mira also points out that she is “used to this school” since the current school is the only school she has taught (which is also the school where she completed her student teaching).

13 As I have noted in Chapter Four, all of the students are from
The multiple identity locations of Asian immigrant teachers suggests the complex ways the teachers work the identity domain within their teaching contexts, particularly in relation to immigrant women's cultural identities. The crossing of geographical, legal and cultural borders into and within U.S. suggests the formations of new hybrid grounds of interactions that enable spaces to re-negotiate identities. Such re-formulations of identities not only offer spaces for (re)self-identification but also enable alternative locations to belong beyond one's ethnic, racial or national domains. Such affiliation resists appropriating other cultural identities and looks for strategic or selective association with teachers of color as well as with progressive white teachers. Furthermore, the teachers' identity locations within the schools also suggest the limits and possibilities of cultural border-crossings in which meaningful cross-cultural affiliations are not always possible within or among people of color. Similarly, the heterogeneous performances of identity are ambivalent yet political and reveal the multi-layered, local/global, flexible and cultural manifestations of immigrant teacher identities. Such enactment of identities illustrate how ethnic, gender, spiritual, racial, social class and national affiliations intersect in productions of immigrant

Third World societies.
identities and ways in which, or how, where and to whom, such
identities are spoken. Such strategic maneuvers of identity
describe both the possibilities and limits of theorizing
collective (or pan-ethnic) Asian immigrant teacher identities.
Thus, the ways in which each Asian immigrant teacher
heterogeneously speaks of identities are about how each
culturally identifies with the self, how the dis-identification
with “given” identities are articulated in relation to U.S.
racial formations and, lastly, how the subjects craft
identities to affiliate/identify with other marginalized
cultural identities and practices. The ways in which the
teachers negotiate identities suggests the ways in which
multiple, overlapping discourses function within the school as
well as within the larger U.S. society. And, such hybrid
performances of Asian immigrant identities function in
relations to the teachers heterogeneous experiences in the
Third World/U.S., which are often effected by historical and
contemporary tensions between western and Third World societies
(in relation to discourses of orientalism, imperialism, etc)
as well as by U.S. racial discourses. In what follows, I address
the teachers’ heterogeneous aspect of “immigrant pedagogy”14 as a Third Space of pedagogy and the research question of “what kinds pedagogy do such identities enable?”

Immigrant Space of Pedagogy

The move towards theorizing immigrant classroom acts or immigrant teacher practices cannot avoid the heterogeneous aspect of pedagogical performances. Neither is there a linear relationship between immigrant teacher identities and teaching practices; however, the pedagogy enacted illustrates (however limited) how such cultural identities can engender responsible teaching practices. Recognizing the disjunction between students’ experiences, identities, and the curriculum knowledge (and the kind of invisibility and silencing such curriculum impose), the immigrant teaching performances create spaces for students to learn practical methods (or skills) and knowledges within the classroom.15 In this discussion I propose four movements of immigrant pedagogy within the Third Space to illustrate how such practices work the hyphen between dominant knowledge and alternative to dominant knowledges to perform, what hooks (1994) calls, engaged pedagogy: “teaching that enables transgression—a movement against and beyond

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14 I also use terms such as diasporic pedagogy or hybrid pedagogy to refer to immigrant teaching practices.
15 As I have described in previous chapters, all four teachers emphasize proficiency tests in the classroom.
boundaries” (p. 12). First, I discuss the heterogeneous ways in which the teachers open-up possibilities for students to speak\textsuperscript{16} curriculum knowledge by simultaneously creating grounds to re-articulate their identities, experiences, knowledge and culture(s). Second, I describe the learning spaces that are crafted when students’ become involved within research practices. I argue that the passage into re-search is a form of decolonized discovery that allows students to investigate and uncover knowledges marginalized within the curriculums. Third, I elaborate on the deployment of both multicultural\textsuperscript{17} and global\textsuperscript{18} aspects of pedagogy and the kinds of academic/cultural possibilities they engender. Finally, I suggest how such trajectories of teaching encounter challenges thus revealing the difficulties and uncertainties of enacting pedagogy within the Third Space.

\textbf{Spaces to Speak}

In Kiran, Rabin and Maria’s classrooms, a majority of students’ are “silent” to curriculum knowledge and such

\textsuperscript{16} I am referring to “speaking” within the domains of verbally speaking as well as speaking via written mediums.

\textsuperscript{17} I use the terminology “multicultural” to denote U.S. context of minority discourse and issues of equity and diversity.

\textsuperscript{18} The use of “global” signifies Third World geographical and cultural spaces. A more appropriate pedagogical category might be post-colonial pedagogy or Third World pedagogy; however, I have utilized “global pedagogy” to articulate the kinds of pedagogy that engages with the Euro-centric formations of global (Merryfield, 2000; Mahalingam & McCarthy, 2000).
silences are not necessarily about inability to speak knowledge but more about how the dominant “politics of knowledge” (Said, 1991) subsumes the currency of alternative knowledges. Students’ silence is unlike dominant society’s silence, which Bhabha (1994) calls within colonial discourse theory, “conspiracy of silence...(the) mythic, masterful silence in the narrative of empire” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 123) but more about the “intentional silence” (Pang, 1996) that speaks of students’ marginalized location within the schooling context. The act of not-speaking can serve as an instrument of resistance, as Ladson-Billings (1996) describes, in which silence becomes a way in which students’ “refusal to talk is often the only way a child has to fight against the authority and power of adults” (p. 83). The immigrant teachers’ emphasis on students’ speaking in classrooms operate via the assumption that dominant “silencing, as a practice, does not work (and) is often ineffective” (Fine & Weis, 1993, p. 1). Recognizing the possibilities to go “beyond silenced voices” (Fine and Weis, 1993), the teachers invest in un/learning students’ cultural (and economic) identities and such practices attempt to open up spaces for students to verbally and non-verbally speak/participate thus to bridge the knowledge gaps between curriculum and cultural knowledges. Within Kiran, Rabin and
Maria’s classrooms, there is a particular urgency to create spaces for students to read and write recognizing that academic possibilities must be crafted despite the state of educational crisis within the school. By engendering locations to speak via reading and writing performances, students learn to engage with classroom curriculum recognizing that their experiences, identities and cultures are recognized, validated and are positioned as being part of the classroom curriculum. Thus

When a people disenfranchised within the existing system validates their own identity as a starting point for their world view, elemental change can happen because the structure through which reality is apprehended becomes fluid (Hart, 1990, p. 296)

Within Kiran’s immigrant classroom, silences are effects of how immigrant students are rendered invisible within the school. As Kiran points out, “students do not see people like them on TV” and that “their story is not told in textbooks.” Recognizing the knowledge disjunctions and that “there is more than language barrier” to students’ silence, the cultural pedagogy enacted within the classroom attempts “to get students to talk in different ways.” To interrupt the silences as well as to reverse students’ not-speaking, Kiran enables spaces to speak by inviting students to perform reading as well as by emphasizing written assignments (authoring journals, etc.). To
reverse the psychology of being academically silenced or to interrupt the linguistic dominance of standard English language, the frequent students’ presentation of their written work creates locations to verbally speak: to “be comfortable and confident of what one has written... (to) gaining confidence and learning to know how to do school work.”

The speaking domain in class is incorporated via strategic reading practices to not only “read for the sake of reading” but similar to what Freire (1989) calls reading the “word and the world.” Such a move allows students safe grounds to read whether to “the whole class, reading with a partner, within a small group or by yourself.” Similarly, such trajectories of pedagogy engender non-coercive passages of reading: “taking the time to read in class” as well as “trying to be comfortable with the language.” One such speaking space is crafted via the project of authoring auto-biographies in which students tell their experiences and personal histories to re-present themselves. Such forms of speech, including the speaking via poetry and art, become “a good kind of routine” that enables students to learn vocabulary and work on sentences structures and also allows possibilities to initiate a “constantly talking climate” within the classroom.19

19 As I have noted in Chapter Five, the challenges of teaching include a number of students’ difficulties with
Within the science classroom, students' silences in regards to science curriculum are effects of what Delpit (1995) calls the “silenced dialogue” that are imposed by “culture of power” (p. 24). To interrupt the silences, students speak of science via developing a portfolio every two weeks to re-write their interpretations on concepts and terminologies and to developing writing skills (grammar, sentence structure, etc). Within the portfolio, students include their notes on topics discussed in each class, write interpretations vis-a-vis the two questions Rabin poses in each class by “creating your own word or language” and, lastly, by completing questions noted at the end of each chapter of the textbook. For Rabin, the teaching of science is inextricably related to developing non-hierarchical dialogic speaking relations with students both within and outside of classroom to open up spaces for mutual respect. Respect in the sense of making prolonged and meaningful commitments in an “effort to break with routine and imagine other ways of giving and receiving trust, and in doing so, creating relationships among equals” (Lightfoot, 1999, p. 10). Thus, the hallway interactions, working with students at athletic track, conversations in cafeteria and being part of community events, are not about inventing “new” languages to speak but to create dialogic spaces or, borrowing Heath’s (1983) reading/writing, students absenteeism, etc.
term, to be “ways with words.” Yet, Rabin’s interactions with students are not about simply being visible to/with students but are move to “listen to student” and “to get to know the students and students to know me in a different place.” Accordingly, the Third Space of teaching is a move of “not acting like a cultural superior” but more of creating meaningful relationships that enables sites to work the teaching domain via “sharing responsibility” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 23) in learning. Such a pedagogy engenders grounds to develop mutual respect in which teacher-student speak with each other to unsettle the silences created by curricular knowledge recognizing students struggle with academics.

Recognizing students’ struggle with official curriculum, within Maria’s classroom, the speaking dimension is enabled by deploying an issue/event-oriented approach to teaching social studies. The interactive approach to teaching social studies places particular emphasis on studying specific events to discuss the multiple ways of examining specific events/issues. Such an approach to teaching social issues interrupts teleological or linear notions of history or geography and resists positioning dominant history at the center. For example, by discussing issues within the book

20 This is similar to issues-oriented approach to teaching social studies (See for example, Merryfield & White, 1996;
Bracelet (which traces the internment of Japanese American during World War II) alternative ways of learning U.S. history are enacted. The discussion is also channeled into contemporary events regarding U.S. government's apology to Japanese Americans vis-a-vis the internment recognizing that "students respond to and relate to such issues in the story." The event-oriented pedagogy examines specific episodes in history and locates its effects both within dominant as well as within minority contexts. Such a pedagogy enables a "cultural synthesis" of multiple knowledges "to resolve the contradiction (of) world view (and to)... critically analyze reality and intervene as Subjects in the historical process" (Freire, 1970/1997, p. 162). By infusing a cultural aspect of issue/event-oriented approach to social studies, students (re)imagine and engage with themes of historical time-line, geographical concepts of longitude/latitude, etc., within an alternative terrain to understand curriculum contents. Within such contexts, Maria places heavy emphasis on writing exercises to assist students in developing vocabulary and sentence structures.

Ladson-Billings, 1996).
Within a largely privileged setting, Mira's pedagogical formations are circulated to assist students on their reading/writing skills and to open up spaces to speak thus to engender "affective change." Such an affective pedagogy asks students to discuss societal issues whether via their own experiences or apriori knowledge to evoke "a certain passion or feeling about issues." For Mira, such performances of pedagogy enable students to speak and

To look at deeply how we interpret issues.
To think beyond facts and fractions.
To think about where they are and what they need to do.

Recognizing students' silence to multicultural topics, Mira infuses art as a possible space from which students can perform speech. Such an art-mediated pedagogy allows students to speak of issues within alternative terrain and nowhere are the possibilities of such an affective cultural pedagogy more salient than in Mira's description of a student's artwork:

A bowl that contained fruits of different colors was placed on a table. She then isolated one pear on the far end of the table and it seems like it had reluctantly fallen off the bowl.

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21 As I pointed out in Chapter Seven, not all students within Mira's classroom are privileged. For Mira, along with the ESL students' struggle with curriculum and English language, the "silences" are also to be understood as intentions "to listen more than to speak" or conditions in which students are learning
Similarly, the weekly students’ speaking of their “ordinary” or everyday experiences or cultural events (at home or within communities) create locations to infuse students’ knowledge thus to invite students to unlearn dominant knowledge. For example, two Muslim students’ speaking of their wearing hajib and fasting during the month of Ramadan allowed the students to speak (their identities) as well as enabled the rest of the class to encounter and to unlearn from such knowledges. Similarly, Mira raises critical questions after each classroom readings to invite students to speak via writing reflexive journals in which students explore questions such as How does this book make you feel? And why did it make you feel that way?"

Lastly, I argue that within the immigrant pedagogy there is also the element of heterogeneous ways of “speaking” with parents and community (ies) of students recognizing, to borrow Lightfoot’s (1978) phrase, how students’ families/communities and schools are “worlds apart.” The triangulated practice between immigrant teacher, students and parents create spaces to speak or to initiate a dialogue about students’ academic progress. For Mira and Maria, asking parents to provide feedback on students’ academic work opens up alternative grounds to converse in relation to students’ academic performances. For
Kiran, speaking with parents engender understandings of parents’ perspective on school/community abyss to craft culturally responsible teaching passages. Rabin emphasizes the need to developing meaningful relationships with parents as well as the communities of students to better understand students’ cultural location within the classroom. The desired relationship with parents or guardians are not always possible yet via recognizing the difficulties and being ambivalent of their own teaching approaches, the teachers attempt to create academic possibilities for the students.

In summary, my argument here is that the teachers enable responsible teaching praxis to make efforts to listen and to recognize the multiple “ontology of silence” (Chambers, 1996, p. 51) within their teaching contexts. Similarly, I have attempted to engage with the question of, as Spivak\(^{22}\) (1988) does, “can the marginalized students speak?” My response would be, as Spivak complexly proposes in gendered subaltern contexts, partially affirmative; however, the questions that I have raised relates to where, how and when one hears such speeches and what does the hearing mean in relation to crafting

\(^{22}\) Spivak’s (1988) question is: Can the Subaltern Speak?
responsible teaching practices. In what follows, I elaborate the research practices to further describe the Third Space of immigrant pedagogy.

Research Terrain

The Third Space of immigrant pedagogy is also a passage into re-search that expands the boundaries (and the nature) of knowledge discussed within the classroom by engaging with official classroom curriculum. I propose that the trajectories of research incorporated within the classroom is about investigating as well as producing new knowledge yet, as I suggest, research is also a space to negotiate/claim identity. Within Kiran’s classroom, students’ involvement in group research projects on topics of women’s rights, nomadic communities in Third World societies and themes of world politics allow spaces to address marginalized (subaltern) knowledges. Consequently, research endeavors create possibilities to critique dominant representation of the Other produced in relation to “the educational legacy of imperialism” (Willinsky, 1998, p. 4). Such pedagogical turns open up sites to re-present issues in relation to Third World “subjugated knowledges...a whole set of knowledges that have been

23 The classroom management aspect is beyond the preview of this work. I have not elided “discipline issue” since, in all four classrooms, discipline was not a significant issue. There were rare student “interruptions” and such incidents were negotiated
disqualified as inadequate" (Foucault, 1980, p. 82). For Kiran, discussion of such alternative knowledge within the classroom is about identity: "about building confidence" to enhance students' academics recognizing that "students have a hard time relating to what is written in the textbooks." Thus, such teaching formations not only reverses the ways to teaching and learning English but, via the space of research, a minority discourse is operationalized in which learning ESL moves not only within dominant knowledge frameworks but also within the terrain of subjugated Third World knowledges.

The research dimension within Rabin and Maria's classroom is situated to learn from specific experiences. Such conceptions of research engenders way to open up new learning possibilities in which experience is not about gaining authority in the coercive sense but about "a way of exploring how difference is established, how it operates, and how and in what ways it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world" (Scott, 1991, p. 777). Within Rabin's classroom, the research space is created in relation to students' work within a medical hospital where students learn about the practical or the everyday aspect of science. Such outside-the-school observing and interacting research experiences are not "field experiences" in the traditional sense but are experiences that between the teacher and the students.
can bridge the gaps between theory and practice within the field of science. Thus, the idea of traveling to a hospital not only allows students to “interact with African American doctors and nurses” but also seeks to engender interest in the field of science. On the other hand, in Maria’s class, research operates by emphasizing practices of cross-cultural learnings in which students interview students from a culturally different background. Such research/pedagogical formation creates site for anti-coercive educational interactions to, “learn from both parties and students explain their views to each other to create some conversation.” The cross-cultural research project positions students as sources of knowledge to generate conversations on “topics of stereotype and misinformation” and opens spaces to further learning U.S. multicultural and global knowledges that are rarely or responsibly represented within textbooks. In other words, such practices resist seeking clarity in learning of cultural difference via the recognition that often “worlds are not accessible through plain speaking, just as the other is not simply accessible through dialogue” (Jones, 1999, p. 315).\(^\text{24}\) Maria recognizes that students from various ethnic and racial groups do not know each other and have “not been introduced to each other” (p. 40) and such teaching

\(^{24}\) Jones is referring to the colonial desire to dialogue that consumes the knowledge of the Other for the profit of dominant
formations become research to speak with other students. Such a pedagogical move recognizes that, as Mohanty (1992) suggests, cross-cultural inquiry cannot operate via ahistorical, totalizing “osmosis thesis” (p. 77) that claims the homogeneity of experience of marginalized people. Such cross-cultural experiences allow students to interact within and outside of classroom to un/learn different cultural practices recognizing the difference/similarities within minority cultures. Yet, as Maria suggests, one cannot romanticize such practices since such learning take time and students have to be continually exposed to such interactions.

The research dimension within Mira’s classroom operates within the domain of students’ speaking of current events research each month. Such research spaces allow locations to learn “what is happening locally and also in the world” and “what students don’t know yet” thus to encounter and learn knowledges from alternative geographical and cultural terrain. For example, students’ questions, in relation to one student’s presentation on flooding in Bangladesh: “why do people live in mud houses?” or “do people really live in such houses? Do the houses get flooded every time it rains?” engendered possibilities to unlearn from a subaltern world. Since marginalized voices from Third World are “silent” within society.
formal curriculum, and such absences are forms of what Spivak (1988) terms “epistemic violence,” the research domain allows spaces to responsibly discuss underprivileged conditions of a different world. In what follows, I elaborate how Third Space of immigrant pedagogy works or enables the performance of responsible and ethical multicultural\(^{25}\) as well as global learnings. Such teaching formations suggest that U.S. multicultural discourses are not always in opposition or separate from global issues in which multiple locals and globals intersect to produce hybrid or Third Space of pedagogy and perhaps alternative ways of imagining teaching and learning.

**The Infusion of Cultural Knowledge**

The Third Space of immigrant pedagogy works via the infusion of multicultural and/or Third World knowledge in which curricular knowledge is addressed and expanded to create alternative learning possibilities. The performance of infusion is a hybrid formation: not a practice that positions minority knowledge on the margins but is “a kind of dangerous supplement because it is added only to displace less palatable

\(^{25}\) I utilize the term “multicultural” to signify the diversity of thoughts within the U.S. discourses on diversity and equity (See for example, Banks & Banks, 1994; Grant & Sleeter, 1998; McCarthy, 1999). The kinds of pedagogy that I describe are also culturally relevant or culturally responsive (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2000) since such practices utilize students’ knowledge to create meaningful classroom environments and to emphasize students’ academic success.
realities” (Norvindr, 1999, p. 23). Such a move of infusion does not erase curricular knowledge by “adding” alternative cultural knowledge but, following Derrida’s (1996) notion of supplement, “intervenes or insinuates itself in-the-place-of; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void” (p. 145; cited in Norvindr, 1994). The infusion move is similar to what Banks (1994) calls “content integration” in which minority knowledge is not positioned on the margins but are strategically integrated/supplemented as a deliberate move to address the limits of curriculum knowledge. Thus, the Third Space of immigrant pedagogy attempts to fill the void, the gaps or abyss in relation to curricular knowledge and students’ cultural knowledge by enabling responsible pedagogical movements within classroom contexts. The performance of infusion is a practice that expands our understandings of multicultural and global pedagogy in an attempt to craft alternative ways of producing knowledge. In what follows, I describe the global aspect of teaching then move into the domain of multicultural pedagogy by tracing the diverse and uneven ways oppositional knowledges are infused within classroom practices. Such moves illustrate the heterogeneity within immigrant teaching practices.

Within Kiran’s classroom, learning standard English is emphasized yet the pedagogical formulations complicate the
standard or disciplinary constructions of teaching English as a Second Language in which the teaching of English is detoured from its dominant moorings and introjected within immigrant cultural spaces. The deployment of such trajectories of pedagogy not only unsettles dominant ways of teaching English but re-formulates the category of global as an effect of immigrant and Third World histories and experiences. Here, the reconstruction of “world” is an effect of, to borrow Pratt’s (1992) term, “contact zones” in which unequal powers negotiate and contend over political and economic rights. The fashioning of a Third Space of global pedagogy articulates gender in an international frame: a global perspective of gender issues in which students are asked to explore (upon reading Shabanu26, a novel that traces the lives of rural Pakistani women) women’s experiences within the novel as well as the conditions of “women around the world and also in the United States.” Such ways of teachings do not privilege “elite forms of non-western knowledge that are most accessible to westerners” (Mahalingam & McCarthy, 2000, p. 10) but infuses subaltern knowledges within

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26 As I have described in Chapter Four, one cannot ignore Kiran’s uncertainties of incorporating the novel since the work is neo/orientalist in many ways and totalizes the lives of Pakistani women. As Kiran points out, there are very few resources available that address issues of gender, spirituality and economic hardship within Third World contexts and which are suitable for ESL students. Here, the “strategic essentialism” (Spivak, 1988) opens spaces to work with/against the novel.
the curriculum. In other words, the novel (ambivalently) becomes a ground from which to address gender issues and to speak of differentiated or multiple globals and locals. Similarly, the classroom discussions on local and global forms of architectures, dietary practices and clothes are not simply articulated within the realm aesthetics but within the politics (and the economics) of cultural movements and how such cultural formations travel within immigrant as well as within transnational spaces.

In the science classroom, the global knowledge is not salient yet occasionally international issues are invoked within the discussion of specific topics. Discussions on hunger strikes (within the context of Third World and U.S. civil rights movements) are integrated in relation to the production and the scarcity of food in society (globally as well as locally). Such discussions are not specific to state-mandated learning standards (or objectives) but are in relation to particular topics and events discussed within the classroom. The absence of Third World (and U.S. minority interpretations of science) within official curriculum speaks of the challenges of teaching science and the dominant politics of imagining science in which, as Rabin points out, “science is white.”

27Yet the classroom is also a space in which the absence of global becomes ironically a form of presence in which Third World
Although the context of teaching and learning are
different within Maria and Mira’s classroom, both enable the
learning of global within alternative frames which re-positions
the idea of global outside of dominant imaginations of
international. Thus, the learning of global is not only about
partially understanding the world but to look outside of U.S.
or through “outside of the whale perspectives” (Wilson, 1990,
p. 427). In Maria’s social studies classroom, specific
aspects of global knowledge are worked via inviting students
to construct a decolonized travel journey to open up spaces
for alternative global imaginations. Such global passages are
not about “going to the beach in the Philippines or to a national
park in Australia for only sight seeing” but about enabling
grounds for responsible learning of history, geography,
politics and cultures within specific regions of the world.
However, as Maria suggests, such learnings are not facile
passages since many students are just beginning their global
interests and often find the international aspect difficult to

visual knowledge (photo of Gandhi and the map of India) coexists
with African American knowledge (photos of African American
scientists) revealing the hybrid meetings of local and global
to produce new knowledges and identities.

28 Wilson utilizes Said’s (1993) use of “whale” to describe the
academic legitimation bestowed upon dominant U.S. perspectives.
29 The international aspect of curriculum complements not only
the specific school requirement of international curriculum but
also sixth-grade state learning objectives on “Eastern
Civilization.”
learn and to connect to their daily lives. Yet, Maria remains optimistic since such pedagogical moves allows students to research "the international part of their personal interest or personal history." Within Mira’s classroom, the global learning is mediated via discussions of current events to complicate romantic learning of the Other: "to think beyond what you are comfortable with." Such a practice invites students to partially enter spaces, to be uncertain, to learn/unlearn what they have assumed thus "to look at what is around the world and see what makes one wonder." Similar to Kiran’s classroom, immigrant spaces (for example, discussions on Muslim students wearing hijab to school, Ramadan, etc.) also becomes spaces to speak of global as well as local issues. Yet, within the classroom, extensive learning of global issues\(^{30}\) are absent yet via supplementing informal global discussion in the class, Mira invites students to think about "what community means and to think about the meaning of community globally." "It is difficult to teach about the world since most of my students come from well to do families and do not intentionally think of economic

\(^{30}\) In the state mandated learning objective, the fourth grade social studies learning objectives center around learning about the state, and global issues are not integrated within the state learning objectives. Occasionally Mira infuses children’s literature to address global issues (for example, S.L. Oppenheim’s The Lily Cupboard, a children’s literature book that examines the separation of Jewish children during World War II).
poverty or prejudice," suggest Mira. Thus, the pedagogy incorporated invites students to expand the idea of community and to explore communities as being “always more many-faceted-open and inclusive, drawn to untapped possibility” (Greene, 1993, p. 17). Such practices, as Mira suggests, allow the learning of “Middle East or Asia not by stereotypes but more from questioning our biases.” My argument here is that both Maria and Mira’s teaching of global issues resist the kind of pedagogy that creates comfortable trajectories of learning the world or the kind of global learning that consumes Third World knowledge to “empower” privileged U.S. locals. Recognizing the difficulties of such pedagogical practices, such a passage of global learning attempts to resist the “epistemology of imperialism” (Said, 1993) that (mis)informs the learning about Third World and engenders a difficult yet responsible passage to learning about the Other.

**Third Space of Multicultural Pedagogy**

If the Third Space of global pedagogy articulates multi-layered passages of teaching/learning about the world, the multicultural terrain of pedagogy similarly operates as a heterogeneous practice in which the idea of multicultural is produced within the context of race and ethnic discourses. Yet
often the nature of multicultural pedagogy performed blur the boundaries between local and global by evoking in-between aspect of multicultural discourse. Within the ESL classroom, multicultural pedagogy largely functions within the framework of immigrant experiences. For example, the classroom discussion on “what are the different ways of talking about freedom?” illustrates the circulation of immigrant epistemologies that complicate positivistic meanings assigned to the idea of freedom both within local and global contexts. The multiple interpretations of freedom is not only situated within theoretical definitions of freedom but is channeled to speak of freedom within everyday immigrant experiences. Evoking immigrant (and similar minority experiences) within U.S. racial formations, neither is the space of U.S. celebrated as a location of freedom and nor are identities within Third World societies constructed as embodying a deficit or a lack of freedom. Such an immigrant pedagogy offers more of in-between interpretations of freedom, interrupts the binary of good/bad, civilized/uncivilized, and works for a Third Space to complicate meanings of freedom.

The multicultural space infused within the teaching science is the arena of “intimate science” in which the

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31 Of particular relevance is the discussion on the effects of having children at an early age in U.S. and its significance
knowledge of curriculum science is very much the “center” yet it is re-fashioned to suit the needs of the classroom. Within the performance of science pedagogy, the knowledge of curricular science is connected to social issues and the everyday experiences of African American students. For example, to teach about isotope is to also speak of the application of isotope (cancer radiation, etc) within the context of health issues within African American communities. If the knowledge of science inhabits spaces of whiteness and “all the scientists are white on textbooks,” classroom discussions illustrate the challenges of teaching science and, most importantly, how teaching of science cannot erase minority maneuvers (particular African American history within the classroom context). The discussion on the works of Black scientists interrupt as well as open up spaces to conceptualize science beyond its white mythologies. The history of Charles Drew’s work on storing of blood plasma and his untimely death reveals the racialized history as well as, as Harding (1998) has argued, the refusals of science to face its oppositional multicultural histories. Thus, the speaking of history of Black science is to open up science discourses for alternative interpretation and is not to resist the learning of science. By being ambivalent over the nature of science curriculum and the challenges of teaching, to freedom (See Chapter Four)⁴³²
the intimate pedagogy of science interrupts the denials of science and its violations. Yet such practices enable the kind of science that “will not become a barrier” and which can “become a motivating factor in learning about science.”

Both within Maria and Mira’s social studies classrooms (although in a different context of teaching and learning), the enabling of a Third Space of multicultural pedagogy is performed to complicate dominant notions of history, geography, politics, community, etc. For example, within Maria’s class, the infusion of multicultural knowledge complicates the meaning of democracy (and the romanticizing of “right to vote”) as enshrined within the curriculum and offers alternative perspectives on multicultural democracies. Such a performance of multicultural pedagogy addresses local/national issues of voting and suggests its relationship to historical and contemporary dis-enfranchisements of the marginalized within the discourse of American democracy. Similarly, the project on the construction of mini-society engenders spaces to understand topics of economics and government within cultural terrain. Students’ involvement in constructing a mini-society enables understanding of concepts such as currency, lease, banks, trade, etc., are not about constructing fictional capitalistic societies but more about learning about “how societies work and
how they can participate to build their community.” Such multicultural or cultural meaningful maneuvers not only formulate alternative passages to understanding economic and political concepts but, via articulating alternative conceptions of community within their project, students learn ways to perform specific roles within cultural communities.

On the other hand, Mira emphasizes the concept of “cultural difference” as a space to perform multicultural pedagogy. Within the classroom, the infusion of multicultural knowledge works via supplemented readings of literature that works largely within ethnic studies paradigm (See Banks, 1997). Mira places particular emphasis on teaching concepts such as tolerance and community to invite students to reflect about “where does tolerance fit when we talk about community?” in which the meaning of tolerance is more than “talking about tolerating someone in a superficial way.” Such a performance of multicultural pedagogy enables to “not to simply talk about all of us being humans or living in planet Earth but about cultural difference amongst us.” Similarly, the incorporation multicultural literature (Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt, Baseball Saved Us, etc) allows sites to speak of different experiences of individuals and how individual experiences converse with specific community struggles. Within classroom
discussions, students are invited to speak beyond the binary of “yes and no answers” and asked to link historical events to contemporary social issues: “to think about how the book defines issues and how it is different now.” The passages into unlearning prejudice similarly invites students to complicate the meaning of prejudice and asks students to differentiate between “being teased for having red hair and someone is not given a job because of her accent or the color of her skin.” The multicultural pedagogical formations that are articulated within the framework of “cultural difference” interrogates modernistic assumptions of community and perform a “supplementary subversion...to rearticulate the sum of knowledge from the perspective of the signifying position of the minority that resists totalization” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 162).

**The Ambivalence within Immigrant Pedagogy**

My move in this discussion has been to not write a deficit approach of pedagogy that represents minorities as lack, without history or agency but more about what Freire (1995) calls, a “pedagogy of hope.” If diasporic immigrant identities enable hybrid teaching practices that can create certain academic possibilities, the heterogeneous moves of teaching are also ambivalent, uncertain passages that register the challenges or the difficulties of enacting cultural
teaching practices. Similar to what Lather & Ellsworth (1996) suggest within the context of situated pedagogy, it is useful to see how the Third Space of immigrant pedagogy allows possibilities to “explore ways of thinking about pedagogy that recognize the paradox, complexity, and complicity at work.” For example, Kiran speaks of challenges in relation to learning identities/knowledge within the context of a diverse group of students who represent more than fifteen nation-states and come from multiple ethnic immigrant communities. Due to the marginalized state of students’ academics (struggles with curriculum knowledge as well as with the English language), the performances of cultural pedagogy are not facile passages of teaching since most of the students struggle with reading and writing. Often the enactment of culturally meaningful teaching practices encounter challenges, in which, as Kiran points out, students speak less “about their cultures and do not always connect with home communities since many are second generation immigrants.”

Both Rabin and Maria speak of the difficulties of fashioning classroom pedagogy in an attempt to link cultural knowledge of students to curricular knowledge within science and social studies contexts. Rabin infuses history and contemporary experiences of African Americans and continues to
investigate possibilities to constructing meaningful relationships between minority culture and science curriculum. For Maria, the tensions of performing a Third Space of pedagogy are effects of the dominant curriculum that “is quite different from what students know and have gone through.” Maria speaks of the difficulties of infusing minority knowledge particularly in relation to translating geographical concepts and global issues within the classroom. For Maria, “teaching geography is tricky like teaching democracy” in which geographical concepts are “isolating for those who see society differently.” She speaks of the dis-connections between the ways maps are charted (and how such maps exclude/include cultural themes) and the difficulties students have relating to concepts such as latitude and longitude, international date line, etc.

“It did not go as I thought it would” is Mira’s response in relation to the challenges of teaching marginalized cultures within the context of reading (and discussing) Smoky Nights, a work of literature that narrates the events similar to Los Angeles uprising of 1993. If Mira’s intention was to discuss the tensions of community within an urban space in which the experiences of Latinos, Asians, African Americans and Whites intersect, the deployment of such a lesson also reveals the

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32 The book does not address the urban lives of Native Americans (see Momaday, 1968; Alexie, 1992).
difficulties of linking experiences of marginalized people to that of the mostly privileged experiences of her students since “most students did not have the sense of what a riot means and what took place in Los Angeles.” Mira similarly notes her own ambivalence in inviting students to talk about issues of prejudice and community via the concept of tolerance since the concept can mean simply the “need to tolerate people who have difference.” Thus, the difficulty of teaching diversity recognizes (however partial) that meaningful ways of teaching “inclusion” can serve a de-politicized trajectory of teaching culture.

I argue that the teachers’ recognition of the difficulties (and ambivalences) of teaching opens up alternative pedagogical practices and which allows us to read the agency within the labor of teaching. The move to a political ambivalence or the “agential politicization of ambivalence” (Radhakrishnan, 1996, p. xxiv) allows spaces to doubt, to be skeptical and to be vulnerable yet work for potential spaces to enact productive and yet dangerous mediations of pedagogy. By recognizing the challenges within classrooms, such a praxis exploits the intervals and gaps within pedagogical formations to formulate new openings and possibilities for a radical teaching trajectory. Yet, such practices recognize that within
subaltern contexts pedagogy cannot not be without creating possibilities otherwise, plainly speak, there is no way out or that there is no other way out.
CHAPTER 9

Epilogue

By arguing immigrant hybridity or the Third Space as a location to conceptualize identities and the kinds of pedagogies such identities may enable, I have puzzled over: “what the political consequences are of moving from a vertical and bipolar conception of sociopolitical relations to one that is decentered and multidetermined” (Canclini, 1995, p. 258). The teachers’ heterogeneous articulation of identity/pedagogy works within the Third Space and offers alternative sites to produce “new” knowledges and also expands the ways in which we conceptualize the concept of multi-cultural, global and immigrant. The hybrid cultural identity discourse operates within “a relational approach, one that operates at once within, between, and beyond the nation-state framework, calls attention to conflictual hybrid interplay of communities within and across borders” (Shohat, 1999, p. 134).

Via describing the performances of immigrant identities/pedagogies, I have attempted to reveal the
in(visible) location of Asian Americans both within the field of education as well as within U.S. national narratives. The immigrant aspect of identity negotiations is a site where U.S. multicultural knowledge meets post-colonial knowledge to create creolized or syncretic notions of culture, and the intersections of multiple experiences and histories produce alternative spaces to conceptualizing teachers’ identities as well as cultural pedagogy. Moreover, the hybrid teacher identities are about partially choosing as well as of being forced into identities\(^{33}\) since Asian immigrant teachers are often constructed only as “international within the national” (Lowe, 1998, p. 29) and their identities are effects of western discourses of orientalism, imperialism and U.S. racial formations. However, by negotiating the tensions and ambivalence of their identities, the teacher re-invent themselves to en-counter dominant discourses that interpellates them as model minority, perpetual foreigners, unfaithful immigrants, etc. In other words, Third Space is a location, a position from which one initiates as well as engages in political/pedagogical projects to interrogate and interrupt dominant identities of Us and Them and its corridors of power.

\(^{33}\) The “forced into” also operates into pedagogical realms: proficiency tests.
If the political aspect of immigrant hybridity critiques colonial models of violent hybridity (that operated via conquest, rape and plunder), my emphasis on syncretism or transculturation also points out the “paradoxes, dangers, and possibilities embedded in such an elusive idea” (May, 1999, p. 14). Thus, the in-between or Third Space (must) resists being appropriated by dominant discourses as a pedagogically “neutral” location. It (must) also critique being interpreted as an unempowering space: as politically indecisive or as being too “comfortable” with dominant discourses. I have emphasized the hybridity of identities and pedagogy\(^{34}\) because “hybridized discourse rejects the principle of monologue and composes itself by selecting from competing discourses” (Artega, 1994, p.18). Such a pedagogy similarly enables, to follow Said (1993), to read the local and global in “contrapuntal” terms: “with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominant discourse acts” (p. 51).

One does not have to enable a Third Space or articulate hybrid identities to understand racism and colonization in the U.S. or globally since, for the disenfranchised who often resist

\(^{34}\) I am referring to Maria, Mira and Kiran’s practices (who work within cross-racial, cross-ethnic, cross-national context since the student body is heterogeneous). Rabin’s pedagogy is more situated within a specific African American context.
oppression, marginality is an everyday experience. Nor are identities necessarily hybrid (the way I have described in immigrant teacher contexts) in dis-advantaged contexts such as the African American students in Rabin’s classroom. Similarly, Rabin’s performance of the Third Space of immigrant pedagogy is not always global or diasporic in nature and does not necessarily operate within heterogeneous immigrant knowledge frameworks but is a local, cultural pedagogy. My argument is that the Third Space of identity is often a location that immigrants move into to negotiate U.S. racial formations thus assigning alternative meanings to categories of local as well as global. And from such spaces, the category of immigrant becomes a middle position, in-between cultures from which the teachers craft a Third Space of pedagogy to negotiate the hyphen between curricular and cultural knowledge. What I have argued is that the pedagogy based on heterogeneity and multiplicity of knowledges, and its politically ambivalent trajectories “asks us to look beyond our inherited way of thinking and acting, to new, unexplored, and even dangerous pedagogical practices” (Dimitriadis & McCarthy, 2001, p. 10). The Third Space of pedagogy can be interpreted as, what Giroux (1992) terms, “border pedagogy” which seek “to create pedagogical conditions in which students become border crossers...to further create
borderlands,” (p. 28). As I have argued, one must simultaneously recognize the difficulties of pedagogical formations since border-crossings often operate one-way since there is always a “story of deportation” (Arteaga, 1994, p. 12) within the idea of border-crossing in which the marginalized is often expelled or denied to cross borders.

I have attempted to describe a topic of discussion that remains “invisible” and rarely receives attention within the field of education; however, my move in this discussion to not about writing the exceptional or unique identities and practices of Asian immigrant teachers. Nor is my attempt to privilege diasporic identifies and practice over other identities/practices but, similar to what Lowe (1998) suggests, “rather to specify the history of Asian American racialization as a critique of national history, so that it might be related to other histories of racialization, those of African Americans, Chicanos/Latinos, Native Americans, and ‘white’ Americans, in order to open possibilities of cross-race and cross-national projects” (p. 44). I have argued that such identity/practice formation expand the boundaries of, what Dillard & Ford (1997) call, “becoming multicultural” that enable us to think of the idea of “immigrant” in a different way. Self-critical yet political formation of immigrant
positions, as Nieto (2002) suggests, offer spaces to negotiate identities in which immigrant can retain indigenous cultural “insights and values while also challenging the limitations that both our native and adopted cultural may impose upon us” (p. 112).

Lastly, I describe the implications of my work and the possibilities it may create for future research within the field of education. First, the study contributes to the larger discussions of multiculturalism within the field of education, particularly in relation to Asian immigrant/American contexts. The multicultural dimension is of significance since Asian immigrant/American discourse has largely remained peripheral within the field of education. Similarly, the study suggests the significance of race within U.S. society and how discourses of orientalism and imperialism effect identities of teachers. Topics in relation to western colonialism and imperialism (both locally and globally) are yet to be fully articulated within the field of education and further research is needed. Second, recognizing how marginalization operates against Asian immigrants, I argued for the urgent need to research identities and practices of Asian immigrant teachers to interrupt paradigms of model minority that positions Asian immigrant identities within dominant frameworks. Furthermore, as I
suggested in this study, we need further research on how issues of race, class, gender, nationality, language and religion serve as hegemonic markers in producing Asian immigrant/American identities and the ways in which teachers dis-identify with dominant discourses of identities. This study adds to the growing body of knowledge regarding teacher identities, particularly in relation to the identity location of teachers of color within U.S. school. Studies on the specific ways in which Asian immigrant teachers negotiate identities within schools is critical since it offers spaces to understand how teachers create possibilities for themselves as well as for their students. Third, I have suggested ways in which Asian immigrant teachers negotiate relationships with teachers of various racial backgrounds within schools. There has been limited educational research in describing relations between/amongst cultural groups (Asian and African American, etc) that can create possibilities for cross-cultural alliance since most often dominant discourse pits one minority group against the other. Fourth, this study has implications within the realm of pedagogy, particularly in relation to the cultural aspect of pedagogy and how such practices can enable transformative educational practices. I have argued that there is a larger need to conceptualize the interconnections between
local-global aspects of knowledge within pedagogical formations. Moreover, there is a growing need to research ways in which cultural pedagogy can be utilized within culturally heterogeneous group (immigrant, etc) of students. Due to the growth of immigrant students within schools and their marginalized conditions, research on immigrant aspect of pedagogy is needed to reverse the academic failure of economically underprivileged students of color. By examining the context in which immigrant teachers teach, I described the marginalized conditions (resources, students’ academic difficulties, etc) within urban schools and the urgent need to reverse such conditions of marginalization.

Lastly, this study has implications within the realm of research methodology, particularly in relation to researching within economically underprivileged communities and the need to ethically construct research design and relationships within field-work. Moreover, there is a larger need for qualitative studies to theorizing cultural epistemologies within ethnic communities. I suggest that the cross-cultural aspect of research maneuvers can open up spaces to explore themes of observation, interviews, writing, etc, within minority
communities, and which may allow us to chart ways in which dominant discourses operate and are resisted within U.S. society/school.
APPENDIX A

Consent Forms and Human Subjects’ Approval
October 11, 2000

Consent For Participation in Research

Title of the Study: Knowledge, Cultural Identity and Practice (Pedagogy) of Asian Teachers

Investigator: Binaya Subedi
School of Education, The Ohio State University

I consent to participating in research entitled: Knowledge, Cultural Identity and Practice (Pedagogy) of Asian Teachers.

Binaya Subedi, co-investigator, has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my participation. Possible benefits of the study have been described, as have alternative procedures, if such procedures are applicable and available.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

(Participant)

[Signature]

Co-Investigator, Binaya Subedi

Principal Investigator, Dr. Merry M. Merryfield
### Principal Investigator

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### Protocol Title

Diaspora Knowledge, Cultural Identity and the Pedagogy of South Asian Teachers

**RECEIVER**

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**Source of Funding**

Self Financed

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- Approved. Research has been determined to be exempt under these categories:
- Disapproved. The proposed research does not fall within the categories of exemption. Submit an application to the appropriate Institutional Review Board for review.
Continuation of the Title Page, Application for Exemption

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☑ Approved. ➤ Research has been determined to be exempt under these categories: 1, 2.
Research may begin as of the date of determination listed below.

☐ Disapproved. ➤ The proposed research does not fall within the categories of exemption. Submit an application to the appropriate Institutional Review Board for review.

Date of determination: 8/10/2000

Signature: Jane E. Selee
Office of Research Risk Protection
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
STUCTURED & OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Describe your educational experience.

Describe how you identity yourself (in relation to ethnicity, nationality, etc).

To what extent was your decision to be a teacher informed by your own educational experience?

What are your views in relation to societal inequalities both locally and globally?

Describe the reason why you decided to teach in this particular school.

Describe your teaching experiences at the school.

How would you describe your relationship with students, teachers and the school community?

Describe teaching approaches you consider culturally meaningful.

What is your educational philosophy?

What can immigrant teachers learn from your experiences?
APPENDIX C

SCHOOL LOCATION/DEMOGRAPHICS
SCHOOL LOCATION/DEMOGRAPHICS

Davidson  Urban/suburban setting; 1200 students; 30% non-whites (20% African American; 10% are Somali, Mexican, Hmong, Laotian, Vietnamese, etc). High School.

Central  Urban setting; 1000 students; 95% African American; 3% Asian American; 2% White. High School.

Verdes  Urban setting; 500 students (60% African American; 10% White; 30% are Somali, Mexican, Hmong, Laotian, Vietnamese, etc. Middle School.

Glanville  Suburban setting: 300 students; 70% White; 15% African American; 15% are Mexican, Somali, Ethiopian, Vietnamese, etc. Elementary School.
APPENDIX D

PROFILE OF ASIAN IMMIGRANT/AMERICAN TEACHERS
PROFILE OF ASIAN IMMIGRANT/AMERICAN TEACHERS

(A) Kiran is a Muslim woman and was born in Pakistan and was educated in Pakistan, Libya and the United States. Kiran, who is in her early thirties (?), has been teaching within U.S. public schools for the past four years. After completing her education degree, she taught one year at a middle school. Currently, she teaches English as a Second Language (ESL) class at Davidson High School.

(B) Rabin is a male of Indian ancestry and was born in U.S. midwest and educated in the United States. Rabin, who is in his early thirties (?), has been teaching at Central High School for the past six years upon completing his education degree at a nearby university. Currently, he teaches tenth grade Biology and Unified Science.

(C) Maria is a Filipina and was born in Manila, the Philippines, and has been teaching for the past thirty years. Maria, who is in her late fifties (?), started teaching within U.S. public school twenty-five years ago and currently teaches Social Studies and Language Arts at Verdes Middle School.

(D) Mira is a woman of Indian ancestry and was born in Delhi, India, and has been teaching within U.S. schools for the past six years. Mira, who is in her late forties (?), completed her education degree at a nearby university and teaches at Glanville Elementary School.
APPENDIX E

RESEARCH/WRITING TIMELINE
RESEARCH/Writing Timeline

Kiran (Davidson High School)

Observation: October 2000-April 2001

Interviews: 10/9/00, 10/20/00, 11/2/00, 11/15/00, 11/21/00, 12/8/00, 1/4/01, 1/25/01, 2/2/01, 3/8/01, 4/19/01.

Member Check: September 2001 & February 2002

Writing: February 2001-May 2002

Rabin (Central High School)

Observation: September 2000-April 2001

Interviews: 10/17/00, 10/27/00, 11/15/00, 11/20/00, 11/29/00, 12/6/00, 1/8/01, 1/26/01, 2/14/01, 3/3/01, 4/20/01.

Member Check: October, 2001 & January 2002

Writing: March 2001-May 2002

\footnote{For all four teachers, I have noted dates of interviews that took place for more than fifteen minutes. Informal or casual conversations (ranging from one to five minutes) took place during most of my visits at the school from September 2000 to April 2001.}
Maria (Verdes Middle School)

Observation: September 2000-April 2001

Interviews: 10/16/00, 10/26/00, 11/11/00, 11/20/00, 11/27/00, 12/4/00, 1/8/01, 1/22/01, 2/13/01, 3/6/01, 4/15/01.

Member Check: August 2001 & January 2002

Writing: February 2001-May 2002

Mira (Glanville Elementary School)

Observation: September 2000-April 2001

Interviews: 10/8/00, 10/19/00, 11/3/00, 11/14/00, 11/23/00, 12/8/00, 1/4/01, 1/25/01, 2/2/01, 3/12/01, 4/12/01.

Member Check: September 2001 & March 2002

Writing: March 2001-May 2002
BIBLIOGRAPHY


