EXPLORING LITERARY RESPONSES TO CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEXTS THROUGH AN ASIANCRIT LENS: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY OF CHINESE AMERICAN STUDENTS IN A COMMUNITY-BASED BOOK CLUB

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the many people who have supported me along this journey. I am thankful for the students and parents who have participated in the Bubble-Up Book Club and supported this study, for the Columbia local Chinese Heritage Language School which strongly supported the establishment of the book club. I dedicate this dissertation to my parents and grandparents who always support my academic growth. Lastly, I dedicate this to my husband, Yuechen Sun, who has not only encouraged me along the way, but also served as peer debriefer during this dissertation study.
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ABSTRACT

Building on AsianCrit, reader response theory, and critical literacy perspective, this dissertation study investigated how second-generation Chinese American students at age eight to twelve respond to culturally relevant texts which portray contemporary and historical Chinese American people’s lives and experiences in the United States. In addition, this study explored how these students negotiate their understanding of race, racism, and anti-Asian racism through associating with the stories, their everyday experiences, family traditions, and interactions with peers and researcher in a community-based book club. Specifically, this study examined how students of Chinese descent respond to xenophobia, discrimination, and racism towards Asian people, especially people of Chinese descent, during the COVID-19 pandemic through reading a text set and news related to COVID-19 and hate crimes. Situated within a critical theory paradigm, this single-site, collective case study forefronted and recentered Chinese American experiences with contemporary and historical relevance, providing students a space to reflect on and (re)negotiate their racial experiences as Chinese Americans in the United States.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRCL................................................................. Culturally Relevant Children’s Literature
CSRRT.......................................................... Culturally Situated Reader Response Theory
POC .................................................................. People of Color
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION OF STUDY

Racism has a pervasive impact on the lives of People of Color (POC) in the U.S., both historically and contemporarily. As an ethnic group that has historically been excluded from entering the United States and deprived of naturalized citizenship (Chae, 2013; Chang, 2017; Lee, 2015; Iftikar & Museus, 2018; Museus & Iftikar, 2013), Chinese Americans faced unique and long-lasting racism which is “quantitatively and qualitatively different from that suffered by other disempowered groups” (Chang, 1993, p. 1247). The Chinese Exclusion Act, which barred Chinese immigrants from naturalization and immigration, is the first law in the U.S. that specifically targeted a certain ethnic group on the basis of race (Zhou, 2014), and it remained in place for about 60 years, from 1882 to 1943.

Like other ethnic groups in the United States, Chinese Americans’ racialization process has been unique and complex. They have been used as scapegoats during various historical periods of time and in the context of particular events. For example, since their earliest arrival in the United States, Chinese immigrants have been positioned as threatening yellow peril and perpetual foreigners (Takaki, 1990) in economic conflict involving non-Chinese laborers. Yellow peril is a racial stereotype targeting Asian immigrants since the 19th century. During the 19th century, European imperialists created
a derogatory ideology that portrayed Asian people as a threat to Western civilization (Tchen & Yeats, 2014). Yellow peril gained popularity in the United States when Chinese laborers arrived on the West Coast in the mid-19th century. Their way of life and work ethic posed a challenge to the financial security and notion of “White purity” held by working-class Whites (Takaki, 1998). Yellow Peril is also called as Asian threat. Then, the model minority stereotype surged lumping all Asians, primarily immigrants from Eastern Asian countries (e.g., China, Japan, South Korea) into the category of good immigrants and citizens. This stereotype obscured the suffering and diverse experiences among and across Asian American communities. At the same time, the singular, misleading, and racialized discourse of model minority has been used as a racial wedge between Asian Americans and African Americans (Lee & Zhou, 2015). As the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, accordingly, Asian threat and Xenophobia was resurfacing and negatively impacting Chinese Americans in the United States with growing cases of hate crimes targeting Asian Americans, especially people of Chinese descent.

The experiences of Chinese Americans in the United States have been uniquely shaped by historical and contemporary racism, affecting every aspect of their lives (Iftikar & Museus, 2018). This racialization process has been influenced by White Supremacy and can be understood through seven tenets of AsianCrit, including Asianization which centers on the racialization of Asian Americans (Iftikar & Museus, 2018). Despite striving for success in the U.S., Chinese Americans’ contributions and experiences are often overlooked and ignored in the dominant discourse (Chou & Feagin, 2015). Additionally, Chinese American students have limited opportunities to learn about
their own racialized experiences and historical figures who fought for social and racial justice (Iftikar & Museus, 2018).

Without serious reflections on authentic history and understanding of the unique ways Chinese Americans were/are racialized in historical and contemporary contexts, students of Chinese descent would have a larger chance still be overshadowed by the ongoing stereotypes targeting Chinese Americans in the United States, especially during post-COVID-19 pandemic.

**Statement of the Problem**

The Model Minority Stereotype (MMS), which portrays Asian Americans as a group that excels academically, adds complexity to how Asian Americans are perceived in society and educational settings. This stereotype originated from two articles that were published in 1966 which lauded Japanese and Chinese Americans for their perseverance in achieving academic success despite facing adversity (Zhou, 2004). Contemporary scholars argue that MMS operates as a tool of oppression and poses negative effects to Asian Americans by denying their historical and contemporary discrimination and suffering, while legitimizing the oppression of other racial minorities (Chang, 1993; Lee, 1996). These stereotypes disregard the realities of distinctive economic and educational disparities faced by different cultural groups in Asian American communities (Hartlep, 2013).
Challenges Posed by COVID-19 Pandemic

The world tumbled into the COVID-19 pandemic. As an international student from Mainland China, it was so hard for me to neglect the daily updated news about anti-Asian hate crimes along with the rising tensions between China and the United States. I found myself seeking shelter from these discourses. Sentiments and hatred toward the Chinese government and people emerged mainly from the economic conflicts under the President Donald Trump regime and then fully fueled by the so-called Wuhan virus and Kongflu. I remember the feeling of absurdity the first time I heard about these names in 2020. However, it felt different when thousands and millions shouted these names in political campaigns and on social media. The rising anti-Asian harassment, violent incidents, and racial turmoil deepened the racial stigmatization of Chinese Americans and groups who look “Chinese”. Throughout the course of the pandemic, instances of racism against individuals of Asian descent have taken various forms, extending beyond overt verbal or physical attacks, to include more subtle actions – suspect glances or avoidance in public settings. I was particularly conscious of coughing in public and not wearing a mask, which could be perceived as threatening. In public, there was self-awareness that led to the feeling of being under constant surveillance. I suspect that my story was not unique for individuals of Asian descent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chinese Americans, members of other Asian American communities, and people who appear Asian, painfully conformed to this harsh reality which reflected the worst side of human behavior. The situation was not as bad as one hundred years ago when Chinese immigrants were excluded from (re)entering the United States, but the racial stigmatization process was similar. Chinese Americans were once again painted as a
threat who brought the virus to the United States. The increasing number of deaths in the United States has overshadowed and normalized the victimization of Chinese Americans (Saito & Li, 2022). What is worse, political campaigns playing the race card routinely evoked racial stereotypes, fears, and resentment against people of Chinese descent (Mendelberg, 2017).

These feelings and sufferings were also expressed by participant families in my study. All participant students in my book club expressed anger and disappointment toward the racial slurs such as China virus and Wuhan virus. For example, one of the participant families started to question American freedom which ostensibly granted people their civil rights. On the contrary, the freedom weakened the virus control and prevention during the pandemic as a part of people practiced their rights as citizens, while others were taking the responsibility for fixing the situation up.

Furthermore, the absence of internet censorship regarding the widespread use of racial slurs against Chinese Americans during the pandemic presented a significant challenge. Dyson (2021) described the racist chanting and President Donald Trump’s support for people who committed crimes targeting people of Asian descent, which degraded Asian Americans as second-class citizens “rather than affirming Asian Americans’ place in the American family” (para. 3). With the resurgence of stigmatization and racialization, the American dream – the translation of hard work into success – has been denied for another generation of Chinese Americans.

Researchers (Hahm, et al., 2021; Dubey, A. D., 2020) have demonstrated that anti-Asian racism as a societal illness is more widespread than initially indicated in media
and social media platforms. Students received racist messages without access to antiracist interventions in schools and homes. It was surprising to learn that almost all students in my book club did not receive any kind of antiracist intervention in their homes and classrooms. That is to say, many students lacked the necessary resources to understand racist events during the pandemic or resolve any associated confusion. Moreover, the marginalization of Chinese American students, coupled with the victimization of Asian individuals throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, is still deeply ingrained in the American educational system. A dearth of educators and researchers acknowledge and address the unique need of Asian students, particularly those of Chinese descent, to participate in critical classroom dialogues regarding anti-Asian racism.

Southern Schools’ Depiction of Slavery as a Solely Political Stance

The history of the United States, as taught in schools, is generally a unified narrative of progress, freedom, and exceptionalism without addressing inequities related language, race, class, and gender (Levstik & Barton, 2011; Loewen, 1995; VanSledright, 2008; Zimmerman, 2002). The state social studies standards are varied in each state and meet different purposes. Although some states explicitly call for teaching aspects of slavery and racism, a large-scale investigation of state social studies standards by the CBS (Duncan et al., 2020) showed that seven states do not mention slavery directly in their state standards and eight states do not mention the civil rights movement. Only two states mention White Supremacy, while 16 states list states’ rights as a cause of the Civil War. South Carolina, with a racial legacy that “does not connect slavery to racism and focuses on slavery as a political issue through the lens of states’ rights” (p. 301). This
text, the *Social Studies Academic Standards Support Document*, is a significant resource for teachers to reference when teaching social study content (Eargle, 2015).

The southern schools often fall short teaching about race in social studies classes. The curriculum’s lack of historical facts, relevant events, and the perspectives of marginalized people, especially Asian groups, result in a Black/white binary discourse that at best addresses some of the racialized experiences of African American communities while perpetuating stereotypes. It is questionable that students learn about the history of slavery in their elementary social studies classes without reference to race and racism. These disconnections between the information taught in schools and sweeping anti-Asian hate and racism in today’s world result in frustration, confusion, and a sense of disillusionment. Many Asian American students, and their white counterparts, are barely taught Asian American historical or contemporary narratives relevant to their racialized experiences in the United States. Neither learn details about how Chinese immigrants and their descendants were treated in historical and contemporary contexts (Rodriguez, 2018). In addition, it is often not feasible to rely on families to teach children about race and inequity as first-generation Chinese immigrant parents often believe that talking about race and racism is “taboo.” In addition, families bring distinctive understandings of race and racism which may not reflect U.S. stances.

**Lack of Asian American Content in School**

Chasing the American Dream is never easy mixed with hardships related to labor, discrimination, racism, and brutal and sometimes deadly violence. Historically, for Chinese immigrants, their descendants, and people of Chinese descent (regardless of their
immigration status), the collective recalls the Chinese Massacre in 1871\(^1\), the Rock Springs Massacre in 1885\(^2\), Japanese American internment during World War II\(^3\), Vincent Chin murder in 1982\(^4\), the Atlanta spa shootings in 2021\(^5\), and swelling anti-Asian assaults and hate crimes during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The lasting impact of these legacies of hate have instilled a sense of uncertainty among people of Chinese/Asian descent regarding their lives in the United States. In short, issues of race and racism are permanent and integral facets of the American experience (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Studies have indicated that children enter school with an awareness of race and an emerging awareness of racial disparities (Falkner, 2019). However, school curriculum has often failed to deliver an authentic accounting of racial conditions that have disempowered communities and strategies for dismantling racism with the so-called “white social studies” (Chandler & Branscombe, 2015, p. 63). Recent studies have demonstrated that the K-12 social studies curriculum in the United States is filled with white people, whereas People of Color and their experiences are misrepresented or omitted (Busey & Cruz, 2015; Shear, et al., 2015). In regard to Asian American history, only the Chinese Exclusion Act and Japanese American incarceration are generally

\[\text{References}\]

1 In Los Angeles, 1871, a mob of white and Hispanic people lynched at least 17 Chinese men and boys.

2 Rock Springs Massacre in 1885: white miners killed 28 Chinese workers and drove hundreds more out of their homes in Wyoming.

3 Japanese American internment during World War II: over 120,000 people of Japanese descent were forcibly relocated and incarcerated in camps across the country.

4 Vincent Chin murder in 1982: a Chinese American man was beaten to death by two white men who blamed him for the decline of the U.S. auto industry.

5 Atlanta spa shootings in 2021: a white gunman killed eight people, six of whom were Asian women, at three massage parlors in Georgia.
addressed without detailing Asian/Chinese American learning narratives (An, 2016). Epstein (2009) maintained that white and African American youth had different experiences when learning about history. In Epstein’s study, African American youth encountered disconnections between the narratives presented at home and school, resulting in skepticism towards textbooks and a disinterest in classroom learning. The apparent tension regarding messages about racialized experiences learned at school and in the communities can negatively affect children’s development and positioning as informed citizens.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to understand how second-generation Chinese immigrant students navigate and negotiate their cultural worlds as they negotiate distinctive cultural norms and practices through reading and discussing culturally relevant texts. Importantly, this study aims to understand how Chinese American students engaged in critical conversations about race, racism, and anti-Asian racism. I am particularly interested in these historical and contemporary discussions given the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, I invoked an AsianCrit lens to address the broad research question of how educators, researchers, and policymakers understand and effectively respond to the specific equity and justice-oriented educational needs of Chinese American (and Asian American) students within the post-pandemic social milieu.
Research Questions

Situated within a critical theory and critical literacy framework, I employed a single-site, collective case study to forefront and recenter Chinese American experiences and explore how second-generation Chinese immigrant students navigate their minority world and (re) negotiate their racial experiences through reading and discussing culturally relevant texts. The participants are four second-generation Chinese immigrant students. Critical conversations were encouraged and generated through processes of reading, responding, and discussing the culturally relevant texts, which included the early racial histories and contemporary lives of Chinese American people. This dissertation study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do second-generation Chinese American students negotiate meaning in response to contemporary Chinese American texts in a community-based book club?

2. How do second-generation Chinese American students negotiate their understandings of race and social justice challenges faced by Chinese Americans in the Southern United States through reading historical fiction and relevant texts?

Definition of Terms

Defining Culture

I acknowledge the intricacy of “culture” since it is inherently dynamic. Anthropological and ethnographic scholars have conventionally portrayed culture as a fixed and distinct entity, by describing and defining the people within a given region
(Wolf, 1984). However, more current perspectives on culture recognize culture as created, sustained, and revised through interactions among individuals (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). Therefore, culture is a complex system of human interconnectivity that saturates time and space. I emphasize that culture is expressed in diverse ways and is characterized by distinctive ways of being and doing. Nonetheless, this does not overlook the fact that culture is both dynamic and hybrid.

My participating students are straddling two or more cultures. Thus, I recognize their cultures as fluid and constantly changing. At the same time, I sometimes witnessed distinct systems in conflict. The coexistence of multiple cultures as experienced by individuals creates distinctive and bounded systems that require critical examination. W. E. B. Du Bois’ described double consciousness to shed light on this contradiction. In his book *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Du Bois explained:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p. 3)

Although Du Bois originally discussed the experiences of Black individuals in a discriminatory society, his description of a delicate equilibrium between belonging and exclusion resonates with many individuals who identify as multicultural or bicultural. Double consciousness suggests that culture cannot be separated from power, and that
one’s self-conception is influenced by others. For both adults and children who bring bicultural and multicultural identities, maintaining and adapting to multiple cultures, involves continual processes of marginalization and negotiating power. Du Bois described this struggle as ongoing strife. Scholars (Chen, 2008; Samreth, 2014) have expanded upon Du Bois’ idea by portraying double consciousness as an enduring experience of racial(ized) trauma.

In the United States, biculturalism encompasses multifaceted and wide-ranging perspectives on cultural identity, power, and oppression. However, it is often explored within the intersections of specific cultures or identities. Each community has a unique history and is impacted by cultural, social, and economic forces (Chen et al., 2008). Similarly, multiculturalism is characterized by the existence of multiple linguistic, cultural, and racial identities, as well as other signifiers of difference including social class, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and linguistic variation (Harris, 1996). Although multicultural may suggest a simple aggregation of various cultures, its social relevance and significance imply a historical and social exclusion from dominant communities. In regard to children's literature, Cai (2002) argued that multiculturalism is not just about acknowledging and appreciating cultural diversity, but also involves power structures and struggles. Its aim is not only to understand and respect cultural differences but also to transform the existing social order, ensuring marginalized cultures have greater voice and authority, and to achieve social equality and justice among all cultures (p. 7).

Race is a central dimension of culture, and for some racial and cultural groups, race is the most salient feature of their cultural identity (Milner, 2010, 2015).
Furthermore, oppression and marginalization are not isolated concepts that reflect individual attributes. They cannot be fully understood without an intersectional framework. Social theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1990) first coined the concept of intersectionality to acknowledge positionings relative to multiple identity markers including class, race, and gender which intersect and contribute to oppression in multiple and simultaneous ways, creating an interdependent system of discrimination. Therefore, in my study, I define culture as entailing the unique ways Chinese immigrants enact and perform their lives in the United States, against an international background. Moreover, I acknowledge that the culture of Chinese immigrants (newcomer, or multi-generational resident) is dynamic, fluid, changing, and sometimes distinctive within the cultural group. My participants’ experiences are influenced by various overlapping identity affiliations. Although it is not feasible to comprehensively examine and indicate all the complex layers of convergence regarding my participants’ responses to culturally relevant texts, it is vital to acknowledge the dynamic nature of culture and the intricate ways in which it shaped and challenged participating students and their families.

**Defining Race**

Race is a term that has no biological meaning; it has been socially constructed based on physicality, social practices, legal practices, and historical norms. The meanings, messages, results, and consequences of race are developed and constructed by human beings, not by genetics or some predetermined set of scientific laws. Genetically and biologically, individuals are more the same than they are different. According to Nakkula & Toshalis (2006), “There is no biologically sustainable reason for establishing ‘races’ as distinct subgroups within the human species…Race is a concept created in the
modern era as a way of drawing distinctions between people such that some might benefit at the expense of others” (p. 123). Thus, the concept of race is built upon multiple constructs and assumptions. Race is partially based on assumptions associated with skin pigmentation (Monroe, 2013). While it is socially constructed, race carried a range of societal information and messages. Race has been legally constructed through laws, policies, and practices. Legal policies such as the Naturalization Law (1790), Brown v. Board of Education (1954), and Milliken v. Bradley (1974) and historically constructed laws, including Jim Crow laws, slavery, and racial discrimination in historical context.

Race has been and continues to be examined to explain educational inequity (Gooden & O’Doherty, 2015; Grooms & Williams, 2015; Jackson et al., 2014; Petchauer, 2015). For example, Chinese American denotes a racialized group of people, not a singular, static cultural group. There is great diversity among people of Chinese descent, alongside notable consistencies. Chinese Americans share a history of tragedy and exclusion, and various other forms of systemic discrimination and racism that have defined the group. At the same time, Chinese Americans have shared the American dream, and many have thrived through their perseverance, and resilience despite hardship. However, there are also many differences among Chinese Americans. I purposely forefront and recenter the diverse experiences of Chinese Americans and Asian Americans in schools to deeply understand and explore race operates in distinct and unique ways.
Conclusion

Along with the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, Chinese Americans have been once again racialized as threats in the U.S. The widespread racial slurs chanting against Chinese Americans on media and the limited representation of Chinese American experiences within the school curriculum contribute to students’ distorted and incomplete understanding of Chinese American history, culture, and contributions. This omission not only perpetuates stereotypes but also denies students the opportunity to develop empathy, respect, and cultural understanding. Additionally, the banned race learning in southern schools further hinders progress in addressing systemic racism targeted Asian American communities in the U.S. Chinese American children, without the proper education on race and racism in school and home settings, would have large potential to internalize these severe forms of racism and discrimination that targeted to their community. Building on AsianCrit, reader response theory, and critical literacy perspective, this dissertation study investigated how second-generation Chinese American students at age eight to twelve respond to culturally relevant texts which portray contemporary and historical Chinese American people’s lives and experiences in the United States. In addition, this study explored how these students negotiate their understanding of race, racism, and anti-Asian racism through associating with the stories, their everyday experiences, family traditions, and interactions with peers and researcher in a community-based book club.
CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Maxwell (2005) described a conceptual or theoretical framework as “the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs your research” (p. 33). This dissertation study draws upon three significant bodies of research for its conceptual framework: (1) Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) focusing on critical issues unique to Asian and Asian American communities (Museus, 2014), (2) critical literacy as a set of guiding principles for my pedagogical approach, (3) reader response theories to explore Chinese American children’s literary interpretations, including Culturally Situated Reader Response Theory (Brooks & Browne, 2012). The following section outlines my understanding of these theoretical frameworks.

Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit)

Critical race and racism theories explore how racial categorizations define groups of people while upholding social and institutional systems of power (Gonzalez-Sobrino & Goss, 2018). The racial meanings attributed to a group’s identity may be understood as “racialization”; notably, Omi and Winant (1994) explain that these racial meanings are placed upon “previously unclassified relationship[s], social practice[s], or group[s]” (p. 111), thus emphasizing socially constructed, rather than biological, nature of these
meanings. Consequently, racialization describes how racial inequality is constructed and maintained in a society.

Asian Critical Race Theory, also called AsianCrit, as a relatively new theoretical framework (Museus, 2014) that is heavily influenced by the long-established traditions of critical theory, critical legal studies, Critical Indigenous Studies, and critical race theory (CRT) (Brayboy, 2005; Museus & Iftikar, 2013; Valdes, 1998). These critical strands help scholars “to understand the oppressive aspects of society in order to generate societal and individual transformation” (Tierney, 1993, p. 4). In the mid-1970s, lawyers, activists, and legal scholars, including Derrick Bell (1980, 1988), Kimberlé Crenshaw (1990), Mari Matsuda (1987), and Richard Delgado (1989) questioned the role of the traditional legal system in legitimizing oppressive social structures and recognized that new theories and strategies were needed to fight against the racism in its subtler forms. They worried about the separation of critical legal studies from the discussion of race and racism and how systemic racism was treated as normal in the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). CRT was a response to systemic racism and the resultant gain/loss of power of people within the legal field (Museus & Iftikar, 2013).

Central tenets of CRT include the assumption that racism is ingrained and a product of social relations in the United States and hegemonic culture (Crenshaw, 1990; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Similarly, the rejection of the dominant ideologies, such as the notion of meritocracy and colorblindness (Crenshaw, 2011), acknowledges that power structures are based on white privilege and “white-over-color ascendancy” which are sustained over time (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 8). The central tenet of CRT is a commitment to social justice and active resistance to oppression through naming,
storytelling, and revisionist history (Bell, 1980; Brayboy, 2005; Delgado, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). In addition, CRT recognizes the intersectional (Crenshaw, 1990) layers of oppression (Crenshaw, 1990) experienced by People of Color which impact their racialized realities and experiential knowledge (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Furthermore, CRT recognizes the ways dominant society racializes different minority groups at different times in response to shifting needs (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

However, CRT is foregrounded to be “dynamically constituted” (Crenshaw, 2011, p. 1261); in other words, CRT was not conceptualized as an intellectual theory of bounded theoretical parameters but as a set of “ideas and frames that are available for mobilization and that are themselves re-constituted in the process” (Carbado, 2010, p. 1606). This is why various CRT scholars have put forth specific theoretical constructs (e.g., Bell, 1980, theory of interest convergence) or have identified their own constructions of key tenets relevant to particular domains (e.g., Yosso, 2005, community cultural wealth). Consequently, by the early 1990s, CRT was being adopted and adapted in many interdisciplinary domains. In particular, schools were identified as playing a key role in sustaining racial inequalities and “as one of the many institutions that both historically and contemporarily serve to reproduce unequal power relations and academic outcomes” (Zamudio et al., 2010, p. 4). Concerning ongoing institutional racism, in education, scholars including Gloria Ladson-Billings, William Tate, and Daniel Solórzano adapted central tenets of CRT to analyze the experiences of People of Color (POC) in education and systemic racial oppression in schools (Taylor, 2009). In their foundational work, Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) asserted that race is a significant
factor affecting educational justice that continues to racialize Students of Color based on both race and property rights in the United States. They emphasized “naming one’s own reality” (p. 57) as a legitimate, appropriate, and critical method for understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial inequities in education.

Later, Solorzano & Bernal (2001) identified five themes that inform research methods and pedagogy based on a CRT framework in education. These include:

1. *The centrality of race and racism and intersectionality with other forms of subordination.* Race and racism are pervasive, persistent, and fundamental; they intersect with other forms of subordination, based on discrimination related to gender and class.

2. *Challenges to dominant ideologies* including meritocracy, colorblindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity.

3. *Commitments to social justice.* A critical race framework is dedicated to promoting social justice and providing a transformative response to racial, gender, and class-based oppression (Matsuda, 1991).

4. *Centrality of experiential knowledge.* Students of Color’s experiential knowledge is appropriate, legitimate, and crucial to knowing, examining, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education.

5. *An interdisciplinary perspective that* confronts ahistorical and narrow disciplinary perspectives by emphasizing the examination of race and racism in education through an interdisciplinary approach that places them within both historical and contemporary contexts.
These themes “can be used in theorizing about the ways in which educational structures, processes, and discourses support and promote racial subordination” (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 315). Further extensions have utilized CRT to examine the school curriculum, textbooks and the literature students read at school. Ladson-Billings (2009) asserted that school curriculum is “a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a white supremacist master script” that is written from a color-blind or race-neutral perspective (p. 29). These curricula presume “a homogenized ‘we’ in a celebration of diversity” (p. 29). Yosso (2002) maintained that Eurocentric discourses found in textbooks and children’s literature - endorsed by teachers - tend to marginalize the knowledge and culture of Students of Color. The aforementioned work was significant in connecting the legal argument to education and offering tools and tenets to critique and challenge educational systems and institutions.

In addition, branches of CRT have developed to amplify the voices of various groups of people and highlight their concerns and histories. Latinx Critical Theory (LatCrit) was among the first cultural divisions of CRT, and it worked to name racist and racialized practices against Chicanx and Latinx peoples, particularly issues involving language and immigration (Delgado, 1995; Valdes, 1998). LatCrit was followed by the materialization of Tribal Critical Theory (TribalCrit), in which indigenous perspectives about colonization, sovereignty, language, and storytelling were brought to the forefront of conversations about inequities in Indigenous communities (Brayboy, 2005). More recently, Asian Critical Theory (AsianCrit), in which CRT frameworks have been applied to Asian American experiences, forefronts and centers the racialization of Asian Americans (Chae, 2013; Museus & Iftikar, 2013). It is worthy to note the further
development of CRT, which includes DesiCrit which addresses South Asian American racialization (Harpalani, 2013), and Asian Pacific American Critical Legal Scholarship (APACrit) which addresses stereotyping mechanisms and group experiences based on the history of U.S. colonialism and the current structures of international law. These branches of CRT share the same underlying principles but have expanded in different directions to address the unique needs of specific communities, based on their complex histories and diverse contexts (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Given the specific immigrant and racialized history of Asian Americans, Chang (1993) argued that the discrimination faced by Asian American people is “quantitatively and qualitatively different from that suffered by other disempowered groups” and CRT had “not yet shown how different races matter differently” (p. 1247). This challenged the historical focus of CRT on the Black/white binary paradigm based on race. Despite CRT’s broad advocacy for People of Color and its theoretical relevance for analyzing racialized experiences, most critical theorists have ignored the complexity of America’s racial hierarchies and the lived realities of Asian Americans who have historically been discriminated against and deprived of naturalized citizenship (Chae, 2013; Chang, B., 2017; Gotanda, 1995, 2010; Lee, 2015; Iftikar & Museus, 2018; Museus & Iftikar, 2013; Teranishi, 2002). Given the need for theoretical perspectives that explicitly explore the impact of various types of oppression endured by Asian Americans and advocate for the telling of stories by Asian Americans and their communities (Chae, 2013), critical theorists began centering Asian experiences over the past 10 years (Chae, 2013; Curammeng et al., 2017; Harpalani, 2013).
Unlike other ethnic groups in the United States, Asian Americans have been positioned as a threatening *yellow peril* and as *perpetual foreigners* in the United States (Lowe, 1996; Takaki, 1990) through an *outsider racialization* which affects various aspects of Asian Americans’ lives, including cognition, learning, political discourses, and institutional structures (Ancheta, 2006). AsianCrit acknowledges and highlights the racialized history of Asian immigrants and how it affects citizenship and the experiences of Asian Americans in the United States. However, as one of the fastest-growing ethnic minority groups, Asian Americans are still underserved in schools, as school curriculum continues to serve as “a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a white supremacist master script” from a race-neutral or colorblind perspective that “presumes a homogenized ‘we’ in a celebration of diversity” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 29).

Compared to other ethnic groups, Asian American narratives and history have long been neglected and excluded in dominant discourses and in school curriculum (An, 2016, 2022; Heilig et al, 2012; Okihiro, 1997; Pang, 2006). In a review of the K-12 history standards in ten states, An (2016) found minimal attention paid to Asian American experiences and history.

Considering the invisibility of Asian Americans in the education system, Museus and Iftikar (2013) conceptualized AsianCrit perspectives to center racial realities of Asian American educational experiences. This framework consists of seven interconnected tenets (Museus & Iftikar, 2013) that draw on aspects of CRT.

1. *Asianization* refers to the racialization of Asian Americans and the distinctive ways in which Asian Americans are racialized in the United States. These unique racialized ways include the persistent conflation of the cultural and racial identities of Asian
Americans into a monolithic group (e.g., model minorities, perpetual foreigners, and threatening yellow perils, in particular sexual/gender representations) (Espiritu, 1994; Museus & Iftikar, 2013; Tuan, 1998). Museus & Iftikar (2013) emphasized how Asianization operates to “(re)shape laws and policies that affect Asian Americans and influence Asian American identities and experiences” (p. 23), which is relevant to why and how Asian people, especially people of Chinese descent, were racialized during COVID-19 pandemic.

2. **Transnational Contexts** emphasize the importance of national and international contexts and how borders have shaped historical and contemporary political, economic, and social conditions for Asian American people (Museus & Iftikar, 2013; Lee, 2015). Specifically, this tenet recognizes how transnational contexts and processes, including international wars, imperialism, political relations, emerging global economies, and migration have uniquely influenced the conditions of Asian American people.

3. **(Re)Constructive History** refers to the (re)construction of a historical Asian American Narrative in response to the unique racialized history and exclusion experienced by Asian American people (Takaki, 1998). This notion emphasizes the re-analysis of history to expose racism towards Asian American people, the transcendence of Asian American invisibility and silence, and the subsequent development of historical narratives that recognize the lived experiences and contributions of Asian American people to foster strong Asian American identities and consciousness (Umemoto, 1989). Notably, (re)constructive history offers a more progressive and equitable future for Asian American people and other People of Color by recognizing the
importance of traditional practices and adapting them to present and future contexts. This tenet informs how students in my research responded to, disrupted, and interrogated the racialized depictions of Chinese American history during our readings and discussions of historical fiction.

4. **Strategic (Anti)Essentialism** acknowledges that race is socially constructed and shaped and reshaped by economic, political, and social forces (Spivak, 1987). This tenet complicates the political, social, and economic forces that dictate racial hierarchies and oppress Asian American people through broad racialized categorizations by recognizing how Asian Americans also (re)construct and (re)define categories.

5. **Intersectionality**, a concept originally identified by Critical Race theorists (Crenshaw, 1990, 2011; Eng, 2001; Prasso, 2005), references to how various systems of oppression, including class, gender, and sexuality, intersect to affect the Asian American identities and experiences. This notion acknowledges that analyses of specific systems, as well as intersectional examinations, provide “crucial insights about the environments, curriculum, policies, programs, practices, processes, or issues that affect Asian Americans within the given situation” (Museus & Iftikar, 2013).

6. **Story, Theory, and Praxis** references how AsianCrit applies to the real world through storytelling. It underscores the intertwine of counterstories, theories, and practices in analyzing Asian American experiences and advocating for Asian American people and communities (Museus, 2014). Importantly, this tenet also “recognizes the relevance of imperial scholarship, or the notion that the voices of people of color and
the work of intellectuals of color have been historically marginalized in academia” (Museus & Iftikar, 2013, p. 27). In this dissertation study, this tenet validated the second-generation Chinese American students’ real-life experiences as counternarratives that challenge the dominant and racialized accounts.

7. Commitment to Social Justice highlights AsianCrit as “dedicated to advocating for the end of all forms of oppression and exploitation. That is, AsianCrit aims to eradicate racism, sexism, heterosexism, capitalist exploitation, and other systemic forms of dehumanization and domination” (Iftikar & Museus, 2018, p. 941). This tenet pushes CRT activism by advocating for the end of all forms of oppression and racism (Museus & Iftikar, 2013).

These tenets provide a theoretical foundation to examine the experiences of Asian Americans in U.S. educational contexts. Through articulating the specific ways Asian Americans are racialized, these tenets enable Asian Americans to distinguish their experiences from other Communities of Color. Furthermore, these tenets provide a theoretical framework that invites scholars to reconsider literacy instructional possibilities for Asian American children.

In this dissertation, Asianization; (re)Constructive History; story, theory, and praxis; and a commitment to social justice are significant (Figure 2.1). These tenets form the theoretical framework that I use to recenter and validate the lived experiences of Chinese American students in a southeastern city in the United States. Simultaneously, these tenets act as analytic tools to understand the complex ways in which Chinese American students navigate racialized discourse and negotiate bicultural, cultural, and racial experiences.
In this study, the tenets of Asianization refer to the reality that racism is pervasive in American society in which Chinese American students and their families are racialized in distinctive ways in/out of educational context, especially during COVID-19 pandemic. During the reading and discussing of culturally relevant texts in this study, racialized experiences of Chinese Americans were demonstrated in a multilayered manner in the following forms: (1) early Chinese immigrant racialized experiences depicted in selected historical fiction picture books and relevant texts provided in the book club, (2) students’ lived experiences shared through the function of racialized dominant discourse, (3) dominant anti-Asian discourse in larger context during COVID-19 pandemic.

Drawing on the tenet of (re)constructive history, this study recognized and centered the racialized sufferings and heroism of Chinese Americans in fighting back against racial violence and injustice through culturally authentic historical and contemporary texts. Additionally, this study encouraged Chinese American students to reflect on their learning at schools and reconstruct their historical counterparts’ narratives. Drawing on the tenet – Story, Theory, and Praxis, this study employed culturally relevant texts and relevant resources as the counternarratives for Chinese American students to negotiate their understanding of racism and anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic. Simultaneously, the lived experiences of my students drawing from their families and communities were acknowledged as counternarratives to validate the Chinese American racialized realities and exhibit self-condemnation (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995). Commitment to Social Justice highlights the emerging activist stance of Chinese American students in this study who gradually developed their
agency and started to advocate for social and racial justice for Asian communities and for all ethnic minoritized groups in the United States during our book club meetings.

AsianCrit theory guides this study in several ways: (1) centralize Chinese American experiences and draws attention to the narratives and stories by and about Chinese American people in the United States, (2) operate as an analytical tool to understand ways in which Chinese American people are racialized in the United States, (3) operate as an analytical tool to understand students’ literary responses regarding to conversations around culture and race, and (4) celebrate the scholarly and literary contributions of Asian American writers and artists as acts of resistance and challenges to Asian American invisibility and erasure in school curriculum.

**Reader Response Theory**

This dissertation study explores how second-generation Chinese immigrant students negotiate the meanings in response to contemporary and historical realistic Chinese American texts that reflect the racialized immigrant history and contemporary experiences of Chinese American people in the United States. I draw on Brooks and Browne's (2012) Culturally Situated Reader Response Theory (CSRRT) to investigate the literary responses of my students when reading and discussing culturally relevant texts. These books have distinctive textual features and cultural themes related to Chinese diasporic groups in the United States. In the following section, I describe CSRRT and how it informed this study.

Reader response theory acknowledges the role of readers in creating meanings from texts, which is different from early New Criticism which focuses on text-based
perspective of reader response (Brown et al., 2021). Literacy scholars including Norman Holland, David Bleich, Stanley Fish, and Wolfgang Iser played a pivotal role in the development of the reader response theory. Reader response maintains that textual meaning occurs within the readers transactions with text and recognizes that each reader is situated in a particular manner that reflects ability, culture, gender, and overall experiences. However, according to Tomkins (1980), reader response is not a representation of a particular theory; rather it is associated with theorists whose work addresses the reader, the reading process, and textual response. Although Tompkins (1980) does not address the work of Louise Rosenblatt, Rosenblatt has had a strong influence on reader response theory. Prior to the popularity of the New Critics (Holland, 1998; Fish, 1970; Iser & Tompkins, 1984), Louise Rosenblatt wrote the seminal text *Literature as Exploration* (1938), which was the first scholar in emphasizing both the reader and the text. In later editions, Rosenblatt drew on the work of John Dewey, shifting her use of the word “interaction” to “transaction,” thus, giving life to her transactional theory of reading.

Louise Rosenblatt is one of the first literary scholars to perceive the reader as an active participant in the meaning construction process (Cox, 1992; Tompkins, 1980). Rosenblatt (1978) contributed to reader response theory by highlighting the transaction process, which she refers to as the “poems” (1978, p. 12) readers construct with texts. Rosenblatt (1978) stated that readers and texts work collaboratively to create interpretations. She explained that reading processes occur as “the meaning – the poem – ‘happens’ during the transaction between the reader and the signs on the page” (p. xvi). The “poem” is embodied in the actual reading process, resulting from a convergence of
the text and the reader. Rosenblatt (1978) stated that reading literature is a lived-through experience that is “shaped by the reader under the guidance of the text” (p. 12).

Rosenblatt argued that 1) the text is a stimulus, activating the reader’s prior experiences with literature and life, and 2) the text is a blueprint for ordering, rejecting, and sketching what is evoked from the reader (Rosenblatt, 1978). Rosenblatt identified two types of reading which are defined in relationship to readers' purposes: efferent and aesthetic. In efferent reading, the focus is on what remains with the reader after the reading. This type of reading is most associated with information that is gained while reading. During aesthetic reading, attention is on how the reader lives through and with the text. Rosenblatt argued that reading occurs as “a transaction, a two-way process involving a reader and a text at a particular time, under particular circumstances” (p. 268). Rosenblatt's transactional theory invites educators and teachers to validate the active roles played by readers in the act of reading and value of the lived experiences of readers.

**Culturally Situated Reader Response Theory**

To adequately capture how students of Chinese descent draw on their diverse family traditions, cultural practices, and racial experiences to interpret the culturally relevant texts, I employ Brooks and Browne's (2012) Culturally Situated Reader Response Theory (CSRRT) which highlights the effects of cultural and racial perspectives on children’s meaning-making processes. Brooks and Browne (2012) theorized CSRRT based on their work with African American students to illustrate how cultural and racialized experiences are mediated by culturally relevant texts. Although
CSRRT is based on research with African American students, it is relevant to readers of all ethnicities. Figure 2.2 depicts the “Homeplace” culturally situated reader response model.

The “Homeplace” culturally situated reader response model (see Figure. 1.2) weighs students’ racial and cultural backgrounds. The model highlights the cultural positions that students might assume when reading. The Homeplace Position represents the most dominant perspective evoked when a child responds to a text. This Homeplace Position remains “transient and constantly interacts with and gets informed by the other positions” (Brooks and Browne, 2012, p. 78). The Homeplace Positions include four different aspects: (1) Family Position, (2) Peer Position, (3) Community Position, and (4) Ethnic Group Position. Generally, these four aspects of students’ lives simultaneously influence their literary responses. Furthermore, Brooks and Browne (2012) argued that these positions could not be understood without taking into account the “cultural milieu” (p. 75) embedded in particular stories. In the following section, I introduce each literary response position and describe its role in my study.

Family Position refers to literary responses that draw on familial aspects of students' culture. When textual interpretations tap into familial perspectives, students craft responses that reflect familial traditions, situate themselves as members of families and assume specific roles and perspectives. In my study, family position stood out when Chinese American students talked about their parents, family immigrant history, extended families in China, and family-oriented cultural traditions, including celebrating Chinese holidays and practicing Buddhism.
Peers Position was shaped by interests, memberships, and values shared with peers. Children often responded to books in keeping with their developmental age and in ways influenced by peers. These responses expressed values and what Giroux (1993) described as meanings related to relationships with others inside and outside of one’s world. In my study, Chinese American students responded from a peer position when their responses reflected their friend-making at school. My study took into account how interactions with peers affected their comprehension and interpretation of literature in the community-based book club.

Community Position emerges because students are immersed in a particular setting featuring various types of institutions (e.g., churches, schools, corner stores, fast food restaurants, etc.). Participants in my study resided in suburban communities. Thus, this community position affected their literary responses.

Ethnic Group Position refers to identification as a member of a particular ethnic, racial, and/or cultural group. This position is intertwined with various assumptions, biases, and stereotypes as well as a deep understanding of collective and subjective positionings within the United States. In my study, ethnic group position focuses on how the students view themselves as Chinese American individuals. It may involve both alignment and contradiction of two cultures, responses to racialized nature of Chinese American experiences, and the influence of stereotypes - including the model minority stereotype – that affect their responses to culturally relevant texts, including historical and realistic fiction.
Homeplace Positioning, which encompasses family, peers, community, and ethnic group positionings, have been posed as the most dominant positionings evoked when students respond to text (Brooks & Browne, 2012). Homeplace can be understood as the center of social and cultural dimensions that inform reader response. These dimensions appear in my data through the types of responses that children make to texts. Collectively, these positionings represent multilayered aspects of a child’s culture and experience. Approaching my study through this lens, Homeplace Position embodies what it means to be a Chinese American child with roots in both Chinese and American cultures and identities. This positioning strongly influenced students’ literary responses and how they drew on the four positionings.

The four cultural positionings (i.e., ethnic group, community, family, peers) embedded in Homeplace have implications for understanding how children transact with texts and to what degree they see themselves reflected in texts with strong cultural themes. Brooks and Browne (2012) maintained that a student’s responses are constructed in “a spiraling or overlapping process” (p. 83) in which ethnic group, community, family and peer positionings contribute to lived-through experiences that Rosenblatt (1985) described as an ongoing organic process. Culturally situated reader response theory: (1) validates culturally relevant children’s literature as providing a lens through which literary interpretations are situated; (2) provides a tool for educators and classroom teachers to understand the range of cultural positionings that can affect students' meaning-making; and (3) compels educators to carefully consider their selection of children's literature (Brooks & Browne, 2012).
Brooks and Browne (2012) argued that textual features embedded in culturally relevant children’s literature (CRCL) should not be ignored. In CRCL, authors insert particular cultural markers that reflect cultural themes, community practices, and distinct linguistic styles to enable children with the shared backgrounds to sustain their cultures and traditions, while supporting children in developing awareness of their membership in a particular cultural group. Brooks and Browne (2012) encouraged educators and classroom teachers to consider culturally relevant children's stories as tools for passing on traditions, beliefs, histories, and values to forthcoming generations (Gates, 1989).

**Critical Literacy**

The roots of critical literacy can be traced back to critical theory and the Frankfurt School of the 1920s. By the late 1940s, critical literacy was further developed by Paulo Freire (1987) who focused on critical consciousness and emancipation (McLaren, 1999; Morrell, 2008). Critical literacy has been influenced by various theoretical paradigms (Luke, 2012; Vasquez, 2017; Vasquez et al., 2019). Drawing on critical social theory, critical literacy addresses social injustice and inequality. Critical social theorists believe that society is perpetuated by unequal power relationships that are maintained through particular forms of knowledge and language (Beck, 2005). People who understand those forms of knowledge and language have more opportunities to gain resources than those who do not. These unequal social relationships privilege some people and degrade others. Critical social theorists argue that individuals have agencies that can enable them to defy social inequalities. Luke (2000) posits that critical literacy is “principally about building access to literate practices and discourse resources and about setting the enabling pedagogic conditions for students to use their existing and new discourse resources for
exchange in the social fields where texts and discourses matter” (p. 449). Moreover, Janks and Vasquez (2011) maintained that critical literacy entails “understanding the relationship between texts, meaning making and power to undertake transformative social action that contributes to the achievement of a more equitable social order” (p. 1). Regardless of one’s emphasis, critical literacy focuses on unequal power relations, and issues of social justice and equity in support of diverse learners (Vasquez, 2017, 2019).

**Critical Literacy Applied in My Study**

Critical literacy is a perspective (Vasquez, 2004), a mindset (Mulcahy, 2008), an inquiry process (Kuby, 2013), and a way of being, living, learning, and teaching (Pandya & Ávila, 2014; Vasquez, 2005, 2014a, 2015). Critical literacy engages students in “questioning power relations, discourses, and identities in a world not yet finished, just or humane” (Shor, 1999, para 1). Critical literacy invites readers to go beyond surface understandings of social, cultural, historical, and political issues in particular contexts to explore hidden messages and underlying ideologies. Being able to understand the complexity of an issue requires students to reach beyond their own point of view and seek alternative explanations (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004; Mulcahy, 2008).

The critical literacy perspective employed in my study primarily draws from Lewison et al. (2002) who synthesized four tenets of critical literacy: (1) disrupting the commonplace, (2) interrogating multiple-view points, (3) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (4) taking action and promoting social justice (p. 382). Lewison et al. (2002) disrupted the commonplace of classrooms to initiate talk about racism and stereotypes using children's literature. For example, critical literacy can be used to invite readers to
question how the text positions readers. In addition, *interrogating multiple viewpoints* involves teachers asking readers whose viewpoints or voices are left out in stories, seeking voices that have been silenced, and making these silences visible to the readers. Readers would be asked how stories would be different if protagonists were of a different culture or race. *Focusing on sociopolitical issues* invites students to recognize sociopolitical systems and what is happening in society. This dimension challenges the unquestioned display of unequal power. It redefines literacy as a form of cultural citizenship that increases opportunities for subordinate groups to participate in society by engaging in acts of critical consciousness and resistance. The final dimension of critical literacy – *taking action and promoting social justice* is achieved through praxis. In my study, participating students were invited to reflect on social, cultural, and racial aspects of culturally relevant texts as they began to develop activist stances and take action in their world.

**Significance of the Study**

Drawing on these three primary theoretical constructs – AsianCrit, critical literacy, and reader response theory - my single-site, collective case study examined second-generation Chinese immigrant students’ literary responses to culturally relevant texts that depict historical and contemporary Chinese Americans living in the United States. Specifically, I explored how these students connected and associated these stories with their cultural and racial realities in the southern U.S. States as they (re)negotiated their own narratives as Chinese American people. The study provided Chinese American students with a welcoming and safe space to read and discuss Chinese American stories and share their understanding of race and racism. In addition, my study offered authentic,
culturally relevant children’s literature (CRCL) and relevant resources from which students could read about the experiences and lives of people who look like them.

My study extends the reader response theory by adding a critical literacy perspective while highlighting Chinese American students’ perspectives about racialized immigrant history, contemporary lives, and, most recently, ongoing racism towards Asian people during the pandemic. Incorporating critical literacy, this study sought to not only document students’ literary responses to texts but also to encourage students to question the existing social and racial structures and strive toward personal and societal transformation. By reading historical accounts and realistic historical narratives of Chinese immigrants in the United States, students moved beyond a black/white binary to better understand racism. For example, after reading a cartoon about anti-Asian hate and violence, students began to reflect on their own racialized experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and develop emerging activist identities.

Similarly, this study extends the utility of AsianCrit to southern and suburban second-generation Chinese American students by examining their responses to culturally relevant texts. My students shared their hybrid and diverse cultural and racial experiences, which supported them in bridging and blurring the various boundaries that constitute the racialized dominant discourse. In particular, students’ counternarratives to dominant discourses about Asian American families, racialized historical accounts, and anti-Asian racism adds layers to how scholars understand AsianCrit theories. For example, my students reported on language barriers experienced in their early grades, confusion about racism, and the continuation of model minority stereotypes.
Third, this study provides K-12 educators with sample lessons – using children’s literature and multimodal texts (e.g., images, videos, web pages) - to discuss critical issues with Chinese American students. For example, during the book club meeting focusing on anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic, I presented activist cartoons, relevant webpages, and the news reports about local Chinese Americans who participated in protests to stop Asian hate. While learning about Chinese immigrants during the Chinese Exclusion Act, I provided students with web pages that described living conditions on Angel Island and how Chinese immigrants endured that hardship. These lessons using diverse texts, provided students with multiple access points to understand and ample space to negotiate their lived experiences.

Finally, this study is significant to Chinese and Asian American communities as they strive for racial equality in educational contexts. I urge educators and policymakers to include culturally and racially relevant and authentic content in the school curriculum for ethnically diverse students, validating both their ancestral and Western experiences. This study calls for establishing racial literacy in school and family settings as cornerstones for Asian immigrant populations that have confronted various forms of oppression. Thus, this study advocates for the inclusion and recognition of Asian American experiences, narratives, and heroism in dominant discourse while also condemning the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and anti-Asian racism targeting Asian Americans.
Conclusion

This dissertation study examines the literary responses of second-generation Chinese immigrant students to Chinese American historical and contemporary picture books. Specifically, this study explores how Chinese American students (re)negotiate their understandings of racism and social justice. I apply critical literacy as a theoretical lens and pedagogical tool by focusing on supporting students as they explore the sociocultural and racial implications of text (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993; Lewison, 2002; Freebody & Luke, 1990; Luke & Freebody, 1997; Shor, 1999). I employ Lewison’s et al. (2002) four dimensions of critical literacy as participating students were encouraged to not only mutually transact with texts, but also read critically – questioning who was privileged and who was not recognized in the texts while exploring socioeconomic reasons that accompany injustice and racism. In particular, students associated the CRCL stories with their everyday racial lived experiences to understand the racialized discourse and stereotypes targeting Chinese Americans. Importantly, students developed counternarratives that disrupted and interrogated dominant racialized narratives by drawing on their cultural and racialized experiences in the United States. Critical literacy, as a theoretical perspective and pedagogical tool, fostered Chinese American students to access powerful discourse positions within an existing social system and to disrupt an oppressive system (Luke, 2014).
Figure 2.1 *Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit)* (Museus & Iftikar, 2013)

*Note.* This figure illustrates my first conceptual frame and the key tenets of AsianCrit highlighted in this study.
Figure 2.2 “Homeplace” Culturally Situated Reader Response Model (Brooks & Browne, 2012, P. 78)
CHAPTER 3
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

I reviewed recent scholarships about how culturally relevant children’s literature engages students of color in meaningful conversations about multicultural, and racial realities in the United States. In order to comprehensively search the literature, I included literature beyond a ten-year search parameter. Thus, in this literature review, I included classic studies as well as more recent scholarship on reader response and children’s literature. To search recent literature, I sought studies published between 2012 and 2022 and focused on empirical studies published in major peer-reviewed journals, Google Scholar, and the university library system, and ERIC database to illuminate the significance of culturally relevant children’s literature in engaging students of color in meaningful transactions. I digitally searched articles in major journals and through the university library system, ERIC database, and Google Scholar with comprehensive search with keywords – “culturally relevant text”, “critical conversation”, “book club”, “picture books”, “Asian/Chinese American children’s literature”, “culturally relevant children’s literature”, and “reader response” in recent ten years (2012-2022). To locate classic empirical studies of reader response, I employed the same process without setting temporal borders so that empirical studies of reader response relevant to this dissertation would be selected for this literature review. After searching these data bases and searching related articles, I crafted an annotated bibliography for all articles and reports on seventeen studies, among which twelve are journal articles and six are dissertations.
This literature review is organized into two sections based on the results from my literature search. I present the literature review into two sections because most of the reader response studies I found were conducted with students of African American and Latinx descent. Few empirical reader response studies were conducted with Asian and Chinese American children. I divide the literature review into two sections to highlight the studies – like my dissertation – that are focused on Asian American students.

The first section presents reader responses studies with ethnically minoritized, mostly American and Latinx students. These studies illuminate how culturally relevant children’s literature (CRCL) improves minoritized students’ literacy development and academic achievement. The second section presents empirical studies that focus specifically on using Asian American/Chinese American children’s literature with elementary-aged children, including children of Chinese heritage.

**Reader Response Studies with Ethnic Minoritized Students**

In this section, I discuss scholarship that informs my understanding of how reading and discussing CRCL helps minoritized children develop their literary understanding through making connections with their lived experiences and engaging in critical conversations around race and racism and other issues facing ethnic groups in the book club setting. Most existing studies speak to the literacy development of African American and Latino/a children. I identified three major themes in the literature: 1) CRCL engages students in transactional and lived-through experiences; 2) CRCL validates ethnic minoritized students’ experiences and identities; 3) CRCL facilitates students’ critical conversations on social justice issues. These studies have contributed to
a body of literature that examines the literary responses of children from diverse racial backgrounds. Through these studies, CRCL is a powerful tool for engaging students in meaningful transactions with their worlds, as well as in critical conversations by connecting the books with larger cultural and racial discourse in the United States.

**CRCL Engages Students in Transactional and Lived-through Experiences**

Studies reviewed below (Bishop, 1983; Brooks, 2006; Brooks et al., 2008; Lohfink & Loya's, 2010; Rodríguez, 2014) explore the culturally relevant textual features and themes in CRCL and document how books engage students in transactions with their lived experiences. These studies examine children's responses to these textual features of CRCL and their literary understandings gained through transacting with CRCL. Through reading, discussing and reflecting on CRCL that echoes strongly with children’s cultural practice and personal experiences, ethnic diverse students’ experiences are shared and validated.

Four decades ago, Bishop (1983) conducted a landmark study to examine the responses of an elementary African American girl reading African American children's books. Through observation, Bishop noted that the girl preferred to read books that featured African American characters like herself and was interested in books related to her personal experiences and African American cultural experiences. The girl enjoyed the African American lyrical language in the books and gave favorable responses when she saw and read about people like herself. When she encountered books and plots in which Black characters were distorted by stereotyping, she displayed disagreement and advocated for her community and people through connections to her lived experiences as
an African American girl. Based on this study, Bishop claimed that young Black readers tended to pay more attention to books that contain African American cultural elements. Bishop found that CRCL facilitated the children's interest and engagement with stories. Since then, many studies have supported Bishop's argument, strengthening the call for students to explore their community, history, and heritage, and value where they come from and who they are.

Understanding how culture impacts a students’ engagement with stories enhances literacy education for culturally and linguistically diverse children. Brooks et al. (2008) conducted a culturally relevant reader response study with 17 African American students in an urban after-school book club. This study examined the literary responses of students to the culturally relevant text – *The Skin I’m In* (Flake, 1998). Their findings demonstrated that the students in the book club identified with the main character in complex and multilayered ways due to their unique experiences as African American girls and boys. This study (Brook et al., 2008) indicated that the shared racial experiences and cultural backgrounds of protagonists and readers empowered students to develop literary understanding through connections to their personal experiences. Extending the reader response research to other student populations, Lohfink and Loya's (2010) worked with Mexican American third graders to explore extent of their culturally mediated engagements with CRCL. The findings demonstrated that through engaging with culturally relevant picture books during collaborative book discussions, third-grade Mexican American students connected to textual cues and connected personally with Mexican food experience, immigrant experiences, and Spanish language. The study
(Lohfink & Loya, 2010) sheds light on the existing research involving reader-response, specifically for culturally and linguistically diverse children reading CRCL.

Rodríguez (2014) also worked with Latino/a children in a literacy group to explore their literary responses to culturally relevant children's picture books featuring Latinx heritage culture and experiences. Similar to Lohfink & Loya's (2010), Rodríguez's (2014) described culturally relevant textual themes as cultural practices, everyday practices, and school experiences. She noted that most children recognized and related to cultural practices and beliefs. Other engaging themes included birthday celebrations and interactions with grandparents. Rodríguez's (2014) maintained that Latino/a elementary participants related strongly to the CRCL books and identified with the characters, indicating how they were like the characters in the stories in regard to race and language. This study reaffirmed that CRCL offered cultural themes that engaged students in transactions with texts by making connections to children lived-through experiences.

Extending the notion that CRCL validates readers’ lived experiences by resonating with the children’s cultural practices and experiences, Brooks’ (2006) theorized that reader response should not only emphasize personal experiences but should also account for the social and political dimensions of readers, texts, and contexts. With the belief that meaning emerges “as students apply their backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge to the cultural practice of reading” (p. 378), Brooks (2006) maintained that African American history and the contemporary lives depicted in the CRCL invite children to associate with these books by drawing on their racial lives, cultural knowledge, and family traditions. Beyond the lived-through experiences relating to cultural elements, the multiplicity nature of the students' responses provides an in-depth
look at how experiences, personalities, and family narratives mediated through sociocultural contexts contributes to the constructions and understandings of story worlds. That is to say, in addition to the cultural backgrounds of readers, understandings of texts are influenced by social interactions, sociocultural conditions, and the contexts in which individuals engage with texts. Therefore, Brooks (2006) believed that students’ social and cultural practices should be explored prior to assessing the complexity of literacy interpretations. However, she maintained that it is never possible for any book to represent the myriad of African American people's lived experiences and cultural practices. She argued that more reader response studies were needed with African American students from families with different socioeconomic status.

These reader response studies conducted with ethnically diverse students affirm the positive effects of cultural text features and themes. Specifically, they suggest that these texts engage students in transactions with books that align with children’s lived experiences. Children from diverse backgrounds find their strengths for literary learning by using their cultural knowledge, personal experiences, and family traditions when CRCL. In addition to cultural backgrounds, various dimensions of children’s lives interact with and shape students’ responses to culturally relevant literature. These include macro sociocultural contexts, readers' values and attitudes about race, class, gender, and other identifiers, personal experiences, prior knowledge, and interpretive communities.

**CRCL Validates Ethnic Minoritized Students’ Experiences and Identities**

Reading, discussing and reflecting on CRCL enhances diverse students’ literary understandings by engaging them in transactions that resonate with their lived
experiences through the representation of cultural textual themes (Bishop, 1983; Brooks, 2006; Brooks et al., 2008; Lohfink & Loya's, 2010; Rodríguez, 2014). By responding to the themes presented in CRCL, diverse students’ heritage culture, experiences, and identities are shared and recognized. In this way, reading and discussing CRCL provides minoritized students with spaces to connect with books and transform their lives. In this section, I present the studies that explore how CRCL validates minoritized students’ experiences and identities.

With the growing number of Hispanic immigrants in the U.S., more studies are being conducted to explore Latino/a children's responses to CRCL that portrays contemporary and heritage Latinx lives and cultures. Martínez-Roldán's (2000) dissertation study centered on Latino/a students' literary responses. In her two-year book club study, she created a culturally relevant space for Latino/a children to engage in robust literature discussions on CRCL that supported students in making connections to Latinx experiences. Participants in her study were second graders in one English/ Spanish bilingual classroom. Martínez-Roldán invited these children to participate in a literature discussion circle where Latinx experiences were shared and validated through reading, discussing and reflecting on Mexican American children’s literature. Martínez-Roldán (2000) found that Mexican American children’s literary responses consisted of 36% personal responses which included the lived-through experiences and “connecting to life experience” (p. 470). Children engaged with the stories as they identified with characters or made connections between aspects of the stories and their own lives. In these cases, “students were entering into the world of the story” (p. 319) and seemed “to be living the experiences of the characters” (p. 320). Additionally, Martínez-Roldán's (2000) found
that Mexican American children made connections to their life experiences and used their real-life knowledge to understand and make meaning of the stories. Martínez-Roldán maintained that children’s lived-through experiences and "connecting to life experience" (p. 470) demonstrated in the discussions and comments from her participants greatly validated their Latinx experiences and identities, and ultimately transformed their lives as Mexican American people.

Focusing on African American male students, Wood and Jocius (2013) found that black male elementary students’ heritage culture, experiences, and identities were shared and validated through reading CRCL in which themselves, their families, their experiences, and cultural histories were reflected. Working with one African American elementary male student who “hated” to read “stupid books” in which only the majority students’ experiences were shared, Wood and Jocius (2013) argued that children’s literature without African American protagonists and culture deprived children of the right of to see themselves in literature and could result in low academic achievement and negative self-esteem. This study showed that “texts that feature protagonists from the same cultural backgrounds as students allow them to connect to texts in more meaningful and personal ways” (p. 665). In addition, Wood and Jocius (2013) encouraged critical conversations that could be initiated through reading and discussing CRCL, allowing students to “take positions and critique so that students shift from being mere receptors of textual information to collaborators with the text in an effort to make meaning” (Wood & Jocius, 2013, p. 667). Through reading and discussing the CRCL containing Black male protagonists, African American elementary students’ heritage culture, experiences, and
identities are shared and recognized. In this way, reading and discussing CRCL provides students with spaces to connect with the books and transform their lives.

**CRCL and Critical Conversations on Social Justice**

The following studies report on how reading and discussing culturally relevant children’s literature can engage students in critical conversations involving social justice issues including race, racism, oppression, and other issues facing minoritized groups. These studies demonstrate that providing children with CRCL that depicts their collective or individual racial experiences and historical narratives encourage children’s lived-through experiences and reflect their racialized experiences in the United States. Furthermore, these literacy transactions encouraged students to actively make connections with the real-world events in order to transform their realities (Brooks & Browne, 2012; Brooks et al., 2018; Browne, 2003; Martínez-Roldán, 2000; Osorio, 2016).

Martínez-Roldán’s (2000) dissertation reported on children's critical discussion of sensitive issues including racism and gender through literacy interactions with CRCL and reflection on their communities in the U.S. These books encouraged children to explore real-world situations and events that affected them and their families. In this study, Martinez-Roldán documented how CRCL books and related literary discussions created meaningful opportunities for minoritized students to value and validate their identities. These issues included discussions about racial discrimination, gender, the border-crossings, and families. Martinez-Roldán stated, “Small group literature discussions provide a safe environment where children and teachers take risks in reflecting on
complex issues that matter to them without the concerns of being evaluated or judged” (p. 447). Through discussing these concerning and sensitive issues, the second graders in the study shared their lived experiences as Latino/a in the United States classrooms.

Extending a focus of Martínez-Roldán (2000), involving social justice issues with elementary Latino/a students, Osorio (2016) examined not only how second grade Latino/a students responded to CRCL that featured border stories, but particularly explored how second graders responded to the societal discourse about “illegal immigrants.” In one-year qualitative study, Osorio (2016) found most of the second-graders resonated strongly with border stories that represent the narratives students shared about their families’ experiences crossing the U.S. – Mexico border. In addition, the border stories shared by the students challenged race neutrality and notions of equal opportunity which reflected the dominant ideologies in most American classrooms. Compared to white students, ethnic diverse students with varied socioeconomic status were faced with complicated classroom scenarios. Osoria (2016) reported:

The curriculum being used in the school made it seem that everyone had the experiences of a white child, that everything was wonderful and there was no struggle or fear in the world. This was not the reality of my students. My students knew the reality of their lives. They were individuals who spoke a language other than English, who many times were treated differently because of the language differences and their socioeconomic class and families’ undocumented status (Osorio, 2016, p. 102).
Osorio’s (2016) study provided Latino/a students with spaces to read and discuss CRCL and connect those books to their lived experiences and identities, which were shared and validated. Most importantly, students from Mexican immigrant families were able to use their experiences and family stories to challenge dominant narratives about immigrants.

In addition to using CRCL to address immigrant issues for diverse students, Brooks et al. (2018) focused specifically on students’ literary responses to race and racism through reading a culturally relevant contemporary and realistic story (Hush, Woodson, 2002) during an after-school book club. In this yearlong qualitative study, Brooks et al. (2018) examined how three African American elementary students responded to depictions of racism in the novel revealing how they understood and experienced racism in their own lives. Through reading and sharing the novel, Brooks et al. (2018) found that students came to understand racism as a long-lasting and ongoing tension in contemporary society, especially for African American people. Their understandings of racism were highly influenced by racialized talk and stories told by family members as part of their everyday lives. In addition, although students and people around them did not directly experience unjust violence from white police officers, they related to the story and expressed their feelings of being less safe and protected since they and the protagonists shared the same skin color. Finally, by talking about these issues students gave voice to their ability to endure and thrive despite “profound trauma” caused by racism. This study (Brooks et al., 2018) highlighted “enduring trauma” as a constant reality for the African American elementary students who faced with complex situations involving racism, low socioeconomic status, and underserved schools. From this study, we can see the possibility of culturally relevant children’s literature in addressing issues
related to racism and trauma with ethnic diverse elementary students. Most importantly, this study demonstrated how students transformed their lives by discussing race and racism heard on the media and in their own communities, and to share their thoughts, fears, and hopes.

Browne's (2003) dissertation featured African American elementary children responding to culturally relevant historical fiction in a book club. Browne explored how urban African American elementary children respond to the ethnoracial and heritage culture depicted in the culturally relevant historical fiction which contained unspoken histories of African American people. Browne examined how African American children disrupted dominant historical narratives and (re)constructed their literary understandings through dramatic responses. Browne found that African American students showed intense cultural connections with African American cultural knowledge, history, heritage, and values in terms of the following themes: “kinship, the culture of oppression/slavery – struggle as a way of life, faith in God, and families and their loyalties and obligations to each other” (p. 75). When reading historical CRCL, students demonstrated the ability to closely examine their relationships to texts. Browne described students taking a “homeplace” stance which suggested a shared experience based on the realities of history when reading the texts with cultural evocations.

Student responses indicated that exposure to authentic narratives that are not directly linked to the current socioeconomic context also provides children with a meaningful opportunity to engage with their own culture. The specific themes derived from the novels enabled the children to make connections with their experiences, with others, and with racialized histories of slavery, segregation, and their impacts on
contemporary society. This study recognizes the significance of CRCL that validates the history and ethnicity of children. Although Browne's focus is on African American students, the findings of this study can be expanded to CRCL into any literary classroom and applied to other racial and cultural groups. Thus, students from diverse cultural backgrounds must attend to their unique cultural practices and experiences, access to the literary texts that connect with their real-life knowledge (Probst, 1990).

In 2012, Browne and Brooks explored how six elementary African American children respond to a CRCL text depicting their heritage culture and history. Their findings suggested that children's literary responses involved a "spiraling and overlapping process" (p. 83) as the children assumed four response positions: racial group, community, family, and peer group/friendship group (Brooks & Browne, 2012). This process provided lived-through experiences, which Rosenblatt (1985) described as an ongoing and organic process that provided opportunities for African American children to draw upon their real-life experience. The study demonstrates that CRCL with strong themes around race and culture could serve as a tool to disrupt dominant historical narratives.

The aforementioned studies (Brooks & Browne, 2012; Brooks et al., 2018; Browne, 2003; Martínez-Roldán, 2000; Osorio, 2016) investigated the potential of culturally relevant children's literature (CRCL) to facilitate critical conversations about social justice issues, including racism, oppression, and other forms of marginalization experienced by minoritized groups. The findings suggest that CRCL portrays the racial experiences of contemporary and historical relevance of minoritized groups can validate and reflect students lived experiences in the United States, thus empowering them to
transform their realities. The literacy transactions resulting from CRCL discussions enable students to connect the stories to real-world events and promote transformative learning.

**Reader Response Studies with Asian American Students**

Reader response studies with Asian American students provide insight into how teachers and researchers incorporated CRCL and critical conversations in their literary groups with Asian American students (Chen, 2019; Kim, 2019; Son, E. 2009; Son, Y. 2020). This section highlights three themes: 1) Strong connections to cultural knowledge and cultural experiences; 2) Collective and dynamic identities demonstrated through literary responses; and 3) Critical awareness and conversations on social inequity and injustice.

**Strong Connections to Cultural Knowledge and Experiences**

Resonating with the findings from the aforementioned studies with African American and Latinx students, research demonstrates that Asian American students also make strong connections to their cultural knowledge, practices and experiences when reading, discussing and sharing CRCL (Kim, 2019; Son, 2009). Kim (2019) discussed four elementary immigrant students employing different reading strategies while reading culturally relevant picture books and culturally distant texts. The four elementary children were ages 7-9 and of Japanese, Korean, Mexican, and Swedish descent. Findings revealed that Asian immigrant children drew on knowledge about their own countries and cultures and the larger world context to make meaning. As members of immigrant families, children paid particular attention to culturally relevant content, such as “arriving
in the United States and adjusting to a new language and culture” (p. 76). Engaging in culturally relevant literature also contains real-life images, familiar plots and events, and connections with real-life (Ebe, 2011), which enable students to make connections to self and develop impressive insights by connecting to their lived-through experiences (Rosenblatt, 1978). Kim’s (2019) study demonstrated that students make strong connections to their cultural knowledge and cultural experiences as they make sense of the text.

Son's (2009) dissertation study examined how Korean transnational children make meaning of culturally relevant picture books. In this study, Son explored how the children responded to picture books about Korean people and culture and how they drew on their cultural backgrounds to construct literary responses. The participants included eight 2nd – 6th grade children. Drawing on Sipe's (2000) five perspectives of literacy understanding (e.g., textual, experiential, social, psychological, and cultural perspectives) and cultural aspects of reader response theory identified by Bleich (1988) and Lewis (2000). Son (2009) showed that children engaged in literary acts such as recognizing, connecting, inquiring and evaluating cultural signifiers in the picture books and responded in analytical, intertextual, personal, transparent and performative ways to these texts. The study extended Sipe's (2000) reader response theory to focus on how heritage culture affected children’s literature understanding. Furthermore, the findings showed that culturally relevant picture books facilitated children’s literary understanding. Participants responded positively to children’s literature that represented their cultures.

To be continued, Son’s study (2009) focused on how the cultural backgrounds of participants support their literary understanding. She noted that Korean cultural themes
and elements were recognized and shared by participants. However, Son (2009) did not describe the specific procedures she used to enact culturally relevant group discussions. Thus, it is hard to know how the culturally relevant picture books were used and how the critical conversations were generated. While Son (2009) used time in the United States as a proxy to identify two groups of Korean students based on the duration of time the participants had lived in the U.S. to predict whether they had become accustomed to the social and cultural norms of the United States. However, it is hard to draw a clear line between these two groups because adaption processes are dynamic and unpredictable. Every immigrant has a unique experience related to their family and community. Capturing individual narratives that recognize immigrant experiences, family traditions, and unique lived experiences is of upmost importance as researchers focus on children's myriad of literary responses.

**Identity Development Through Literary Responses**

Studies (Kim, 2010; Leung, 2002) have also demonstrated how students’ collective cultural and national identities (e.g., as Chinese Americans or Korean Americans), and their hybrid identities which were shaped by each student’s cultural knowledge, experiences, and perceptions. Leung (2002) argued against making generalizations about readers from the same racial, cultural, or linguistic group. In this study, Leung complicated relationships between background and reader response. He examined the literary responses of four girls – three Chinese American girls of Cantonese descent and one white Jewish American girl to *Homesick* (Fritz, 1982), a book about an American girl’s life in China, Leung (2002) concluded that the three Chinese American girls had different responses to the book depending on their different stages of cultural
and identity development and their knowledge of Chinese culture. In addition, the
different personality traits of these Chinese American girls were reflected in their
different literary responses. Leung argued for recognizing diversity among readers from
the same cultural group and claimed that more research should be done to examine the
literary responses of different subgroups and communities.

Similarly, exploring literary responses of Korean American students, Kim (2010)
revealed that Korean American students created hybrid and dynamic identities influenced
by intersections of gender, religion, age, social and educational experiences. Kim (2010)
examined how six Korean American students in a literary discussion group respond to
CRCL that mirrored their lives in the U.S. Specifically, the study explored how Korean
children reconstructed their cultural identities and coped with their real-life experiences,
based on their discussions of CRCL. Recurring themes raised in these conversations
addressed “pressure to succeed/ academic achievement, knowledge about heritage, racial
identity, racial stereotypes/prejudice /discrimination, language barriers, dating
relationships, immigrant hardships, and cultural differences” (p. 223). Kim (2010) found
that exposure to CRCL invoked Korean American students’ reflections on their collective
identities as in Korean American people and enhanced their understanding of Korean
American struggles, which ultimately contributed to personal transformations.

Kim (2010) showed that elementary-aged students could recognize the textual
features and themes embedded in CRCL and were able to draw on their heritage culture,
family traditions and cultural experience to understand the struggles and hardship of their
people in the United States. These students were capable of actively engaging in critical
conversations on these topics including racial discrimination and prejudice, family
relationships, valuing education, identity struggles, and immigrant hardships. Notably, Kim (2010) recognized two kinds of lived experiences of that Korean American students that were shared through their literary responses. One set of experiences reflected Korean American students' shared commonalities as members of the Korean American community. Another reflected the individual viewpoints that defined their Korean American lives and hybrid identities which shaped their unique cultural knowledge, experiences, and perceptions. These connections between collective identities related to race and culture and hybrid identities shaped by individual experiences extend Leung’s (2002) study which advocated the diverse literary responses among readers from the same cultural group.

**Critical Awareness and Conversations on Social Inequity and Injustice**

In light of the current dire tensions surrounding anti-Asian racism in face of COVID-19 pandemic, critical conversations with students of Asian descent have become particularly crucial. Boutte and Miller (2018) emphasized that, “one way of helping children to name oppressions and to frontload vocabulary about discrimination is through using children’s literature” (p. 4). Recent scholars (Crawley, 2020; Darvin, 2017) have reiterated these claims, identifying classroom teachers as capable of facilitating critical conversations around race and racism by using children’s literature. Thus, I focus below on studies that report on how reading and discussion of children’s literature facilitates critical conversations around anti-Asian racism. Building on the findings of aforementioned studies, scholars found that Asian American students also showed their concerns about social injustice and inequities faced by minoritized children.
Son (2020) demonstrated that Korean immigrant students engaged in critical conversations related to their immigrant experiences, current marginalized status, and social inequalities and injustice in the United States through reading CRCL in a multicultural book club. In addition to the critical conversations, Son (2020) observed that three students of Korean descent provided each other with suggestions and support, and eventually worked together to overcome the stigma associated with marginalized identities. In short, while elementary Korean immigrant students faced “numerous challenges, struggles, and triumphs as immigrants”, critical conversations helped them to cope with these challenges and struggles.

As the only Chinese American reader response study I found, Chen (2019) focuses on Chinese American children in literacy education research and identifies spaces for educators and classroom teachers to further investigate Chinese American children’s schooling and educational experiences. Chen (2019) explored Chinese American students’ literary responses and how they used their cultural knowledge and experiences in book discussions to negotiate their identities. Her participants were seven Chinese American students born in the United States with distinct family backgrounds. Based on their literary responses, Chen (2019) showed that students displayed disagreement with books that implied social stigma related to Asian model minority stereotypes and spoke up for their Chinese American community by drawing on their lived experiences as students. The findings also showed that using CRCL with Chinese American students enhanced their critical thinking about the contexts in which they were situated.

Chen (2019) demonstrated that the different literary responses of Chinese American readers were based on their unique cultural experiences. However, a limited
timeframe would pose drawbacks to the study's validity. Methodologically, Chen (2019) offered a six-week series of meetings which included the researcher becoming familiar with the participants, and a second stage that involved tracking students' identity negotiations through students’ literary responses and discussions. Literacy circle meetings spanning six-weeks may not provide enough time to observe reconstructive processes. In addition, Chen (2019) did not provide the detailed process of selecting authentic literature for her participants, which would decrease the credibility of the study’s findings.

Both studies (Chen, 2019; Son, 2020) demonstrated that reading and discussion of CRCL can promote critical conversations among Asian American students regarding social injustice and inequities faced by minoritized children. By engaging in discussions of critical issues surrounding immigration, racial experiences, and current events, Asian American students in the aforementioned studies developed their own counternarratives to overcome their marginalized and stigmatized identities.

Conclusion

This literature review presents recent scholarship on reader response studies conducted with ethnically minoritized students from 2012 to 2022, as well as classic studies beyond the ten-year parameter. The literature review is divided into two sections and highlights empirical studies conducted with Asian American and Chinese American students. From this literature review, it is worth noting that reading and discussing culturally relevant children’s literature engage students in transaction and living-through experiences, validates ethnic minoritized students’ experiences, recognizes their
collective and diverse racial and cultural identities, and facilitates students’ critical conversations on social justice issues.
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Situated within a critical theory paradigm, this dissertation employed a single-site, collective case study to recenter Chinese American students’ racial experiences through reading and discussing culturally relevant literature and relevant multimodal texts. The purpose of this study was to explore how second-generation Chinese American students engage with culturally relevant children’s literature (CRCL) and relevant multimodal texts, including contemporary and historical narratives that depict the lived experiences and historical accounts of Chinese immigrants. Furthermore, this study examined how students engage in critical conversations around race, anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the unique racialization of Chinese immigrants and their descendants in the United States within a community-based book club.

The participants are four second-generation Chinese American students aged from eight to twelve. Studying how young Chinese American learners make meaning of xenophobia, discrimination, and racism, which historically and continuously impacted Asian Americans, can inform understandings of race learning fostered by children’s literature and broaden existing research on East Asian immigrant students. I took a critical lens to address the broad research question of how educators, researchers, and policymakers understand and meet the individual equity and justice-oriented educational needs of racially diverse students in the post-pandemic social contexts. Studies exploring
students’ negotiating issues around social justice and race are plentiful; however, only a few involved students of Asian descent. My dissertation research engaged young learners of Chinese descent in critical and social justice conversations around culture, race, and power through reading and sharing literature and relevant multimodal texts.

This qualitative case study is framed by a critical research paradigm, as second-generation Chinese American students disrupted and interrogated the racialized dominant discourse over Asian communities in the United States and created their counternarratives by drawing on their racial experiences and identities. In this chapter, I describe the following aspects related to the research design and method: 1) research design and methods, 2) research contexts, 3) research participants, 4) data collection and analysis, 5) researcher positionality, and 6) limitations of the study.

**Research Design and Methods**

This dissertation study employed a qualitative case study research methodology which is defined by Merriam (1998) as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon” (p. xiii). The primary goal of case study research is to conduct a thorough and comprehensive analysis of a particular issue, considering its context and other relevant factors, with the aim of gaining an understanding of the issue from the researcher’s perspective (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995, 2005). This research design was a single-site case study where all four participant students involved were bound by the same community-based book club. Analysis was conducted for each book club meeting first, and across all book club meetings, conclusions were drawn for each one as well as across all three. Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995) held that knowledge and reality are
constructed through our experiences, and that research is a valuable means of producing knowledge about the world. This dissertation study employed an etic, single-site, collective case study research methodology as this affords an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon from the perspective of multiple participants (Stake, 1995). The case study design mainly relies on the model developed by Stake (1995, 2005), who allows understanding a case from multiple perspectives and emphasizes the subjectivity and influence of researchers in case study research.

Stake’s (1995) work has been particularly influential in defining the case study approach in education research. Stake (1995) characterized three main types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. The collective case study involves studying multiple cases simultaneously or sequentially to generate a broader appreciation of a particular issue. Following Stake's classification of case study, my study can be named a single-site, collective case study. A collective case study enables me to explore several cases other than a single case and allows in-depth case analysis within and across cases (Stake, 1995). My study features four Chinese American students and aims to interpret their literary responses by taking each participant’s diverse cultural experiences and realities into account. Although those participants share a membership in the local Chinese American community, they come from different families and bring unique cultural experiences, community lives, and schooling experiences. In addition, they keep various bonds with their extended families in China, which influences their awareness of Chinese culture. It is necessary to examine each Chinese American child's sociocultural background and diverse cultural experience, which would impact their literary responses.
The collective case study methodology enables me to understand the similarities and differences across settings fully.

As Stake (1995) claimed, understanding the individual case and the context in which the case is situated is crucial to understanding the phenomenon. For this study, my goal is to understand second-generation Chinese American students’ socially and culturally constructed literary responses through analyzing multiple data sources, including book club meetings transcriptions, students’ and parents’ semistructured interviews transcriptions with, field notes, students' reading reflection, and artifacts. I will apply the case study methodology to focus on multiple cases and to examine them in depth through triangulation of various forms of data through carefully observing the subjects in the field, making thorough teaching and field notes, examining their meaning, and redirecting observation to substantiate those interpretations (Stake, 1995).

Including specific propositions would allow the researcher to place limits on the scope of the study and increase the feasibility of completing the project (Atkinson, 2002; Baxter & Jack, 2008). My study builds on the following propositions: (1) reading literature is a lived-through experience which is "shaped by the reader under the guidance of the text" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 12); (2) Chinese American students negotiate meanings in response to CRCL through associating with their unique cultural, family, and community experience; and (3) Chinese American students disrupt dominant Chinese American narratives and recognize racism is an ongoing construction in the United States. In addition, Stake (1995) suggested that placing boundaries on a case can prevent researchers from answering a question that is too broad or a topic with too many objectives for one study. Suggestions on how to bind a case include: (a) by time and
place (Creswell, 1998); (b) time and activity (Stake); and (c) by definition and context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Since responding to books is a socially and culturally constructed activity (Beach & Freedman, 1992; Enciso, 1997; Galda & Beach, 2001), the Chinese American students' literary responses are bound by their cultural experience, family traditions, community, and other unique experiences as a minoritized group in the United States. All participants are also bound by a particular space – a local community-based book club and within a specific timeframe.

**Research Contexts**

This dissertation study was conducted in a community-based book club which was set up within a local Chinese Heritage Language School since 2019. In the following section, I introduce the larger context of the study – the southern state and its segregation legacy, and the Chinese Heritage Language School and the Bubble-Up Book Club. The book club is affiliated with a local Chinese Heritage Language School located in a southern city in the United States. The city’s population was estimated to be 137,541 as of 2021, among which 53% of the population are Whites, 40% African Americans, 2.7% Asian Americans, and 5.5% Latinos (Census Bureau, 2020). It is the capital and second-largest city in the state and home to more than ten universities and colleges. Considering the unique racialized history of minoritized populations in the southern United States, it is important to note the historical and social context of the state. In Guerrero’s (2017) recent work – *Nuevo South: Latinas/os, Asians, and the Remaking of Place*, she argues that scholars should understand the “legacies of southern history in terms of dealing with racial difference and economic development” (p. 9). As one of the several states that owned large populations of slaves dating back to 1860 (Rothman, 2007), slavery and the
exploitation of labor of migrants is one of the key social and economic institutions in the region (Rodriguez, 2020). After the civil war, Chinese contract labor (also called as “coolies”) replaced most of the African American slaves on southern cotton plantations as a new labor supply beginning in 1865 (Lee, 2015; Loewen, 1988).

Positioned physically and societally at the similar level as African American slaves, Chinese laborers were viewed by Whites as essentially “Black” and were excluded from attending white schools, neighborhood organizations, and social life (Loewen, 1988). This unique legacy of segregation and the paradoxical relations with Chinese immigrants inform the local ideologies toward Chinese and other Asian immigrants. In the eyes of the youth participating in this study, this segregation legacy strongly impacted their families’ ways of being in the southern city including their involvement in schools, engagement in local communities, the ways they practice heritage culture, perspectives of education, all these were highly influenced by the racial realities they face in this Southern state. The legacy of this racialized history continues to be apparent in the ways the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the lives of Asian Americans in the United States. Therefore, the racialized historical and contemporary context of the southern state is considered as one aspect which would highly influence students’ literary responses in this study.

**Chinese Heritage Language School**

From my continuous and thorough conversations with the heritage school principal and other seniors within the Columbia local Chinese community, I gradually formed a picture of the history of this heritage language school. Almost two decades ago,
several professors of Chinese descent working in a local sizeable research-intensive university established the Chinese heritage language school to provide Mandarin Chinese language tutoring to mainly university professors' children in the southern city. Twenty years later, with more Chinese immigrants arriving in this city and their increasingly urgent need to maintain their children’s heritage language, the language school started to serve more than 250 local Chinese American families and provides Chinese language classes from PreK to K12. The students in the school are from Chinese immigrant families (including first and second-generation Chinese Americans) and local families with diverse racial backgrounds. The Chinese heritage language school is located on the fifth floor of the Humanity Building at the local university. Every Sunday afternoon in academic semesters, students and their parents would gather in the language school.

It is important to note that the language school provided a heritage cultural space for these families of Chinese descent to communicate in Chinese, exchange information and interact with each other concerning their educational, cultural and racial experiences in the southern city. Furthermore, The Chinese language school comprises a diverse community of Chinese immigrant families and teachers from various provinces, each with distinct socioeconomic backgrounds, ages, cultural identities, and traditions. Thus, the school offers a rich and immersive cultural experience for its members, providing authentic and multifaceted presentations of Chinese culture that are vivid and engaging. For each academic year, the school held traditional Chinese events, including the New Year gala (students and teachers demonstrate art-based performances in front of the whole community), Spring sports (e.g., push-pull games) to engage the local Chinese
American community. It can be asserted that the local Chinese heritage language school served as a Chinese American ethnic enclave for residents of Chinese descent.

Since 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the school enrollment rate has dropped. All language classes have transitioned to an online delivery format, which posed difficulty for the principal to keep track of the students’ demographics. Thus, I provided the demographic information of this Chinese Heritage School before the pandemic in 2019. In total, the language school served nearly 80 students in 2019 (before the pandemic), among which 68 were students of Chinese descent, seven White students, four African American students, and one student of Latinx descent.

**Bubble-Up Book Club**

In January 2019, I established the *Bubble-Up Book Club* and welcomed my first cohort of six students who are all second-generation Chinese American students with China-born parents. Since then, I have facilitated weekly literary discussions with my students for nearly four years. As the lead facilitator of the book club, my initial goal was to provide local Chinese American children with culturally authentic stories which are highly relevant to their lives in the United States. Considering schools and families often fall short in providing an authentic narrative of Chinese Americans in the historical and contemporary context (Lewis, 2003), the *Bubble-Up Book Club* provided Columbia local Chinese American students (all students in the book club were studying at the local heritage language school since 2019) with a welcoming and judge-free space where they can read and discuss authentic Chinese American stories and cultivate their understanding of race and racism associating with their lived experiences and their
minority world. In this case, *Bubble-Up Book Club* serves as a transformative and transcendining space for Chinese American students to keep up with their day-to-day bicultural and racial realities. The lead facilitator and students in the book club all have Chinese descent and had read with three of the participant students for nearly three years before the last year’s dissertation data collection.

Notably, all of my participating students are of Chinese descent, with similar cultural backgrounds and racial experiences in and out of school; they naturally formed an affinity group⁶ (Gee, 2005, 2007) in which they share their voices, experiences, and confusions without constraints and concerns. I was sensitive to the responses from my students and their interactions, and I tried to avoid any negative messages from students to students. I value and appreciate any thoughts and ideas from my students. In this way, I built up a judge-free zone for my students and allowed for more possibilities to unpack critical issues around social justice for Chinese and Asian groups in the United States.

Establishing the *Bubble-Up Book Club* emerged from my Chinese language teaching experience and profound interactions with students and their parents inside the language school. In the summer of 2018, I started volunteering as a Mandarin Chinese language teacher for the fifth-grade class at this heritage school. During my teaching and weekly interactions with students, I recognized that the Chinese language textbooks (Hanyu, 2007, Jinan University), which have long been used as the major teaching and

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⁶ The term “affinity space” refers to loosely structured social and cultural environments in which the task of teaching and learning is often shared among numerous individuals, dispersed across various locations, and united by a common interest or passion (Gee, 2007).
learning resource in the language school, contain mostly distant and far away Chinese culture which could not be applied in the daily lives of second-generation Chinese Americans and would possibly pass down the idea that the culture of mainland China is still old and outdated. Furthermore, these textbooks lack primary content to support students in developing their understanding of their Chinese American culture, which is neither purely American nor Chinese but Chinese American, which brings a particular set of lived realities for the children who are now living in the United States.

Significantly, through my ongoing conversations with the parents, I found that these students and families had inadequate access to Chinese American children’s literature locally and virtually. From interviews with these parents conducted as a research project for one of my courses, I recognized that one reason for the lack of culturally relevant texts was the limited number of relevant children’s literature in local libraries. Another reason was that even if the parents could afford to purchase children's books, they often did not have enough literacy knowledge to select culturally authentic books for their children. Therefore, I set up the book club to provide authentic culturally relevant children's literature and a space for Chinese American children to read and discuss these books. In addition, the book club stemmed from the hope that schools could act as forces for equity and justice and move on “from an understanding that they often fall short” (Lewis, 2003, p. 11).

I named my book club as Bubble-Up Book Club\textsuperscript{7} to recognize the intimate relationships that children have with Asian American youth culture. Bubble in the name

\textsuperscript{7} The name – Bubble-Up & Book Club was inspired by an online Asian American book club and podcast whose name is Books and Boba which is dedicated to spotlighting
represents a popular drink in China – Bubble Tea (also called Boba Tea). In the United States, “Bubble Tea” has become a token of Asian American youth culture, like rice and dumplings (Zhang, 2019). According to Miranda Brown (2019), “the story of Bubble Tea is one of disparate parts coming together, a collision of cultural products and practices in one drink”. For many Asian American youths, the “Bubble Tea Shop” has become a “third space”8 (Bhabha, 1990), which allows them to cling to their Asian identities and intimate space to transcend dominant American culture and stay “Asian” (Zhang, 2019). Therefore, I name my book club Bubble-Up Book Club to appreciate the fusion of two cultures; I hope my book club becomes a third space in both the literal and figurative sense for local Chinese American students.

**Book Club Routine**

The Book club meetings were held in a classroom at a local University. The classroom is equipped with a desktop PC and projector to support multimodal learning. Each week, I shared one picture book and relevant online multimodal resources, including texts, pictures and videos of one topic about Chinese culture or Chinese American stories. These picture books were shared through interactive read-aloud sessions in English. During the read-aloud sessions, I mainly used English since all culturally relevant picture books are written in English. I read them in English in order

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books written by authors of Asian descent. You can find more information about the podcast through the following link: [https://booksandboba.com/](https://booksandboba.com/)

8 Third space refers to the interstices between colliding cultures, a liminal space “which gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation.” In this “in-between” space, new cultural identities are formed, reformed, and constantly in a state of becoming (Bhabha, 1990, p. 211).
not to reproduce any distortions or misunderstandings for any possible false translations. For other activities during the book club meetings, including picture walks, questioning, and students’ reflection sharing, both languages (Mandarin Chinese and English) were used to facilitate students’ literary responses. In addition, students in the book club are all second-generation Chinese American students who are natural bilinguals. They were encouraged to express themselves freely in both languages.

During the interactive read-aloud, I modeled how I construct meanings from texts and encouraged my students to raise questions, discussed plots and characters, connected to their lived experience and current social events, and finally helped them to (re)construct their understandings on their own lives. After modeling, I had children answer questions relevant to the stories and their day-to-day lives verbally or through writing or drawings. Next, we discuss the specific events in the stories to share our thoughts and reflections. I prepared post-reading questions to prompt students’ thoughts, including “what is the most memorable part of the book for you and why? do you have a similar experience as the character? what will you do if you are the character and why?

Since March 2020, the weekly book club meetings had been moved to online format through Zoom – a video conferencing platform due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The virtual classes lasted for two years until May 2022 since the guardians of the students preferred to attend the book club remotely. Students read electronic versions of picture books during the virtual classes and shared their literary responses verbally and in multimodal format on the Padlet. Padlet is an educational virtual bulletin board that provides a real-time collaborative web platform where users can upload, organize, and share content. It is an interactive platform for students to upload and edit their responses
and view and comment on others. All my students had free access to the Padlet to post their writings, photos, drawings, and leave comments to each other.

During the study period from December 2021 to March 2022, I facilitated ten book club meetings, each lasting approximately 1.5 hours. These sessions encompassed interactive read-aloud activities, oral discussions about the books, and writing reflection sessions. For each book club meeting, I read and discuss one picture book and relevant texts with participants. For each book club meeting, students write reflections (e.g., thoughts on the story, connecting to personal experiences, or answering my questions) before leaving the class. Sample lesson plans discussing a historical fiction picture book – *Coolies* (Yin, 2003) and a contemporary Chinese American picture book – *I Hate English* (Levine, 1995) are provided in Appendix E.

**Research Participants**

All participants were selected through a purposive sampling process by employing a “criterion-based selection” (Preissle & LeCompte, 1993, p. 65). As Merriam (1988) maintained that “purposive sampling is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore, one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most” (p. 48). Purposive sampling occurs “before the data are gathered” (p. 51). In this study, the use of purposive sampling was appropriate given my long-term interactions with students in the book club and the Chinese heritage language school, which provided me with the knowledge to identify and select participants who could offer unique and varied insights on this research. Furthermore, the purposeful sampling criteria enabled me to use my prior knowledge and insights gained from my past book
club meetings with second-generation Chinese immigrant students and families who had diverse literacy experiences and unique cultural backgrounds (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998).

The criteria I adopted to select the participants are as follows: 1) American-born children of Chinese-born first-generation parents; 2) have attended the book club for at least one semester before the study; 3) over eight years old. It is important to note that these criteria have not been applicable for group membership in the first three year of the book club. The first criterion I established is that the participants should be American-born children of Chinese-born first-generation parents. I purposely selected this group of students as my research participants because of their unique cultural, ethnic, and racial experiences compared to their first-generation immigrant parents. This is also why I named them second-generation Chinese American students\(^9\) in this study. Distinct from their first-generation Chinese immigrant parents, second-generation Chinese American children are often enculturated within two cultural frameworks simultaneously (Stroink & Lalonde, 2009). These children, including those with partial Asian ancestry, encounter American values and ideals through peers, teachers, and media, and the values and ideals of the heritage culture through parents and other immigrant community members. Therefore, unlike their first-generation parents, second-generation Chinese American children experience unique challenges of identity development and navigate between different cultural “worlds” of home and school (Choi et al., 2016; Padilla, 2008; Vyas, 2002).

\(^9\) In the United States, second-generation refers to the American-born children of foreign-born parents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).
The second criterion is that the students should have at least one academic semester participation and attendance in the book club, considering the book club was established in 2019 and has had regular literary discussion meetings since then. That is to say, the students who joined my book club after the 2022 spring semester would not be considered as possible participants. Participants who have joined the book club for at least one semester would have a basic understanding of the book club meeting routines. In addition, they would develop familiarity with other students and have a sense of belonging in the book club. In this way, it was more possible for participants to comfortably discuss sensitive social justice issues and share their racial lives with each other.

In addition, since I was particularly interested in examining the literary responses of mid-grade elementary students through oral and written format, selecting the students at or beyond eight-year-old was considered as the third criterion. According to the English Language Arts standards by grade level developed by the South Carolina State Department of Education (2021), students from third grade to higher grades are expected to develop their literacy ability to a greater extent to transact with texts from multiple perspectives, construct knowledge through exploration, collaboration, and analysis, and reflect through inquiry individually and collectively. Therefore, during the last year book club meetings toward my dissertation data collection, all my participants were at or beyond eight-year-old in order to elicit more literary responses for this study.

The criteria developed by purposive sampling (second-generation Chinese American students with both parents born in mainland China, at least one academic semester attendance in the book club, at or beyond eight-year-old) led me to identify four
Chinese American students as my participants. The four students were from the local Chinese heritage school, and most knew each other before joining the book club. The following table (Table 4.1) is a short description of each participant for this study.

Prior to my dissertation, I had three-year interactions with the students and their families in the local Chinese heritage school while I served as a Mandarin Chinese language and literacy teacher, instructing kindergarten, fifth grade, and sixth-grade students for three years each. I got to know and have developed a rapport relationship with these immigrant families and gained insights into the challenges they faced while navigating the American sociocultural landscape. All parents in my book club are non-native speakers. Some of them have limited access to the dominant local communities for their English proficiency, as well as faced with difficulties in supporting their children in learning English.

Chinese American Culturally Relevant Children’s Literature (CRCL)

The children’s literature selected for this critical reader response study are eight culturally relevant and authentic Chinese American picture books which depict historical and contemporary realistic cultural and racial experiences of Chinese Americans in the United States. In the following section, I detail my definition of Chinese American culturally relevant picture books, the process of selecting CRCL in this study, and the themes and brief introduction of each picture book.
Book Selection

The Chinese American children’s picture books used in this study were selected from the process when the author reviewed picture books for a master list of Chinese culture-related picture books created through a children’s literature project led by Dr. Yang Wang. In this dissertation study, based on the criteria above for selecting culturally authentic Asian American children’s literature, I selected Chinese American culturally relevant and authentic children’s literature following the criteria:

1. Set in the United States.
2. Focus on historical episodes and contemporary realistic experiences of Chinese Americans in their family, community, and the larger context of the minoritized world.
3. Avoid stories set solely in ancient China regarding the large number of folktales that already existed.
4. Depict the diverse cultural identities and practices within the Chinese American group.
5. Illustrate the distinct cultural and racial experiences of different generations of Chinese immigrants.
6. Authentically illustrate the struggles and tensions experienced by Chinese Americans while growing up in the United States (Wang et al., 2022).

Especially, I ensured all selected picture books reflect Chinese Americans’ lives from their earliest arrival until their current lived experiences in the United States. Only by reading and knowing these immigrant stories past and now could students develop their
understanding of their nuanced minoritized world and their positions in the United States. Thus, in this study, I named all fiction stories depicting Chinese American experiences and lived experiences as culturally relevant children’s literature. In addition to the aforementioned criteria, I also selected the stories which (1) are compelling to my students, (2) allow my students to see aspects of their lives reflected positively, (3) allow my students to see their historical counterparts’ lives in the United States, and (4) I felt my students could connect with.

Based on these criteria, I selected eight culturally relevant Chinese American picture books (see Table 4.2). According to the textual features, including recurring cultural themes and cultural practices (Brooks & Brown, 2012) depicted in these picture books, I summarized and reorganized the themes of the picture books as follows: 1) transnational experiences, 2) tensions of navigating distinctive cultural norms, 3) struggles of friend-making in the school setting, 4) encountering language barriers (the prior themes were from Wang, Guo, and Sui’s study (2022)), 5) historical narratives on racialized minority discourse, 6) racialized discourse on COVID-19 pandemic. All selected picture books demonstrate an appreciation of heritage culture in the contextualized local setting. In total, eight picture books, relevant multimodal and multimedia resources were selected to read and discuss with my student participants. Notably, regarding the Asian American historical fiction picture books often fall short in providing the historical background knowledge and naming the racism (Rodriguez & Kim, 2018), I provided students with extended readings. Notably, in order to address the sweeping challenges of Asian communities posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, I adopted
the same criteria and employed online multimodal texts about the pandemic with my students.

Picture books were purchased through an internal grant funded by the SPARC Graduate Research Grant, Vice President Research Office, University of South Carolina. Before starting the book club meetings for this dissertation data collection, I brought each family a set of the selected picture books so that students could read the books both physically and virtually. The content of used picture books, relevant extended readings, and multimodal resources for this study are included in Appendix D.

**Data Collection**

The data collection timeframe was between December 2021 and May 2022. In this study, I collected data from multiple sources, including (1) ten book club meetings recorded discussions and transcriptions; (2) eight semistructured interviews in total with student participants (one interview with each participant conducted at the December and another one at the end of April); (3) researcher’s field notes; (4) students’ written responses including answers to questions and reading reflections during the book club meetings; (5) students’ artifacts including drawings, self-portrait, and photographs. The following part describes the data collected during the study in detail.

**Literary Meeting Recordings**

Ten weekly book club meetings were recorded and collected. The entire book club meeting, including the read-aloud session and discussions, both sessions were recorded through the built-in recorder of Zoom. After each book club meeting, the researcher reviewed the meeting recording, and pruned and transcribed the literary
discussion parts verbatim. The transcripts of the ten literature discussions were the primary data source in this study. The recordings of book club meetings were stored in the researcher's portable storage hard drive with a security code.

**Field Notes from Book Club Meetings**

As Merriam (1988) described, field notes “gives a firsthand account of the situation under study” (p. 192) and when combined with other methods, they “allow[s] for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated” (p. 102). I was a practitioner and participant observer as I participated, organized, and facilitated the book club meetings and discussions. In addition, I was an observer participant as I had observed my classroom and interactions with the students and parents for so long. I could not take notes during the literature discussions since I was the lead facilitator. Therefore, the field notes were taken after the discussions immediately. The field notes were taken mainly in English for consistency.

**Semistructured Interviews with Students**

I conducted two semistructured interviews with each student participant in a different phase of the study. The first set of semistructured interviews were conducted at the beginning of the data collection phase. The aim was to understand students’ lives in their families, communities, and schools, as well as their understanding of race and racism. In addition, the interview also explored students’ cultural awareness and understanding of Chinese American histories and the ongoing racism faced by Asian people during the pandemic. Interview questions were designed based on the seven tenets of AsianCrit (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). The first interview round was conducted through
two consecutive appointments with each student. Each semistructured interview appointment was conducted within 30-45 minutes. Sample interview questions are attached in Appendix B.

The second round of semistructured interviews were conducted at the end of the study with fourteen summary final-thought questions to explore students' reflections on the CRCL read in the book club meetings. The aim was to add another layer of students' understanding of the CRCL in the study. These semistructured interviews were conducted within 30 minutes. The interview questions are attached in Appendix C. I used English and also Chinese to thoroughly explain questions while interviewing students. Students were also translanguaging during their responses to questions. All interviews were audio and video recorded with the built-in recorder by Zoom. In total, eight students’ interview recordings were transcribed.

**Students Writing Samples**

After reading theme-based picture books, students were encouraged to write a reflection on each book during the book club meeting. I gave students writing prompts such as “How do you feel about the story?” “What do you learn from the story?” and “Have you had any similar experience that helps you relate to the story?” In addition, students were invited to generate responses to the stories via different writing genres (e.g., poems or letters) in class or as homework. For example, after reading a picture book featuring Chinese and American differences, I encouraged students to write a poem to describe their feelings of being different with more than ten lines starting with “I am
different in…and…I feel…” I also asked students to write letters to the main characters to express their concerns or support.

**Students’ Artifacts**

Artifacts included self-portraits and drawings. At the beginning of the book club meetings, students were encouraged to draw themselves on their preferred platforms to present their identities (e.g., paper, iPad, or laptop). Relevant drawings and photos were generated during the study. All the students’ artifacts were uploaded on the Padlet board or sent to me through the book club WeChat group (a Chinese instant message application). Students can access the Padlet classroom board through a secured link to post their homework. Padlet is a functional application for my study since it allows students to upload posts containing writings, images, and website links, and to interact.

**Informal Conversations**

Occasionally, during my interactions with students and their parents, the conversations naturally flowed toward my research questions outside of the book club meetings. At the same time, recording these conversations was not always feasible, while I attentively listened and jotted down notes in my field journal as soon as possible after the conversations. Additionally, I found it necessary to have further conversations with students after the book club meetings to understand more of their responses. I also engaged with students with extra time to gain further insights into their artifacts, such as their writing, drawing, and other expressive works, and to discuss my interpretations of their creations with them.
Data Analysis

In this study, data analysis was intended to provide thick descriptions of the meaning-making processes of second-generation Chinese American students as they drew upon their cultural and racial backgrounds in responding to picture books about their own culture and history. Data analysis began with the first literature discussion and continued during both the data collection and analysis phases. Merriam (1998) suggests conducting data analysis concurrently with data collection as the researcher is able to concentrate on and mold the study as it unfolds. Thus, during my data collection phase, I conducted preliminary data analysis by transcribing, reviewing, examining, organizing, analyzing, and coding the data from the beginning of the data collection. For example, after each interview, I first used online software that offers multiple language transcribing services (e.g., Rev or Chinese transcribing software Xunfei) to transcribe all the semistructured interviews with students. Then, I reviewed all interview transcriptions to identify misspellings and areas where the software had difficulty transcribing. In addition, the book club meetings video recordings were reviewed and pruned to be transcribed verbatim immediately after each week’s class during my data collection phase.

For the data storage, organizing, and analysis, Huberman and Miles (1994) stress the significance of giving equal consideration to both the data storage and retrieval processes. Considering the amount of data I am going to collect, I decided to use the qualitative data analysis software “Nvivo 12” student version as the major tool to store, retrieve, categorize, organize, and analyze interviews, book club discussions transcriptions, and students reflections and other work. In my study, I used triangulation
for both purposes. For the data analysis within each book club meeting, the purpose is to use multiple sources of data to fully interpret students’ literary responses to each text. For the data analysis across book club meetings, I seek to generate collective literary response themes and understand the most concerned issues for Chinese American students. Thus, in this etic, collective case study, the data was analyzed relating to individual book club meetings first, then the comparison across ten book club meetings was conducted.

Before I began to interpret the data I collected, I revisited Brooks and Brown’s (2012) conceptual categories of literary understanding in order to explore how second-generation Chinese American students negotiate meanings in response to the contemporary Chinese American picture books. Brooks & Brown (2012) cultural situated categories of literary responses were appropriate for analyzing students’ oral and written responses to culturally relevant picture books in this study because of the similarity that this study has with Brooks & Brown (2012) research. For the data analysis for the second research question of how second-generation Chinese American students understand race and social justice issues faced by Chinese Americans in the Southern United States, I mainly employed the theoretical construct of AsianCrit to generalize themes and subthemes.

My process for data analysis began with revisiting and reviewing notes that I created along with my conducting interviews and book club meetings. In addition to the field journal I created after each data collection event throughout the process, I also used my analytic memos to reflect upon my analysis, connections to theory, and ways that I saw data connecting to each other and shaping into stories as I transcribed, analyzed, and reviewed my notes, journals, and analytic memos. This form of ongoing analysis served
to guide my study at all phases as I kept connecting my data with the theories and the larger narratives of the Chinese American community in the United States. Three cycles of coding in my process of data analysis, based primarily on Glesne’s (2016) guidelines.

1st Cycle Coding

For the first cycle of data analysis, I used in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2013, p. 91) and descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2013, p. 87) to identify initial themes and organize these data into meaningful clusters. In Vivo coding method represents the real words of culturally diverse participants. Descriptive coding summarizes raw data in words or short phrases, which is particularly appropriate for studies with a wide variety of data forms, including interview transcripts, field notes, journals, artifacts, and video (Saldaña, 2013, p. 88).

After each book club meeting, I transcribed students’ oral responses to the books during the interactive read-aloud sessions, referring to the discussion point of each page of the picture books, and also attached the picturebook pages in the transcription for later retrieval and data analysis. Then, I collected students in-class written responses and reflections on the Padlet and organized all students’ written and artistic responses in one separate document. After transcribing and organizing all initial data (e.g., oral response transcripts, response artifacts, and interview transcripts), I read several times of each data and used color coding to find meaningful clusters of data. Then I used in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2013, p. 91) and descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2013, p. 87) as my preliminary data analysis. While analyzing the data, I took notes and memos and generated emerging themes for each book club meetings with multiple sources. Most of the students’
responses were highly connected to the major themes of the selected picture books. During this phase, most of the codes were original quotes with short descriptions from the raw data. For example, “I don’t share my culture in school”, “it’s not only African American being discriminated against”.

**2nd Cycle Coding**

For the second-round coding, I used pattern coding (Saldaña, 2013, p. 209) to generate themes across the individual book club meeting data including students’ oral and written literary responses transcripts, researcher journal, and students’ artistic work. Pattern coding is a way of generating major themes by grouping summaries into a smaller number of sets and constructs (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For the first round of pattern coding, I collected coded data from the first cycle codes, then I assembled in vivo and descriptive codes in a big chart to construct initial themes. For the second-round pattern coding, I inputted all initial themes, codes. And students’ responses into Nvivo qualitative data analysis tool and use Nvivo to compare data and reorganize themes and codes.

I began my analytic coding after I had transcribed, examined, and coded most of the data. The second cycle of analysis focused on generating major themes and subthemes for each book club meeting. My theoretical framework and research questions mainly guided this process and helped me to generate substantive categories based on the first cycle of data analysis. I started to group all initial codes into a big chart for each book club meeting to provide some structure for data and the themes and/or connections that I saw emerging. The chart was organized by themes, codes and students’ responses.
In total, I created ten charts to generate ten book club meetings students’ oral and written responses. After the second cycle of coding, I input all the themes and codes of each book club meeting into Nvivo in order to conduct a thorough third cycle of coding. During this phase, I started to see the themes of students’ literary responses to each picture book and multimodal texts (Table 4.3).

3rd Cycle Coding

For the third round of coding, I generated larger themes and subthemes after analyzing across ten book club meetings’ data. I used the final Pattern Codes to develop statements that described major themes. I reported the findings for each research question in the form of different themes with thick description (Stake, 1995). In this phase, I started to compare the data (e.g., participants’ oral, written and artwork responses) across each book club meeting and the groups of participants. All the third cycle of analysis work was conducted in Nvivo. Notes and analyses associated with the theoretical framework were taken during the whole process. Throughout the process of integrating the data, similar themes and codes from the second cycle of pattern coding were combined under a major category. However, the overly broad categories were divided into subthemes and codes. During the third coding cycle, codes were sometimes renamed and relocated under other major categories. Theoretical framework and research questions guided this process closely. Finally, I systematized the major themes, subthemes, and codes around the research questions, which became the organizational framework through which the findings of this study are presented.
Researcher Positionality

Throughout the study, I served in multiple roles as a researcher, meeting curriculum planner, facilitator, and participant observer. As the researcher, I was involved in this study by contacting student participants and their guardians, purchasing picture books used in the study, organizing an online meeting platform, and working on possible changes for my participants. As a curriculum planner, I designed the book club meeting lesson plans and literary activities. As a book club facilitator, I led read-aloud and book discussions to support the participants’ meaning-making processes and create a welcoming and transcending space. As a participant observer, I observed how my participants responded to the stories in oral and written form. I acknowledged the multiple roles I served in the study, and I delivered the message to my participants that their voices and thoughts are most valued in the space. I did not judge any literary responses or guide them to respond to stories in specific ways.

Furthermore, my deep-rooted Chinese cultural background and extensive six-year immersion in the U.S. contributed to my ability to provide an insider perspective. As a member of Chinese immigrants in the U.S., my shared experiences allow participants to feel more at ease when expressing their thoughts and responses to the stories, fostering a community built on trust, support, and solidarity. It is important to acknowledge that my exposure to Chinese culture has surpassed my exposure to American culture, which inevitably shapes my interpretation of events and informs my overall perspective. In conducting the study, I strive to remain impartial and avoid guiding participants towards any particular responses or interpretations of the stories.
Trustworthiness

In this study, I established prolonged engagements with student participants and their families for three years before they joined this study. Three of the research participants have read with me in the book club for about three years with regular book club meetings on each Sunday afternoon. The prolonged engagement with my research participants before and during the research addresses Cuba’s advice that “the inquirer ought to be able to show that sufficient time was spent at the site to justify his characterization of it” (p. 20). Additionally, in this study, peer debriefing and member checking were utilized to ensure the accuracy and comprehensive interpretations of the data. I invited other professionals who are willing to listen, pose questions, and give me responses to audit my classes and also review my lesson plans. I also constantly conducted member checking during my data analysis and writing process. I sent interview transcriptions to my participant families to confirm the correctness of my interpretation. In addition, I also confirmed with them about the accuracy of the details in my writing during the findings writing process.
Table 4.1 *Participants Demographics and Family Backgrounds*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (all pseudonyms)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>School Grade Level</th>
<th>Years in Book Club</th>
<th>Family Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xuanxuan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Fourth Grade</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Business owner. Father completed bachelor’s degree in China, mother did not finish her bachelor’s degree in China while attended two-year community college in the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yixuan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Fifth Grade</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Xuanxuan and Yixuan are siblings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hexin</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sixth Grade</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Father received his master’s degree in a local university and works in local government as business representative; mother received her bachelor’s degree in China and is a housewife and volunteer in Chinese heritage language school as accountant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yanhui</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sixth Grade</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Both parents received Ph.D. degrees from university in the United States. Father works as an assistant professor in local university and mother works as a senior scientist in a local pharmaceutical company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contemporary Fiction</td>
<td>Transnational experiences</td>
<td><em>Shanghai Messenger</em></td>
<td>Cheng, Andrea</td>
<td>2005</td>
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<td>Tensions of navigating distinctive cultural norms</td>
<td><em>The Ugly Vegetables</em></td>
<td>Lin, Grace</td>
<td>2001</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Struggles in school setting</td>
<td><em>Watercress</em></td>
<td>Wang, Andrea</td>
<td>2021</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Encountering language barriers</td>
<td><em>Lissy's Friend</em></td>
<td>Lin, Grace</td>
<td>2007</td>
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<td>Historical Fiction</td>
<td>Historical narratives on racialized minority discourse</td>
<td><em>Coolies</em></td>
<td>Yin</td>
<td>2003</td>
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<td>Picture books</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Brothers</em></td>
<td>Yin</td>
<td>2006</td>
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<td></td>
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<td><em>Paper Son: Lee's Journey to America</em></td>
<td>James, HelenFoster</td>
<td>2013</td>
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<td>Texts</td>
<td>Racialized discourse on COVID-19 pandemic</td>
<td><em>I’m not A Virus</em></td>
<td>Sjöblom, Lisa Wool-Rim</td>
<td>2020</td>
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<td>Photos about Stop Asian Hate protest in Columbia, SC.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.dailygamecock.com/gallery/cv1r8njn6w8kti9">https://www.dailygamecock.com/gallery/cv1r8njn6w8kti9</a></td>
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<td>Additional Material</td>
<td>History of Chinese Exclusion Act</td>
<td>Bound for Gold Mountain, from <em>Angel Island: Gateway to Gold Mountain</em> written by Russell Freedman. The first video was <em>The dark history of the Chinese Exclusion Act</em> taught by Robert Chang. The second video - <em>Breaking Ground</em> is one of the episodes of <em>Asian Americans</em> which is a five-hour film series that center on Asian American history.</td>
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### Table 4.3 Themes and Subthemes of Students’ Literary Responses

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<tr>
<th>Picture books</th>
<th>Themes from Students’ Responses</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Shanghai Messenger</em></td>
<td>Transnational Experiences&lt;br&gt;-Relationship with extended families&lt;br&gt;-Memories in China&lt;br&gt;-Developing transnational awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Ugly Vegetables</em></td>
<td>Appreciating Heritage Culture&lt;br&gt;-Valuing family traditions&lt;br&gt;-Valuing heritage cultural uniqueness&lt;br&gt;-Proud of being different</td>
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<td><em>Watercress</em></td>
<td>Tensions with Heritage Culture&lt;br&gt;-Not understand family traditions&lt;br&gt;-Struggles of practicing traditions</td>
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<td><em>Lissy's Friend</em></td>
<td>Unrelatable with the Book&lt;br&gt;-Have friends in school</td>
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<td><em>I Hate English</em></td>
<td>Dealing with Language Barriers&lt;br&gt;-Shared English Language Learner experiences in school&lt;br&gt;-Learn English is a must to survive&lt;br&gt;-Received minimal language support from school&lt;br&gt;-Culture is not valued in school – “I don’t share my culture in school”</td>
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<td><em>Coolies</em></td>
<td>Pushing Beyond Black/white Binary Paradigm&lt;br&gt;-Recognizing unfair treatment of Chinese laborers.&lt;br&gt;-Naming racism&lt;br&gt;-Recognizing White supremacy&lt;br&gt;-Developing counternarratives&lt;br&gt;-Connecting to anti-Asian racism during COVID-19 pandemic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Brothers</em></td>
<td>Understanding Unique Ways Chinese American were Racialized&lt;br&gt;-Recognizing unfair treatment of Chinese laborers.&lt;br&gt;-Developing counternarratives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Description</td>
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| **Paper Son: Lee's Journey to America** | Understanding Lives of Chinese Immigrants  
- Recognizing unfair treatment of Chinese laborers.  
- Making connection to immigration policy nowadays. |
| Multimodal and multimedia resources of Chinese Exclusion Act (CEA) | Recognizing CEA legalize racism against Chinese Americans  
- CEA is a severe form of racism  
- Developing understanding of systemic racism  
- Developing counternarratives  
- Connecting to anti-Asian racism during COVID-19 pandemic |
| *I'm not A Virus* | Students Demonstrate Emerging Activist Stance  
- Naming racism (racisl slurs and hate crimes)  
- Racism is a mental illness  
- Developing counternarratives  
- Measurement to relieve racism  
- Measures to protect community |
CHAPTER 5
RESPONSES TO CONTEMPORARY CHINESE AMERICAN TEXTS

This chapter provides detailed findings of my first research question. This study aims to explore the ways in which second-generation Chinese American students engage with culturally relevant texts that depict the contemporary and historical accounts of Chinese immigrants. This study validates the active role of readers and encourages students to engage in critical transactions with culturally relevant texts by employing critical literacy as the guiding theoretical lens for the literacy instructions within the book club. In addition, this study values and validates the nuanced cultural, linguistic and racial experiences within my students regarding their different, sometimes distinctive cultural and linguistic practices among their families. This chapter probes deeply on how second-generation Chinese American students respond to contemporary culturally relevant texts in a community-based book club.

As we read contemporary picture books and engage with relevant multimodal and multimedia resources, students responded to these texts from multiple perspectives. The first major source of information that students draw on to generate their literary responses is family. Family knowledge includes cultural practices at home, family traditions, family daily practices, interactions with parents, and connections with extended family back in China and stories delivered by children’s parents. For example, students drew extensively on family position during our readings of *Shanghai Messenger* (Cheng, 2015) and
The second major resource students drew upon to generate literary responses was their schooling experiences. Students related to *I Hate English* (*Levine, 1995*) strongly and associated it with their English Language Learner (ELL) experiences in schools, while struggling to navigate White dominant monolingual spaces. Additionally, students related to *Lissy’s Friend* (*Lin, 2007*) and made connections with their experiences of marginalization and isolation in schools. Students also drew from their lived experiences in communities to negotiate with their *differences* and *uniqueness* and shared their dreams and goals as second-generation Chinese American children who straddle two cultures and are subjected to dual expectations. The contents of the culturally relevant texts used in this study are discussed in methodology section.

The findings related to the two research questions are separated into two chapters. In this chapter, I focus on how students respond to contemporary picture books that illustrate Chinese American experiences and struggles in navigating distinctive spaces – homes and schools, issues of language, power, culture; extended family; family trauma; and memories, dealing with differences, growth, and development. I have organized my findings around the following five themes: (1) Families as anchors of hope and bridges across cultures, (2) Language struggles of second-generation Chinese American children, (3) “Incorporating culture into class” – language and culture are intertwined, (4) Navigating differences – cultural differences as unique assets. An in-depth explanation of the forementioned themes and an examination of students’ literary responses are introduced in the subsequent section.
Families as Anchors of Hope and Bridges Across Cultures

The first theme explores how students drew from their families’ experiences as they responded to contemporary Chinese American picture books. For immigrant children, family was a shelter which provided a sense of belonging, especially in challenging times during COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, family also functioned as a bridge to connect different cultures and communities and possibly foster understanding and empathy.

During our reading of contemporary Chinese American picture books, students had strong evocations to Chinese cultural gems, practices, and traditions illustrated in picture books and responded with their knowledge and experiences mainly drawing from their interactions with their parents, routine family practices, and interactions with their extended families back in China. It is noteworthy that students experienced family-related evocations to almost all the contemporary picture books that I selected for the book club meetings. In the following section, I present students’ literary responses during our reading and discussion of *Shanghai Messenger* (Cheng, 2015) and *Watercress* (Wang, 2021), in which students drew primarily from their family experiences. All students actively responded to the unique Chinese immigrant family experience and Chinese cultural gems and items illustrated in the picture books.

In the following section, I explore three subthemes: (1) Recognizing and Appreciating Heritage Culture, (2) Transnational Experience: Roots Rediscovered, (3) Tensions with Family Heritage Traditions. It is worthy to mention that even though all students are from Mainland China and are second-generation immigrant children, their
families practiced activities associated with their Chinese heritage and engaged with the local community and displayed their cultural identities in various ways. Thus, it is important to consider these students and families as individuals with unique backgrounds and experiences, rather than solely through a lens of panethnicity. In order to foster deep layers of understandings, I attend to students’ family backgrounds in my presentation of students’ literary responses.

**Recognizing and Appreciating Heritage Culture**

“I feel happy because I like China”.

(Xuanxuan, 2022)

For students aged eight to twelve, family and school are two major spaces where they construct their understanding of themselves and the world. For my students, living in between two cultural paradigms which are distinctive and sometimes contradictory was difficult. How to balance maintaining their heritage culture through cultural practices at home and being “American” at school and in the local communities was a mandatory lesson that would continue throughout their lives. These students demonstrated a strong affinity with Chinese culture as they drew on their day-to-day interactions with their parents in creating cultural unit in families. Students responded to the texts with evocations on various Chinese cultural items including gems, the Chinese lunisolar calendar, chopsticks, Chinese paintings, and Buddhist statues. During our readings, students experienced affirmation, recognition, and appreciation for their heritage culture.

In the following section, I demonstrate how students responded to *Shanghai Messenger* (Cheng, 2015) drawing knowledge and experience from their family.
"Shanghai Messenger" is a heartfelt story with poetic language illustrating Xiao Mei’s extended families’ tradition and cultural practices living in Shanghai, China. During our reading and discussion of "Shanghai Messenger," students actively responded to the texts and Chinese items portrayed in pages by drawing knowledge and experiences from their families. After reading the book, students were then invited to answer the relevant questions including do you own any Chinese culture related items at your home and why? Students in the book club had strong reactions to the story since it was told from the perspective of a second-generation Chinese American girl who straddles the two cultures.

For the responses, I would start with Yixuan and Xuanxuan since they have strong evocations to the picture books and exhibited solid appreciation to their heritage cultural gems. Yixuan responded proudly noted that his family had “rice bowls, chopsticks, an umbrella, and a lunar calendar”. He explained that the calendar is used to check Chinese dates and festivals, rice bowl are used for eating rice, and the chopsticks are used to pick up food. Yixuan said, “it’s easy to pick with chopsticks”. In addition, he explained that the traditional Chinese umbrellas were brought from China as gifts for friends. Yixuan presented us with a photo of Chinese lunisolar calendar (Figure 5.1) hanging on the door and a paragraph written in English to describe the Chinese items in his home.

The calendar is a traditional Chinese family owned one and still used by many Chinese families back in China. Although there are so many cultural gems from Chinese history, the traditional Chinese lunisolar calendar is widely used in modern China to track Chinese holidays, birthdays, zodiac, and more. Yixuan shared that his family made more use of the lunisolar calendar as his parents used it to organize their schedule to contact with their extended families back in Mainland China. In addition, Yixuan kept strong
affinity and appreciation to his heritage culture might partly be from his unique experience of going back and forth to Mainland China in his early years. For example, Yixuan mentioned Chinese is his “mother tongue” and he wanted to go back to Mainland China to work after he graduates from college. For the intense Chinese cultural immersion at his home setting, Yixuan shared that he can easily spot and recognize the Chinese cultural gems and objects in the picture books, and this made him more related to the story. Similarly, Xuanxuan also listed “rice, lanterns, thread, cloth and tea, teacup, chopstick, bowl and mug” to respond to heritage gems illustrated in *Shanghai Messenger*. She noted that her parents thought that these items had “traditional” value and explained “I feel happy because I like China”.

Similarly, Hexin strongly connected with the story and responded with the items he had reminded him of Mainland China, “abacus, paper lanterns, firecrackers, rice bowl, chopsticks, ink brush with ink, and a paper with Chinese characters”. In addition, Hexin was proud to share that there are two little household Buddhist shrines including Buddhist statues and incense in their living room and kitchen. Following his mother, Mrs. Li, he practiced Buddhism and meditation. Sometimes, he lights incense and prays in front of the Buddhist statues. All of these Chinese cultural associated items, religious practices, Zen ideology towards life constructed Hexin’s understanding of Mainland China and Chinese culture.

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Zen is a school of Mahayana Buddhism that originated in China during the Tang dynasty. Zen emphasizes the practice of meditation as the means to gain insight and wisdom, and its teachings often focus on the importance of direct experience rather than on theoretical knowledge.
Transnational Experience: Roots Rediscovered

“China is a Place I Call Home”

(Yanhui, 2022)

During book club meetings, students made connections with texts by drawing on their transnational experiences, including connections with extended families, visiting Chinese cities, and developing transnational awareness through observing distinctive cultural practices between U.S. and Mainland China. Instead of learning about heritage culture through their parents, these transnational experience supports my students to keep the function of their culture by rediscovering and reconnecting with their roots. In addition, by responding and connecting to transnational experience, students’ were encouraged to bridge two different cultural worlds, develop a deeper appreciation of their heritage, and ultimately foster a sense of belonging. In the following section, I introduce students’ literary responses associated with their transnational experience which support rediscover their roots and affirms their cultural identity.

Students all found these picture books relatable to some extent and connect the cultural practices and Chinese cultural objects with their daily lives at home. For example, Hexin responded to the family tree depicted in Shanghai Messenger and said, “my family has similar one”. Hexin said the family tree was his family history and his parents “wanted to remember their ancestors and their memories”. Family book, also called as Jiapu (家谱), which keeps track of family members since the first person in the family, is cherished and carefully preserved by many Chinese families, especially in northern China and areas like Guangdong and Fujian district. Additionally, during our
reading of the Watercress (Wang, 2021), Yanhui responded to the illustration of the family photo and said, “I have the same family photo in my house”. In addition, Yanhui also responded that, “the parents want to remember their traditions by picking watercress” during our reading of Watercress. From these responses, students shared their connections with the items and traditions they spotted in the picture book and actively associated with the traditions and Chinese related items their families kept. Additionally, students understood their parents’ efforts in creating the diaspora cultural shelter with their distinctive family’s history and traditions.

In addition to transnational practices at homes, students shared their experiences in Mainland China. For example, in responding to the Shanghai Messenger, students wrote poems to share their deep connections with heritage roots and the land of China in varied ways. Yanhui wrote a powerful poem (Figure 5.2) to share her transnational experiences.

Yanhui’s poem included references to many significant Chinese cultural gems and landmarks in China, including Journey to the West, a classic Chinese novel; The Summer Palace, imperial garden in China; Mount Tai, one of the Five Great Mountains of China; Beijing, Hebei, Shanghai, and XI’an. Yanhui’s poem shared her transnational experiences including practicing Chinese culture at home (e.g., “chopsticks are a thing I use”), visiting Mainland China, and meeting with extended families. For example, in the poem, Yanhui mentioned heritage traditions still kept in her family: speaking Chinese language, celebrating Chinese New Year, using chopsticks. Yanhui also mentioned the Chinese cultural gems she got to know during her visits to mainland China including Ping-Pong, red color, and pandas and the way she identified with these cultural signs as she said,
“pandas are an animal I love…”. All these transnational experiences fostered Yanhui to develop a deep and layered understanding of her ancestral land and heritage culture, at the same time, facilitated Yanhui to rediscover her connection with her Chinese half.

Yixuan and Xuanxuan often shared their memories about their hometown in China. Drawing on these accounts and his own memories of visits to China, Xuanxuan wrote a short poem in Figure 5.3. Xuanxuan used Chinese and English, as well as pictographic ideogram (Figure 5.3) to express her visiting experiences in Mainland China. She highlighted Chinese foods and shopping at night markets in China. The poem shows that for Xuanxuan, Mainland China is full of culinary delights and pleasant memories. Similarly, Yixuan also recalled his transnational experiences:

When I went to China 🇨🇳. I remembered we have big dinners. My cousin mom will take us out at night to play, but not too late, have most of our time playing. It was so much fun. I want to go there again.

Yixuan’s memories highlighted play and relatives in China. For Yixuan and Xuanxuan, visiting to their hometown in China offered a valuable opportunity for them to rediscover their cultural heritage and familial roots through the act of participating in communal feasts and reunions with relatives, which in turn contributed to senses of belonging and cultural identities.

Similarly, Hexin used both Chinese and English to write a poem (Figure 5.4) that reported on his experiences in China. He mentioned paternal grandparents and maternal grandmother who cared him during his China visit. During his visit, Hexin observed
cultural differences between China and the United States. For example, Hexin described his grandma’s apartment, a common form of housing for Chinese people, and eating frog legs. In response to the section of the book where the main character returns to Shanghai to meet relatives, Hexin recalled his relatives in China. He said, “my extended family consists of many members, too many to list, but they are all happy to see us, and help us.” For Hexin, traveling back to China, maintaining close ties with his extended family members, and observing the cultural differences foster him to develop a stronger sense of connection to his cultural heritage and identity. These experiences support Hexin to rediscover his family history, cultural values, and traditions, and to feel a sense of pride in his cultural heritage.

**Tensions with Family Heritage Traditions**

“Sometimes the tradition is not right”.

(Yixuan, 2022)

During our reading and discussion of *Watercress* (Wang, 2021), students demonstrated distinctive understanding of their family traditions. Yixuan and Xuanxuan were highly related to the characters’ struggles when dealing with distant family traditions, at the same time, actively associating it with the tensions they had with the heritage traditions they were forced to practice at home. In the following section, I introduce students’ literary responses which were relevant to their struggles and tensions living with their family traditions.

The *Watercress* (Wang, 2021) is a vivid story depicting a Chinese American girl negotiate her family distant tradition in the U.S. context. Xuanxuan and Yixuan
demonstrated their struggles in understanding the family heritage practice – “picking up watercress by the pond” depicted in the story. For example, Xuanxuan responded, “they are getting watercress and she is embarrassed. She doesn’t want other people see that she's picking. And not like buying”. Similarly, Xuanxuan responded to the practice of grabbing food from somewhere other than official store or grocery store as an act of “not buying” and regarded it as a misconduct. Then, after the family back home, the girl looks angry at the meal which was made from the watercress they picked up from the pond. The girl is so upset that she does not want to eat the watercress. I asked students, “why does the girl not want to eat the watercress?” Then Yixuan responded to the story, “maybe she thinks [that] it’s not right to eat stuff that you picked from something else, like someone else's stuff. I feel like that”. In responding to the family tradition depicted in the story, students primarily drew on their knowledge of ethical considerations and societal norms as contemporary individuals.

Additionally, students associated the story with their struggles in negotiating their family traditions. For example, Yixuan responded that sometimes the “tradition” was not right and understandable for him. He connected the story with his own experience negotiating his family traditions for which he did not understand and would not like to practice. He said,

I think that she does not like anything that she is going through. I felt that way before in my life with my family. I think that heritage is a way to do something, and a heritage culture is an old tradition on how to do something. And sometimes the tradition is not right.
Second-generation immigrant children are always living in the crevasse of several
different cultural paradigms which are highly intricated and complicated. For Yixuan, he
regarded the heritage culture as an “old tradition” and local American culture as modern
one, which might lead to tensions and his confusions on practicing his heritage traditions.
Lack of background knowledge about family traditions, it is tough for Yixuan and other
immigrant children to understand the need to practice and maintain the traditions. These
unrelatable and isolated experience with his family traditions made Yixuan to think about
“sometimes the tradition is not right”.

Yixuan also strongly related to the story when the little girl felt angry and upset
during the interaction with her parents. Yixuan responded to the tensions illustrated in the
story,

I think that she is not happy, and I have experienced that when my mom got mad at
me. I just don't understand sometimes. I think that she just gets mad at us way too
often. I don't know why, but yeah. And I just don't understand. Whenever we forgot
to do our homework, and then there was a punishment.

The pressing desire of parents for their descendants to uphold cultural legacy sometimes
compelled immigrant children to engage in traditions hastily. Yixuan conveyed his
perplexity regarding his parents’ strict expectations for his academic performance and
their frequent dissatisfaction with his behavior. Yixuan did not understand why his family
had different expectations on his academic performance and behavior. The discrepancy
between Yixuan's performance and her parents' expectations may be attributed to cultural
differences. Yixuan's parents may not be familiar with or may not agree with the
American system of academic evaluation, leading them to set higher standards for Yixuan.

When responding to the last page of the picture book – the girl finally tried the watercress with understanding her family’s hardship, Yixuan said,

Maybe now she realizes why like her family does this type of stuff. And she is like, well, if I don’t eat this then her family probably not going to be happy. And now feel like they should do this again. So, then she eats it. While they know that they can continue.

Yixuan responded to the final page quickly and harshly followed his mindset that “sometimes the tradition is not right” and he mentioned if the girl did not practice her family traditions, her family members might be unhappy with her, and this could be the major reason the girl accepted the tradition. Furthermore, Yixuan expressed concern that conforming to tradition for the sake of family could potentially send misleading signals and result in repeated requests from her family members to continue practicing the tradition. Yixuan’s literary responses to Watercress (Wang, 2021) mainly drawing from his family experience. At the same time, the tensions and challenges Yixuan encountered during his navigating and negotiating of heritage culture and family traditions also demonstrated through his responses.

**Language Struggles of Second-generation Chinese American Children**

The second theme introduces Chinese immigrant children’s struggles as English language learners (ELLs) at their early ages in school and how learning English as a
continuum for second-generation Chinese American children through reading and responding to culturally relevant picture books. Book club meetings transcripts, students’ reflections and writings, students’ and parents’ interview transcripts, and researcher journals were employed as data sources. The major findings under the theme are: (1) Language Struggles as a Continuum for Second-generation Chinese American Students, (2) English Proficiency as a Fundamental Requirement for Participating in American World.

Language Struggles as a Continuum

Students in the book club strongly related to the language shock Meimei experienced in her school and responded to *I Hate English* (Levine, 1995) by connecting to their lived experience as ELLs when they first attended kindergarten in the United States. In addition to enculturating into local norms, acquiring English and improving English proficiency become another urgent and continued task for these students. For students in the book club, all of them were born in the United States and raised in single-race Chinese immigrant families in which Mandarin Chinese other than English are primarily spoken. Learning and improving English proficiency became a continuous endeavor for them.

Yixuan spent his first three years living with his grandparents in southern rural China. His first language is Fuzhou language. For this reason, Yixuan experienced tremendous number of difficulties when he first attended the local monolingual English-speaking schools. Connecting Meimei’s story to his ELL experience, Yixuan said, “[it is] really hard to stay in the U.S. because I probably didn't know any English at that time. So
then I had to stop speaking Chinese and started to learn English which is hard”. Yixuan reflected on his transition from China to attending the American school, in which he had to stop speaking Chinese and learn English at very young age to survive in an English dominant school. As a young student attending a monolingual school, Yixuan was compelled to focus solely on the development of his English language proficiency.

Similar to Yixuan, Hexin also experienced obstacles when he attended the local school. He remained reticent and quiet for two years in the monolingual school without interacting with any peers or teachers. He shared, “my thought in this story is that this story is relatable, such as not being able to understand other languages”. He then added that, “this was due to me being exposed to Chinese more than English so my Chinese speaking skills were better than my English-speaking skills”. Hexin understood that his early years interacting with his parents in Mandarin Chinese and being immersed in Chinese-speaking environment would naturally result in the unbalanced bilingualism in his both languages. In order to develop his English language proficiency, Hexin paid meticulous attention to English pronunciation, grammar, accuracy and correctness even though he attended fifth grade. He said,

I correct myself to this day when certain phrases don't make sense or I misspell something. I learned from my mistakes in grammar to avoid making that same mistake again. I felt comfortable in school as I did not suffer from many problems.

Hexin learned English purposely and even after five years he was still very careful about his pronunciation and grammar. Language struggles are faced by many second-generation Chinese American students throughout their early schooling years,
which may persist throughout their education. After the book club meeting, I wrote the following researcher note.

I understand it is highly challenged for ELLs to improve English language proficiency, at the same time learning content knowledge at the monolingual classroom. Moreover, it is common for young ELLs to desire a sense of belonging within the English dominant environment for the need of navigating local social and cultural norms, making friends with peers, and academic success.

The fact that Yixuan and Hexin placed English language acquisition as priority and focused on the correct pronunciation and grammar is not a single case. Hexin added, “I felt comfortable in school as I did not suffer from many problems”, which could possibly be unpacked as he did suffer from “problems” in school, and he thought most of the problems were caused by his lack of English proficiency. I kept wondering how English-only policy and its relevant language bias, e.g., overemphasis on linguistic components and accuracy in pronunciation and oral expression relocate immigrant and migrant families and students. How English-only language policies and linguistic racism affect immigrant students and ethnically diverse children’s identity development and their perception of their heritage language and culture.
English Proficiency as A Must for Participating in American World

This theme demonstrates how students responded to picture books from their ELLs experiences. During our reading of *I Hate English* (Levine, 1995), all students in the book club shared they had gone through the similar experience with the main character, Meimei, in the story: they felt scared to speak up and experienced challenges in learning English. At the same time, students often face urgent needs and avid expectations of becoming fluent English speakers since it is commonly held by Chinese immigrant parents and communities that acquiring English is a fundamental requirement for acceptance and participation in the English dominant world. In the following section, I demonstrate how students in the book club prioritized and emphasized the importance of learning English with internalize their struggles in learning English in their early schooling ages.

During our reading of *I Hate English* (Levine, 1995), when we were reading about the plot in which Meimei refuses to talk to Mrs. Nancy in English and is angry with English language, I asked my students why Meimei refuses to speak in English and why is Meimei so angry. My students responded actively, and all have unique perspectives responding from their lived experience.

Yixuan: I think that she just not used to it. Because whenever you go to somewhere new like Portugal or Spain. Like they speak a different language and if you don't know how to speak. You probably won't speak so well.

Xuanxuan: Yeah. I think she is new and just moved here Just like the only one that's like. Not racial. Because since she's the only Asian in the classroom, she
probably doesn't know how to speak English that well, and doesn't want to embarrass yourself. Uh, in front of the other people.

Situating in the similar context as Meimei, Yixuan and Xuanxuan have received their education since the kindergarten in White dominant English monolingual schools. They both shared their feeling as “scared” to speak up and “very difficult” to learn English since limited English language support was provided in the school. They shared they learned English with the support from their mother, Mrs. Yang, who is a Chinese monolingual with limited proficiency in English. From Yixuan and Xuanxuan’s responses, we can see how monolingual and dominant English discourse alienate and estrange the students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. However, faced with the unequal power relationships across languages, most students in my book club internalized the toxic dominant discourse on languages. In this regard, Yixuan explained that being a language learner is a common thing for most people if they move or travel to different countries.

It is common for students to internalize the isolation and other negativity brought up by English learning experience at their early ages. Students justified the limited English proficiency as a negative factor excluding individuals from active participation in mainstream American society. With the mindset, Yixuan responded to Meimei’s English learning experience that, “Meimei can only speak Chinese and could not understand English. So then, it is not an advantage”. Yixuan spent his PreK-4 in English-dominant monolingual schools learned that proficient in English is an advantage for immigrant children like him. Since my students believed that proficient in English is a must for immigrant students to survive and thrive in American schools, it is not surprising to see
how my students responded to Meimei’s difficulties from language learner’ experience and prioritized the importance of English learning.

Hexin: Meimei could not pronounce English very well and only most of the time Meimei was able to understand English, meaning that Meimei could not understand everything when her teachers communicate in English. Meimei is unable to speak or understand English. Meimei doesn’t want to learn English because she found it too difficult when she tried.

Yanhui: I think it might be her teacher is talking to her. And she looks like she doesn't know what she's saying. I think she's mad because she’s trying to learn English, but she can't seem to get it. And she's like getting angry at herself. And if you don't learn it fluently others may not understand. So, um, if you traveled one place and you meet friends, but you can't communicate with them and it's really hard to keep the friendship.

It is interesting to learn that Hexin, Yanhui, and Yixuan all responded from the language acquisition perspective and mentioned it is hard for Meimei to learn English or learning English is too difficult even though there is not any clue in the book referring or inferring English acquisition is tough for Meimei. For Yanhui, being fluent in English is her top priority since communication is the key for making friends and having long-lasting friendship at school. Hexin focused on the correctness of English pronunciation and spelling. For my students, being able to speak fluent and standardized English is a life buoy for them to survive in schools and the ticket for them to access mainstream world. For immigrants, attaining adequate English proficiency is often seen as a prerequisite for
entering American society. In this sense, becoming proficient in English is equated with becoming American.

**“Incorporating Culture into Class” – Language and Culture are Intertwined**

The third theme demonstrated two findings related to students’ ELL experiences in schools with majority English native speakers and in school with Chinese language immersion program to demonstrate how students unpack their ELL experience with culture. For my students’ distinctive responses to learning English at school and their mentioning of their unique experience between English-speaking monolingual school and language immersion school, I paid special attention to these differences and believe there is a need to introduce their unique experience in both schools. In the following section, I introduce two findings related to students’ language acquisition experience in schools with majority English native speakers and in school with Chinese language immersion program to demonstrate the intertwine of language and culture for my students: (1) Lack of Support Linguistically and Culturally from Monolingual School, (2) “I Soon Felt Included” – ELL Experience in Bilingual Language Immersion School.

**Lack of Support Linguistically and Culturally from Monolingual School**

This subtheme demonstrates students’ ELL experiences in monolingual school. During the time of collecting this dissertation data, three students, including Hexin, Yixuan, and Xuanxuan, were all attending local monolingual English-speaking White dominant schools. From their literary responses to stories relevant to language struggles, they all exhibited the lack of support from their peers and schools, which situated them in a more difficult position. In the following section, I focus on Xuanxuan’s literary
responses since she clearly mentioned the importance of “culture” when learning English during our readings.

In the reflections on *I Hate English* (Levine, 1995), Xuanxuan shared her connection to the story, “when I first went to school, I had a hard time learning and understanding English. I needed to like focus a lot on English so then I could understand the teachers”. Although Xuanxuan was not sent back to China as Yixuan, she still faced struggles in learning contents through English when she first attended a local monolingual kindergarten. It is not surprising to see how difficult for a second-generation immigrant child to navigate the new environment with linguistic barriers at their early age. Then Xuanxuan said,

I'm like Mei-Mei, but a little different. First of all, I don't hate English! Second, I didn't get help from the teacher. Lastly, I DON'T SHARE MY CULTURE IN SCHOOL! These are the similarities that I have with Mei-Mei. First, I needed help from someone. Second, I also am part of the Chinese culture. Lastly, I get more confident with some help.

Xuanxuan reflected on the differences and similarities she had with Meimei and emphasized that she did not receive any forms of language support from her teacher. Without the language and academic support from classroom teachers and peers, it is even tougher for immigrant children to navigate the space and achieve their academic success. In particular, Xuanxuan highlighted that her “heritage culture” was not recognized and appreciated in her class and support her learning English, which is different from Meimei in the story. Then, Xuanxuan shared that she does not “hate” English while she does not
have the resources as Meimei to learn and speak English in a culturally relevant way. In the story, English teacher Mrs. Nancy helps Meimei to learn and speak English in a way that Meimei could share her heritage culture.

At the time of my study, Xuanxuan was in a suburban elementary school in which predominant students are from White middle class families. Xuxuan mentioned she was the only Asian girl in her class. It is not difficult to understand why Xuanxuan capitalized that she did not share her culture in school. The culture Xuanxuan mentioned here is a mixture consisting of Chinese heritage traditions, family traditions, the ways her family preserving and practicing heritage culture, language they choose to speak, and the degree they adjust to local American norms. Obviously, her teachers and school curriculum did not make effort to include Xuanxuan’s heritage culture and appreciate the funds of knowledge she brough to the class.

“I Soon Felt Included” – ELL Experience in Bilingual Language Immersion School

This subtheme demonstrates Yanhui’s ELL experience in a bilingual language immersion school. Yanhui was the only student attending a local Chinese/English language immersion charter school on my book club. Yanhui stayed in the immersion school throughout her elementary years. In the following section, I introduce how Yanhui responded to Meimei’s experience in school and Yanhui’s associations.

Yanhui related to Meimei’s story and shared that she also had difficulty in understanding English in her kindergarten. While different from Meimei, Yanhui did not have resistance to English language. She was actively learning English in order to make friends. When I asked her how she was learning English in her kindergarten, Yanhui
responded,

I forgot how, but I just picked it up really fast and I also make friends. I mean, it was not that bad because I was in immersion. I had two Chinese speaking teachers and a lot of people in my class spoke Chinese, so...

Despite encountering the similar language shock as other three students in the book club, Yanhui did not share her English language learning experience as “scared” or “lonely”, neither demonstrate feelings of fear or estrangement in school. Yanhui described her English language learner experience as “not that bad” since she had Chinese speaking teachers and classmates which provide a highly diverse and inclusive environment for Yanhui’s development in both languages. Additionally, Yanhui shared, “I soon felt included and I had friends” in school with the diverse and inclusive environment bilingual school provided.

Additionally, due to the diverse and inclusive school environment, Yanhui had better understanding of how culture and language are intertwined in the story. For example, when we were reading about the plot that Meimei writes letters to her friends in Chinese, students can see the sparkling smile on Meimei’s face which is rarely spotted when Meimei is in her school. On the page, big Chinese characters printed in red as “亲爱, 欢迎 [dear, welcome... ]”. Yanhui responded, “she [meimei] seems very happy and willing to write Chinese. Because it’s her native language and the language she knows how to speak, and it reminds her of China”. The relation of Meimei with the Chinese language stirred up Yanhui’s evocation about her feeling when speaking Mandarin Chinese. As a multilingual speaker (English, Mandarin Chinese and Spanish), Yanhui
assumed speaking and using Chinese would foster Meimei’s sense of belonging and help to maintain her Chinese identity in the U.S. context.

Throughout our reading of *I Hate English* (Levine, 1995), Yanhui responded, “the language is kind of a part of culture”, “Meimei struggled in accepting that she was trying to learn English because she felt that learning English was kind of abandoning her culture”. With the solid understanding about the relationship of language and culture, Yanhui suggested that “the teacher could help Meimei by kind of like incorporating her Culture into class”. Yanhui expressed her concerns over the school environment in which Meimei’s heritage culture and language are not fully recognized and validated. She called for schools and teachers to leverage Meimei’s linguistic and cultural resources she brings to the classroom and create a diverse and inclusive learning environment for Meimei.

“A language is far more than a means of communication; it is the very condition of our humanity. Our values, our beliefs and our identity are embedded within it” (UNESCO, 2018). During our reading and discussing of *I Hate English* (Levine, 1995), students demonstrated their understandings between language and culture. Yanhui and Xuanxuan’s literary responses demonstrated their understanding of the strong connection between an individual’s language and their culture, and it is through the language certain cultural beliefs and values are transmitted.

**Navigating Differences – Cultural Differences as Unique Assets**

The fourth theme demonstrates how students navigate values, beliefs, and practices of two distinct cultural paradigms through responded to the story – *The Ugly Vegetables* (Lin, 2001). During our reading of *The Ugly Vegetables*, students have strong
evocations from their family cultural practices after learning about Meimei’s garden filled with vegetables. Students related strongly to the unique garden illustrated in the book and showed empathy to Meimei. Having a similar experience, students showed appreciation and understanding of their vegetable gardens.

For the literary responses, students all shared that they have gardens similar to Grace Lin, which are filled with Asian vegetables. For example, Hexin shared the garden (Figure 5.5) in his parents’ house in Columbia. In his backyard, several blue and red flowerpots were there. Hexin shared the fresh herbs and spices he and his mother planted such as ginger, peppermint, basil, and rosemary. Hexin wrote: This is my garden: The shorter ones with long leaves are the ginger plants. The big plant in the bird bath is the peppermint plant. The plant (hard to see) in one of the blue pots is the dead basil plant. The plant (hard to see) in the back blue pot is the dead rosemary plant. Similarly, Xuanxuan shared a photo of her garden in her parents’ house in Miami with us and wrote the Chinese words for these unique vegetables of Asian descent. Xuanxuan shared that some of these vegetables can only grow and be sold in China and some Asian areas. Thus, planting these vegetables in the garden becomes a common cultural practice for many Chinese/Taiwanese/Asian Americans and new immigrant families.

Additionally, students wrote letters to the author Grace Lin with their thoughts about the story. Since the story is a biography of Grace Lin when she was a young girl living in a small town in upstate New York, students wrote the letter both to the young girl in the story and to Grace Lin who lived through the experience. In the following section, I demonstrate students’ letters and connections they made with their experiences of navigating different cultural paradigms. For example, Hexin wrote Grace Lin a letter
to convey his understanding of “ugly vegetables”. He wrote,

Dear Grace Lin,

Your plants are don't look pretty because you can eat them, the plants are vegetables. You can eat the plants when the plants are ripe, you can't eat flowers can you? The plants are special, the plants can only grow in China, and in foreign places, the plants need special needs. The plants are unique to others because everyone else in the neighborhood have never seen nor tasted the plants. Your plants can taste delicious compared to ordinary flowers.

Best Vegetables Ever,

Hexin

With the similar garden filled with vegetables, herbs, and spices, Hexin valued the distinctiveness and uniqueness of his heritage culture and appreciate the connections built through planting Chinese-origin vegetables. As the second-generation Chinese American child growing up amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Hexin did not have many chances to build strong ties with his heritage culture with only one time visit to mainland China in his five-year-old. This Chinese-origin vegetables planting experience supports Hexin to connect with his heritage culture through its legacy brought by his parents. In part, it is also a journey of self-discovery for him. Immersing in both cultures through family cultural engagements and practices, Hexin learned his way to value and appreciate diverse cultures and perspectives. After reading young Grace’s story, Yanhui wrote a letter to her and demonstrated profound understanding and appreciation of the uniqueness of her heritage cultural practices.

Similarly, Yanhui shared her letter to Grace Lin. She wrote,
Hi Grace Lin!

In this letter, I would like to talk about what I think about your experience with ugly vegetables and garden. I think that from this experience, you should learn it’s not always bad to be the odd one out. In the beginning of this story, everyone else had a pretty garden full of flowers and you didn’t. But later your neighbors were influenced by your differences and started to adapt to them. This is like how the Chinese developed in America. When the Chinese first came to America, they were treated like outcasts and slaves. Today programs like Chinese Immersion have developed and many Americans are learning the Chinese language and culture. This is what I think about your experience with the ugly vegetables.

Sincerely,
Yanhui

Compared to Hexin, Yanhui went beyond solely appreciating and honoring her heritage culture within the Chinese community but focusing on the dynamic interactions and transactions of the heritage cultural attributes with the U.S. local contexts. Yanhui demonstrated her strong appreciation to the “difference” of her family traditions and regarded them as unique cultural assets. In addition, Yanhui connected The Ugly Vegetable with the acculturation journey of early Chinese immigrants in the United States through associating with the long Chinese immigrant history.

From my findings, second-generation Chinese American children navigated the different cultural spaces and negotiated their differences and uniqueness in myriads ways. As people straddling in two cultures, my students grew up exploring their access to each culture and experiencing identities change in different point of their lives. Despite the
collective experience as Chinese American children who faced with challenges in identifying both cultures, students in my book club forged hybrid identities across barriers and bridges and formed a sense of belonging in their worlds.

**Conclusion**

This chapter answers the first research question of how second-generation Chinese American students negotiate meanings in response to contemporary Chinese American picture books in a community-based book club. During the reading and discussion of contemporary Chinese American picture books, students drew on their knowledge more from their family position including cultural practices at home, family traditions, family daily practices, interactions with parents and extended family back in China, and stories delivered by their parents. Moreover, students also drew on community position including schooling and friends-making experiences. Through reading and responding to culturally relevant texts, students demonstrated their diverse and nuanced cultural identities and practices within their families and communities.
Yixuan wrote: Our house has rice, bowl, chopsticks, umbrella, lunar calendar. [we use the calendar to] see the Chinese day, Chinese painting on bowls, rice to eat, easy to pick, umbrellas to give.
Homework (Poem)

Title: China and Me
Chinese is a language I speak.
The Great Wall is a place I tour.
Chinese New Year is a holiday I celebrate.

西游记 is a book I enjoy.
故宫 is another place I tour
I've been to 北京, 河北, 上海, 西安, and 杭州.

Chopsticks are a thing I use.
The Terracotta Soldiers are a view I admire.

泰山 is a beautiful mountain I climbed.
Pandas are an animal I love.
Red is my favorite color.
Ping Pong is a sport I enjoy.
China is a place I call home.
Figure 5.3 Xuanxuan’s Reflections After Reading Shanghai Messenger (Cheng, 2015)
Daniel Wang

Shanghai Messenger
(Family)

When I went to China, I saw 爷爷奶奶, and 姥姥。爷爷奶奶 gave me delicious food, and 姥姥 stayed with me for a part of my time in 连云港. 姥姥 lived in an apartment and we got her a goldfish that I fished myself. One of my mom's friends in 杭州 gave us food and I liked it except for the part about the frog legs (it tastes like chicken).

Figure 5.4 Hexin’s Reflection After Reading Shanghai Messenger (Cheng, 2015)
Figure 5.5 Hexin’s Garden with Asian Vegetables
CHAPTER 6
RESPONSES TO HISTORICAL FICTION TEXTS

This chapter addresses my second research question, which examined how students engaged in critical conversations related to race and the unique racialization of Chinese immigrants and their descendants in the United States. Students drew on their knowledge and experience from family, school, and community within the context of a community-based book club. In particular, this study investigated the responses of these students to xenophobia and Anti-Asian racism targeting individuals of Asian descent, especially of Chinese heritage, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the data collection for the dissertation, the book club meetings were held amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in which Asians, particularly those of Chinese descent, were subjected to significant racial stigmatization and harassment. Students in the book club were more or less influenced by the racialized dominant discourse. Thus, it is crucial to understand how the politicized COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing anti-Asian racism have influenced the lives of my students and people of Chinese descent in general. Although the students in my book club were not directly involved in racist harassment and crimes, as members of the Asian community living in a southern state where the legacy of slavery still lingers, they may still be negatively impacted psychologically in various ways.
As we read *Coolies* (Yin, 2003), *Brothers* (Yin, 2006), *Paper Son: Lee’s Journey to America* (*Tales of Young Americans*) (James, 2013), we discussed historical facts about Chinese Exclusion Act, COVID-19 pandemic relevant artwork, and other multimodal texts and multimedia resources. Students responded to these texts from a critical lens and drew from their knowledge on ethnicity, race, racism, slavery, and unjust incidents they heard about from their parents, community, and the internet. Students’ discussions during book club meetings provided opportunities for them to engage in critical discussions as they negotiated understandings regarding issues of injustice and inequity around race and equity. Additionally, students began to understand the distinctive ways Asian Americans were and are racialized in the United States, including xenophobia and anti-Asian racism. Moreover, students began to reflect on hate crimes targeting Chinese people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings in this chapter are organized in the following four themes: Negotiating Meanings around Race and Racism; Disrupting Historical and Dominant Discourses; the Emergence of Activist Stances for Chinese American Students; and Unresolved Tensions.

**Negotiating Meanings around Race and Racism**

The first theme introduces how students negotiated meanings related to racism and the historical racialization of Asian American people, as well as racialization during COVID-19 pandemic. During our reading and discussing of picture books and relevant extended readings, students recognized the unfair treatment of early Chinese laborers, immigrants, and Chinese Americans in the historical context. Students had evocations on why these unfair treatments happened to people of Chinese descendant and made connections with the hate crimes and anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic.
The subthemes related to students’ understanding of racism include Beyond Black/white Binary: Racism is “Human Nature”, Racism is Discrimination Based on Race and Skin Color, Understanding the Distinctive Racialization of Chinese Americans.

**Beyond Black/white Binary: Racism is “Human Nature”**

During our reading and discussion of historical narratives of early Chinese Americans, students recognized the unfair treatment of Chinese Americans in the stories. They gradually went beyond the Black/white Binary perspective and named these unfairnesses as racism. Students gained insights into the discrimination and racism faced by Asian Americans through reading a text set and drawing on relevant resources. Below, I introduce students’ literary responses relevant to their understanding of racism.

In our discussions of *Coolies* (Yin, 2003), *Brothers* (Yin, 2006), *Paper Son: Lee’s Journey to America* (Tales of Young Americans (James, 2013), students recognized the unfair treatment of Chinese workers including long hours working in harsh weather, lower payment compared to non-Chinese workers, and frequent violence from their bosses and non-Chinese workers. In particular, students responded to the exclusion of Chinese laborers with emerging awareness about racism. For example, when it came to the page in which people were gathering together for the celebration of the completion of the transcontinental railroad except Chinese workers, students had the following dialogue (see Figure 6.1).

Wenyu: What do you get from this page?

Hexin: The transcontinental railroad, they only showed certain people on celebration, not everyone.
Wenyu: Yes…

Hexin: All the Chinese workers are *left out*.

Wenyu: How do you think about this exclusion?

Yanhui: I feel sad because they [Chinese workers] did most of the work on the West side, and they *didn't get any credit*.

Hexin: The contribution made by Chinese workers was immense but not credited enough.

Xuanxuan: I feel like the *real workers* should be included in the picture. Alright, I think *we* build the railroad and *we* should be in the picture and not them. I think that’s how the workers feel like.

Yixuan: I also think that the Chinese will need to be in the photo because they did most of the work.

*Note: some phrases and words were italicized for their significance of understanding participants’ thoughts.*

The text read: ‘Wong and Shek stood back and watched the ceremony from behind the crowd of reporters and cameras. “We know,” Shek said to Wong. “Call us what you will, it is our hands that helped build the railroad.”’

All of the students acknowledged that Chinese workers were excluded and did not receive proper recognition for their contributions. It is worthy to mention that my students still had strong living through experience with the characters and actively put themselves into the stories during historical fiction reading. For example, when responding to the unfair treatment of Chinese laborers depicted in Coolies, Xuanxuan used “we” to describe the sufferings these laborers endured. Additionally, students
employed marginalized language including “left out” and “didn’t get any credit” to highlight the exclusion and devaluation of Chinese workers' contributions and experiences. By using this language, they displayed their understanding that these practices were unjust and displayed critical thinking about systemic racism and how it shaped the lives of Chinese Americans.

Then, I showed them the authentic celebration photo (Figure 6.2) that marked the completion of America’s first transcontinental railroad in 1869. The historical moment recorded in this photo has taken place in U.S. history. No single Chinese-looking laborers can be spotted in the historic photo. My students were familiar with the photo since they seen it in their textbook without realizing that Chinese laborers were purposely excluded from the celebration. This hidden history astonished my students and some of them began to recognize it as a form of racism. In particular, students began to realize that unfair treatment and discrimination not only targeted African Americans within the United States.

I asked students about possible reasons why Chinese workers were not invited to the celebration? Hexin, in his fifth grade, responded immediately, saying “racism”. Hexin added,

[Chinese laborers are] Cheap labor. We're getting paid less. Uh, racism. I need the stories to saying that racism isn't a new thing. Uh, that racism, isn't a new thing. And then it wasn't just African Americans getting discriminated against.

Through reading Coolies, Brothers, and Paper Son, students learned authentic historical facts about the unfairness and injustice Chinese laborers suffered during their building of
transcontinental railroad, Hexin learned that it is not only African Americans who were and are discriminated against in the dominant discourse, but Chinese Americans and other ethnic groups are racialized in unique ways. Hexin used “we” and “I” to demonstrate his living through experience with the Chinese laborers and showed his strong feelings to the unfair treatment. He also actively made connection to the current anti-Asian racism during the pandemic to state the “racism is not a new thing”. This newness understanding of the unique racialization of Asian Americans demonstrated Hexin’s lack of understanding of racism targeting Asian Americans and his prior belief on Black/white binary.

Yixuan then joined the conversation maintaining that “ethnic groups” are generally the people who get discriminated against. He believed that the reason for Chinese laborers being treated differently is because “they are from the ethnic group”. Echoing Yixuan and Hexin’s discussion on the Coolies, Yanhui connected the story with anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic and said, “so like the COVID racism. Things like those like murder. Um, because they are blaming innocent people. Like in Atlanta or someplace, a lot of people were Killed Unreasonably”. During the conversation, Yanhui connected the story with a hate crime during the pandemic and expressed her strong emotion with using “murder”, “racism”, “killed”. “innocent” and “unreasonably”. All these demonstrated Yanhui’s understanding of racism targeting Asian Americans with historical and contemporary relevance. During our reading of historical Chinese American stories, students not only made meaning of the stories, but also actively associated the unfair treatment of Chinese Americans to varied levels of hate crimes or incidents of anti-Asian racism they learned from their day-to-day lives.
Yixuan, Hexin, and Yanhui’s statements and conversations broadened the Black/white binary paradigm that heavily shapes the lives of people in the United States. They began to understand Chinese Americans, as with other ethnic groups, are facing with different kinds of racism and discrimination in the United States, especially during COVID-19 pandemic. It is worth noting that my students had strong living through experiences with the Chinese laborers in historical fiction stories and named the unfair treatment of Chinese Americans as racism. Furthermore, students actively drew connections between historical instances of racism and the anti-Asian racism prevalent during the pandemic, advocating for fair and equitable treatment of Asian Americans.

**Racism is Discrimination Based on Race and Skin Color**

This subtheme demonstrates how students understood distinctive historical underpinnings of discrimination and racism against Asian American communities and how White privilege shaped and shapes the experiences of Asian Americans. Even after abandoning segregation and discriminatory laws in the United States and Europe, White privilege is still prevalent in more covert forms and shapes every aspect of individuals’ lives. Through reading the picture books and extended reading on Chinese American history, students in my book club gradually probed into the question, “why Chinese workers are treated differently” and started to doubt the dominant narratives through naming and questioning the hidden White privilege inferred in these picture books.

While reading books about the construction of the railroad, the children learned that Chinese laborers were the only people who had to place dynamite underground during the building of the transcontinental railroad. Yanhui responded angrily,
It’s unfair. It’s unfair how Americans are not trying to send an American down there. And they [American] make orders like somebody going down there, I don't care how old you are. I don't care who you are, just go down there.

Yanhui not only recognized the unfair treatment targeting Chinese laborers, but also started to question why other ethnic groups especially White Americans were not forced to work in this dangerous environment. Then I asked why Americans were not sent down to place the dynamite. She then added to the conversation, “because Americans don't want to waste their people.” Similarly, in the story of *Brothers* (Yin, 2006), Chinese people were not allowed to leave Chinatown or attend American schools. When I asked, “who is dominant in the story?” Yanhui said without any doubt “White Americans”. She named racism as based on race and skin color and recognized who is dominating the discourse in these stories and how these unique racial discourse shape Chinese laborers’ lives. Yanhui’s response differed significantly from that of other students, as Yixuan and Xuanxuan made personal connections between the unfair treatment and their feelings of fear and unease.

Hexin associated the story with current realities faced by immigrant workers from Mexico. He learned from the news that immigrant workers from Mexico and other Latinx countries often take jobs “the American people don't want to take”. He displayed concern for immigrant workers especially under the Trump regime when America “set up the wall in the border of U.S. and Mexico” and separated families. Yixuan also associated Chinese immigrant worker history with slavery saying, “I think that slaves should have never existed because the African people have their own family, and they don’t want to be so far away from their family”. Hexin made connections with the unfair treatment of
Mexican immigrants and how White privilege under Trump regime shaped the minoritized groups in today’s world. The connections made by students with the story highlighted the value of historical narratives with racialized themes, as they provided insights into students' understanding of present events and imparted moral lessons to them.

Significantly, during our reading of Coolies, Yanhui suggested that Americans did not want others to know how they treated the Chinese. Then I asked, “why does this kind of historical facts not get taught in school?” Yanhui answered in lower voices, “Because they want Americans to look good”. Yanhui’s words exhibited her understanding of the fact that the textbooks are hiding the truth about how the Chinese were treated in the historical context. From Yanhui, who were included or omitted from the historical curriculum were decided by White Americans in order to favor and solidate their White dominance. Yanhui could not explain why she came up with this thought. However, from my interviews with Yanhui and her parents, I believed the dominant racial discourse in the southern city (her parents referred it as “preservative”) with unique legacy of segregation did pose negative influence on her family to some extent. All these narratives from her parents and her community navigating lives as ethnic minorities helped to shape Yanhui’s understandings of her White counterparts.

Understanding the Distinctive Racialization of Chinese Americans

This subtheme explores students’ understanding of the unique forms of racism targeting Chinese Americans in the United States including xenophobia, othering, and perpetual foreigner stereotype. In particular, the perpetual foreigner stereotype pertains
to the phenomenon where Chinese immigrants, including Chinese Americans who have been residing in the United States for multiple generations, are consistently perceived as foreigners and are not recognized as having a sense of belonging or rootedness in the United States.

During our reading and discussion of *Paper Son* and its historical background related to the Chinese Exclusion Act (CEA), students learned about the *perpetual foreigner* stereotype which posits Asian Americans as “others” in relations to White dominant society (Lee et al., 2008). Focusing on the expulsion of Chinese Americans under the practice of CEA, Yanhui said, “I think that it was unfair to kick the Chinese out of somewhere they used to call home just because more of them were getting more and more successful which made them become a threat for American workers”. Yanhui unpacked the CEA with several layers of understanding. She knew the CEA is racialized law exclusively to Chinese immigrants and their descendants. Moreover, Yanhui expressed her understanding towards the expulsion under CEA as an act of ruling out Chinese Americans citizenship since they were forced to move out of their “home”. Most importantly, Yanhui started to unpack the xenophobia which is historically associated with derogatory *yellow peril* stereotypes and prejudices towards Asian people. She maintained that being successful (getting more jobs) is one of the major reasons for Chinese laborers being excluded in the U.S. considering the hostile and sentiments invoked by White Americans and European workers. As the second-generation Chinese American, Yanhui could intentionally or unintentionally be regarded as successful, thus she naturally used “more successful” to describe Chinese Americans.
Another example is while we were reading *Coolies*, I asked, “what are the possible reasons why Chinese workers were not invited to the celebration?” Yanhui responded, “I think one reason is that since it was built in America, Americans thought it was embarrassing that they had to get Chinese people to build the railroad.” Yanhui then confirmed her assumption through reading *Brothers* (Yin, 2006) and knew how Chinese American experiences in the U.S. were shaped by the dominant society. She came with a conclusion that “American hate Chinese.” Then she added, “I just kind of assumes that American think Chinese steal the gold and the jobs” after combining all information she received through readings. Yanhui recognized the labor tensions was one of the reasons Americans felt threatened and excluded Chinese immigrants in the early times. And the reasons for the feeling of being threatened could be complicated with the common mindset including dislike of foreigners and xenophobia among American people.

In book club meetings, students – to different degrees – gradually formed their understandings of racism, White privilege, and the unique forms of racialization of Chinese immigrants and their descendants. Part of this learning occurred as students responded to questions about who made the rules presented in these stories, who suffered, and what were the reasons for their sufferings.

**Disrupt Historical & Dominant Discourse**

Students disrupted dominant racialized discourses about Asian/Chinese Americans based on historical accounts and the COVID-19 pandemic. Subthemes included: (1) Chinese Exclusion Act Legalizes Violence and Racism Against Chinese People, which demonstrated how students make meaning of the racialization of Chinese
immigrants under the racialized law in the United States and how they developed narratives to challenge the historical ones; (2) Back to Yellow Peril – COVID-19 and Anti-Asian Racism, which demonstrated students responses to anti-Asian racism through reading a series of antiracist cartoon artwork.

**Chinese Exclusion Act Legalizes Violence and Racism Against Chinese People**

Through discussion and reflection, students shared their voices, thoughts, and emotions surrounding the CEA, as they recognized the severe forms of racism imposed on Chinese immigrants. Some students responded to harsh immigration policies during CEA and made connections with immigration today in the U.S. Responding to the racialized law, students said,

Yixuan: every single Chinese should be able to go to the U.S.

Yanhui: Now, people don't have to try and sneak around the government and say that they are American, not Chinese. I think that the immigration policies before were too strict and was not very necessary to interrogate a kid. It is better now because everyone is free to immigrate now.

Xuanxuan: Now, Chinese immigrating here, the U.S., don't have to stay under the shadow and stay in their house forever.

Students actively compared the immigration policy in present times with the past and talked about how things are better now. It is true that immigration is not as impossible as it was during the time of the CEA. However, students were still lack of enough knowledge of immigration policies in present times. For example, Yixuan and Yanhui
said that everyone should or can immigrate while there is still a long and complicated citizenship process for immigrants. It is questionable to observe the limited awareness of immigration policies among students, considering that they all come from Chinese immigrant families.

Hexin displayed an ambiguous understanding of racism in our earlier readings of *Coolies* and *Brothers*. When interacting with the extended reading on historical backgrounds of CEA, he began to realize that the CEA validated the oppression and violence against immigrants and their descendants in the United States. He shared that,

My thoughts are that the Chinese were being exposed towards racism that they had not previously felt during the building of the Transcontinental Railroad, but they were being attacked with *a much greater form of racism that became legal* under the Chinese Exclusion Act.

Similarly, Yanhui added, “I think that it was very unfair to sign the Chinese Exclusion Act because it is unfair to discriminate a group of people based on their race.” Hexin and Yanhui recognized that the CEA is a racialized law which positioned Chinese Americans on an even lower racial ladder. The CEA posed severe forms of racism and unfairness targeting Chinese Americans.

Hexin then added, “The Chinese had to adapt to these conditions or leave the United States. Some may have left but others have adapted. Lying became common to remain innocent.” Hexin connected with the *Paper Son* story in which Chinese immigrants who were born in China needed to purchase documentation from Chinese who had already received United States citizenship to prove that they are blood relatives
so that they could reenter the United States while still under harsh investigations in immigrant stations. He responded that Chinese Americans at that time were too powerless to fight against the whole system. The only solution is to “adapt” or “leave” the place “they used to call home”. When reflecting on his parents' immigrant stories to the U.S., Hexin mentioned that he was aware that his father came to pursue further studies while his mother accompanied him. However, Hexin did not establish a personal connection to the immigration experience or openly discuss his family's immigration story. As a second-generation Chinese American child, it appeared that Hexin was reluctant to engage in conversations about his family's immigration history.

Back to Yellow Peril – COVID-19 and Anti-Asian Racism

During book discussions, the students attended to anti-Asian racism and made with their lived experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, Chinese Americans suffered a double pandemic which included the anxiety related to catching the virus and fears related to going out and being targeted by hate speech and violence.

In one of our sessions, I introduced students with COVID-19 pandemic, hate crimes targeting Chinese and other Asian communities, and protests organized by local Columbia Chinese community through artwork and news. During our reading of antiracist artwork made by a Korean-Swedish artist, Lisa Wool-Rim Sjöblom. Students reflected on the first time they heard people refer to the “Wuhan virus” or “China virus”, Hexin recalled his first-time hearing about these racial slurs:
Uh, it supposed to be a very *innocent* day. Uh, fifth grade me in the science and social studies class. We watched CNN 10. And then I heard of it. At that time, I did not take it very seriously. Just coming out, just go away.

Hexin used “innocent” to reference the fact that it was a regular day in school, and he did not expect to be positioned as he was while doing a regular school activity – watching CNN. As Hexin mentioned during our interview that he was the only Asian boy in his class, it could be imagined how the racial slur – “China virus” automatically positioned Hexin as a victim. In short, residents and individuals with Chinese descent are contaminated with the virus and have a possibility to spread it. Hexin later shared that he felt ashamed and embarrassed because the virus was associated with China and a Chinese city. It also places blame on China and Chinese people as the virus was assumed to have originated in China. Thus, Chinese people were positioned as the cause of the problem. Hexin described his social studies teacher as not providing any kind of antiracist intervention for him or for the whole class. The discomfort of this Chinese American student was ignored. Yanhui reported “I just googled ‘coronavirus’ and the [term] ‘Wuhan virus’ [was] coming out”. In both examples, students were just doing ordinary things – watching CNN, Googling – and they encountered these racist memes, words, and slurs. It is their everydayness to negotiate with stereotyped and racialized experiences. However, their schools and families, according to our interviews, were not actively providing emotional or race learning support.

My students maintained that calling the virus a “China virus” or “Wuhan virus” was racist. They were angry and disappointed in the wide-spread racial slurs which scapegoated Chinese.
Yanhui: I don't think it [Wuhan virus] should be used. I felt that it was wrong to call COVID-19 as the Wuhan virus, because it's kind of racist. My family thought it was wrong too. I felt very angry and disappointed that everyone was blaming it on the Asians. My parents were also angry.

Hexin: Yeah, I agree with Grace and Wuhan virus should not be used.

Xuanxuan: I also felt sad that American people are blaming Chinese people that they started the virus.

Yixuan: I learned it first from my parents. They told me that it should not be called that…I think that they should not be doing that stuff to Asians.

Students shared that they developed an understanding of the inappropriateness of racial slurs through conversations with their families. It was evident that their parents openly discussed these terms in front of their children and made intentional efforts to help them negotiate the negativity of the racial slurs. Additionally, students expressed strong emotion and maintained that these names should not be used because it targeted a certain group of people and scapegoat the entire Chinese and people of Chinese descent, which is not fair. Some of them regarded it as a racist behavior because it blamed the virus to a specific group of people. All students maintained that racial slurs should not be used and spread.

With continued reading and discussion, students recognized this as a behavior of racial stigmatization and called these names as “racist”.
Yanhui: I think it’s racist because it kind of 针对 (targeting) Chinese people.

Hexin: It is definitely racism because you’re blaming it to one entire group of people.

Yanhui used “kind of” to demonstrate her politeness while dealing with the harsh stereotype and discrimination targeting Chinese Americans, which left spaces for me to think about the race learning for Chinese American students. and Hexin mentioned that the naming and relevant hate speeches were targeting a certain group of people and blamed the Chinese for creating and spreading the virus. They recognized these as racist behaviors and said no to the racial stigmatization of the entire group of people. Furthermore, Yanhui associated the anti-Asian racism with the Atlanta spa shooting in which six women of Asian descent were killed and she challenged the racialized dominant discourse as follows.

Yanhui: And first of all, it's not China's fault that Covid originates from there. And second of all, it's not China’s fault that the COVID still going through in the U.S. and third of all, those are not the people that caused the virus, why are you going to kill them?

Yanhui’s counternarratives on anti-Asian racism wiped out the racial stigmatization and victimization of Chinese and people of Chinese descent. For Yanhui, she actively deconstructed the dominant discourse which depicting Chinese people as virus carriers and threats, especially in the face of COVID-19 pandemic. Her responses were strong and clear and influenced other students positively. Similarly, disrupting the dominant discourse which degraded Chinese people as the inferior citizens who spread virus, Hexin
mentioned many people brought back the virus from traveling to European and other countries and spread the virus to their neighbors and community.

During the book club meeting, students openly discussed their encounters with racist memes and slurs targeting Chinese residents and how they navigated and responded to these pervasive racial stereotypes and discrimination, which demonstrated Chinese American students’ ability in dealing with the difficult talks around anti-Asian racism and the necessary in engaging these students in learning about racism and the racialized realities faced Chinese and Asian Americans communities.

**Chinese American Students Emergent Activist Stance**

As our reading and discussions continued, students learned about the multiple protest demonstrations initiated by Asian/Chinese communities and joined by diverse ethnic groups to stand up against discrimination, racism, and violence targeting people of Asian descent during the COVID-19 pandemic. A protest about stopping Asian hate initiated by the local Chinese community was particularly inspiring to the students while in the past students had said things such as “when I did hear about the hate crimes...I wasn't very concerned that it was going to happen to me” (Hexin, 2022) and “There's like nothing I should do” to fight against the anti-Asian racism (Yanhui, 2022).

Yanhui stated that she would “tell everyone that COVID-19 most likely did not come from China” and encouraged us all to “spread the word that you should not blame Chinese people for it”. In addition to disrupt the racialized dominant discourse, Yanhui expressed that she would take actions to spread the message that “you should not blame Chinese people” or target Asian people for the virus. We can see the transition of
Yanhui’s responses from prior meetings “there’s nothing I should do” to “spread the word” through learning about the stop Asian hate protests organized by Asian/Chinese communities around the United States.

In responding to a series of brutal hate crimes, Yanhui advocated with a firm voice:

Sometimes if you don't get treated fairly. Stand up for yourself. Don't just accept it. If you really want something, you have to fight for it. Can't just sit there and wait for it to happen.

In responding to the hate speeches and crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic, Yanhui bravely expressed her thoughts to “spread the word” and gradually developed her emerging activist stance to advocate for justice. Yanhui assumed a leadership role when responding to the hate crimes targeting Chinese Americans. She employed assertive and impactful language, such as “stand up” and “fight for” to advocate for a resolute pursuit of justice and equality.

Hexin exhibited more complex and mixed feelings when responding to hate speeches and crimes during COVID-19 pandemic. Hexin said,

Spreading the word that Asians did not cause COVID-19 would get situation worse. I’ll use social media to state the fact. I feel a lot more confident on the internet than the real life.
It is important to highlight Hexin's unease when it comes to actively engaging in physical advocacy for justice, which was distinctive from Yanhui’s strong resolute pursuit of racial justice. Hexin explained his fears about making the problem worse:

Racism can’t be prevented, but you can make the problem less worse. You can talk to someone and ask why. You can use why as an argumentation to that person. Well, making the racist person angry would only lead to this person stick to this belief more and more. Calm would have more chance to change. saying your own reason for right or wrong in a more calm [calmer] manner would be good.

During our book club meetings, similar to Yixuan, Hexin shared a perspective that the question “why” should be utilized as a starting point to interrogate the dominant discourse surrounding racism. Different from Yanhui’s statement on standing up and fighting for justice, Hexin advocated for a composed and reasoned approach, emphasizing the value of calm and rational conversation. He believed that engaging in calm and logical arguments provides a more effective means of communication and could possibly change racism.

During discussions on the hate crimes targeting Asian Americans amid the COVID-19 pandemic, students expressed two distinct responses. Yanhui emerged as a passionate advocate, stating her unwavering determination to stand up and fight for justice. On the other hand, Hexin conveyed his concerns to public announcement on Stop Asian Hate and advocated for calm and peaceful conversations with individuals exhibiting racist behavior. These two distinct responses among students surfaced when
they became aware of the protests initiated by the local Asian American community, as many of them had previously been indifferent to the racist hate crimes. The transition experienced by students in developing an understanding of anti-Asian racism underscores the importance of actively engaging them in learning about racism and the racialized realities encountered by Chinese and Asian American communities.

**Unresolved Tensions around Discussion of Race and Racism**

Second-generation Chinese American children displayed unresolved and ongoing racialized realities and confusions around racism and stereotypes. As aforementioned, the book club was set up in early 2019. Three of the participants have been reading with me for nearly three years at the time of collecting data. I consider my students to have made significant progress in understanding racism and the distinctive ways Asian/Chinese American people are racialized in historical and current contexts. However, with limited racially just education provided in school and home settings, tensions and larger issues around race and racism still permeate every aspect of students’ lives. The subthemes are: (1) Misconception of Racism & Learning History in School, (2) Developing Hypothesis for Racism; (3) Model Minority Stereotype Still Perpetuates Students’ Lives.

**Misconception of Racism & Learning History in School**

This subtheme sheds light on students’ confusion surrounding racism in the contemporary world and how social studies classes fails to adequately address issues of race. Students expressed a sense of disconnection between the historical events they learn about in school and the current societal challenges they witness around them. The
learning about history in school did not support them to fully understanding and engaging with the complexities of race and racism.

During our conversations based on *Brothers* (Yin, 2006) in our book club, Yixuan argued that “there is no such thing [racism] now”. He noted that his social studies teacher had taught them that “racism only exists in the past days”. Similarly, Hexin reflected on his learning about slavery in his elementary school and how these learning impacted his understanding of racism and said,

I learned about discrimination and racism when I first learned about slavery in elementary school. Back then, I thought racism and discrimination are wrong but I’m happy it ended.

For Chinese American students at their 4th and 5th grade, it is common for them to gain knowledge about slavery. However, it seemed that their learning about slavery at school did not directly raise their awareness of racism. Hexin used “ended” to articulate his understanding of racism following his learning of slavery in school, which raised questions regarding the extent to which teachers make connections between past and present forms of racism in classroom.

Additionally, Yanhui expressed her disappointment for the deemphasizing of Chinese American experiences in school social studies curriculum, which negatively impact students’ understanding of their minoritized world. She shared,

I don't think in the social studies textbook when we learned about this *Coolies* like how the Chinese were treated. I have learned about it in school, and about the
Chinese helping, but they never taught me that the Chinese did not get credit for helping.

In particular, Yanhui stated that she did not learn about how Chinese Americans were treated in historical contexts, especially the discrimination and racism placed on these people. Only positive facts were selected to be exposed to students. This exclusion of early Chinese struggles and heroism cut off the possibility of students’ engagement in critical conversations on social justice and racism which continuously impacted Asian groups in the U.S.

**Developing Hypotheses to Account for Racism**

**Racism as a Mental Health Issue.** During our book club meetings, a unique perspective emerged among students that regarded racism as a mental illness and psychological disorder. For example, in responding to the hate crimes targeting Chinese and Asians during the pandemic, Hexin responded that it would make the situation worse if spreading the word directly and make the racists angry. Hexin believed that “racism can be prevented” if proper actions were employed. For example, he responded that he would “use the social media to state the fact” about the pandemic, which could be a safer way for him to express himself without exposing himself in the spotlight and subjected to any possible retaliation. Hexin believed that communication calmly with the racists was an efficient solution to both parties and believed that “making the racist person angry would only lead to this person stick to this belief more and more”.

Additionally, Hexin said, “I think people should do the research like why the hate crimes happen and it can be prevented”. Hexin believed that hate crimes can be prevented
if innocent people conducted thorough research. He placed more responsibility on people who are subjected to racism and thought it was their responsibility to avoid the scenario of being the targets of hate speeches and crimes. This is not a single story when people talked about racism and hate crimes concerning people of color (POC), as it indicates that it is the POC’s responsibility to avoid being the targets in hate crimes, as well as racism can be treated and remediated using approaches identical to those used in treating other illnesses. However, it is worth mentioning that this perspective was not commonly held among students in my book club. Hexin’s words also raised questions about racial education for students of color. For students who have not received adequate education on race and racism, there is a likelihood for them to internalize stereotypes and biases.

**Language Proficiency as an Explanation for Racism.** Another tension is the fact that students was still unpacking the underneath reasons for racism and walking through the concept that the language proficiency is an explanation for racism. For example, when we were reading Brothers (Yin, 2006) and learning about Chinese American experiences under the Chinese Exclusion Act, student learned about the fact that Chinese immigrants were not allowed to attend the American schools for the racial segregation. Hexin responded, “they were not allowed to go to school. Maybe they could but vast majority of them can’t understand English”. Similarly, Yanhui also responded to segregation with assumption of language concern, “They didn’t speak English and they can’t communicate.” Hexin and Yanhui regarded English language proficiency as the leading factor influencing early Chinese immigrants’ schooling and experiences in the United States. Students’ hypothesis on the association between English proficiency and racial discrimination once again granted the power of the English language and the entire
system. This ideology downplays the systemic racism, which not only targets and adversely affects Chinese Americans but also has negative influence on the entire immigrant population. Based on the students' understanding, there is a tendency to attribute individual failure in the United States to personal shortcomings rather than acknowledging the role of systemic barriers that may have restricted opportunities for people of color.

Colorblindness. When they first started discussing the books, some students had previously adopted a Black/white binary believing that they could escape racism, which only involved Black and White people. Some students were still hesitant to speak about race and regarded race and racism as taboo subjects. For example, Hexin resisted using words relevant to skin color and race in our book club meetings. During our reading of Watercress (Wang, 2021), when he read the sentence “as the child of Chinese immigrants, growing up in a small, mostly White town in Ohio...”, he chose not to read out directly “White” and changed it into “ethnic minority [majority]”. Then Hexin added, “I don't really like it calling people by their skin color”. When I asked him the reasons behind his thoughts, he replied that, “because that was a very controversial word [white]”. Hexin shared that he learned it from the school and thought calling people [white] is racist so that he chose not to distinguish people’s skin color and treat everyone “equally”, which would perpetrate racism since colorblindness negate the occurrence of racism (Alexander, 2020; Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

On another occasion, Hexin still chose not to talk about race when asked about his fifth grade class:
Wenyu: could you describe the racial demographics to me in your class?

Hexin: Okay hold on... [18" pause; It’s] difficult to say haven't really bothered thinking [about that].

Wenyu: So could you describe the ethnicity and maybe some features of your friends?

Hexin: Uh, I prefer to not talk about that.

Wenyu: Can you give me a reason why you not talking about the racial demographics?

Hexin: This is from myself because racism is wrong.

Hexin was reluctant to talk about the demographics of his class and used “not bothered thinking” to report that he was not paying attention to skin color, racial differences. and the underneath distinctive power relations. However, this colorblindness approach would serve to solidate racial hierarchy and used to “diminish sensitivity to racism” (Plaut et al., 2018, p. 204). Colorblindness could potentially result in students’ indifference to the discrimination and racism.

**Model Minority Stereotypes**

Model Minority Stereotypes (MMS) permeate every aspect of my students’ lives. Despite unpacking and discussing the various ways people of Chinese descendant were/are racialized in historical and contemporary contexts. Many participant families believed that they could transcend their minority status by having their children become doctors or lawyers. Based on my interviews and interactions with the students, they appear to have internalized their parents’ American dreams as career goals.
For example, Hexin shared during our interview when we were talking about schoolwork,

“My goals of every single report card, there's an A on it. My goal is to get at least a 95”.

“My dad wants me to become a doctor”.

“I try to work hard on grades to impress my father. I tried to be once [score below 90] and well...let's say he wasn't very happy”.

“It gives me a chance to have a future”.

“I wanted to have a job. I just wanted to feel like at what it's like to be”.

In order to meet the high expectation of his parents, in fifth grade, Hexin was practicing swimming, piano, and flute on weekdays, and on weekends he was learning Mandarin Chinese and math, and attending English and Chinese book club sessions. Also, in addition to learning languages, musical instruments, and swimming, Hexin was one of 12 students selected to participate in an advanced math competition program at his school. Receiving good grades on schoolwork, entering top universities, and obtaining good jobs were common life goals for students in my book club. Bearing the high expectations from their parents and school, students of Chinese descent often have limited opportunities to experience a carefree childhood and to develop their own agency. The desire for transcending social status and cultural emphasis on filial piety may plant the seeds of the idea that children could sacrifice their own interests and passion to pursue careers with high economic value. The students in my book club are significantly influenced by the model minority myth. Their achievements and successes can inadvertently reinforce the stereotype, without fully recognizing the negative implications
that come with it. This perpetuation of the model minority stereotype can contribute to increased racial tensions within the Asian American community and among different ethnic groups.

**Conclusion**

This chapter addresses the second research question of how second-generation Chinese American students (re)negotiate their understandings of race, racism, and social justice issues faced with Chinese Americans in the southern United States through reading historical fiction story and relevant texts. As we read *Coolies* (Yin, 2003), *Brothers* (Yin, 2006), *Paper Son: Lee’s Journey to America* (*Tales of Young Americans* (James, 2013), historical facts about Chinese Exclusion Act, COVID-19 pandemic relevant artwork, and other multimodal texts and multimedia resources, students’ unpacked racism as human nature and discrimination based on race and skin color. Along our reading and discussion, they gradually understood the distinctive racialization of Chinese Americans in historical and contemporary relevance. Findings also demonstrated that students actively generated their narratives to disrupt the historical and dominant Discourses and developed their emergent activist stances to relieve racism. Additionally, it is significant to note that the students’ learning about racism was not a one-time shot, instead, it was an ongoing and dynamic process. There is a need for continuous education and self-reflection due to students’ self-generated narratives with presumptions and explanations surrounding racism. It was evident that the students’ perspectives were impacted by colorblindness and the model minority stereotype, highlighting the necessity for critical examination and awareness of these dominant racial narratives.
Figure 6.1 Chinese Laborers in the Transcontinental Railroad Completion Celebration
Figure 6.2 Historical Moment of the Transcontinental Railroad Completion Celebration in 1869
CHAPTER 7
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

Muted Cries

Chinese scholars banned and arrested, deemed underhanded,
Students reprimanded for speaking Chinese, causing pain,
Whose grandma was assaulted in San Francisco’s Chinatown.
Vincent Chen beaten to death; his kin left to astound.

Six Asian women shot for being Chinese at the wrong time,
Then what is right? Is speaking one’s language a crime?
We have mouths but are not permitted to speak out loud,
We have eyes but see only suffering in the crowd.

We have souls but our worth and values constantly scrutinized,
We have history months but only holidays showcase our plight.
Blinded souls with the loudest voices,
We cry inside but remain silent, even in death our choices.

(Wenyu Guo, 2023)

In the face of the ongoing anti-Asian racism drama that has surged since the
Trump regime, I wrote this poem in order to remember the days and absurdity with my
eyes. Asian Americans are the fastest-growing minority group in the U.S. (Budiman &
Ruiz, 2021; Taylor, 2012). However, Asian Americans are still invisible in the K-12
school curriculum (NCES, 2013, 2015a; Poon, 2014; Pang & Nelson, 2006) and U.S.
history curriculum (An, 2016, 2022; Hartlep & Scott, 2016; Heilig, Brown, & Brown,
2012). Discussions and studies within critical race theory paid more attention to the
experiences of African Americans and Latinx individuals, neglecting students of
Asian/Chinese descent. The Bubble-Up Book Club since 2019, and this qualitative
research project aim to recenter and forefront Asian American experiences, Chinese Americans in particular, through reading and discussing culturally authentic picture books and relevant supplementary material, as well as sharing our racial experiences, to no longer leave Chinese Americans hidden in curriculum with the hope of transcending invisibility to visibility within a community-based book club.

Building on AsianCrit (Museus, 2014), reader response theory (Brooks & Browne, 2012), and critical literacy perspective (Lewison et al., 2002; Luke, 2012; Vasquez, 2017), this study explored how second-generation Chinese American students engage with the CRCL and relevant supplementary material, including contemporary and historical narratives that depict the lived experiences and historical accounts of Chinese immigrants. Furthermore, this study examined how students engage in critical conversations around race, anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the unique racialization of Chinese immigrants and their descendants in the U.S. within the context of a community-based book club. Situated within a critical theory paradigm, I employed a single-site, collective case study to explore Chinese American students’ experiences as they navigate distinctive cultural norms and negotiate cultural and racial identities through literacy engagement.

**Discussion**

This critical reader response study encouraged second-generation Chinese American students to engage in critical transactions with culturally relevant texts within

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11 In the U.S., second generation refers to the American-born children of foreign-born parents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012)
the book club. This case study research expanded upon CSRRT (Brooks & Browne, 2012) by looking at second-generation Chinese American students’ literary responses in both historical and contemporary settings. For another, this study extends CSRRT by incorporating critical literacy perspective and practice (Lewison et al., 2002; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004, 2019) into students’ reading and discussion of texts, leading students transcending their Black/white binary paradigm and transforming their invisibility. Last but not least, this study expanded upon AsianCrit (Museus & Iftikar, 2013) by exploring second-generation Chinese American students’ literary responses.

**Students’ Literary Responses Situated Within/Beyond CSRRT**

In this study, situated within CSRRT, students generated their literary responses mainly from their familial, school, and racial experiences. The findings of this study demonstrated that students’ literary responses to contemporary culturally relevant texts were more from family and community positions. Students’ literary responses to historical fiction picture books were primarily from ethnic group position. It is important to note that students’ literary evocations and responses, in this study, were highly connected to the textual features of selected picture books (Rosenblatt, 1978; Brooks & Brown, 2012) as readers and texts are both valued in equal and transactional ways. In the following section, I discuss three major positions of students’ literary responses within CSRRT.

During our reading of contemporary Chinese American picture books, students responded to the texts mainly from family and community positions, in which students “tapped into the familial aspects of their culture” and “situated themselves as members of
families” (Brooks & Brown, 2012, p. 81). For this study, family is a primary cultural domain for students to acquire their heritage language, engage in cultural practices, and uphold family traditions. Students’ literary responses situated in family positions were mainly drawing from the following familial aspects: heritage traditions and practices that family preserves (e.g., specific cultural attributes and family traditions), Chinese heritage objects family keeps at home setting (e.g., Buddhism statues in Hexin’s home), transnational experiences (e.g., visiting China), daily interactions with their parents, influence of their parents’ distinctive cultural identities.

For community position, different from Brooks and Browne’s (2012) study, students in this study mainly drew on their experiences from their schools, instead of other community spaces. Brooks & Browne (2012) described the community position as it emerges when students talk about various types of institutions including churches, schools, corner stores, etc. In this study, since all students were from Chinese immigrant families and lived in suburban areas. Compared to African American student participants in Brooks and Browne’s (2012) study, school experiences have become a crucial resource for students, enabling them to effectively engage with and respond to picture books. However, different from urbanized environment, students in my book club had limited access to other institutional spaces. Aside from the fact that most students reside in suburban areas, some families do not practice any particular religion belief or participate in community events. Therefore, schools become students’ major community that they drew from to generate their literary responses.

In this study, students’ Ethnic Group position became apparent when they engaged with the recurring textual theme of confronting racism depicted in both historical
fiction stories and COVID-19 pandemic racialized narratives. From the Ethnic Group position, students’ talk of the “we” which was grounded in their language to seek association with their historical counterparts and bridge connection to contemporary life. For example, during our reading of Coolies (Yin, 2003), Brothers (Yin, 2006), Paper Son (James, 2013), students used “we” to showcase their affiliations with the Chinese laborers’ experience and express their frustration towards injustice and racism. As the discussion intensified and spiraled into various directions related to ethnicity, students recognized the unique ways in which Chinese Americans were subjected to racial discrimination in the historical context and the current surge of anti-Asian racism and violence during the pandemic, leading to the emergence of their activist stance.

**Critical Literacy Facilitates Multidimensional Literary Responses**

This study extends Brooks and Browne’s culturally situated reader response (2012) by incorporating critical literacy perspective and practice (Lewison et al., 2002; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004, 2019) into students’ reading and discussion of texts, fostering students transcend their Black/white Binary Paradigm and transform their invisibility within their racial narratives. Critical reading provided my participants with an opportunity to explore not only the word but also their own cultural and minoritized worlds. During our reading of the contemporary and historical fiction narratives, I encouraged my participants to move beyond a surface level engagement with the texts. Rather than solely making meaning of the texts and unpacking the stories, participants were asked to question, disrupt, and emancipate the texts by making connections to a larger sociocultural context. By doing so, my participants were able to develop deeply critical understanding of the texts, themselves, and the world around them. That is to say,
in this study, participants not only drew on their prior knowledge from their family and community, but also read from a critical stance to question the white supremacy, disrupted racialized discourse, and actively weaved their counternarratives with their authentic racial experiences. Namely, participants in the book club were not only reading alongside the texts as meaning-makers, but they were also creating a new space to critique the texts and examine the world with their experiences.

It is worth mentioning that students had Black/white binary paradigm deeply rooted in their orientation which negatively influenced their understanding of Chinese American experiences. During the book club meetings, I asked question, “whose voice is heard/represented in the story and whose not? Who benefited and who did not? How Chinese immigrants were treated unfairly and why?” to encourage students to go beyond the texts and eventually to push beyond their Black/white binary perspective. During the process, participants started to name the racism as “discrimination based on race and ethnicity”, question their school contents, “I didn’t learn it [Chinese laborers’ stories] in social studies class”, and advocate for racial literacy, “school should teach about truth”. Furthermore, in response to anti-Asian racism and hate crimes, participants took on a more activist stance, advocating “united all people”, “stand up for yourself” to “fight back” injustice. The transitions were obvious from my participants’ holding Black/white binary paradigm to gradually acquiring an activist stance.

**Students Lack Connection to Picture Books**

Although the selected picture books have been repeatedly and thoroughly examined, due to the limited number of Chinese American cultural authentic and relevant
literature, the selected books still lack diversity in their representations of Chinese Americans and fail to capture the nuanced differences among individuals within this community. Some picture books illustrate Chinese Americans as newcomers and minimize their experiences solely as new immigrants adjusting to dominant American society. Prior studies (Stephens & Lee, 2006; Rodriguez & Kim, 2018; Tuon, 2014; Yi, 2014) also found contemporary Asian American picture books focus more on the immigrant experiences. In particular, most of the stories of immigration cast brushstrokes on how characters make adjustments to American life and present Asian Americans as immigrant newcomers rather than citizens (Tuan, 1998).

In this study, I have carefully chosen eight picture books that aim to represent a range of Chinese American experiences for my participants. However, it is important to note that several picture books including Lissy's Friends (Lin, 2007), Watercress (Wang, 2021), and I Hate English (Levine, 1995) are narrated primarily around the experiences of Chinese immigrants, particularly in relation to schooling and language barriers. During our reading and discussion of these picture books, students mainly responded from their family and community experiences while also reported disconnections and confusions when reading specific parts of the content. For example, during our reading of I Hate English (Levine, 1995), although all students had lived-through experience with the main character, Mei-Mei, and related to their ELLs experience in kindergartens, students found the story irrelevant in some way. For example, Xuanxuan responded to the story, “I’m like Mei-Mei, but a little different. First of all, I don't hate English”. Students also did not have evocations to the urbanized environment illustrated in I Hate English (Levine, 1995). Additionally, during our reading of Watercress (Wang, 2021), Hexin also
expressed his confusion on “picking up watercress” in a pond as a family tradition in the story. All of these reading events highlighted the disconnected experiences students encountered when reading these picture books and called for more hybrid and diverse second-generation Chinese American experiences represented in children’s literature.

Additionally, during our reading of picture books that highlight the Chinese heritage culture, students exhibited a potential to name their heritage culture with certain festivals, traditions and certain cultural attributes such as rice and tea, which would possibly result in cultural tokenism. For example, Hexin unpacked his heritage culture in terms of the Chinese food and festivals. These literary responses raised questions about “tourist-multiculturalism” approach (Derman-Sparks, 1993) which shapes and molds a certain culture as food, festivals, and heroes (Kohl, 1994; National Council for the Social Studies, 2017). The “tourist-multiculturalism” approach oversimplifies culture by reducing it to a few superficial markers and neglects the nuanced differences among individuals, which would perpetuate stereotypes.

**Students Make Meaning of Racism**

Children constructing their own understandings on racism and discrimination is often misinformed (Boutte, 2016; Matias, 2016). In this study, students’ understanding of racism was back and forth with hybrid discourse in which some dominant racialized narratives were disrupted, whereas stereotyped others were solidified and reproduced. Students enacted master narratives, including racism as a thing of the past, racism as a mental health issue, English proficiency as the reason for racial segregation, naming skin color as a racist behavior. Additionally, students also reproduced white supremacy with a
belief that English proficiency is a must for participating in the U.S. The critical conversations around race and racism for students in this study were indeed a dynamic, ongoing process, not a one-time occurrence.

During our reading of Coolies (Yin, 2003), Brothers (Yin, 2006), Paper Son (James, 2013), and the supplementary materials on CEA and COVID-19 pandemic, students responded strongly to the distinctive ways of how Chinese laborers and the descendant immigrants were racialized as threats to the U.S. However, my early engagement with these second-generation Chinese American children in the reading and discussion of racial literacy has been encountered with both tensions and challenges. Due to students different and sometimes misleading knowledge about race, together with their nuanced family education, they demonstrated both engagement and resistance in discussions involving race and racism found in historical fiction stories. For example, during our reading and discussion of Coolies (Yin, 2003) and Brothers (Yin, 2006), students responded to the story with a denial of racism in today’s world. Yixuan responded, “there is no such thing [racism] now” since his social studies teacher lectured that “racism only exists in the past days”. Similarly, Hexin also positioned racism as history after learning about slavery in social studies class and said, “I first learned about slavery in elementary school. Back then, I thought racism and discrimination are wrong but I’m happy it ended”. The students' denial of racism not only stems from their limited knowledge acquired in school but also from their discomfort and unease when engaging in discussions about racism.

Additionally, students entered the book club with more or less a Black/white binary paradigm in their orientation and regarded Asians do not fall into Black and White
racial discourse. At the same time, they also created a hypothesis to justify discrimination and racism with consistently regarding English proficiency as the major reason for the racial segregation and exclusion of early Chinese immigrants living in White neighborhoods and attending white schools. All these responses reflected the lack of school and family education on race and racism and the urgent needs of providing students with adequate education and backgrounds knowledge on historical and contemporary racism.

Implications

Findings of this study validate the active role of culturally relevant Chinese American texts as tools that pass on traditions, histories, beliefs, values, life lessons to upcoming generations of children of Asian/Chinese descent. Additionally, this study demonstrates that culturally authentic historical fiction picture books, together with supplemental material (extended readings, images, videos, etc.), would profoundly facilitate second-generation Chinese American students’ understanding of race and racism with both historical and contemporary relevance and foster their race learning.

Using Culturally Authentic and Contextualized Texts

Reading contemporary, culturally relevant and authentic picture books supports second-generation Chinese American children to have lived-through experiences and understand their lives. Reading stories relatable to their ethnic and racial lives helps students to reflect on their sociocultural stance. It is important for researchers and classroom teachers to diversify their collections of multicultural children’s literature to
represent a large range of cultural and racial experiences of children from ethnic minoritized groups.

According to Bishop (1982), culturally authentic stories should be told from the perspectives of characters who are cultural insiders and reflect substantial lived experiences that reflect both heritage and contemporary living. The Chinese youth growing up in immigrant households in the U.S., navigated multiple cultural and linguistic worlds and negotiated complex and multilayered identities that were integral to their daily lives. For example, although all students in this study shared the same membership in Chinese American community, they had a varied degree of knowledge about their cultural worlds. For example, some families celebrate both Chinese and American festivals (Yanhui celebrated Chinese New Year and also Thanksgiving) and have kept strong relations with their extended family (Hexin’s father has business trips to China several times a year and usually brings gifts from China to Hexin) while some families celebrate festivals and traditions sporadically (Yixuan’s family solely celebrated Chinese festivals in his household) and stay in the United States for most of the time (Xuanxuan’s whole family were immigrated to the United States and would not visit China frequently). These unique and distinctive cultural practices and traditions practiced in families are vital to students’ understanding of their ancestral culture and the construction of their bicultural world. Thus, researchers and teachers should attend to the “nuances of day-to-day living” (Bishop, 1992, p.43) of Chinese (Asian and other ethnic) Americans in their families, communities, and larger social and historical contexts within the U.S. and select children’s literature reflecting these differences.
Regarding the disconnections students had with some contents in the picture books in this study, teachers should select children’s literature with multifaceted and multidimensional depictions of Asian American experiences. In this study, some students did not resonate with the “newcomer experience”, “feeling out of place in school”, or “socially isolated”. For example, Yanhui responded to *I Hate English* (Levine, 1995) that, “…I just picked it [English] up really fast and I also make friends…I had two Chinese-speaking teachers and a lot of people in my class spoke Chinese…” Yanhui’s Chinese/English language immersion schooling experience was not reflected in this book, and she did not relate to the isolated experience described in the story. Such overgeneralization and minimizing of Asian American immigrants’ experience as newcomers ignore the hybridity of the Asian American experience. Researchers and teachers should avoid stories that illustrate immigrant experiences exclusively in a negative light, instead, should acknowledge and emphasize the multifaceted range of experiences, strengths, and contributions of immigrant communities.

**Providing Relevant Historical Contexts to Foster Race Learning**

This study suggests that reading and discussion of historical fiction, together with relevant knowledge of historical contexts, would profoundly support students to unpack the racialized experiences of Chinese immigrants and foster their race learning. It is evident that *Coolies* (Yin, 2003) and *Paper Son* (James, 2013) did not adequately introduce the relevant racialized historical contexts and failed to provide a thorough description of the nature of racism. Thus, providing solely children’s literature on historical stories would not fully support students’ understanding of race and racism. It is of overmount importance for educators and classroom teachers to not only provide
authentic historical picture books but also relevant supplementary materials that provide background knowledge for students to construct their understanding. For example, while reading of *Paper Son* (James, 2013), teachers can add documentary films to scaffold students’ learning about the distinctive racialization of Chinese Americans under Chinese Exclusion Act with sufficient historical background. During the discussion of anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers can insert local news of Stop Asian Hate protests in their curriculum, which would profoundly support students to make association with their community and to relate to the real world.

The incorporation of multimodal texts that offer historical context allows students to access relevant information while constructing their understanding of contemporary issues. As revealed in the findings, most of participants generated master narratives towards racial injustices based on their own limited experiences with racial stereotypes and mistreatment of racial minorities. Due to the limitations of their personal experiences, the interpretations they formed tended to downplay anti-Asian racism and create explanations and presumptions for a whitewashed perspective. Therefore, it is essential for researchers and teachers to carefully choose extended texts that offer students a historical context, enabling them to comprehend current events as products of the persistent beliefs and practices that have been carried forward from the past.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

This study focused on how second-generation Chinese American students unpack and understand the cultural and racial experiences of Chinese ethnic groups with historical and contemporary relevance in the U.S. through transactions with culturally
relevant text sets in a community-based book club. I recognize the difficulty of continued study in the school context with the same population. The challenge posed by non-West Coast contexts, particularly in the deep south and red states, underscores the significance of this research due to the prevalence of a White-dominant school curriculum and conservative educational policies (e.g., emphasis on standardized testing, ban on critical race theory, etc.). These factors exacerbate the difficulties faced by Chinese and other Asian American students who are more prone to experiencing stereotypes, cultural and racial isolation, and marginalization as outsiders. As such, researchers are encouraged to study the racial literacy of Chinese American immigrant students’ population in the deep South and red states. In particular, it is highly recommended to explore how these students and their families navigate the racialized southern discourse and negotiate their cultural and racial identities through literacy engagement.

Although this study focused heavily on elementary students’ responses to the diverse cultural and racial experiences of Chinese Americans, researchers should take steps further to explore southern states’ K-8 classroom teachers’ views toward students’ race learning and racial literacy development with specific attention to notions of ethnicity, race, and cross-racial understanding and solidarity and how their understanding influences their instructional and curricular decisions. Considering the race talk dilemma existing in most Chinese American families, more research should be launched to explore how first-generation Chinese immigrant parents unpack the racialized discourse and anti-Asian racism, and provide racial literacy support to facilitate their children’s comprehension and negotiation of concepts pertaining to ethnicity, race, identity, and racism within the cultural and historical context of the American South.
Limitations of the Study

No qualitative research is perfectly designed. Four significant limitations emerged when I conducted this dissertation study. The first limitation comes from the paucity of Chinese American picture books that represent a large range of Chinese American experiences in the United States. Based on my research purpose, I made a sub-list of titles that only contain stories about early Chinese immigrants and contemporary Chinese American experiences in the United States. However, the number of picture books and stories were not adequate enough to reflect the nuanced differences among Chinese American community. Therefore, without sufficient picture books of hybrid racial experiences available for my participants to have a continuous reading, it was hard for students to thoroughly engaged in one topic with stories.

Similarly, another drawback of this study might be related to the online format of the class. The data collection of this dissertation study was conducted in an online format as the pandemic began. However, the online conferencing software provided a private and secure online class environment. It offered me additional instructional features, including setting up breakout rooms and sharing screens to enhance the online teaching and learning experience. The online class format still influenced my interactions of me with my student participants and also the communications among these students.

Another limitation of this qualitative study resulted from the small sample size, which includes only four student participants. Although I gathered data from various sources and used these data to inform each case, the conclusions drawn from the study
still cannot represent a group of people or the Chinese American community. For another, this study was conducted in a community-based book club exclusive to Chinese American students. The book club was established to offer a safe space for local students to discuss their racial experiences and confusions. However, the space is too ideal without considering the complex context they might encounter in their schools or communities. To highlight their literacy practices, more literacy studies should be conducted with Chinese American students in larger educational contexts.

Conclusions

The purpose of this dissertation was to illuminate the cultural and racial experiences of second-generation Chinese American students in the southern state during the COVID-19 pandemic. As an international student seeking further education in the United States, the opportunity to teach at the local Chinese Heritage Language School truly supported my understanding of the challenges faced by Chinese ethnic groups in the southern context. Their distinctive and heterogeneous immigrant and racial experiences resonated strongly with mine, which hugely motivated me to launch this study to probe deeply into how second-generation Chinese American students negotiate their understanding of culture and race.

During the whole process of conducting this dissertation study, there were moments when I learned and grew together with my students. My students shared their family traditions, friends-making and schooling experiences their family might not know. Similarly, I shared my knowledge about Mainland China, cultural and linguistic stories, and my experiences living in the United States with them. These moments constituted the validation and recentered Chinese American narratives and spoke to the importance for
educators and policymakers to center on the lived experiences of this group of students. This study underscored the transformative potential of shared cultural and racial experiences. It highlighted the imperative to include Chinese and Asian American authentic narratives and histories into school curriculum and establish the racial literacy as a cornerstone for education.
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culture, new technologies, and critical literacy in the elementary classroom (pp. 78–97). Abingdon, UK: David Fulton Publishers.


CITED LITERATURE


*See other literature books in Table 4.3.
APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

ASSENT TO BE A RESEARCH SUBJECT

Exploring Literary Responses to Culturally Relevant Texts Through an AsianCrit Lens: A Collective Case Study of Chinese American Students in a Community-Based Book Club

*Please read the following consent form carefully before choosing to sign for consent to participate.*

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Wenyu Guo

**SPONSOR:** SPARC Graduate Research Grant, Office of the Vice President for Research, University of South Carolina

**PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND**

The purpose of the study is to hear your child’s voice through reading Chinese American books, discussing plots or personal experience, creating writings and projects as a group in a safe and inclusive community. Teens in the group are second-generation American-born Chinese children. Because your child has experiences in both Chinese and American cultures, I would like to learn how she/he thinks about books through interactive conversations. This study will help teachers to understand teenagers’ different cultural backgrounds and perspectives, and to create an inclusive classroom community.

**PROCEDURES**

The study will start from November 2021 to June 2022, and the data collection timeframe will be from November 2021 to January 2022. The central part of this study will be ten-week book club meetings. The purpose of the book club is to read together and discuss books. Since most of the student participants prefer to speak English, I will mainly use English in the book club. All book club meetings will be conducted through an online conferencing platform – Zoom considering the COVID-19 pandemic. Students need a Zoom account which can be downloaded on the Zoom official website for free. I will send students the Zoom link to join my classroom before our book club meeting. The
book club meetings will be held on each Saturday afternoon. Each meeting will last an hour and half to two hours, and your child will be videotaped for data analysis. In the book club meeting, before reading the book, your child will reflect on their experience based on a book topic of the researcher’s choice. Next, I will conduct an interactive read-aloud with students. I will encourage students to raise questions, discuss plots and characters, and connect to their lived experience and current social events. Then, I will provide students a list of questions about the story they read. Students will answer these questions on an online discussion board – Padlet, a free instructional application that can be accessed through a laptop or iPad. Then, they can share what they wrote and talk about the story and their lives. For homework, participants will complete various projects such as making picture books or writing letters and poems. Students will be asked to explain what each project means to them. I will also take photos of your child's projects for data analysis.

Two sets of interviews will be conducted with your child during the study. One set of semistructured interviews will be conducted at the beginning of the data collection phase in November. The aim is to understand students’ lives in their families, communities, and schools. In addition, the interview will also explore students’ cultural awareness, understanding of Chinese American histories and current ongoing racism faced by Asian people during the pandemic. The first round of interview with your child will be conducted within 30-45 minutes. The second set of semistructured interviews (one with each student) will be conducted at the end of the data collection phase in January 2022. I will ask your child fourteen summary final-thought questions to explore students' reflections on the books read in the book club meetings. The aim is to add another layer of students’ understanding of the books in the study. Learning about your child’s life experiences and thoughts about participating in the book club will help me to gain more knowledge about your child’s literary responses. Also, I will record audio of these interviews for data analysis. As parents of my participants, one of you will be interviewed to talk about your family immigrant history, background, and basic information.

DURATION

Participation in the study involves two student participant interviews and ten book club meetings over a period from December 2021 to May 2022.
RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

During the literary club meetings and interviews, I will use Zoom built-in recorder to videotape and record, which will not distract students. If you or your child feels uncomfortable with the interview questions or audio recording, you have the right to stop answering or to stop the interview at any time. In addition, students will discuss picture books in the group on Zoom. If your child does not want to turn on his/her camera to respond to peers, he/she may choose to turn the camera off at any time. If you or your child feel uncomfortable in this study, you and/or your child can withdraw at any time.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

I will keep your personal information private and confidential in this study. Any information that might show who you and your child are will remain confidential and secret. I will use an anonymous name to communicate with your child in the videos and recordings. In addition, all videos and recordings will be stored in an encrypted portable storage hard drive stored in a locked cabinet at the researcher’s home. Only the researcher will have access to this data. Data will be kept for three years (per federal regulations) after the study is completed and then destroyed. Also, names will be changed in the study report to protect your child. Any educational presentations or published articles generated from this study will also use an anonymous name and information that would not reflect your and your child’s identities to protect your privacy.

BENEFITS

Your child will find her/his voices and experiences to be heard, shared, and appreciated in the book club. Participants can learn more about Chinese American history and culture and develop balanced identities in the book club. Moreover, this study may help classroom teachers better understand Chinese American teenagers’ literacy needs. Benefits of full and successful participation in the study include 1) Barnes & Noble $25 Gift Card and 2) One Chinese American graphic novel.

PAYMENT

No payment will be rendered for any participants in this study.
QUESTIONS

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you should first talk to the researcher, Wenyu Guo at (803)873-5555 or email wguo@email.sc.edu or contact researcher’s dissertation chair, Dr. Yang Wang at (803)777-9963 or email wangy@sc.edu.

Concerns about your rights as a research subject are to be directed to, Lisa Johnson, Assistant Director, Office of Research Compliance, University of South Carolina, 1600 Hampton Street, Suite 414D, Columbia, SC 29208, phone: (803)777-6670 or email: LisaJ@mailbox.sc.edu.

DOCUMENTATION OF CONSENT

I have read this form and decided that my child will participate in the project described above. Its general purpose, the particulars of involvement and possible risks have been explained to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this study and give permission for the researcher to present and write for publication using my data. I have been given a copy of this form for my own records.

Printed Name of Child

Printed Name of Parent/Guardian  Signature of Parent/Guardian
Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent
Date

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APPENDIX B

STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Note: In answering these questions, take your time. If you feel uncomfortable with a question, you don’t have to answer it. Please describe your experiences in as much detail as possible and feel free to add anything you think is important. Your name will not be exposed in any reports or presentations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal, school Family background</td>
<td>• How would your friends describe you? Explain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How would your family describe you? Explain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How would your teachers/other adults describe you? Explain.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How would you describe yourself? Your identity?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How would you describe your family?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How do your friends see your family?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How do you think others (your teachers, neighbors, Non-Chinese) would describe your family?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How does your family support you (in and out of school)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe your typical school day.</td>
<td>Describe your typical weekend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe your school. How many people in your class and what is the demographics?</td>
<td>How would you describe the teachers in your school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you describe your family?</td>
<td>Describe your friends in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When did your family immigrate to the U.S.?</td>
<td>• Tell me what you know about the circumstances around your family’s immigration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How do you feel about living in South Carolina?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How do you think your parents feel about living in the United States?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Describe your parents’ jobs and their workplaces.</td>
<td>• Have you ever accompany your parents to work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What do you learn from working there?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where are the different places you and/or your family have lived?</td>
<td>• Which place did you like the most? Explain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Which place did you like the least? Explain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can you tell me about your relationship with your sibling(s) (if you have any)?</td>
<td>--What was the last conversation you had with your sibling about?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>--How, if at all, does your sibling support you (in and out of school)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe your extended family in China.</td>
<td>• What is your relationship with them like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections with China</td>
<td>How many times you’ve visited China?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What were some of the things you did while you were there?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What differences do you think there are between China and the United States?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture &amp; Identity</td>
<td>• What differences do you think there are between Chinese culture and United States culture?</td>
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<td>--------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>How would you define culture?</td>
<td>• Do you think there is a Chinese way of thinking or an American way of thinking?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think is essential to “Chinese” culture?</td>
<td>• How would you define “Chinese” culture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think is essential to “American” culture?</td>
<td>• How would you define “American” culture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think it means to be Chinese?</td>
<td>• Complete this sentence: The typical Chinese person _________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do you identify as Chinese?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How do your parents identify you?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Do you think people you don’t know identify you as Chinese?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do the students/teachers in your school identify you as Chinese?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How do students/teachers in your schools perceive Chinese?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think it means to be an American?</td>
<td>• Complete this sentence: The typical American person ____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do you identify as American?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do your parents identify you as American?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do you think people you don’t know identify you as American?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do the students/teachers in your school identify you as American?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How do students/teachers in your schools define American?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think it means to be Asian?</td>
<td>• Complete this sentence: The typical Asian person ____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do you identify as Asian?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do your parents identify you as Asian?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Which ethnic groups do you think are included in the term Asian?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Which ethnic groups do the students/teachers in your school include in the term Asian?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How do students/teachers in your schools define Asian?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| How would you describe your culture? | • Do you think you and your friends share a common culture?  
  If yes, describe it. |
| | • Do you think Chinese youth in Columbia share a common culture?  
  If yes, describe it. |
| | • Do you think Chinese youth in the United States share a common culture?  
  If yes, describe it. |
| | • Do you think Chinese youth in the United States and China share a common culture?  
  If yes, describe it. |
| What do you think are some stereotypes about Chinese people? | • What do you think are some stereotypes about Asian people (and other students of color)? |
| | • How do you feel about these stereotypes? |
| | • What impact have these stereotypes had on you in and out of school? |
| | • What impact do you think these stereotypes have on Chinese in school (and other Asians, other students)? |
| | • What impact do you think these stereotypes have on Chinese outside of school (other Asians, other students)? |
| Race & Experience | Do you have friends who are from another ethnic groups (White, Black, Latino/a)?  
• How would you describe the relationship with them?  
• If there are tensions, what do you think is the cause of tensions between you?  
• Did your parents ever encourage you to associate with one specific ethnic group? If yes, please explain.  

Do you have friends who are from another Asian ethnic groups?  
• Are there other Asian students from Asian countries besides China in your school or communities?  
• How would you describe the relationship with them?  

How do you think your identities have affected your experiences in/outside of school?  
• Ask participants for stories and examples.  

How do you think others’ perceptions of your identities have affected your experiences in/outside of school?  
• Ask participants for stories and examples.  

How do you think your experiences in and out of school would be different if you were of another ethnicity (e.g., White, Latino/a, Black)?  
• Do you see differences in the ways people are treated because of their race/ethnicity? Explain.  
• Do you see differences in the ways your friends are treated because of their race/ethnicity? Explain.  
• Do you treat people differently based on their ethnicity?  

How do you think your experiences in and out of school would be different if you were boy/girl?  
• Do you see differences in the ways people are treated because of their gender?  
• Explain.  
• Do you see differences in the ways your friends are treated because of their gender? Explain.  
• Do you treat people differently based on their gender? Explain.  

Do you think that your experiences would be different if your family were not immigrants (e.g., expectations, language)? Explain.  
• Do you see differences in the ways people are treated because of their immigration status? Explain.  
• Do you see differences in the ways your friends are treated because of their immigration status? Explain.  
• Do you treat people differently based on their immigration status? Explain.  

Do you think teachers expect more from you and other Asian students?  
• Where do you think these expectations came from?  
• What impact has the teachers’ expectations had on you?  
• What impact do you think the expectations has on Chinese in school (other Asians, other students)?  
• What impact do you think the expectations has on Chinese outside of school (other Asians, other students)?
APPENDIX C

FINAL THOUGHTS

(Participants responded their final thoughts by the end of the study.)

1. What did you think about the meeting within these ten weeks? What have you learned in our meetings?

2. In the past weeks, we talked about a variety of books with different topics, including Chinese immigrants’ history, identity, relationships with the extended family, appreciate heritage culture in the U.S., pandemic, and dream pursuits.
   (1) Which topic did you like the most? Why?
   (2) Which topics would you feel comfortable sharing with your peers/families?
   (3) Which topic did you like the least? Why?
   (4) Which topics would you not feel comfortable sharing with your peers/families? Why?

3. Which was your favorite book? Why? Which book would you recommend your friends to read and why?

4. You are familiar with some Chinese American history in our book club, how do you feel about that?

5. If you are about to share anything about our book club with your friends, what would you say?

6. Could you share how you think you being Chinese and at the same time being American have affected your experiences in/outside of school?

7. How do you think others’ perceptions of who you are and how does it affect your experiences in/outside of school?

8. How do you think your experiences in and out of school would be different if you were of another ethnicity (e.g., White, Latino/a, Black)?

9. If you could change anything about Chinese Americans (as an individual or community), what would it be? Why?

10. If you had to keep something about Chinese Americans (as an individual or community), what would it be? What would you value the most?

11. How Asian people could unit together to make a difference?

12. What are the good ways you think Chinese Americans can do to change their status quo in United States?

13. What are some of those things that you wish we could have talked about in our book club?

14. What else you would like to share with me?
APPENDIX D

INTRODUCTION OF READING MATERIAL

Picture Books about Transnational Experiences

The theme is represented in Wang, Guo, and Sui’s (2022) book *Shanghai Messenger* (Cheng, 2015), which tells a story about a second-generation Chinese American girl who went back to Shanghai to visit her extended family and brought her memories in Shanghai with her aunties, uncles, and cousins back to her grandmother in the United States. Xiao Mei was anxious and nervous about meeting with her relatives since it was her first time visiting Shanghai and traveling to China alone. Her Grandmother, nainai (in Chinese 奶奶), comforted her with the words “You are my messenger. Look everything. Remember.” *Shanghai Messenger* (Cheng, 2015) is a heartfelt picturebook with poetic words illustrating Xiao Mei’s extended family’s traditions and cultural practices living in Shanghai, China.

Picture Books about the Struggles of Navigating Different Cultural Paradigms

(adapted from Wang et al. (2022))

*The Ugly Vegetables* (Lin, 2001) is a story about a second-generation Chinese American girl navigating different cultural paradigms and practices between her immigrant home and the local culture. As commonly witnessed in most immigrant families, the American-born Chinese girl undergoes cultural negotiation as she grapples
with the challenges of identifying with both her ancestral and local cultures. *The Ugly Vegetables* (Lin, 2001) is a story about self-growth as a minoritized child surviving and *thriving*. This journey yields insights into the significance of appreciating heritage culture and embracing diversity and inclusiveness as they enrich individuals and society. The author, Grace Lin, is a Taiwanese American children’s literature author and illustrator. Her work contributes to and advocates for Asian American representations and diversity in children’s literature. *The Ugly Vegetables* (Lin, 2001) is a biographical story of Grace Lin when she was young and lived with her family in a small town in upstate New York.

*Watercress* (Wang, 2021) is a powerful and delicate story depicting how a Chinese immigrant family preserve their family memories by picking up watercress which was an important food source when they were in China and how immigrant parents communicate the cultural difference with their children and fill the emotional gap of their children through the deep exploration of their family memory, trauma, and love for each other. This is a story about how immigrant parents resolve the family tensions brought by the unique cultural practices from a distant culture, such as Chinese culture, for their children unfamiliar with these differences. It is also about healing generational gaps and coming together as a family.

**Picture Books about Struggles in School Setting** (adapted from Wang et al. (2022))

*Lissy’s Friends* (Lin, 2007) is a touching story about a Chinese American girl – Lissy’s newcomer experience in school. Lissy is a quiet and shy girl who joins her new school while having no friends to accompany her during the recess time. Lissy is sad and she makes paper friends (e.g., paper crane and elephant) with her in school. One day, all
her paper friends come alive and talk to her. Lissy is so happy since she finally has friends with her in school. While sadly, one day, all her paper friends are blown away by the wind. Other children visit Lissy to comfort her. In turn, Lissy teaches them how to make paper animals. Finally, Lissy has new friends. This is a story depicting the struggles of friend-making for a Chinese American girl as a newcomer in school. My students related to the story of their frequently changing school experiences.

**Picture Books about Encountering Language Barriers**

The theme is from Wang, Guo, and Sui (2022). *I Hate English* (Levine, 1995) is a touching story about language learning and cultural identity development and self-growth as a 1.75-generation immigrant Chinese girl who is moving from Hongkong and transitioning to the United States with mixed feelings toward the English language and local culture. Meimei is a Chinese-born girl who moves from Hongkong to New York’s Chinatown with her family. The life and people in Chinatown are familiar to her, while everything is different in her school. Her classmates talk to each other in English, and her teachers all speak in English. Meimei understands English, but she refuses to speak English for her not being able to use her language - Mandarin Chinese. One day, her new teacher, Nancy, comes to help Meimei with her English in a new way in which Meimei can share Chinese culture and her experience in Hongkong through English.
Books about Historical Narratives on Racialized Minority Discourse

_Coolies_ (Yin, 2001) illustrates a racialized “dark” history of early Chinese immigrants – coolies\(^\text{12}\) who worked on the transcontinental railroad between 1863 and 1869. In the story, two Chinese-born brothers – Shek and Little Wong--took a difficult sea voyage to San Francisco (also called “Golden Mountain” or “Gumshan” historically by Chinese immigrants) to seek opportunities and finally worked on the transcontinental railroad. Despite the efforts to achieve their American dream, Chinese railroad workers suffered from multiple layers of discrimination and racism, particularly from non-Chinese workers and directors. Chinese laborers were frequently subjected to severe violence, exploitation, and exclusion\(^\text{13}\) from mainstream American society. By vividly illustrating Shek and Little Wong’s ethics of hard work, perseverance, and resilience when faced with discrimination and their silent contributions to the country, _Coolies_ (Yin, 2001) provides valuable counternarratives to the singular dominant narrative over Chinese Americans (and also Asian Americans) as “model minority”\(^\text{14}\).

_Brothers_ (Yin, 2006) is a positive story about how Chinese laborers lead their lives after building transcontinental railroad facing severe segregation and racism. The Chinese immigrant boy, Ming, arrives in San Francisco in the mid 19th century to live with his two brothers and help them run their small store in Chinatown. Ming’s desire for

\(^\text{12}\) “Coolie” is a pejorative term for low-wage workers, primarily but not exclusively of Asian descent.

\(^\text{13}\) See Chinese Exclusion Act and the following racialized law targeting people of Chinese descendant here: [https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/chinese-exclusionact#:~:text=In%20the%20spring%20of%201882,immigrating%20to%20the%20United%20States.](https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/chinese-exclusionact#:~:text=In%20the%20spring%20of%201882,immigrating%20to%20the%20United%20States.)

\(^\text{14}\) Model Minority depicts Asian Americans as a “model” group while at the same time was used as a racial wedge between Asians and other ethnic groups (J. Lee & Zhou, 2015).
friendship pulls him across the boundary of his neighborhood where he befriends an Irish immigrant, Patrick O'Farrell, whose family came to America to escape starvation. The boys teach each other about their respective cultures and languages as well as devise a plan to save Ming's brothers' failing business.

*Paper Son: Lee's Journey to America* (James, 2013) shares the Chinese American lives under the dark history period of the Chinese Exclusion Act which excludes Chinese immigration for nearly 60 years. It tells a story about how 12-year-old Fu Lee, as a paper son, went through immigration detention and finally landed in the United States in 1926.

**Texts about Racialized Discourse on COVID-19 Pandemic**

I provided my students with antiracist artwork made by a Korean-Swedish artist based in Sweden, Lisa Wool-Rim Sjöblom. As a cartoonist and graphic designer, she addressed the anti-Asian racism and discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic in a series of cartoons shared on her Instagram account. I have been following her artwork for around three years. She is an antiracist artist. Her illustrations send out antiracist messages to young learners and the world about adopted Asian children’s narratives and experiences in a White dominant world. The title of this series of illustrations stemmed from a hashtag, #IAmNotAVirus, which was started by French Asians responding to racist incidents on public transportation and has been advocated on social media by many other inspiring activist artists. In order to download these images and edit the words more accessible to my student, I have reached out to Lisa through Instagram to express my support for #IAmNotAVirus movement and her artwork and explain my dissertation and my plan to have my students learn about anti-Asian racism through her artwork. She
replied to me with an undoubted yes. Then I made a storybook with her illustrations and my edited age-appropriate language (see Appendix F).

As our reading and discussions proceeded, I provided students with multiple protest demonstrations initiated by Asian/Chinese communities and joined by diverse ethnic groups to stand up against discrimination, racism, and violence targeting people of Asian descent during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the protests enlightened students the most was initiated by the Columbia local Chinese community (see Figure 3.1 and 3.2). It was a Stop Asian Hate and Violence protest organized by the local Chinese Association of Columbia and joined by supporters from diverse racial backgrounds. I provided students with these photos and a piece of news reporting how Columbia's local Chinese immigrants (more from https://www.dailygamecock.com/gallery/cy1r8njq6w8kti9) worked together to stop Asian hate in the book club. Witnessing people of Chinese and Asian descent employing various measures to raise their voices and stand up against Anti-Asian hate enormously expanded my students’ understanding of their community. It supported them to develop a sense of agency.

Other Resources

During our reading of Coolies, Brothers, and Paper Son, a small portion of the dark history of Chinese immigrants was broached while not in the complete picture. I then selected the following age-appropriate complementary multimodal resources for my students to learn the authentically detailed narratives of early Chinese immigrants’ history: the electronic text: Bound for Gold Mountain, from Angel Island: Gateway to
Gold Mountain written by Russell Freedman. The twelve pages of age-appropriate, easy-to-read texts with illustrations provide the complete picture of the racialized history of Chinese immigrants in the U.S. since the early 19th century. The material for extended reading is two videos. I selected these videos for the following reasons: (1) these videos introduce CEA with thorough historical facts and authentic narratives on Chinese immigrants; (2) videos are age-appropriate for my students. The first video was mentioned earlier – the five-minute-long animated educational film: The dark history of the Chinese Exclusion Act taught by Robert Chang, directed by Mohammad Babakoohi & Yijia Cao, delivered through TED educational channel. The video introduces the essential socioeconomic background for issuing the racialized law against Chinese and how it impacted Chinese immigrants and their descendants in the U.S. The second video was a documentary film\textsuperscript{15} about the lives of early Chinese immigrants, their struggles and sufferings facing immense racism and violence, and showed the heroism of all those who fought for equality in the U.S. Supreme Court. Students watched the content relevant to Chinese immigrants, nearly 20 minutes in total, which centers on Chinese American history and experience in the United States, including Chinese laborers in the transcontinental railroad, the beginning of Chinatown, segregation of Chinese Americans in San Francisco, school segregation, immigration stations, and Angel Island detention, Chinese Americans fight for equal education and civil rights in cour

\textsuperscript{15} The video - Breaking Ground is one of the episodes of Asian Americans which is a five-hour film series that center on Asian American history. It is produced by WETA-TV at Washington, DC and the Center for Asian American Media (CAAM) for Public Broadcasting Service (PBS).
## APPENDIX E

**COOLIES LESSON PLAN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time (Minutes)</th>
<th>Agenda</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 am-10:10am</td>
<td>Show students the picture book - <em>Coolies</em> (covers, illustrations and characters) and invite them to predict the story's sociohistorical context.</td>
<td>Classroom discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:10am-10:15am</td>
<td>Introduce the major content of the books – transcontinental railroad to students and learn about students’ knowledge on the historical background and encourage them to ask questions and share their knowledge on the topic.</td>
<td>Classroom discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15am-10:25am</td>
<td>Share the PowerPoint slides through Zoom. Have students share their knowledge on each question. Then, start discussions of each statement for a whole class.</td>
<td>Classroom discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:25am-10:45am</td>
<td>I conduct an interactive read-aloud (questions will be prepared before the class). The sample questions will be:</td>
<td>Students’ answers and classroom discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Why do Shek and Wong leave China?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Describe how Shek and Wong look like (face, clothes, hair).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- How was Shek and Wong’s journey to the United States?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- How were the lives for Shek and Wong in the U.S.? Did they get fair treatment?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How were the lives for other racial groups? Did they get fair treatment?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How was Shek and Wong’s work in the U.S.? Did they get fair treatment in their workplace?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How was it for workers from other racial groups? Did they get fair treatment?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- During the celebration when the two railroads finally met, who were there and who were left out? Why?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:45am-10:55am</td>
<td>Give students five minutes to read <em>Coolies</em> silently and remind them to pay more attention to how Shek and Wong were treated in the story.</td>
<td>Students’ written reflections on Padlet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:55am</td>
<td>I share one final clip about the railroad building told from the perspective of a young girl whose father was a Chinese Laborer. Ask students to listen for any additional ways the Chinese workers were maltreated. Tell them they will have the opportunity to add anything new to the &quot;graffiti wall&quot;.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building the Transcontinental Railroad (3 min.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4YgEMykqAQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4YgEMykqAQ</a></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00am</td>
<td>Allow 1 – 2 minutes for students to add any new information to the &quot;graffiti wall&quot; and then discuss it. Wind things up by talking about the relevance of how some Asian people are treated during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a good opportunity to connect students to think about current hate crimes targeting Asian people out of discriminations and racism. I'll encourage students to share their stories during the pandemic with some prompt questions.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have you experienced anything that make you uncomfortable during the pandemic?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• How do you feel when you read news like this?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Have they ever experienced unfairness in your communities or schools? And why?</td>
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<td>• Have they ever seen someone be treated badly because their skin color?</td>
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<td>Wrap up with their final thoughts about the historical story about Chinese immigrant workers and the deep discussions on people in the “unfavored” group should stand up for themselves.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Post-reading activity & Reflections paragraph, drawing a picture, or anything representing how the brothers were treated. They will post their feedback under each thread with their names. After they finish, I will quickly read their responses aloud. (If they mainly focus on the fact that the Chinese workers were not paid the same wages for the same work, or that they were called names or that they were given the more dangerous jobs, I use several questions to help them think critically and connect with current issues.

- How do you feel about the story?
- How do you feel about Shek and Wong?
- How did Shek and Wong’s lives in the United States?
- How did Shek and Wong do to help themselves?
- How did workers in other racial groups react?
- Why did Shek and Wong being treated unfairly?
- If you were Shek or Wong, what would you do?
- Would Shek and Wong be treated differently if they were from other ethnic groups?
- Can you relate to anything happened in the real life?
- What will you do to help?

Students’ written reflections on Padlet
## I HATE ENGLISH LESSON PLAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time (Minutes)</th>
<th>Agenda</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 am-10:10 am</td>
<td>Show students the picture book – <em>I Hate English</em> (covers, illustrations and characters) and invite them to predict the story and context.</td>
<td>Classroom discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture walk</td>
<td>• Describe the people on the cover.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Describe the possible place they are in.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• What can you predict from the cover?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• What are the differences of the girl from others?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• What does the girl look like?</td>
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<td>10:10 am-10:15 am</td>
<td>Introduce the major content of the book – it’s a story about a girl from Hongkong learning English in American school. Introduce the background of the story and the struggles of Meimei with balancing Chinese culture and learning English.</td>
<td>Classroom discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:15 am-10:25 am</td>
<td>Let’s make a story time! (Since all my students have the similar experience of learning English when they attended American school, it’ll be interesting to hear how they make their own story about Meimei and relate to their own experiences. I’ll prepare several prompt sentences as follows to facilitate students’ story making.</td>
<td>Classroom discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-reading activity</td>
<td>• Meimei came from Hongkong. This is her first time attending American school…</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Meimei can only speak Chinese and couldn’t understand English…In class…Meimei…</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• In the recess time, Meimei…</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Meimei didn’t want to learn English because…</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Meimei felt she is different from others because…</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Meimei tried to learn English…</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Meimei wanted to make friends with classmates…</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Students take turn to make up the story by filling up the sentences. I ask students more questions if they give unique plots such as why do you make up your story this way? Will you do the same thing if you are Meimei and why?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:25 am-10:35 am</td>
<td>Pre-reading activity  Wordless Illustration Story Time! I show the illustrations of the picture book on PPT slides for students to remake the story. There is no words on the illustrations. This activity demonstrates the different perspectives an immigrant girl would possibly take during English learning. It also helps my students understand more about their English learning experiences which are common to many people.</td>
<td>Classroom discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive read-aloud</td>
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<td>Students’ answers and classroom discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td>&amp; Discussion</td>
<td>11 am-11:30 am Post-reading Reflections</td>
<td>11:30 am-11:40 am Final thoughts &amp; Make connections &amp; Wrap up</td>
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| • P.5 What are the Chinese characters? Why are there Chinese characters here on the page? How do you feel about Chinese characters?  
• P.6 How does Meimei look like? How did she feel?  
• P.7-9 How does Meimei feel in learning center? How children in learning center look like (appearance)?  
• P.10-13 Who were in Meimei’s dream? Why Meimei use Chinese in her dream? Could you share with us your most memorable dream?  
• P. 14-18 Meimei had an English teacher, how did Meimei feel about her English teacher and why? Do you have an English teacher when you start to learn English?  
• P. 19-20 Meimei had a nightmare, she dreamt she forget her name, why? Why Meimei was angry with her teacher?  
• P. 22-30 What are the struggles of Meimei in learning English? What happened between Meimei and her teacher? How did English teacher helped Meimei go through her struggles with learning English? | Give students five minutes to read *I Hate English* silently and remind them to pay more attention to Meimei’s struggles and how the teacher helped her. After reading, I will ask my students to write 250-words of their story, and their thoughts about the story. The prompt questions are listed below.  
• What kind of struggles Meimei had when learning English and why?  
• Could you share your story about your struggles when learning English and how did you solve it? How did you feel? What do you learn from this experience? | Share students’ writings and ask more questions:  
• Do you have similar experience like Meimei when learning English such as losing the identity as Chinese?  
• Why did Meimei finally feel comfortable speaking English?  
• What languages you speak frequently to your family and in school?  
• Do you think language influence people’s identity?  
• How do you identify yourself?  
• How do you think the people who don’t speak English in the U.S. and why?  
• Do people benefit more or lose more from the society if they can’t speak English and why?  
• Speaking multiple languages is not rare in current society, how do you feel about your speaking Chinese? | Students’ written reflections and classroom discussions  
Students’ written reflections and classroom discussions  
Wrap up with their final thoughts and have students write answers to these questions as homework. |
APPENDIX F

I AM NOT A VIRUS

Are you from Wuhan? Take off the fucking masks!

I stabbed them because I thought they were Chinese and infecting others with the virus!

On March 14 a man stabbed an Asian American family, including two very young children in Texas.

I don't want to come across as racist, but shouldn't you perhaps get off this tram?

Fucking virus! Go back to your country! Sleep with bats and dogs, gooch!

You're not welcome here!

Ching Chong!

CHINK!

Your adoption saved your life!

You should be more grateful.

You're almost white.

Adoptive privilege!

Lucky us!
STOP THE HATE
END VIOLENCE AGAINST ASIANS

RACISM IS THE VIRUS

882 likes
chung.woolrim New brushes, new ink, new paper, same old fight against racism.

No JUSTICE No PEACE!