

The Racialization of AAPI Educators and Potential for Liberation: *An AsianCrit Framework Analysis*

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Background & Context

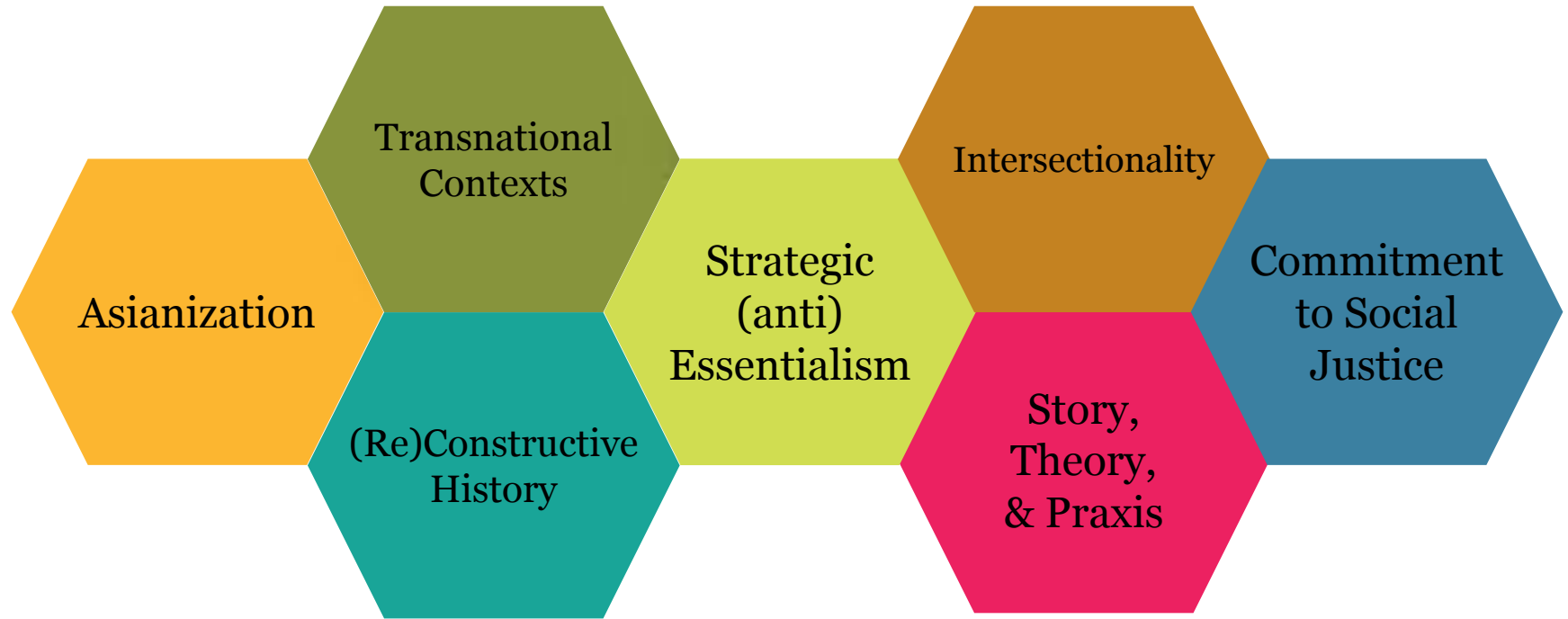
- Chronic issues of educator stress, burnout, and mental health challenges
- Teacher shortage and attrition, particularly among teachers of color during the pandemic (Green & Bettini, 2020)
- AAPI educators make up 2% of educators nationwide (NCES, *n.d.*); low interest from AAPI college graduates (Rong et al., 2022)
- AAPI population is fastest growing minority group (*Budiman & Ruiz, 2021*)
- **Rising anti-Asian hate and violence during the pandemic** (StopAAPI Hate, *n.d.*)
- Limited number of research on AAPI educators and their experiences with anti-Asian violence

“If we remain silent when the fundamental humanity of any racial group is challenged or undermined, we perpetuate white supremacy’s system of dehumanization.”

*-Margaretta Wan-Ling Lin,
UC Berkeley lecturer in city and regional planning*

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Theoretical Framework: Asian Critical Theory (AsianCrit)



Research Questions

RQ1

To what extent are AAPI educators experiencing racialization within the context of COVID-related anti-Asian violence?

RQ2

What are opportunities for AAPI educators' liberation?

Method

Interview Data

- Part of a larger longitudinal mixed-methods study
- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 3 AAPI-identifying educators between March –June 2022
- Open-ended questions regarding their experiences with anti-Asian violence and discrimination, how their individual strengths and the social support and professional networks they belong to were utilized to mitigate the impact of anti-Asian violence, and school climate.

Qualitative Data Analysis

- Multiple case study
- Thematic coding using AsianCrit as Analysis Framework
- Synthesized themes and subthemes using AsianCrit as analysis framework

Participant Demographics

3 AAPI-identifying educators

- Jessica identifies as a Chinese–American female who teaches ethnic studies in a high school setting in California.
- Arelly identifies as a Filipinx–American, non–binary who teaches at a special needs school with primarily 12th–grade students in Pennsylvania.
- David identifies as a Vietnamese–American male, an after school learning specialist in California who works with kindergarten through 12th–grade students.
- All three participants shared that their parents moved to the U.S. from another country.

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Findings (Q1): The Racialization of AAPI Educators During Covid-Related Anti-Asian Hate

General Asianization : Arelly & Daniel's experiences

- Invisible & Overlooked
- Resurging stereotypes

they would go directly to the white people and pass me, they would go directly to the white volunteers...It was just something I had to learn. I was strong and confident about myself and by my identity and everything but it's hard to get work done when people question yours.

Since the pandemic started, [...] I was referred to as a cheap. And I was like I don't even remember the last time I was called something like that.... I really felt like that was kind of symbolic of how our society has kind of opened up these doors for that type of behavior and thought.

Findings (Q1): The Racialization of AAPI Educators During Covid-Related Anti-Asian Hate

Asianized Identity: Jessica's Struggles & Advocacy

- Stereotypes about interests & abilities based on ethnicity
- Explicit Othering

I think for me as an Asian American educator, I had often got like I had been hired into jobs. And immediately, the assumption was I taught math...I teach history. Like you guys hired me on. Like, how do you not know that?

Earlier this year, I walked into a (student) group that was having a club meeting...they had written on the board, 'We don't like Asian Americans!'...It was hard because I had never seen that so outwardly (before)...

Findings (Q1): The Racialization of AAPI Educators During Covid-Related Anti-Asian Hate

Asianized
Identity:
Jessica
Struggles &
Advocacy

- Tokenism
- Intersectionality

I also am advocate of the issue of tokenism... I shouldn't have to be a representative for my people to get this point across which I often do feel like if I want social justice issues related (to) Asian Americans to be addressed, I have to represent my whole group just to even get the dialogue started...

It's been interesting. I think there's a lot more realization that as an Asian American, I'm not as safe as I thought I was...as a woman, that was always something at the forefront. But now, being an Asian American woman, it's been even more prevalent..

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Findings (Q2): Opportunities for Liberation

Jessica:
Counter-
narratives

- Redefining racialization through (re) education & coalition

Genuine cultural responsiveness...I think when we think back about educators and even just college... You had to learn American history. You did not have to learn Asian American history. You don't have to learn any history of any person of color.....They've never had to actually learn about what it's like to be Asian Americans. They've never had to learn what I like to be Black or Brown. And so, all those things come into play.

Findings (Q2): Opportunities for Liberation

Transformative
Pedagogy:
Arely's Vision
for Inclusive
Learning

- Educator commitment towards social justice
- Honor and value for classroom diversity

...we can be as sweet or as fiery or, you know as collaborative as we want, but..(as long as)..white people are the ones that are in charge..are the ones that are making the change nothing is going to change, it's just the band-aid. ... I want them to do the work of anti-racism and...to get training to work with other people, to get more faculty of color, just in general Asian, or not just like just in general, have more people of color and provide them the support they need to thrive in that Institution.

Modeling how to...not spotlight a white child over a person of color...will allow opportunity for all students to grow...

Findings (Q2): Opportunities for Liberation

Bridging Divides: Daniel's Identity & Collective Action

- Identifying barriers & understanding complexity of Identities
- Opportunities for collective action

Barriers prevent them (A APIs) from unifying...historical as far as the wars...or historical from gangs...These are some of the things that hold my students back...

Initiatives that promote intercultural understanding, educational interventions that celebrate diversity, and community-led efforts to bridge historical gaps

Findings (Q2): Opportunities for Liberation

Panethnicity & Ethno Racialization

- Fluidity of ethno-racialization
- Consideration for intercultural/ethnic identities

Being a Filipino means I'm not East Asian. I'm not a White Asian and I'm brown so a lot of people will think of me differently or not even know what a Filipino is or anything about the Southeast Asian region. Which is kind of interesting and I've also seen among my friends, you know West Asians or South Asians or other brown Asians are also misidentified or discriminated against, and yeah, I'm part of that or I'm in that.

You'd have a lot of history that conflicts with one another's cultures, different languages, different cultures, a lot of history.

Implications for Systems Leaders

- **Research & Practice Calibration**
 - AAPI Educator identities & navigating white-centering spaces as a numerical minority
 - Struggle for liberation while navigating Asianization
- **Education policies & practice**
 - Examine and improve recruitment & retention
 - Critically reflect how schools continue to perpetuate Asianization (Danger of model minority myth and what it hides)
 - Work towards data disaggregation to reveal complexities and needs of AAPIs
 - Integrate AAPI history & stories into professional learning and curricula
 - Prioritize culturally responsive and relevant social emotional wellbeing and supports for AAPI educators

“The poetry of small acts, tracing a shared history, the smell of cooked rice, the sight of shoes at the door, migration mixed with the tales of filial generations, being woven into the cultural fabric of everyday American life.”

-Konrad Ng, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Creative Media, University of Hawaii

Senior Advisor, Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program, Washington, D.C.

Thank you!

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

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Questions/Comments?

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