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The Lived Experiences of Filipino Teachers Teaching in Texas: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study

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**THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FILIPINO TEACHERS TEACHING IN
TEXAS: A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY**

by

Jeffrey Chua, B.S., M.Ed.

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

Stephen F. Austin State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

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Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

Among the estimated 100,000 Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) working in the United States, a small group of Filipino teachers may have lasting impacts on one of the most important pillars of the nation: its public schools. Thus, it is important to understand the lived experiences of Filipino teachers teaching in Texas. This research aimed to contribute to existing literature that explores the lived experiences and the acculturation process of Filipino teachers. Utilizing a transcendental phenomenological approach, seven such teachers were selected through snowball sampling and were interviewed. The findings of the study showed their shared experiences revolved around four themes: their search for greener pastures, the challenges they faced teaching in the US, the support systems that helped them adapt and acculturate, and their perceived differences between Filipino and US values and culture. While most of the findings correlate with existing literature, the experiences shared about extreme microaggression and the magnitude of the mental health effects it brought upon the participants were surprising findings that add to the reviewed literature.

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Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam. For the greater glory of God. *Deus Vult.* Without His will, this dissertation would not have been completed.

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DEDICATION

To everyone who gave up on finishing their dissertation: It is never too late.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Immigration has always been the lifeblood of cultures and societies. With the movement of people, the values and artifacts that flow through and within these cultures and societies are undeniably the source that keeps most of them able to compete in a global economy (Roces, 2015; San Juan, 2009). The United States, for example, a country that stands as one of the world's superpowers, is in fact, founded by immigrants. Its American values of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are echoes of desires stemming from immigrants' pasts, from those who have escaped from religious persecution, driven by their need to fulfill their potential, and from those that wanted equal rights. Each and every immigrant that comes into the country contributes not only to culture but also to the different facets of society (e.g., economy, communication, education). Immigration, therefore, does not water down a culture but enriches it.

However, immigration not only benefits the society the immigrants assimilate into but also the immigrants themselves. Some of them find freedom from political persecution that has haunted them their entire lives, while others find a country where they secure the financial and economic stability that has never been an opportunity for them back in their own homelands (Pido, 1997; San Juan, 2009). Most of all, immigrants benefit from the cultural values and artifacts that they obtain from their host society

which they use to further hone their own skills, expertly weaving between this newly acquired culture and their own, creating an identity that is culturally unique on its own. One such group that exhibits such an identity is Filipino immigrant workers working here in the United States.

Background of the Problem

The Filipino worker diaspora has been a continual phenomenon that has both shaped the Philippine economy and the development of Filipino culture (Aguila, 2015; David & Nadal, 2013; San Juan, 2009). Historically, many reasons are suggested for the immigration of Filipinos, both forced and unforced: for example, as slaves taken by the Spanish conquistadors in the late 1500s, as territorial citizens of the United States in 1898, and as scholars and even as political refugees running away from the iron grip of the late President and dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos (Aguila, 2015; David & Nadal, 2013; San Juan, 2009). However, the biggest reason for Filipinos immigrating to other countries is less romantic but as important as any of the aforementioned reasons: it is economics. In the Philippines, the average daily household income for a family of six in urban areas in 2018 was 857.53 Philippine pesos, roughly three US dollars per Filipino based on the exchange rate in June 2021 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2019). According to the Philippine Statistics Authority bulletin of 2017, many Filipinos are living below the poverty line, with a high unemployment rate of 5.6% and a staggering underemployment rate of 16.3% (Bersales, 2017; Trimbach, 2017). Given these conditions, many Filipinos make the hard decision of leaving family and friends and going abroad to look for greener pastures, enduring along the way many hardships in the process both before and

after leaving their homeland (Almendral, 2018). Here in the United States, many of these workers are in the health sector, working as nurses, physical therapist, and lab technicians (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2017, 2018), each one bringing their expertise, cultural values, and artifacts into the society they have migrated to and contributing to its cultural diversity.

But a small yet increasing number have been coming into the country in a field that may have a lasting impact on the deepest aspects of the United States: its public schools. For the past three decades, most of the 48 contiguous states have had or are currently having a teacher shortage problem, most notably in the fields of Math and Science in core areas that are seen to be the backbone of preparing students to become competitive in an evolving STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) market (Dupriez et al., 2016; Howard, 2003; Van Houten, 2009). And its importance felt even more now as the United States tries to maintain its rank as a superpower in terms of global innovation and technology, a position slowly slipping away due to the lack of qualified graduates to fill positions that meet demands in the STEM fields (Olson & Riordan, 2012; Ramdass & Zimmerman, 2008).

To alleviate this problem, many high needs school districts have taken drastic steps to fill these teacher positions, from offering large monetary incentives for new hires to allowing probationary (1-year) certified teachers to teach in classrooms while these teachers take alternative certification programs (Heilig et al., 2011). Other school districts, however, have looked over the other side of the fence to solve the problem, by hiring foreign teachers. Here in Texas, a majority of these foreign teachers hired to teach

Math and/or Science come from the Philippines, a third world country whose complicated national identity and culture is shaped by its geographically spread-out communities and by its colonized past (Aguila, 2015, p. 58).

The process, however, for a foreigner to be able to teach in Texas is a long and complicated one. Like most Filipinos dreaming of working in the US, the process begins with the potential employer filing a Labor Condition Application with the US Department of Labor. Once this application is approved, an H1-B petition with the US Citizenship and Immigration Services is filed (Ontiveros, 2017; Trimbach, 2017). In the Philippines, this means going for an interview at the US Consulate in Manila and having the H1-B visa stamped on the passport, enduring the bureaucratic process laid out by the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (Wiley, 2012). This entire process may take months to accomplish while enduring long lines and prolonged waiting periods for each step of the process. Such hardships, coupled with the financial burden of trying to pay for all the fees associated with this and the emotional toll related to leaving family members behind, make the effort of the Filipino migrant worker to go to the US indeed praiseworthy.

However, the challenges faced by Filipino teachers do not simply end once they set foot on US soil. Some endure accusations that they are stealing jobs while others encounter issues adapting to their host country and the new job, accent and language problems, and problems with cultural differences and discrimination (Alberts, 2008; Lee et al., 2015). All of these challenges greatly affect the well-being and mental health of these Filipino workers. But surprisingly, little literature documents such trials of these foreign-educated and foreign-born Filipino teachers.

Although many Filipinos know of the documented trials and tribulations that await Filipino teachers dreaming of greener pastures in the US public school systems, they still spend thousands of dollars and risk being victims of human trafficking just to be able to teach in the United States (Perea, 2018; Piccio, 2019). Many attributes such high desirability of working in the United States to the positive impression that the American colonization and lifestyle have left in many Filipino's minds, that American culture is far superior to their own, and that American values and artifacts are premium. Scholars have sometimes alluded to this phenomenon as *colonial mentality*. "Colonial mentality refers to the notion that superiority, pleasantness or desirability [is] associated with any cultural values, behaviors, physical appearance, and objects that are American or Western" (David & Okazaki, 2010, p. 850).

As such, many Filipinos have a perception of their own cultural identity as inferior to that of Americans. This, however, could be seen as a helpful fact by some in that Filipinos are said to be one of the minority groups that easily adapt to Western cultures (Aguila, 2015, p. 63). But at the same time, such a mindset can also give rise to tensions and conflicts within the persona of the Filipino as s/he tries to forge her/his own identity, which could lead to mental health stress and affect performance inside the classroom and the formation of students. Colonial mentality, as a double-edged sword, can be seen as either a helping grace for Filipinos or a dark abyss in their search for their own identities (David & Nadal, 2013; San Juan, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

There is much literature and research that alludes to teacher identity and the lived experiences of these people (Alberts, 2008; Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Schutz & Lee, 2014) and on the acculturation of Filipino immigrants (Yu, 2015; Baek Choi & Thomas, 2009; Ea et al., 2008). However, very few studies focus specifically on the lived experiences of Filipino teachers teaching in the United States, particularly those residing in Texas. With the growing number of Filipino teachers entering the US public schools and teaching America's future leaders, the scarce literature on the lived experiences of these teachers should be a great concern for researchers as it may directly or indirectly affect the formation of their students under their tutelage and the communities that they part of.

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this phenomenological inquiry, therefore, was to understand the lived experiences of Filipino teachers teaching in the United States, specifically in Texas, to get a glimpse of their acculturation process and the challenges and obstacles they faced during their first five years of staying in Texas. Specifically, the purpose was to determine how the acculturation process of these teachers made use of their original cultures and values in their teaching profession, and if they tried to assimilate into the US school system's western culture by completely accepting its new values, customs, and traditions while setting aside their own. A secondary purpose for this study was to explore the challenges that these teachers faced during their acculturation and the factors that helped them adapt to a different culture.

The following research questions were considered for this study:

1. What are the lived experiences of Filipino teachers teaching in Texas public schools?
2. What values, traditions, and cultural artifacts did Filipino teachers experience in Texas public –schools, and how do they perceive the essence of these compared to their own cultural traditions and values?

Definitions of Terms

Filipino teachers are part of the ten million Filipino workers doing their best to make a living outside their home country. Obtaining the essence of the lived experiences of these Filipino teachers is an important phenomenon that we cannot take for granted as it may have implications on our greatest investment: our children (Aguila, 2015; David & Nadal, 2013; San Juan, 2009). It was therefore important to ensure that there was clarity in the terms that were to be used in the review of literature. Hence, several terms used in the context of this study are described below.

Acculturation

The process of adjusting to a different culture is called acculturation. It is “the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes places as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (Berry, 2005, p. 698). It is a long-term process that often involves mutual accommodation, often spanning years and even generations.

Colonial Mentality

Filipinos value Western culture, values, and artifacts more far superior than their own. Such mindset, often termed as *colonial mentality*, refers to the “perception of ethnic or cultural inferiority” (David & Okazaki, 2006, p. 241) of one’s background and a

heightened “desirability associated with any cultural values, behaviors, physical appearance and objects that are American or Western” (David & Okazaki, 2010, p. 850).

H1-B Visa

H1-B is a visa type that allows non-immigrant aliens with special skills or knowledge to enter the United States to temporarily work in fields that require those special skills and knowledge to help employers who cannot obtain qualified US workers (Lee et al., 2015, p. 320).

Filipino Worker Diaspora

In the general context, a diaspora indicates a scattered population originating from one location. However, in the context of the Filipino worker and for this study, a diaspora alludes to experiences of overseas Filipino workers who migrated, both temporarily and permanently, in the hopes of providing a better future for themselves and their families. The term may also include those who fled from political persecution during the reign of Ferdinand E. Marcos, the Philippine dictator who held power for decades until he was toppled in a bloodless revolution in 1986 (Aguila, 2015).

Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW)

In the Philippines, the Filipino workforce that migrates to other countries is fondly called overseas Filipino workers, or OFWs, living heroes to the Filipino nation as hailed by then President Cory Aquino (Encinas-Franco, 2015, pp. 56-78).

Significance

Numerous research studies point out that the acculturation process takes a toll on both the physical and psychological well-being of immigrants, affecting numerous

aspects of themselves, including their acculturation attitudes towards themselves and their community, modification of behaviors and diets during the acculturation process, and changes in psychological patterns and mental health states (Baek Choi & Thomas, 2009; David & Nadal, 2013; Vargas, 2017). However, few studies specifically look at Filipino teachers. This study can therefore provide support to a deeper understanding into the acculturation process of Filipinos teachers and contribute to the literature on the psychological aspect of this process.

This research can also provide information that will be helpful to future migrant Filipino teachers and/or provide information that will be helpful in teacher preparation programs looking to bring in Filipino teachers into the U.S. public schools. This becomes more important when knowing that the shortage of qualified teachers is growing at an alarming rate, not only in the United States but all over the world (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Finally, this research can also provide insight on the persistence of colonial mentality on the acculturation process of Filipino teachers, adding to the literature on how colonial mentality contributes to the high desirability of Filipinos of anything related to the United States (David, 2008; David & Nadal, 2013).

Assumptions

This study focused on the experiences and the private lives of the participants involved, which may or may not be considered by the participants as confidential information. It is therefore in this context that I assumed that the participants trust the researcher enough to be truthful throughout their participation in this study.

Another assumption I made is about the accuracy of the information provided by the participants. Although trust may have been established between the researcher and the participants, the possibility of forgetting important details or details being inaccurate due to the amount of time that has lapsed existed.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study aimed to add to the existing literature on the lived experiences of Filipino teachers teaching in Texas. As such, the scope of the study was confined to Filipino teachers teaching in Texas public schools, have only been in the United States within the past five years, and have no other citizenship other than Filipino. This delimitation of using purposive sampling employed to gather participants was to ensure that participants have had a shared experience with regards to the phenomenon while restricting the effects of other factors that might affect it. These factors that might affect the study including but not limited to teaching in private schools, already possessing US citizenship after a long period of stay in the United States, being married to a US citizen, and other socio-economic factors. By doing purposeful sampling, and as noted by Creswell (2014), the researcher “selects participants that would help the researcher understand the problem and the research questions” (p. 239).

Another possible delimitation was the broadness of the research questions employed in this study. Doing this ensured the flexibility of the study and allowed the researcher to capture the richness and vividness of the descriptions of the experience of the participants. As noted by Wilson (2015), a phenomenological study “explicates the deeper human aspects of a situation, attending to mood, sensations, and emotions,

seeking to find out what the experience is, what it means to individuals and what the personal implications are” (p. 40). It is therefore only through voluminous rich text, collected by casting such a wide net, that these experiences can be fully explicated.

Several limitations were also considered for this study. One was the possibility of the researcher’s bias unconsciously influencing the data collection process, the flow of the interviews and the data analysis of the rich text data (Creswell, 2014). To remedy this, the researcher took intentional and conscious efforts to bracket these biases throughout the study, as recommended by Finlay (2009) and Moustakas (1994). The details of this bracketing process are available in Chapter 3 of this study.

Sample size and restriction to Filipino teachers on an H1-B visa could also limit the transferability of the findings of the study. The Philippines is both a culturally and linguistically diverse country, with numerous cultural traditions and practices and about 111 spoken dialects (Aguila, 2015; San Juan, 2009). Thus, having a sample size of seven participants and limiting the participants to specific qualifications could limit the diversity of the sample and limit how generalizable and transferable the findings of the study to other Filipino teachers. The researcher thus followed the recommendations of Merriam (2009) of using thick, vivid descriptions throughout the study to enhance the transferability of the findings.

One final possible limitation of this study is related to the short time frame in which the interviews were conducted. Phenomenological studies usually are recommended to be done over longer time frames, allowing the establishment of good personal rapport and empathy between the researcher and the participants (Benner, 1994;

Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). To address this limitation, the researcher engaged the participants in informal, personal chats and spent as much time as possible with them.

Organization of the Study

In this chapter, an overview on the teacher shortage in the United States, the Filipino diaspora, and the challenges of H1-B workers were provided to serve as backdrop to the researcher's question about the lived experiences of Filipino teachers here in Texas public schools. This question is very significant since a deeper understanding of the acculturation process of the Filipino teachers can provide information that could be helpful to teacher preparation programs looking to bring in Filipino teachers into U.S. public schools, and that could help in the effective adaptation of foreign teachers, and this would benefit not only the teachers themselves but also the students they teach. The purpose and research questions were addressed in this chapter, as well as the significance, assumptions, and the limitations and delimitations of the study.

In Chapter II, literature relevant to the study will be reviewed, mainly focusing on literature with regards to Filipino worker diaspora, the H1-B process, acculturation of Filipinos in the United States, and colonial mentality which is considered by numerous studies as one of the prime reasons for the strong desirability of Filipinos for anything "American."

In Chapter III, the purpose of the study and the research questions are reviewed in order to provide context for the use of a phenomenological analysis approach. A detailed

discussion of phenomenology is also included. Identifying the participants, participant selection process, and data collection process are described in this chapter, as well as (and with emphasis on) the methods for the explication of the data that will be utilized by the researcher to derive the findings of the study. Explication, as Kung (1975) notes, is

the move from expressions of ordinary language to explicitly defined expressions of a technical language, i.e., to expressions of a language with an explicit system of exact definitions... that is, a step of translation from ordinary ways of speaking into the highly technical language of transcendental phenomenology. (p. 72)

Or in layman terms, explication is the “investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole” (Hycner, 1999, p. 161). Laying out these methods of data explication is done to ensure the validity and truthfulness of the findings and to provide context to the phenomenon examined in the study.

In Chapter IV, the purpose of the study and the research questions are reintroduced to give context to the transcendental inquiry process, the research setting, and the data collection process. Results from the study and data analysis are also presented this chapter.

The final chapter, Chapter V, will contain the discussion of the findings, a discussion of the limitations of the study, as well as some recommendations for future research and implications for practice, policy, and theory.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Introduction

The Philippines, comprised of 7,106 scattered islands, is full of beauty yet is beset by poverty. Years of corrupt governance have left the country reeling with a \$30 billion international debt and a daily household income of only eighteen dollars to feed a family of six (Gillespie, 2013, p. 1502; San Juan, 2009, p. 103). Burdened with the daunting task of providing for their families and the rising unemployment rate, many Filipinos decide to leave their homeland and search for work in foreign countries. Millions of these choose to take a risk and sojourn to the United States, a country highly desired by Filipinos and seen by most as the land of opportunity.

In this chapter, the literature relevant to Filipino migration will be reviewed. Specifically, the literature review will focus on the Filipino worker diaspora, the H1-B visa process, the acculturation of Filipinos in the United States, and the colonized mentality of Filipinos towards Americans.

Filipino Worker Diaspora

Remittances from Filipinos working abroad continue to be a major contributor that keeps the Philippine economy afloat. According to National Statistical Coordination Board, a government body tracking national and international migration in the Philippines, in the year 2016 an approximate total of 26.92 billion dollars (1.2 trillion

Philippine pesos) was sent back to the families of these workers, equaling to around 10% of the gross national product (GDP) of the Philippines (iMoney Philippines, 2015).

Popularly known in their homeland as overseas Filipino workers or OFWs, these Filipinos work in various jobs like maids, bartenders, cleaners, engineers, nurses, and health care practitioners (Aguila, 2015; Aguilar, 2015; San Juan, 2009, p. 106), and they are part of the 10.5 million Filipinos who are currently residing in different countries around the world, making roughly 10% of the entire country's population (Aguila, 2015). This massive number of migrant labor is often termed as Filipino diaspora.

Diaspora, as defined by Shain (2007), is “a people with a common origin who reside, more or less on a permanent basis, outside the borders of their ethnoreligious homeland, whether that homeland is real or symbolic, independent or under foreign control” (p. 130). The term was originally used to reference the great dispersion of Jews out of their homeland during the Assyrian exile in 733 BC and that continued on to the Babylonian exile in 597 BC and then by that of the Romans in 135 AD (Aguila, 2015; Aguilar, 2015).

However, in recent times, the term diaspora started to reflect the socio-cultural aspects of the immigrant population. As noted by Eigartaigh et al. (2008),

...a diaspora is formed through a two part-process: a group of people is displaced from its original homeland, and it then goes on to form a new community in its adopted homeland. This new community is characterized by its ability to retain elements of its original culture and identity. (p. 5)

Such communities are never totally assimilated into the societies they sojourn in, creating an identity that embraces both cultures.

The Filipino diaspora had its origins in the Spanish conquest of the Philippines during the 16th century (Aguila, 2015; San Juan, 2009). These European conquistadors, looking to expand Europe's burgeoning global power, not only brought the Philippines into a global market but also caused cultural shifts that would forever change its society. Most marked of these changes were the introduction of the Catholic faith to the islanders. Such introduction would not only create the most predominant Roman Catholic nation in Southeast Asia but also result in Westernization and spiritualization that would define these islanders' identity later on (del Castillo, 2015).

The defeat of the Spaniards later on by the Americans, and subsequent occupation of the Philippines, further enhanced this Westernization. This occupation was spurred by the Philippine's abundant natural resources and strategic position of the Philippines for establishing the United States' foothold in Asia. This, coupled with other reasons, earned the Philippines the *adoration* [emphasis added] of the United States and was given the nickname *Pearl of the Orient* (San Juan, 2009, p. 101). Filipinos then started migrating into the United States as a "migrant labor force that worked in the sugar plantations in Hawaii, the Alaskan salmon canneries and the agricultural fields in California" (Roces, 2015, p. 191). These *little brown brothers*, as the Americans fondly called Filipinos, enjoyed this opportunity to work in the United States and, later on, even chose to stay and create homes. In both the United States and in the Philippines, Filipinos started to rely on the US for different things like knowledge, goods, and even in politics and governance

(Roces, 2015; Rodriguez, 1997). As Senator Jose Diokno, a Filipino senator at the time, put it more bluntly,

When the Americans left, they left behind the same three basic problems which they found in the country: widespread poverty, unequal distribution of wealth and social exploitation and added two more: a totally dependent economy and a military situation so tied to the US that decisions in war and peace, in fact, rest with the United States and the Filipino people. (as cited in San Juan, 2009, p. 102)

However, it was not until the end of World War II that the Philippines became totally dependent on the United States, and this is because the country was ravaged by the Japanese invaders and had very little to rebuild with. To the Filipinos, the United States was their saving grace, and going to the United States was going to the promise land (Rodriguez, 1997). As territorial constituents and comrades in arms during the war, Filipinos had easy access to the United States and thus more and more Filipinos started entering the United States as immigrants (Roces, 2015; Rodriguez, 1997). As Rodriguez (1997) points out, “for many Filipinos, coming to America means the fulfillment of a lifelong dream” (p. 318). Thus, the voluntary migration of Filipinos then stemmed from their grandiose perception of the United States.

This migration due to colonial influence however has been overtaken by migrants leaving the Philippines as cheap laborers. Nearly an average of 3,400 Filipinos leaves the Philippines every day to work as cheap labor in another country, making the Philippines the second-highest exporter of laborers after Mexico and the highest in Southeast Asia (San Juan, 2009, p. 99). This was simply because life in the Philippines did not improve

much after the war. High unemployment rates and increasing foreign debts hallmarked the Philippine economy, especially under former President and dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos. To alleviate the situation, Marcos signed Presidential Decree 442 or the 1974 Labor Code, formally laying the ground for a program that was to “ensure the careful selection of Filipino workers for the overseas labor market to protect the good name of the Philippines abroad” (Office of the President of the Philippines, 1974). This marked the exponential increase in the number of Filipino laborers, who have never even ridden on a plane before, to take huge risks and leave their homeland in search of employment. With it, stories of abuse, struggles, culture shock, trials and tribulations experienced by these OFWs also started to abound. As noted by San Juan (2009),

Although most are professionals with college degrees, teachers, midwives, social workers, etc., they are generally underpaid by the standards of their host countries – a sociopolitical, not purely economic, outcome of core-periphery inequity.

OFWs work in the most adverse conditions, with none or limited labor protections and social services otherwise accorded to nationals. The millions of undocumented workers suffer more with unscrupulous employers brutally exploiting their illegal status. Whether legal or undocumented, OFWs experience racism, discrimination, national chauvinism, and xenophobia; many are brutalized in isolated households and in the *entertainment* industry. They are deprived of food and human lodging, harassed, beaten, raped, and killed. Meanwhile, their families suffer from the stresses and tensions in households lacking parental

guidance; often marriages break up, leaving derelict children vulnerable to the exigencies of a competitive, individualist-oriented environment. (p. 107)

Stories of success and financial fulfillment, as well as a surge of national pride of the heroism and patriotism of these OFWs, parallel the anecdotes of sadness and regret. OFWs are considered by family members in the Philippines as financial lifesavers, with some eventually garnering honor and becoming experts in the fields they work in. As noted by Aguilar (2015), OFWs are “regarded generally as laboring overseas in the act of sacrifice for the family and benefiting the country as well. Migrant workers have been crowned by the Philippine state as *bagong bayani* (new heroes)” (p. 452).

However, in whatever region they land on, Filipinos are known for keeping in touch with family and relatives in the Philippines and for creating communities in their host countries (Aguila, 2015). As noted by San Juan (2009), “because of globalizing changes in the modes of transport and communications, diaspora communities appear to be able to sustain their own distinctive identities – and economic ties to their homeland” (p. 103). Indeed, Filipino workers essentially became ambassadors of good will to the Philippines, spreading its cultural values and heritage as small communities around the globe while sending remittances in hopes of freeing their loved ones from poverty.

These stories of experiences by OFWs are part of the complexity that characterizes the Filipino diaspora. As noted by San Juan (2009),

Like racism and nationalism, diaspora presents multiform physiognomies open to various interpretations and articulations . . . accordingly, the static territorial nationalisms of the past have given way to a series of shifting or contested

boundaries, engendering notions of transnational networks . . . that emphasize the complexity, fluidity and diversity of migrant identities and experience. (pp. 103-104).

It is therefore these complexities (in the identities of the Filipino diaspora) created by cultural fluidity, neocolonialism, and other factors that affect the acculturation process of OFWs (Aguila, 2015; San Juan, 2009).

The H1-B Visa

The journey for all Filipino workers, including Filipino teachers working in Texas, begins with the quest for an H1-B visa. “An H1-B visa is a non-immigrant work visa that allows an alien with special skills or knowledge to enter the United States to work in a position that requires those skills or that knowledge” (Trimbach, 2017, p. 277). Initially began in the 1990’s to fill gaps in the US domestic labor supply, H1-Bs are highly coveted by foreign workers and foreign placement agencies alike, with an estimated 1 million people trying to get a visa out of the 65,000-cap set by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and in the H1-B lottery that follows it (Ontiveros, 2017). India is leading the pack in this race, with an estimated 100,000 H1-B visas granted to its citizens each year (Callan, 2016; Lee et al., 2015). This includes H1-B visas obtained from the 65,000-cap, the H1-B visa lottery, and H1-B visa applications that were filed in previous years but only approved that current year. H1-B visas are initially given from 1 to 3-year durations, renewable every year afterwards up to a maximum of six years (Callan, 2016; Ontiveros, 2017).

The H1-B visa is highly prized in many parts of the globe, as it presents an opportunity for financial stability, and for some a recognition of their superior qualifications over their fellow countrymen. Such high demand for the H1-B visa from foreign job seekers and large US companies that cannot fill in their labor needs has given rise to many international companies—like Tata Consulting Agency, WiPro, and Infosys—that process H1-B jobs for large US conglomerates like Toys-R-Us and Disney. These companies make millions of dollars, with the placement agencies charging thousands of dollars to potential employees while US companies saving millions by employing these workers (Ontiveros, 2017; Trimbach, 2017).

Although the H1-B visa is seen as a ticket for a very high paying job, the reality however is not what it always seems. Many H1-B workers are usually overqualified for the positions that they take, are usually underpaid, work long hours without overtime pay, and even do duties that are not part of their job descriptions. Trimbach (2017) makes a good case on this as he noted:

The H1-B program sets a minimum salary for H1-B workers based on the position the worker would fill, and this minimum is calculated using an average of salaries received for similar positions. As such, calculating the minimum salary does not involve looking at the potential employee's skills or qualifications. Because of this, H1-B workers who should receive a wage premium likely do not. (p. 278)

Overall, the H1-B visa is both vilified and glorified by many sectors, both in and out of the United States and has left many questioning if the program is already in dire need of reforms.

The H1-B process

The process of obtaining an H1-B visa is a complex and convoluted one that often involves months to years in the making. It begins with an employer ensuring that the position that needs to be filled is deemed as a specialty occupation by the Department of Labor and that there is a lack of US citizens who are willing to, and are qualified for, that specialty occupation (Trimbach, 2017, p. 278). The employer then files the necessary documentation to attest to this fact and documentation related to the H1-B visa to the different government offices. One such filing is the Labor Condition Application, or LCA, that employers have to do with the Department of Labor (DOL). The LCA filing is done to demonstrate the availability of the position being offered to the H1-B employee, that it does satisfy the conditions set out by DOL for specialty occupations, and that it does not displace any US workers (whether it be to break a strike, labor dispute or future openings to replace US workers) (Ontiveros, 2017; Trimbach, 2017, p. 279). One of the requirements for the LCA includes posting of the specialty occupation by the employer in major newspapers, jobsites, and community halls to ensure that no qualified US worker is willing to take the job.

Once the LCA is approved, the employer then files a petition with the USCIS for the alien worker. USCIS only allots 65,000 H1-B visas capped yearly, with different countries getting different numbers of allocated visas. This, according to the USCIS, is to provide equal opportunity to those who seek it and ensure diversity in the program (Callan, 2016; Lee et al., 2015). Throughout the process, the employer must shoulder all the fees associated with the filing and is responsible for ensuring the authenticity for all

information provided to the different government offices. Descriptions of job, attestations on the authenticity, and *taking-good-faith-steps-to-recruit* documentations often make up the bulk of the documents that many employers frown upon in the H1-B filing. However, these attestations and other documentations are designed to be there to “ensure that employers are subjected to additional scrutiny if they are more likely to abuse the program” (Trimbach, 2017, p. 281).

On the other hand, different countries have different demands on its citizens after the H1-B visa is approved. In the Philippines, the arduous process begins with a trip to US Consulate in Manila to be interviewed and get the H1-B visa stamped on potential OFWs’ passports. Some are fortunate enough to have their visas stamped after some simple questions from the consular officer. However, others are not. Stories of being immediately denied the Visa due to inconsistencies in their answers during the visa interview and/or meticulous discretion of the consular officer abound. Others are even slapped with a *request for further evidence* (RFE) forms when consular officials doubt their qualifications for the job. Whatever it is, the embassy trip is a nerve-racking experience for most first-time OFWs, enough to drive some to tears as they leave the embassy premises (i.e. tears of joy or tears of frustration).

Although getting the visa stamped in their passport may already seem like a success in itself to the OFW, it only lays out the start of their battle with the Philippine government’s bureaucracy. The main opponent in this round is the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA), the government agency in-charge of ensuring that the job offered to the potential employee is authentic, that he or she is indeed qualified to fill

such position, and that their physical and mental health is at its prime (San Juan, 2009). These are understandable measures that ensures that the rights of Filipino migrant workers are protected and that these migrants do not fall victims to human trafficking syndicates and/or to abuse (Perea, 2018; Piccio, 2019).

The issue, however, lies in the long wait lines, incessant fees, and the Gestapo-like interrogation from the POEA employees and recruiters. Many OFW complains that these make the process more of a burden and a challenge to them (San Juan, 2009, p. 106). And, based on first-hand experience, this process could take a few days to a few weeks and even a couple of months to be successfully completed, requiring patience from both the employee and the employer waiting. After successfully navigating all of these, what awaits the OFW in the end is a piece of paper called an *exit clearance* that would allow the OFW to pass through immigration and board his plane to his destination country. And this is not to mention that the physically, emotionally, and financially drained Filipino employees will still need to face the emotional burden of leaving family behind (Lee et al., 2015). The emotional toll and the additional financial burden of buying plane tickets and having enough pocket money to survive overshadow the OFW's initial foray into the US.

Goals of the H1-B program

Although the process seems complex and arduous, many large US companies still hire H1-B workers and even employ the services of top-notch immigration law offices just to ensure that they get these workers in a timely manner (Trimbach, 2017). This simply attest to how much the demand is for these foreign workers and the main reason

why the H1-B program exists: to bridge the labor gap by “allowing US employers to fill positions with highly qualified alien candidates where there are too few qualified US workers” (Trimbach, 2017, p. 277). The H1-B program therefore prevents companies from outsourcing these jobs to other countries if there are no US citizen takers, keeping jobs on US soil and keeping the money involved in it in the US economy (Trimbach, 2017).

Controversies with H1-B

However, many do not see the H1-B program as helping with the labor gap and helping keeping jobs on US soil. Many citizens in the US feels that is does the opposite. Such can be alluded to from the following case, as noted by Trimbach (2017):

In October of 2015, about 250 Disney employees were informed that they were being laid off. Many of these employees were replaced by non-resident alien workers entering the United States with H1-B visas. Some of these employees could only receive a severance package if they spent the next three months training one of those workers to do their job. (p. 276)

In some places, and even in US congressional policy hearings, some people see cases like these as foreign H1-B workers stealing jobs away from US citizens (Lee et al., 2015, p. 320). Although the DOL and the USCIS put in policies and safeguards to protect from such thing happening, such as including attestations to “take good faith steps in recruiting,” some companies still find loopholes and abuse the program (Trimbach, 2017).

Another argument against the use of H1-B workers is that it actually contributes to the labor gap, something that the program was originally intended to alleviate. As Trimbach (2017) noted,

because H1-B wages are tied to US worker wages, the program makes it more difficult for the average wage to increase. If wages stagnate, US workers have no incentive to enter the field and fill the labor gap. Keeping wages constant (or decreasing them) perpetuates the labor gap, effectively displacing US workers permanently with H1-B employees. (p. 278)

With rising qualifications but stagnating pays for specialized jobs, more and more US citizens are shying away from them and are instead choosing jobs that require little qualifications but a bigger chance of getting higher wages. In the end, only foreign workers who are willing to work longer hours at lower wages compared to their US colleagues, but whose wages are astronomically larger than their counterparts in their home country, choose to fill in those specialized jobs, further contributing to the labor gap (Ontiveros, 2017).

Finally, one controversy that the H1-B program has but is rarely spoken of in the halls of congress is the abuse that some H1-B workers get in the hands of their employers. These abuses range from being overworked and underpaid. Some OFWs report being asked to pay back the fees paid to hire them, placed in unsanitary living conditions while waiting for a position to open, and even doing duties that were not in their job description of their H1-B contracts (Banerjee, 2008, p. 104; Ontiveros, 2017).

But many of these workers tolerate these abuses in silence, fearing losing their H1-B visas. As noted by Ontiveros (2017)

Significantly, under this program, the employer applies for the visa and sponsors the worker. If the worker is fired or the employer cancels the visa, the worker loses the legal right to be in the United States and must return home. This visa program, originally designed to bring highly skilled technical workers to the United States to meet gaps in the domestic workforce, has resulted in the exploitation of many high-tech workers in the United States. (p. 3)

And once the visa is revoked, the immigrant worker must leave the country immediately, else he/she can be declared as *overstaying* and be banned for 10 years from applying for a US visa. This fear of losing the H1-B visa, being banned from the US, and returning to their home countries defeated pushes most H1-B workers to tolerate abuses from their employers. To them, these are nothing compared to the financial losses that they would face if they lose their visa.

Acculturation

The H1-B process is not the only complex part in the sojourn of the OFW. The acculturation process of Filipinos, like their diaspora identities, is also a very complex yet very fluid process. Acculturation, as defined by Baek Choi and Thomas (2009), “is a process of adaptation and culture modification as a result of continued contact between two different and distinct cultures. Oftentimes, it results in the change of beliefs, values and behavior of immigrants” (p. 77). However, it is not only the migrant that benefits from the acculturation process. Numerous research studies show that the host country and

its economic, social, and cultural systems also benefit from the migrants' acculturation process (Aguila, 2015; Berry, 1992, 1997, 2005; Ea et al., 2008; Jacoby, 2009).

Although acculturation can sometimes be quick, as in the process of assimilation where the individual learns the characteristics of the new culture while shedding his own (Berry, 1992, 1997), related changes, both for the migrant and the host country, may span months, years, or even decades to have a lasting or noticeable effect. "Acculturation is a process of cultural and psychological changes that involve various forms of mutual accommodation, leading to some longer-term psychological or socio-cultural adaptation between groups" (Berry, 2005, p. 699). These mutual forms of accommodations may include the migrant and the host country learning each other's preferences, both socially and in terms of living standards (e.g. food, clothing, and interior design), each other's languages, meanings of mannerisms, and even observed religious beliefs. Filipinos, for example, are notorious for serving traditional Philippine cuisines like *adobo*, *crispy pata*, and *pancit* to foreign guests, food that they feel represents the Filipino-ness of their cultures. On the other hand, Filipinos in foreign countries try to learn to eat with only a fork instead of using a spoon, which is the norm in the Philippines. On the former, many foreigners fall in love with the dishes, but there are also those who are undecided on whether or not to like it. On the latter, some Filipinos do learn to use forks in eating but still mainly prefer to use spoons, especially when dining in private.

The above examples show that the acculturation process can sometimes be the result of conflict within the individual, which Berry (1992) termed "acculturative stress" or acceptance of host societal norms termed "behavioral shifts." As Berry (1992) noted,

In [behavioral shifts] are changes in behavior away from previously learned patterns toward those more frequently found in the new society. Those involve learning and unlearning a repertoire of behaviors. In [acculturative stress] are a number of stressful psychological phenomena that involve conflict and often result in new forms of behavior that interfere with smooth day-to-day functioning. (p. 71)

These behavioral shifts and acculturative stress affect the length of time for individuals to get acculturated into the new culture and have lasting psychological and physiological effects on that person. And for most of these individuals, successful acculturation involves overcoming these acculturative stresses and effectively changing behavior patterns to adapt to society (Berry, 2005; Crisp & Turner, 2011).

As with the example of the use of the fork, most Filipinos easily adapt to this societal norm, seeing that using a fork in eating is almost equivalent to using a spoon, albeit more difficult to eat rice, and that it is an essential to adapt in dining out while in the US. Berry (1997) sees this acculturation process as assimilation, part of four-fold path and outcome for acculturation (see Figure 1).

The framework is based on two conflicting issues with regards to acculturation: the “maintenance and development of one’s ethnic distinctiveness in society” and the “desirability of inter-ethnic contact” (deciding whether relations with larger society are of value and should be sought) (Berry, 1992, p. 72). It shows that different responses to these critical issues result in different ways of acculturation for the individual.

Figure 1

Acculturation Strategies.

				ISSUE 1	
				Is it considered to be of value to maintain cultural identity and characteristics?	
				Yes	No
ISSUE 2	Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with other groups?	Yes	INTEGRATION	ASSIMILATION	
		No	SEPARATION	MARGINALIZATION	

Note. Adopted from “Acculturation: Living Successfully in Two Cultures,” by J. W. Berry, 2005, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29(6), p. 703.

With the case of using a fork, many Filipinos assimilate into using a fork in fear of being embarrassed and being marginalized simply because they require a spoon to be able to eat in the presence of Americans (who sometimes make fun of Asians whose social norm is using a spoon). These stresses and assumptions, coupled with their need and motivation to adapt into their new environment, allow Filipinos to easily forego of their old habits and behavior (Berry, 2013) that makes them Filipino and embrace the new norm.

However, using the same framework when it comes to Filipinos showcasing Philippine cuisines to their American friends, one could clearly see that this acculturation

process is integration, where Filipinos feel that their cultural heritage (i.e., Filipino food) has both value to be maintained and value in creating relationships with others. In this case, any stress that results from the acculturation is easily resisted or overcome, although such stresses may not actually stop from creating conflict within the individual (Berry, 1992, 1997, 2013).

Separation, on the other hand, is an acculturation path where one creates a situation where one maintains his own cultural identity, either through continued association with individuals coming from the same cultural background or limited contact with the culture of the host society or dominant group and continues to practice his or her own cultural traditions (Berry, 1992, 1997). An example of this is how Quakers created communities that preserved their heritage and way of life, creating a society that is independent from the current dominant one. However, if the migrant or minority group is forced to separate by the dominant group from mainstream society, such phenomenon is called by Berry (1997, 2010) as segregation, which usually results in a higher amount of stress and challenges for the minority group.

Marginalization, on the other hand, happens when individuals isolate themselves from other individuals of any culture, including their own, and have very little interest in practicing their own cultural beliefs (Berry, 1992, 2010, 2013). Individuals sometimes, however, instead of choosing to isolate themselves, are pressured or forced to exclude themselves from the majority culture and their own by a dominant group. Such type of marginalization is often called exclusion (Berry, 2010) and usually results in trauma or

psychological stresses that may affect the mental health of the individual (Berry, 2013; David, 2008).

Numerous research, however, point to the fact that most members of the Filipino diaspora are considered as part of the *model minority* and easily acculturate to their host society (Aguila, 2015; Nadal, 2009; Pido, 1997). As noted by Aguila (2015),

. . . actually Filipinos are known to be more adaptive to migration than other ethnic groups . . . Filipinos being ideal migrants with an inclination for foreign languages. This is often attributed to fluency in English, a second mother tongue in the Philippines. In fact, the ability of Filipinos to thrive even in the most oppressive of circumstances is well documented. (p. 63)

Therefore, the Filipino diaspora easily and readily adapts to their environment, where adaptation, as Berry (2005) stated, “refers to the relatively stable changes that take place in the individual or group in response to external demands” (Berry, 2005, p. 709).

This flexible adaptation of the Filipino diaspora is often attributed to their positive attitude toward the conditions of their acculturation, influenced by the spirituality brought upon their religious beliefs, the social support they receive from their fellow migrants, their fluency in the English language and, perhaps as noted in some studies, their risk-taker attitudes brought by poverty and dire economic situations they experienced in the Philippines (Aguila, 2015; del Castillo, 2015; Pido, 1997; San Juan, 2010; Yu, 2015). Such can be noted in Filipino communities in California and in New York where these migrants have established organizations that provide counseling and support to their fellow countrymen. They also hold meetings at parks, do community cookouts, and meet

at churches and other venues where they can mingle and keep in touch with other migrants. And, in recent times, Filipino migrants have a growing presence in online communities where they have created virtual communities that allow them to keep in touch and up-to-date. These support systems help these Filipino migrants deal with psychological, social, and environmental stresses that may accompany the acculturation process, enabling them to successfully acculturate in the new culture.

Colonial Mentality

However, upon looking at the literature on Filipino diaspora and their acculturation, one question that surface is whether *colonial mentality*, or the great desirability of anything American, has helped in the acculturation process of the Filipino diaspora. Colonial mentality, as defined by David and Okazaki (2006, 2010), refers to the “perception of ethnic or cultural inferiority” (p. 241) of one’s cultural background and a heightened “desirability associated with any cultural values, behaviors, physical appearance and objects that are American or Western” (p. 850). It is said that colonial mentality is a condition of internalized colonialism, “consequence of centuries of colonization under Spain and the U.S.” (David & Okazaki, 2006, p. 241).

Colonization of the Philippines officially started on March 16, 1521, when Ferdinand Magellan, after a perilous two-year journey through the Pacific in search of the fable spice islands, successfully landed on the island of Cebu with three galleons, with the goals of establishing trade, converting the natives to Catholicism, and establishing Spain’s and its king’s dominance of the world (Aguilar, 2015; del Castillo, 2015). The conquistadors were successful, and by the early 17th century, the majority of the Filipinos

in the Philippines had converted to Catholicism and were feudal serfs to the Spanish crown. Towns were established based on Spain's city structures, and bureaucratic organizations and schools were all established patterned after those of Spain's as well. Catholic beliefs, values, and traditions also permeated throughout the daily lives of Filipinos. It has been said that from this point on, the Filipino mindset that Western culture and civilization were superior to theirs started to take root in Filipino psyche (Aguila, 2015), and thus the start of the Filipino's colonial mentality. As noted by David and Okazaki (2006), Filipinos, having experienced the convenience and ease of lifestyles brought in by the foreigners, started to see the beliefs and values of colonizers as superior to their own. They started to see their previous way of life, as well as their beliefs, as backwards and yearned to learn more about the lifestyle of Westerners.

This colonial mentality of Western civilization and culture being more superior than that of Filipinos became further entrenched in the Filipino mindset during the American occupation of the Philippines. During this time, the American lifestyle of convenience and values of equal opportunity were introduced to Filipinos who felt oppressed due to the hierarchical rule of the Spaniards. American politics that encouraged representation, social values and norms that oozed confidence and fun, and technology that screamed progress mesmerized Filipinos. And even the minds of Filipinos were not spared, as "American teachers and school administrators were sent to the Philippines to inculcate Filipinos with ideas of American superiority, civilization and worldviews" (David & Nadal, 2013, p. 298). To the subconscious mind of Filipinos, colonial mentality's Western preference now had a face, and it was American.

Colonial mentality for anything American became so ingrained in Filipino life and culture that it persists well past the time the Philippines obtained independence from the United States in 1945 and long after the American had abandoned their military bases in the 1990's (Aguilar, 2015; San Juan, 2009). As noted by Pido (1997),

. . . many no longer wanted to make a living from the land as their parents did . . .

In addition to having a different occupational outlook, this generation of Filipinos also had different lifestyle expectations. They were becoming oriented as consumers toward American products. (pp. 24-25)

Indeed, many Filipinos have already forgotten the historic native practices of eating their rice-based meals using their hands and have started to use a spoon and fork introduced by Western colonization. The young ones flocking to universities and colleges to get degrees to get blue collared jobs instead of tilling the land as their forefathers did, preferring to wear Nike shoes instead of the traditional *bakya* or wooden sandals and dress shirts and ties instead of the traditional *bahag* (loincloth) or *barong Tagalog* (traditional Philippine men's wardrobe) that our ancestors wore. More and more Filipinos have changed their palettes to prefer American goods, brands, and fashion that now dominate Philippine media and society. "In effect, the US exercised sovereignty over a neocolonial formation so thoroughly Americanized that its people today believe that moving to the US metropole is the true fulfillment of their dreams and destiny" (San Juan, 2009, p. 102).

However, the colonial mentality of Filipinos did not only stop with the reliance and subconscious preference for American goods, values, and traditions, but it also

involved the veneration of American governance, politics, and military prowess. As David and Nadal (2013) explained:

Decades after American colonial rule formally ended in 1946, the legacies of American colonialism are still strongly felt in modern-day Philippines . . . English continues to be the primary language used for school instruction, formal government businesses, and other important communications. It has been speculated that such practices [continues to] send the message that English is the language of the educated and the civilized and thus better than indigenous Filipino languages. (p. 299)

The colonial mentality of Filipinos was so inculcated into their identities that they subconsciously yearned to be Americans. This is reflected by their desire to look American and associate with people who look American. Many had preferences for partners who had higher bridged noses and those who were taller and had lighter complexion. As David and Nadal (2013) explained,

. . . the continued regard for lighter skinned people as more attractive is also argued to send the message that natural Filipino physical characteristics are not as desirable as European physical traits. Indeed, the abundance of skin-whitening creams, skin bleaching products and skin lightening clinics throughout the Philippines is evidence that the masses may have fully accepted this Western-centric standard for what is beautiful and desirable,” that is “more Western or American you look, think, and behave, the better off and more accepted you will be.” (p. 299)

It could therefore be inferred that the choice of the Filipino diaspora to head towards the United States is due to the ingrained colonial mentality in Filipino's minds, regardless of difficulties or trials and tribulations that they may face during the migration process. As San Juan (2009) noted in his work, "about 700000 men and women and children are being trafficked to the US, but OFWs are quite unique in that the Filipino's deeply colonized mentality/psyche privileges America as the [dream destination], an intoxicating way out of poverty" (p. 107). And it is not only with America being seen as a destination of choice that colonial mentality has a subconscious grip on the minds of Filipinos, but also on how they acculturate to their new society (Massey et al., 1993; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). As Aguila (2015) pointed out, "Filipino diasporic identities should not be viewed separately from Filipino identities" and the complexities and conflicts it brings about but as an interplay with "colonialism as the source of the Filipino complicatedness" (p. 69). It is therefore important to further study the influence of colonialism on Filipino diasporic identities for us to get a clearer glimpse at how Filipinos create their self-identities in the US.

Summary

The sojourn of the Filipino OFW, particularly the Filipino teacher, has its roots deep in the historical context of the Filipino diaspora. Such sojourn begins with the tumultuous process of obtaining an H1B visa, continuing on with the complex and complicated process of acculturation here in the United States. This chapter looked at the challenges and trials faced by the OFWs during this sojourn, the factors that contribute to

their identity as OFWs, and the cultural backdrop on how they acculturate into a new society.

In the next chapter, the purpose of the study and the research questions are reviewed in order to provide context for the use of transcendental phenomenological inquiry to better understand the lived experiences of Filipino teachers in Texas. The sampling process and data collection process are also described, with close emphasis on the exclusion and inclusion criteria used in picking the participants of the study. This is done to ensure the credibility, transferability, and dependability of the outcomes of the study.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction

Teachers have had a hand in the formation of most of the greatest people on this planet: from presidents to great businessmen and famous people who everyone adores and worships. In fact, teachers have had a hand in all of our lives, whether one lives a great one or not. However, the teaching profession is one of the most underpaid and unappreciated careers on the planet—one possible reason why there continues to be a teacher shortage here in the United States. To alleviate this problem, different school districts around the US have turned to hire foreign teachers to fill in these demands for teachers. One country that has been a hunting ground for such needed teachers is the Philippines.

These teachers, a drop in the ten million Filipinos who left the Philippines in search of a more secured financial future, are part of what researchers call the Filipino diaspora, a complex and complicated process that stems from centuries of colonization and economic circumstances. They are unsung heroes whose work touches the lives of those who hold the future of the United States. It is therefore important to better understand their lived experiences here in the US, how they acculturate to their new surroundings, and to obtain an understanding of how the challenges and cultural

traditions have helped them weather this transition period. This importance thus frames the purpose and goals of this study.

Purpose

The lived experiences of these Filipino teachers may perhaps provide us with a deeper understanding of their acculturation process while serving in U.S. public schools, and specifically here in Texas. The purpose of this phenomenological inquiry was to explicate the essence of these lived experiences, to have a deeper understanding of these teachers' acculturation process, and to unravel the role their cultural traditions and values have had during this transition process. It aimed to see whether these teachers made good use of their original cultural values, beliefs, and artifacts as they conducted their duties as teachers here in the United States, or if they simply accepted U.S. values, customs, and traditions that were present in their new societal structures in efforts to assimilate more easily into their new environment. Another purpose of this inquiry was to look at the difficulties and challenges these teachers had to go through while settling here in the United States and what factors helped them acculturate into the culture of their new environment, and specifically in Southern Texas.

Research Questions

In order for the study to determine the essence of the shared experiences of these Filipino teachers, an inquiry approach that elicits vivid responses from the participants was used. To be able to collect such rich descriptions of the experiences of the participants, the following research questions were used for this study:

1. What are the lived experiences of Filipino teachers teaching in Texas public schools?
2. What values, traditions, and cultural artifacts did Filipino teachers experience in Texas public schools, and how do they perceive the essence of these compared to their own cultural traditions and values?

Research Design

A qualitative research design was a conspicuous choice for this study to address the research questions and determine the essence of the experiences of these Filipino teachers. As noted by Creswell (2014), the qualitative method is a good “approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 32). Its flexibility and its reliance on rich descriptions obtained through emerging questions and interactions throughout the research made qualitative research design an excellent choice in bringing out the meaning from the Filipino teachers’ experiences.

Several qualitative research designs were considered to best address the research questions that were developed to address the purpose of the study. One such research design was narrative research that, as Creswell (2014) noted, “is a design of inquiry from the humanities in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives” (p. 42). This would have been a good choice of research design since understanding the lived experiences of the participants would rely on the stories that they would provide the researcher. However, in most narrative research designs, information, in the end, is simply retold by the

researcher in chronological order and often, “the narrative combines views from the participant’s life with those of the researcher’s life in a collaborative narrative” (Creswell, 2014, p. 42). Thus, I deemed it unacceptable for this study.

The most important consideration for the choice of design for this study was that it should not allow the meanings explicated from the experiences of these Filipino teachers to be tainted, diffused, or biased in any part by the researcher or the research design itself. Using all of these considerations, a phenomenological inquiry approach, more specifically a transcendental one, was thus chosen as the main research design that would guide the inquiry itself.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is “a low-hovering, in-dwelling, meditative philosophy that glorifies in the concreteness of person-world relations and accords lived experience, with all its indeterminacy and ambiguity, primacy over the known” (Wertz, 2005, p. 175). As a research method, it “is a form of inquiry that seeks to understand the human experience” (Sheehan, 2014, p. 11), as it tries to “describe the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept of a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). Phenomenologists believe that such truths are subjective, as cultural backgrounds, prior experiences, beliefs, and values, among others, all contribute to how one interprets a phenomenon. This subjectiveness, however, is what gives each event a person experiences its richness, and the source of the treasure trove called the essence that it wants to reveal. Therefore, phenomenology’s main purpose of illuminating these truths and translating them into text representing the shared experiences of a phenomenon by

the participants greatly coincides with the goals of this study, thus making it the most appropriate research method for the study.

The term phenomenon has its roots in the ideas of Immanuel Kant who first used it to describe objects as understood by human understanding (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). In his work *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant distinguished between *apriori* justification, that is, seeing objects independent of experience, and *posteriori* justification, or seeing objects as experienced by a person (Finlay, 2009; Padilla-Diaz, 2015). This gave birth to two distinct fields: structural linguistics where the meaning of experiences are seen as framed by knowledge and social context and thus are important tenants when describing it; and phenomenology where it is believed that to get the essence of a phenomenon, one has simply to describe it and not interpret it based on prior knowledge (Finlay, 2009; Padilla-Diaz, 2015). This resulted in phenomenology splitting further down the line into transcendental phenomenology (whose goal is to describe the phenomenon) and hermeneutic phenomenology (whose aim is to interpret the phenomenon). Several variations of transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology would later come out each one with its own touted superiority over the other and its concerns.

Although many phenomenologists would endlessly debate on which phenomenological approach is more apt over the other, everyone would agree that it was Edmund Husserl that took phenomenology into the center stage of research methodologies. As mathematician by profession, Husserl “sought to reach the conclusions framed within the scope of science” by “starting with empirical observations” (Padilla-Diaz, 2015, p. 102). He declared that phenomena are the basis of

all experience, and thus the root of all knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). He noted that the way we see reality is bound through what he calls the natural attitude—a state where the reality we experience is fundamentally separable from our subjective experience of it (Husserl & Gibson, 1983; Moustakas, 1994). This natural attitude is so inherent in us that we often do things without thinking about why we do them. Husserl also notes that this natural attitude is the reason why we hardly reflect on experiences that we are so used to doing. But such natural attitude usually hides the true meaning of things through our subjective meanings, hence the need to bracket this natural attitude. Husserl noted that this bracketing of the natural attitude, called phenomenological attitude, was a powerful tool that would allow man to see past the materialistic and what was before one's eyes to see its essence. He saw its applications as limitless as it could be used to look at everyday experiences to the natural sciences. Thus, he saw phenomenology as the “science of science” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). He saw phenomenology as a tool that can look at the essence of the root of all knowledge, unbridled by man's interpretation of it.

Transcendental Phenomenology

The transcendental phenomenology that we know today generally stems from these ideas of Edmund Husserl, and it focuses on researcher suspending all preconceived biases and allowing the meaning to come out of the descriptions of the experience rather than being interpreted by the researcher using his own knowledge (Moustakas, 1994; Padilla-Diaz, 2015).

To Hermeneutic phenomenology, “the meaning of phenomenological description lies in its interpretation” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 37). It notes that all our experiences are

connected in our understanding of language and communication and vast social and cultural interactions. Thus, it is inevitable that we tarnish our interpretation of anything we see with bias. But transcendental phenomenology believes that this should not be the case. It believes the true meaning or essence of the phenomenon should seep out of the experiences of the participants themselves without being tainted by someone else's bias. Transcendental phenomenology, thus, relies on the rich text of the experience of the participants to draw out broad unifying themes that reflect the reality of the experience without the researcher's bias clouding it. This creates a more truthful representation of the understanding or essence of the participant's experience. Thus, other theoretical frameworks are of no use in transcendental phenomenology as they would tend to skew this essence. It is thus the reason the researcher feels that transcendental phenomenology would be the best approach for this study as it aims to keep the essence of the phenomena as seen through the lens of the experiencer and not of the researcher.

Intentionality

Getting to the pure essence was the main goal of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. However, the core of this phenomenology "is the intentionality of consciousness, understood as the direction of consciousness towards understanding the world" (Sadala & Adorno, 2002, p. 283). It is how we give meaning to what we experience, our awareness to the world around us. It is through such intentionality of consciousness that we attributed a sad emotion to a picture of a funeral or warmth and happiness to a scene of a hillside full of blooming flowers. "Consciousness, through such intentionality, is understood as the agent that attributes meanings to objects. Without

these meanings, it would be impossible to talk either about an object or an object's essence" (Sadala & Adorno, 2002, p. 283).

Phenomenological Reduction

The main goal, of the researcher, therefore, is to "analyze the intentional experiences of consciousness in order to perceive how the meaning a phenomenon is given meaning and to arrive at its essence" (Sadala & Adorno, 2002, p. 283). But how can we, as researchers with our own biases, truly arrive at the phenomenon's essence without it being interpreted through our own experiences' lenses? Husserl's remedy to this is the phenomenological reduction, which is the "process of rendering oneself as non-influential and neutral as possible," allowing one to focus on a specific phenomenon (Finlay, 2009, p. 12). This is akin to the person looking into the murky lake staring past his own reflection on the surface and focusing his eyes on one single object at the bottom of the lake. The first step of this reduction is therefore for the researcher to "bracket" his own biases, knowledge, and understanding of the phenomenon, and not simply to acknowledge it as part of the subjective bias in research. This thus increases not only the credibility and dependability of the descriptions of the phenomenon, but also ensures that it is the true meaning or essence to the participants is drawn out from each level of the research process (Finlay, 2009).

Epoche

Husserl termed such intentional and conscious bracketing or abstention of the researcher's own bias from tainting the inquiry after the Greek word *epoché*, "meaning to stay or abstain from" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). The *epoché* is the first step in reducing

the participant's experience into one single *noema* (phenomenon) and allowing the researcher to look deeper within it. It allows the researcher to remove any *noetic* (previous understanding) perspective and allow the *noema* (phenomenon) to surface and gain its true and honest essence (meaning) (Moustakas, 1994; Sousa, 2014). This conscious effort, Husserl noted in his works, allows for the researcher to be able to look at the phenomenon with an untainted mindset and to see it as if it was something foreign and never seen before, being able to engage it without prejudice or bias.

The question that begs to be answered therefore is: if the phenomenon is framed by the experiences of people, would it not be better to use preconceived knowledge to interpret it? To put this in better perspective, we can imagine a phenomenon as a murky lake, with all the complexities and facets of the different experiences of the participants clouding it. A researcher then who does not inhibit his own biases and preconceived notions is like a person looking at the surface of the murky water seeing only his reflection, but not what is underneath the surface. Thus, it can be said that without the *epoché*, the researcher only tends to interpret the phenomenon as he sees it and loses sight of the true meaning of the phenomenon.

It should be understood, however, that bracketing is merely suspending our biases and not eliminating them altogether as such would be very difficult if not impossible. What this means is that we suspend our judgements based on our previous experiences and focus on the phenomenon in order to "cleanse the phenomenon of everything that is unessential and accidental in order to make the essential visible" (Sadala & Adorno, 2002, p. 283). However, the same cannot be said of our present experience. As of the

moment, you are reading this dissertation and this present experience, as such, cannot be suspended as you are currently living in it. As such, when a researcher analyzes the experiences of the participants, although his or her own previous experiences are bracketed, his or her own current situation and reality provides context to the perceptions that emerge from the experiences. “These perceptions that emerge from angles of looking Husserl calls horizons” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 50). As noted by Peoples (2020),

therefore, nothing can be fully seen in its entirety unless you were omniscient (all knowing), which of course, no human is. So, when we look at something, even though we suspend our judgement to try to get this pure essence of something, we come to the horizon and the horizon is the understanding we have. (p. 30)

The Role of the Researcher

As noted earlier, the first and most important step in transcendental phenomenology is the *epoché*, or consciously bracketing one’s own biases and preconceived notions out of the study. It is thus important to consciously verbalize the researcher’s background and role within the study so as to ensure that any intersectionality of identities that may affect the research is made apparent and that the researcher’s own biases and knowledge would not cloud the interpretation of the meaning of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher is also expected to uphold confidentiality of all information from participants and to ensure ethical standards are followed such as obtaining informed consents for all participants, ensuring all steps of verification and transcription of interviews are followed (member checking), and ensuring that the purpose of the research study is followed throughout the process.

To start, it should be noted that I, as the researcher, am also a Filipino teacher teaching in Texas. Thus, my main role in the study was that of an informed inquisitor. I hail from a middle-class Filipino-Chinese family in the Philippines. I was born to parents who are conservative Catholics and are very strict. My upbringing can be characterized by a strong Asian preference, believing Asian customs and cultures as far more exquisite and superior to those of Western cultures. My own beliefs are that Asians, particularly Filipinos, are very resilient and can easily adapt to any situation. I believe this is because of Filipinos' spiritual heritage and not because of colonial mentality, a notion, which I believe, is antiquated and was only true within the decades that followed the American conquest of the Philippines. I feel that such ideas of colonialism are an upfront underestimation of Filipino grit. Filipinos, I believe, are simply meek and patronizing because of their nature of being kind to others.

I also believe that, as a foreigner who has made a home here in the US, I have integrated, not assimilated, into living in the United States of America. I believe and I am confident that I have maintained all of my Filipino cultures and traditions, having only few concessions with regards to a few of them. One example of such compromise is celebrating the holiday commemorating the Day of the Dead on November 1st. Back in the Philippines, I would visit the graves of my departed relatives and light candles for them during this time. Since time and money is an ongoing issue, ever since coming to the United States, I have only lit candles for my dearly departed and have not visited their graves ever since.

My transition into the United States, on the other hand, could be noted as uneventful as I was not a very social person to begin with. I treated everyone as I did previously with colleagues and friends back in the Philippines. Differences that I perceived in their manners, behaviors, and beliefs I simply dismissed as due to differences in upbringing and circumstances. With regards to any difficulties with the transition process, I cannot seem to recall any which is a complete contrast to what some research has shown on Filipinos migrating into the United States (Aguila 2015; Aguilar, 2015).

Comparing school culture between the Philippines and the United States, I could safely say that there is not much difference between the two except for some practices that differ because of need. However, I have seen that discipline issues are more prevalent in schools in the United States than in the Philippines. I believe that such difference in discipline issues is mainly due to the limited time parents have in disciplining children here compared to the Philippines (many families still have non-working mothers), and children would be as disciplined as Filipino children had they had the same circumstances.

It was important to verbalize those background information about myself so that I, as the researcher, and the target reader of the study would have a better understanding of the bracketing process. As a Filipino myself, I may have a pre-understanding of the phenomenon and the participants' experience. This pre-understanding could influence the findings of the study, thus, a conscious effort was done to bracket my own biases during the entire duration of the study. One such step that the I took was to consciously and

continuously engage in self-reflection through journaling to ensure that my own biases are suspended throughout the study. By bracketing oneself, as noted by Miller and Crabtree (1992), the researcher “enters into the individual’s lifeworld and use the self as an experiencing interpreter” (p. 24), ensuring that his own views do have not tainted the meanings coming out of the phenomenon. While many of the participants’ experiences may come across as relatable and familiar to my own experiences, I avoided making any assumptions and kept my biases in check. And with a pristine mindset, I undertook the study as if this was the first time I was hearing such experiences or, as described by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), put on an intentional and deliberate naivete.

Participants

Phenomenological inquiry requires participants with shared experiences regarding a certain phenomenon. As such, special attention must be done in selecting participants for the study, the main reason why purposive sampling was used for participant selection. This “purposive sampling”, as Padilla-Diaz (2015) noted, is “characterized by the incorporation of specific criteria met by the participants at the moment of selection” (p. 104). It is therefore within reason that the participants for the study were only Filipino teachers teaching in Texas public schools, have only been in the United States within the past five years, and have no other citizenship other than Filipino. Having such criteria ensures that although collected data will be diverse, the phenomenon from which it stems from remains a common factor.

Seven participants were included in this study as Padilla-Diaz (2015) recommends that “3-15 members” is sufficient for a studied group (p. 104). Having too many would

result in too many transcripts to transcribe or having too little would result in a very small amount of narratives to distinguish general experiences of participants from their experiences relating to the phenomenon. Both of these can hinder the effective and efficient understanding of the phenomenon, resulting in a phenomenological study that may have less value (Giorgi, 2008; Padilla-Diaz, 2015). These participants were identified first through acquaintances and then through snowball sampling. As noted by Noy (2008), snowball sampling is “when the researcher accesses informants through contact information that is provided by other informants” (p. 330).

Another consideration that was taken into account was the socioeconomic background of participants when they were in the Philippines. The researcher wanted to have a pool of participants that was as homogenous as possible when it came to socioeconomic status since research suggests that colonial mentality is stronger when it comes to those coming from lower socio-economic backgrounds (David & Nadal, 2013). Thus, the participants selected were considered to be of lower middle-class status while living in the Philippines, having a median income of roughly 250 000 to 300 000 Philippine pesos based on their previous employment in their home country. By doing so, we expected to have a more or less coherent essence of the phenomenon from the collected data in the study.

The seven participants in the study initially came from a pool of 15 potential participants that fulfilled the requirements of the study. However, eight backed out and/or did not consent to the study. Their reasons for backing out or not consenting to the study were not directly provided to the researcher. The seven participants were then formally

invited by the researcher and the purpose of the research was explained to them. The participants were also provided an invitation letter that addressed the interview protocols and the confidentiality of data from the interviews (see Appendix B).

Data Collection

The goal of transcendental phenomenology is to allow the essence to seep out of the experiences of the participants. Thus, it was essential for the data collection process to be as flexible as possible to let the participants feel comfortable in sharing those precious experiences. As such, the main method of data collection that was employed in the study was two semi-structured interviews and one open interview. As Padilla-Diaz (2015) noted of open or semi-structured interview, “these two types of interviews allow the researcher to address the phenomenon profoundly, providing a space of aperture for the informants to express their experiences in detail, approaching reality as faithfully as possible” (p. 104). Switching between semi-structured to open interviews during the data collection process allows the researcher enough room to adjust the questions as themes arise during the interviews; to pause or be emphatic at different moments or to simply build an *idle chat* environment that allowed participants to be at ease and enable the researcher to build rapport and trust with the participants. All interviews were done in either in English or in Tagalog medium, whichever the participant was comfortable with (see Appendix A). This is in line with Benner’s (1994) recommendation that interviews be done in the vocabulary and language the interviewee is comfortable with. As noted by Bevan (2014), “in Benner’s view, this approach enabled access to the respondent’s

perspective unencumbered by theoretical terms and would appear to imply a form of phenomenological reduction” (p. 137).

The three-level interview process was deemed essential for this study since simple or single interviews would not be sufficient to draw the essence out of the narratives of these participants or even to particularly establish common themes with regards to the phenomenon. Each level of interview was made flexible and open or semi-structured but had different goals and purposes (see Appendix A). The first level interview focused on finding particular experiences from the participants with regards to the phenomenon and then bracketing the data collected to find themes. The second level interviews then focused on the themes common to the experiences of the participants with regards to the phenomenon and on further elaboration to any developing themes the participants may have touched on. The third level interviews dived deeper, probing into the philosophical and universal aspects of existence, inquiring into the nature and relationships that bind the participants to the phenomenon (Halling, 2008).

As such, the outcomes of these interviews, as were expected, came to be text-rich, as the inquiry tried to be as descriptive as possible to capture the essence and meaning of the phenomenon. It was therefore essential to use different media recording tools, such as the audio recorder app on the iPhone and an electronic digital audio recorder, to capture these interviews as vividly as possible. These were placed in specific locations: one as close as possible to the participant and the other as close as possible to myself to ensure clarity in the collected audio files. The audio files were then immediately transferred into a computer and copies of them were made to ensure that no unexpected loss of data

occurred. Interviews in Tagalog were translated to English by myself and then verified by an individual who is fluent and has done extensive coursework in several Philippine dialects, especially Tagalog. The individual's verification of the translations ensured not only was the translations accurate but, also promoted the rigor and quality of the phenomenographic process (Sin, 2010).

However, as noted by Sin (2010), "...the lack of a non-contextual and transparent relations between representation and reality in interviews, and the inherent difference between language and meaning in interview data, have presented both theoretical and methodological problems" (p. 308). Thus, to supplement interview data, field notes were also taken during the interview process to record and emphasize emotional and behavioral expressions not captured by audio tapes. These were done in the hopes of enhancing the trustworthiness of the collected data and of the overall research.

I also utilized a self-developed interview protocol to have a consistent procedure in the interview process. The sample interview protocol is included in Appendix A and contains the following components, as following the recommendations of Creswell (2007):

- Date, time, place, name of interviewer and interviewee
- Standard preparation protocols like setting up audio equipment and ensuring privacy during interviews
- Introductory statement to introducing the researcher, explaining the study and its goals, ensuring the confidentiality of the responses, and allowing the participant to reiterate their consent to the interview

- Initial questions and follow up questions for the participant
- An ending statement that includes thanking the participant and relaying the time ending the interview

Member-checking was completed after each interview, with transcripts sent to participant's emails and participant confirmation of accuracy of its contents obtained from their replies. As noted by Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checking is the "most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314) and "the investigator who has received the agreement of the respondent groups on the credibility of his or her work has established a strong beachhead towards convincing readers and critics of the authenticity of the work" (p. 315).

After generating and reviewing themes from interviews, I then got in touch with and provided copies of the transcripts to the participants to ensure the accuracy of the data analysis process and that the participants could confirm what I deemed were appropriate themes. I also double-checked transcripts to ensure that they did not contain errors inherent in most lengthy transcriptions. A third person was also employed to assist during the cross-check process.

Data Analysis

Data analysis of the text-rich descriptions obtained from the interviews, as noted by Padilla-Diaz (2015), involved the following: the "*epoché*, identifying common meanings and essences, horizontalization of data, textual and structural analysis", where "textual analysis refers to the description of what was expressed by the participants" and "structural analysis" refers "to the interpretation of how it was expressed by the

participants” (p. 105). This allows the researcher to explore the meaning of the experiences, and at the same time, to reflect “the intentionality of conscience as a fundamental aspect of phenomenology” (Padilla-Diaz, 2015, p. 106). And from these analyses, the essence of the phenomenon was later on identified.

As such, the important first step was to consciously determine my own bias and preconceived ideas that could affect the results of the study before jumping into the data analysis. This is what Husserl (Husserl & Gibson, 1983) denotes as the *epoché*. This was the intention of the inclusion of the previous section on the researcher’s role. This section described my past experiences as a migrant Filipino myself, and my ideas on colonial mentality and acculturation. As the researcher, I then continuously practiced this bracketing through reflective journaling whenever I analyzed any collected data, doing so throughout the entire study, so as to ensure my own biases have not tainted any of the themes that come out of the analysis.

Data collected during the interviews were read, re-read, transcribed, and verified through member-checking. These were then coded and bracketed by myself with the help of a peer. This peer provided the needed check-and-balance to “scan some of the raw data and assess whether the findings are plausible based on the data” (Merriam, 2002, p. 6).

I manually coded and bracketed out common themes from these collected data to create categories to determine shared experiences of the participants, thus horizontalizing data and the start of phenomenological reduction (Groenewald, 2004, p. 17). This was essentially where textual analysis began, where we sifted through textual descriptions looking for relevant topics of the participants’ shared experience and highlighting

significant statements in the transcripts of the interviews. The entire process was labor intensive, where I started from small units of analysis of generating preliminary meaning units to larger units of analysis. All throughout the process, I, as a researcher, had to go back to listening to the audio of the interviews and to my field notes to get a sense of the participant's emotions while relating the experience in order to have a deeper understanding of it and to verify if my initial analysis and coding were correct.

The researcher considers the coding process the most time-intensive of all the data analysis steps taken in this study. In the initial phase of the coding process, codes that were assigned to different statements within the interview were "first impression" phrases that, more or less, the researcher felt summarized the statement. This presented a challenge to the researcher since the researcher had to be very careful in using codes that would not be mistaken for being seen as using a coding lens.

For example, a statement by a participant on how the teachers were told to go back to their own country was initially labeled with the code 'xenophobia' by the researcher. However, after some reflection, the researcher deemed that such label could be seen as the researcher employing Values coding to label certain experiences and was tantamount to the researcher's bias tainting the data. Hence, the researcher had to look back at the epoche, consciously, continuously, and intentionally bracket himself throughout the entire coding process to ensure coding was reflected the participants' experience and not tainted by the researcher's bias.

However, since the researcher manually coded all of the transcripts, several instances where the code that should have been labeled the same (e.g., conflict with a co-

worker) was unintentionally labeled differently and with confusing words that, at the time of coding, might have made sense to the researcher (e.g., clap back from a co-worker) but was later on confusing for the researcher on what it meant.

It should be noted that using the same codes repeatedly throughout larger data sets, as noted by Saldana (2015) is . . .

both natural and deliberate – natural because there are mostly repetitive patterns of action and consistencies in human affairs, and deliberate because one of the coder’s primary goals is to find the repetitive patterns and action and consistencies in human affairs as documented in the data (p. 5).

Hence, the transcripts were re-read two more times and coding labels were compared for consistency. For data that seemed to span several codes, simultaneous coding was applied. Simultaneous coding, as noted by Saldana (2015) is applying two or more codes to a single datum. Saldana (2015) gives a good insight on why researchers do this:

When you search for patterns in coded data to categorize them, understand that sometimes you may group things together not just because they are exactly alike or very much alike, but because they might also have something in common – even if, paradoxically, that commonality consists of differences. . . . Acknowledge that a confounding property of category construction in qualitative inquiry is that data within them cannot always be precisely and discretely bounded; they are within “fuzzy” boundaries at best. That’s why a method called Simultaneous Coding is an option we have, when needed (p. 6).

The “fuzziness” of the boundaries of the datum also presented a challenge when it came to forming subcategories for the codes. The researcher had to code, re-code, categorize and re-categorize several times to ensure that emergent patterns and meanings were reflective of the true experience of the participants. These relevant topics were then grouped together, creating unifying textual descriptions or themes to accompany it and included actual quotes from participants to further emphasize its meaning, creating a portrait that sketches out how the participant’s experience through their own words. I then reflected on these textual descriptions to create a structural one and from these, determined the essence or meaning of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

Communicating the Findings

The outcome of the interviews generated a voluminous amount of text that would be too much for the target reader to determine the essence of the phenomenon, or even to distinguish which experiences relate to the phenomenon. I thus followed the advice of Creswell (2007) to communicate the findings by “developing descriptions and themes from the data, [and] to present these descriptions and themes that convey multiple perspectives from participants and detailed descriptions of setting or individuals” (p. 253). These thick descriptions include direct quotes from the interviews to provide a more vivid account of the experience, as well as descriptions of emotions and facial expressions that the participants showed while recalling their experiences.

Provisions for Trustworthiness

One question that always comes up in phenomenological studies is how reflective the outcomes of the study are of the actual experiences of participants. As noted by

Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Merriam (2009), this issue of trustworthiness can be addressed by ensuring the credibility, transferability, and dependability of the outcomes. One step that I took to ensure credibility of the study was to consciously and continuously engage in self-reflection, journaling, and bracketing to ensure that my own biases are suspended throughout the study. This was to ensure that my own views do not taint the meanings that would come out of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Another step that I took to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the research was doing member checks. After generating and reviewing themes from interviews, I got in touch with the participants and provided them copies of the transcript to ensure accuracy of the data analysis process and to confirm what the researcher deemed as appropriate themes. I also included a third person in the cross-check process to ensure that the transcripts did not contain any errors that are inherent in most lengthy transcriptions.

With regards to transferability of the study or the “extent to which findings of one study can be applied to other situations” (Merriam, 2009, p. 223), I addressed this through the use of thick vivid descriptions when describing the process, the setting, the participants, and the results of the study (Merriam, 2009). Enhancing the transferability of the findings of the study were done by utilizing probing questions involving a three-tiered interview process and the results being reported in a detailed manner, allowing the reader to fully immerse themselves in the experiences of the participants.

Dependability of phenomenological studies, as noted by Merriam (2009), refers to how the “results are consistent with the data collected” (p. 221). To strengthen the

dependability of this study, I utilized audio recordings, journaling, and field notes and kept them for three years to create an audit trail should the need for it arise, as recommended by Cope (2014).

Finally, I tried to establish as much trust with participants as possible by creating relationships with them and spending as much time as possible with them between interviews. Building trust contributes to the accuracy of the data provided by the participants, and so the researcher did this in hopes that the data obtained from the participants would be as vivid and as accurate as possible.

Summary

It is important to better understand the acculturation process of Filipino teachers teaching in US public schools since they touch the lives of students who will one day become pillars of this country. A phenomenological inquiry approach, and more specifically, a transcendental one, was deemed most appropriate to capture the meaning of the lived experiences of these Filipino teachers. To be able to gather the rich descriptions needed to flesh out the essence of the phenomenon, a purposive sampling of participants was used, with careful emphasis on the selection criteria. Three-level interviews were employed. Following the Husserl's recommendations, *epoché* and phenomenological reduction were done before, during, and after data analysis to ensure that results were untainted by the researcher's bias. The findings were communicated utilizing thick descriptions of the phenomenon and included direct quotes of the experiences of participants to ensure that clarity of meaning was conveyed. Issues of

trustworthiness were also addressed in this chapter, with a focus on how the credibility, dependability, and transferability of the study was enhanced.

In the next chapter, the purpose of the study and the research questions are reintroduced to give context to the transcendental inquiry process, the research setting, and the data collection process. Results from the study and data analysis are also presented.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

Introduction

Every year, tens of thousands of Filipinos migrate to unfamiliar countries in the hopes of finding better lives for themselves and their families. Such undertaking has been mainly called the Filipino diaspora. These Filipinos, otherwise known as OFWs, are seen as national heroes in their barrios and communities contributing to almost 10% of the GDP (gross domestic product) of the Philippines. One example of these OFWs is Filipino teachers working here in Texas. However, more like paper roses instead of heroes, not much is known about lived experiences of these Filipino teachers. They acculturate and work in these foreign lands and meld in the background, keeping their stories to themselves. Given that these teachers help mold the fates of people who affect all facets of the world today, it is thus important that we understand the acculturation process of these Filipino teachers teaching in US public schools. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological inquiry was to therefore, better understand the lived experiences of these Filipino teachers as they acculturated and taught in US public schools. The research questions that guided this study were: (1) What are the lived experiences of Filipino teachers teaching in Texas public schools? (2) What values, traditions, and cultural artifacts did Filipino teachers experience in Texas public schools, and how do they perceive the essence of these compared to their own cultural traditions and values?

In this chapter, descriptions of the setting of the study, the demographics and characteristics of each participant, the findings of the research, and the data analysis outcomes, including the main themes that emerged during explication and analysis of the data are presented. The chapter concludes with the summary of the major findings of the study cited.

Setting

Seven Filipino teachers participated in the study. These teachers fulfilled the requirements of the study of having been in the United States for less than five years and teaching on an H1-B visa in public schools in Texas. These participants initially came from a pool of 15 potential participants, but many backed out with only seven consenting to the study (see Appendix C). These seven participants also fulfilled the requirements of coming from the same socioeconomic status back in the Philippines (based on income from their previous employment). The participants were obtained through snowball sampling through correspondence with and referrals from other Filipino teachers. Each participant, after being invited and informed of the purpose of the study (see Appendix B), consented to be part of the study, and signed the consent form documents at our initial meeting. All interviews conducted for the study were face-to-face and using Skype/Facebook messenger for follow up interviews with participants. This was to give the researcher the opportunity to record the facial expressions of the participants in the field notes and to have a more vivid recollection of the experiences of the participants during the reflection and explication process. Interview venues were chosen mainly to accommodate the participant's convenience. And although the researcher made steps to

ensure that the venues were private and secure, several instances of disruptions happened during the interviews (e.g., the waiter at the restaurant interrupting us to ask how our meal was). At the time of the interviews, all participants were currently employed and assured of continuous employment until the end of the school year. Hence, no organizational conditions were expected to influence the research results.

Demographics

The pool of seven participants who volunteered for this study was homogenous based on their socio-economic status (based on their verbal confirmation of their financial standing in the Philippines) and the number of years of their stay in the US. However, this group was heterogenous when it came to age distribution and gender. Participants ages ranged from 35 years of age to late 60's. Five identified as male men and two participants identified as female. All participants worked at TEA designated Title 1 schools. Table 1 summarizes the demographic information of the participants who consented to the study.

For the purposes of this study, each participant was then then assigned a number, indicating the order of their participation, to ensure confidentiality of all data and protection of their privacy and identities. Ensuring confidentiality and gaining the participant's trust and sympathy was essential for this study as the participants themselves were the source of referrals in the snow-ball sample. This was noted by Noy (2008) when he said that in snowball sampling,

the quality of the referring process is naturally related to the quality of the interaction: if the informant leaves the interview meeting feeling discontented, or

if the researcher did not win the informant's trust and sympathy, the chances the latter will supply the former referrals decrease (and vice versa). (p. 334)

Table 1

Demographic Summary of Participants

Participant	Age (years)	Gender	Years worked as a teacher in the Philippines	Years worked as a teacher in the US
1	67	M	31	3
2	42	M	14	5
3	36	M	5	4
4	39	M	5	4
5	44	F	19	3
6	35	M	5	4
7	36	F	13	4

Participant 1

Participant 1 worked in a small school district in West Texas, where the student population is mainly Hispanic. He hails from a family of teachers, with his parents and siblings all teachers in the Philippines.

You see, my family hails from a background of teachers: my mother was a teacher, my father was a teacher, my elder siblings were all teachers. So, when I came into teaching I was expecting that I already knew what to expect.

(Participant 1, 1st interview)

He completed a bachelor's degree in education from the Philippines and had been teaching in the Philippines for 31 years before he came to the US under an H1-B visa to teach in another state. He started his career teaching in one of the poorest places in the Philippines before he came to Manila, the capital of the Philippines to teach in one of its

public high schools. He eventually ended up as a teacher in a Catholic high school there. He was already close to his retirement age when he realized that he still did not have the financial freedom that he dreamt that he would have at that age. He felt that most of his finances were spent paying for the college tuition of his son and that he yearned for a better life for him and his family. It was then he decided to apply to teach in the United States.

Participant 1 mainly relied on the help and support of a Filipino friend (who was also a teacher) when he initially came to the United States as a Science teacher for a rural high school. He eventually left and applied to become an ALE (Alternative Learning Environment) teacher or Special Education teacher at the high school in West Texas where he currently teaches in. He hopes that the school district would eventually sponsor him for a green card so that he can bring his family over from the Philippines.

Participant 2

Participant 2 had been a 14-year veteran teacher from Philippines before coming to teach in the United States. He taught in the Philippines for one year at a provincial school, four years at a technical institute, six years at a laboratory high school, and two years as a college professor. He has a bachelor's degree in Secondary education, majoring in Biology and in Chemistry. Due to his long tenure as a teacher, he admitted that he has an overwhelming ego and pride that he professes has caused him some challenges in embracing change but has mellowed ever since due to his experiences here in the United States.

Well, it was actually hard for me when I first came into the US. Having 14 years of teaching experience, I thought I was already ready to face whatever challenge would be thrown at me in the classroom. But it was actually difficult for me.... I felt alone as a professional. I even asked myself if it was my fault because I did not socialize with them that they did not help me? Or was it simply because I did not bother asking for help. Sometimes I felt it was my pride that kept me from asking for help from my co-workers then because I felt like I was already a veteran teacher and should already know how to face any problems. I was not very open-minded when I first started teaching in the US. I feared that if I contacted parents that they would criticize my teaching strategies and techniques. But I know now that whatever they say is just constructive criticism and could help me out a lot, especially if such criticism comes from co-workers. To be honest, I believe I have grown a lot since coming over here. You know, as Filipinos we are a proud race. And I was a proud Filipino as one could be. But I realize that it is important that we communicate with others especially if you want to be successful in the US. I learned that the hard way and changed myself for the better. (Participant 2, 1st Interview)

Participant 2 came into the United States under one of the international visiting teacher programs that offered foreign teachers J1 visas to teach in one of the high-need areas here in the United States. He initially came here alone but had his wife and son join him during his second year into the program. The J1 visa program stipulates that bearers must go home for two years to their home country before they can apply for any other

visa. Out of fear of being sent back to the Philippines after their third year on the J1 visa (J1 visa program stipulates that bearers must go home for two years to their home country before they can apply for any other visa), Participant 2 decided to apply and was eventually hired to teach under an H1-B visa at a school district in East Texas. He has since moved to a school district in South Texas and is hoping to convince the school district to file a green card petition for him and his family. He currently is the only bread winner in the family as his wife takes care of their child at home.

Participant 3

Hailing from the Visayan islands of the Philippines, Participant 3 was a Special Education teacher teaching in one of the big high schools in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in Education and taught for five years at an all-girl Catholic high school in a rural part of Philippines before coming to the United States. Like Participant 2, Participant 3 came to the US under a J1 visa sponsored by the same company. He initially had been eyeing to apply to become an immigrant to another country. Due to some coincidences, he was introduced by a friend to a visiting teacher program. He eventually applied and was accepted. He first came in as a teacher for a high-needs area in another state. Like Participant 2, Participant 3 broke the contract with the sponsoring firm only after two years, reneged on the J1 visa contract, and applied for a teaching job under an H1-B visa. He was accepted and eventually moved to the Dallas-Fort Worth area where he currently resides.

Participant 3 is a single father. He has a daughter who resides with her grandmother, his mother in the Philippines. He has not seen his daughter for the past four

years as he never stepped out of the country for fear of being denied re-entry due to renegeing on his contract under the J1 visa program. He sends most of his earnings back to the Philippines to support his daughter. He left when she was only eight months old and she is now turning four years old.

I want to give her a better life, which is why I am trying my best over here. I have to earn money to provide for her and to make up for the shortcomings that we have had with her as her parents. It is very hard for me since I miss her a lot. . . . I missed a lot of her first: her first words, her first steps, even her first birthday. But I know I have to grit my teeth and persevere. Everything I do is for a better future for her...I realize that this is for the best for her future. Working here will allow me to save a lot for her. (Participant 3, 1st interview)

He plans to have his daughter and mother join him here in the United States once his school district applies for the green card that was promised to him.

Participant 4

Participant 4 is a married man with children. His wife and youngest daughter have decided to stay in the Philippines while his wife is studying to become a nurse. Until recently, he lived with his eldest son who had now graduated high school and is a college freshman in a college near their residence. Participant 4 has a bachelor's and master's degree in Biology from the Philippines, with some doctorate courses under his belt. He previously worked as a high school teacher in the Southern Philippines and then as a college professor in the Philippine capital. When asked why he decided to teach in the United States, Participant 4 says,

Because if you're in the Philippines and if you are given the chance to go to US, 99% of the time you would grab the opportunity since it would be the right choice for you and your family. As a teacher in the Philippine, I did not really receive a big salary and going to the United States was a big opportunity, especially for our families. I wanted to give a better life to our families and provide better opportunities for our children. (Participant 4, 1st interview)

Participant 4 was in his fourth year in the United States as a teacher during the time of the interviews. He had applied to teach in the United States through an employment agency that was popular for providing H1-B job placements in the Philippines. The first school district that he worked in the United States was an inner-city public school in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. He was forced later on to look for another school district that would sponsor him for an H1B visa after his contract was not renewed after one year. He then worked for a school district in East Texas before moving to West Texas because, as he stated, the school district there promised him that they would eventually sponsor him for a green card. He was in his second year working for that district as their robotics, AP Biology, regular Biology, and Principles of Engineering teacher.

Participant 5

Participant 5 has a doctorate degree in education from the Philippines. A bubbly, outspoken, single woman in her 40s, Participant 5 has been teaching for the past 19 years, first as a high school biology teacher and then later as a college professor in the Philippines before becoming an Algebra teacher here in the United States. Her story of ending up teaching in the United States was mainly by providence as she described she

was only going to Texas to visit her sister as part of her vacation but ending up accepting a teaching position in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. She has taught in the same school district ever since and professes to be very satisfied with her current school.

Although participant 5 is only in her 40s and is single, she is very spiritual and believes in many local Filipino beliefs. She confesses that she still practices these beliefs today. She professes that her sister and her mother are her main support systems but she also enjoys the company of many co-workers, friends, and people that she has met outside work.

Participant 6

Participant 6 spouse of participant 7. She is a former high school math teacher who became a bank teller in the Philippines before coming to the United States - with her baby - to join her husband who had been accepted as a teacher under the J1 visa program. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in Mathematics from the Philippines but was not certified as an educator from an accredited teacher preparation program. Hence, Participant 6 had to go through an alternative certification program in the United States to be able to take the certification exam to become a teacher. She had to balance taking care of her family and taking courses in a foreign country, and she mainly relied on the help of other Filipino families to accomplish most of her responsibilities.

Participant 6 did not immediately land a teaching job after finishing her alternative certification. Hence, she settled to substitute for teachers in the school district where her husband taught while taking care of their child. At the end of their J1 visa contract, she applied and was hired by a West Texas school district to become an algebra

teacher under an H1-B visa. However, her husband was subject to the two-year rule for J1 visa holders and was told to go back to the Philippines. Left with a baby and no more money, Participant 6 decided to stay with her child in the United States and work as a teacher to be able to provide for their family. She credits her spirituality and the support of other Filipino families for letting her successfully endure the period during which her husband was gone and her going through the trials and tribulations of her first year of teaching in the United States. Eventually, the husband of participant 6 returned to the United States under a H1-B visa and worked in the same school district as her. They continue to teach in the same school district with the hopes that the school district will eventually sponsor them for a green card.

Participant 7

Participant 7 is the husband of Participant 6 and is a science teacher in a school in West Texas. He is a 13-year veteran in education, spending most of those years teaching Physics, Biology, and Biology AP. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in Education from a university in the Philippines and taught at a Catholic high school before coming to teach in the United States. Participant 7 and Participant 6 lived a financially stable life until they had a child. After their son was born, they felt that their earnings were not sufficient and thus decided to try their luck applying for teaching jobs in the United States. He got hired under J1 visa program and flew to the United States alone. It was only after six months after that his wife and son were allowed to follow and join him in the United States. Participant 7 was assigned to teach at a high-needs, low performing school in another state, which he described as "horrible" since, as he said, "there was a

fight almost every day of the week” and they “had more fire alarms than school holidays.” Challenging as it was, Participant 7 still decided to finish the 3-year contract under his J1 visa with the same school. But during that time, Participant 7 and his wife had already made plans to stay in the United States since they wanted to provide a better future for their son. He and his wife applied to and were accepted at a school district in West Texas during the end of their 3-year contract. However, as luck would have it, Participant 7 was apparently subject to the two-year rule under the J1 visa program which required participants to go back to their home country for two years before they could apply for another visa going back to the US. Participant 7 eventually found a way to be exempted from the two-year rule but was still required to go back to the Philippines and fulfil the conditions there. Not left with a choice or with a lot of money, Participant 7 and his wife decided that he would be the only one to leave the United States while his wife and son stayed, with the wife working as a teacher to provide for their family. Although it took half a year and a lot of effort on his part, Participant 7 eventually returned to the United States with an H1-B visa and was able to teach in the same school district as his wife. They taught in the same school district in hopes that the school district would eventually sponsor him for a green card.

Data Collection

Data obtained for this study came from three-level semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted face-to-face with some follow-up interviews completed over Skype and Facebook messenger. All interviews were held in venues that were convenient for the participants. For example, the interviews took place in their own

homes, at a restaurant close by to them, or during a Filipino party where they would be attending. The interviews were conducted in the language that the participants were comfortable with, as recommended by Benner (1994) that interviews be done in the vocabulary and language the interviewee is comfortable with. This is the reason why most participants, for example, answered in a mix of Filipino and English, while Participant 1 mainly answered the questions in Filipino.

The interviews lasted roughly from 30 to 45 minutes, with audio recordings and field notes carefully collected to increase the credibility and dependability of the results. During those interviews, the participants were asked the questions provided in Appendix A, with some other questions asked that would either clarify their initial answers or create a more comfortable atmosphere during the interview process. Two audio recordings were made, with one recorder as close as possible to the participant and the other close to me, the researcher. This was to ensure that there would be a back -up if any technical issues were to happen or if the recordings were not clear enough to capture the answers and questions fielded at that moment. This proved to be important especially during the translation process where some spoken words were not clear enough on one recording or if the answers of participants seem to be vague and hanging at times.

Data collected after each interview was first manually transcribed verbatim using Microsoft Word. This was because no speech-to-text software was able to transcribe a mix of Filipino-English words at the same time. There was some difficulty translating some of the participants' Filipino words as well and we had to consult the participants during the transcription process for accuracy of its meaning. Once transcripts were made,

these were then sent back to participants for member-checking. Upon approval of each participant, these were sent to an outside expert for translation to full English. The speech-to-text feature of Google Docs also proved to be helpful during this translation process, and most of translations were done in a shorter amount of time compared to the initial transcription. These translated transcripts were then sent back to each participant again for member-checking since Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that this is the “most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314) and that “the investigator who has received the agreement of the respondent groups on the credibility of his or her work has established a strong beachhead towards convincing readers and critics of the authenticity of the work” (p. 315). Once edits requested by the participants were done and the transcripts were approved, we re-read again them in preparation for the next round of interviews.

Great strives were made to preserve the audio recordings, verbatim transcripts, and translated transcripts of all interviews for the next three years. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, data analysis was halted from 2018 to early 2021. During this time, I had to address family issues, left work, and had traveled abroad. It was then that I had lost access to original Google Drive, which housed all the data collected (as it was a work account) and I had lost my computers where I had initially stored all audio recordings, verbatim transcripts, and translated transcripts. I had then needed to re-collect all of the lost data. Audio recordings were obtained again from the researcher’s phone and verbatim transcripts and translated transcripts were obtained again from participants. Unfortunately, some participants who had changed employers also did not have copies of

the transcripts since these were originally sent to their school email addresses. The best course of action then was to re-transcribe the interviews, have the participants member-check each one again and have them translated again by the outside expert. The entire process of obtaining these documents from the participants took some time as some of them had moved on to other jobs, moved to other states, or had returned to the Philippines. Once all data was again re-collected, I once again re-read all transcripts and listened again to all audio recordings to refresh my memory of the interviews.

The field notes, however, were lost and never found again. The only saving grace were the journals that the I had kept on my phone during the interview process as part of my bracketing process for the study. These provided enough data to re-create the field notes that were lost; however, credibility and dependability of the study may have been lessened by the fact that these were not the original notes taken at the exact time the interviews happened. However, the researcher believes that collected data remains credible as Winter (2000) notes,

...if the researcher is dishonest or lacks commitment to the work then the matter becomes one of integrity. In this case, most would agree that validity is compromised. However, if both accounts represent the conscientious efforts of the researcher, rather than labelling the greatly differing accounts as evidenced of reduced validity and unreliable measures, the discrepancies between them merely mark the multi-perspective experiences of the researcher. (p. 5)

After double checking the accuracy of the transcripts (with the help of the participants and the outside expert) and of the field notes and journals, the I believed that enough data was collected to suggest data saturation to continue with the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis started with bracketing any previous bias I had through self-reflection and journaling. I also re-read all transcripts, field notes, journals, and listened to audio recordings multiple times to re-familiarize with the data. Data analysis then proceeded by noting texts that were relevant to the research questions: (1) What are the lived experiences of Filipino teachers teaching in Texas public schools? (2) What values, traditions, and cultural artifacts did Filipino teachers experience in Texas public schools, and how do they perceive the essence of these compared to their own cultural traditions and values?

During the initial read-throughs of the transcript, irrelevant information and unnecessary language were deleted from the text. Similar words and phrases were then highlighted as part of the initial coding process, generating preliminary meaning units, as recommended by Giorgi (1985). Afterwards, these highlighted words and phrases were reflected on to find recurring similarities. Journaling was an essential part of this reflection process. As the researcher, I continually looked backed at my own experiences and bracketed out any bias related to the participants' experiences. This followed Peoples' (2020) recommendation:

after noting their [researcher's] experience, they will then separate their experience by examining it and exploring it in terms of varying experiences other

[participants] have with the same phenomenon. Then, they either confirm their suspended experience as authentic to the phenomenon studied or remove it from their analysis as biased information. (p. 63)

This cyclical process of re-reading and bracketing continued, allowing themes to emerge from the commonalities of these highlighted words and phrases. Textual meaning was then developed for each participant and included verbatim statements from the transcripts for each of them. Structural descriptions were then created from these individual textual descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). The conclusion of the study is a synthesis from these descriptions of the experiences of the participants, utilizing quotes to communicate the essence of their experiences.

Results

The data analysis process yielded four overlapping main themes and ten subthemes that show commonality in the participants' experiences. These themes and subthemes emerged from rich textual descriptions obtained from three-level interviews. The interviews conducted to look at the lived experiences of these Filipino teachers teaching in Texas. Table 2 shows the resulting themes and their related subthemes.

Theme 1: The Search for Greener Pastures

All seven participants in this study described their reasons for teaching in the United States and the challenges they faced in getting here. All of the participants described their desire of providing a "better life for their family," stating that what they were earning was "not enough" and teaching here in the United States was a good "opportunity" and somewhat of an "accomplishment" for them and their families. For

example, Participant 1 described his frustration at his financial situation during his old age.

I was already getting close to my retirement age, and I felt like I still did not have anything to show for it. At that time, my son was already grown, and I had spent most of my savings paying for his college tuition. And I felt that the conditions in the Philippines was getting harder and harder . . . I told myself I wanted a better life for me and my wife. . . . I wanted to leave behind an accomplishment that I could be proud of. (1st interview)

Table 2

Main Themes and Subthemes

Main theme	Subtheme
The search for greener pastures and the challenges getting there	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty and the search for a better life • Work visa challenges and the Philippine bureaucracy
Challenges faced while teaching in the US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microaggression towards Filipino teachers • Effects on mental health
Support systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family • Spirituality • Filipino hospitality
Differences in values and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value of education • Culture shock • Colonial mentality • Proud Filipino values and traditions • Good US values worth emulating

Participant 4 echoed this sentiment of teaching in the United States as an achievement and great desire to provide more for his family.

Because if you are in the Philippines and if you are given the chance to go to US, 99% of the time you would grab the opportunity since it would be the right choice for you and your family. As a teacher in the Philippines, I did not really receive a big salary and going to the United States was a big opportunity, especially for our families. I wanted to give a better life to our families and provide better opportunities for our children. (1st interview)

This response of participant 4 also echoed the high desirability of teaching in the US as shown by most of the participants compared to other foreign countries, a theme that seems to overlap with the sub-theme of colonial mentality. This high desirability could also be gleaned, for example, from the response of participant 1:

In the minds of Filipinos, going to the US presents more opportunities and is ranked higher in our minds than going to Dubai. In the US, you have more freedoms, more opportunities to rise from the low-level job to a high paying one. In Dubai, since it is a pre-dominantly Muslim country, many restrictions are in place that curtails some of our most cherished freedoms (3rd interview).

All the experiences of the participants, however, showed that getting to United States presented challenges of their own. This was another theme that overlapped with the participants' search for greener pastures. Most described their experience of processing their departures as "confusing," "frustrating," and "financially" draining and burdensome. Some described their frustrations at how the Philippine government

processed clearances to work abroad, with some calling some parts of the process as “unnecessary” or as “scams,” as is seen in the responses of Participant 1:

When I got to the POEA office, I had a hard time figuring out where to start and how to start the process. All I saw were long lines and whenever I asked people, I would always get different answers since apparently the process was different for people going to different places. I also almost got tricked by some people called fixers who tried to pretend that they were employees there... It was frustrating.

Maybe they [government office] were into the scam. (1st interview)

The emotions associated with the financial weight of the process is also reflected in some of the responses of the participants. Participant 4 described the financial weight stating:

100,000 pesos, which is roughly 2000 dollars, was a big amount of money, almost half of my year salary then. Of course, that still did not include the airfare, terminal fee, recommended pocket money and all. Over-all, it was estimated that we would need around 10000 dollars or around 500,000 pesos for the entire process. When it dawned on me that I needed such a huge amount, I got apprehensive again. So, when I got home, I spoke to my wife about it. At that time, we only had one child, but we were only starting out, so we did not have much. I spoke to her about the cost and then to my parents and siblings. They all said that it was a good opportunity, and they would support me as much as they can, so it encouraged me to move forward with the process... we pooled the money from different places. I withdrew some of my savings and left the rest for

my wife and my son, my parents pitched in some of their retirement money and my siblings gave me some. However, it was not enough so I sold my old car and had to borrow from my well-off friends. (2nd interview)

Participant 6 elaborated

It was also stressful at the same time. I had to sell some of our stuff, not knowing if we would need it again should we return from the US. I had to talk to some of our debtors to assure them that we would still continue to pay what we owed them even though we were already in the US. There were some debtors that actually settled to just get paid with the things that we were trying to sell instead of waiting for us to pay them back... But in the end, I felt that everything was worth it. (3rd interview)

Participant 7 added his experience

So before I left, I was already neck deep in debt. Of course, we had to make assurances with our creditors that they would be paid immediately as soon as I get a paycheck... But it was embarrassing leaving like that and stressful, not knowing if I would be successful or come back as a loser. (1st interview)

Theme Two: Challenges Teaching in the United States

For all the participants, their trials and tribulations did not just end when they stepped on US soil. They described these challenges as falling into two sub-themes: microaggressions toward Filipino teachers from students, parents of students and co-workers; and the effect on their mental health during their transition process.

All participants described events in their experience that the researcher and literature could describe as microaggressions. However, none of the participants used such word to describe their experiences. Their experiences mainly contained descriptions like being “mimicked,” “cursed” at, “made fun of,” and being subjected to “passive-aggressive” treatment. The participants described these experiences as “horrible,” “traumatic,” and “scary.” Some of these events that showed microaggression towards the participants are given below. Participant 1 shared:

I had a lot of kids who did not do work, who slept in class and who were aggressive when you told them to sit down and do their work. I was even cursed out by a kid on my third day in school... They did other things like the typical trying to mimic you while you talk, laughing at your accent or making fun of how short you are. (1st interview)

Participant 2 added

I felt my co-workers were professional but not really friendly with me. There were times that I felt that they were actually making fun of me, or making fun of my accent, or making fun of my expertise on the subject area. (3rd interview)

Participant 3 explained that

Kids would not pay attention. Most of them would ignore me if I tried redirecting their behavior. I would tell them that I would call their parents if they did not comply, and they would just get even angrier. Many called me names, even calling me ching chong, even though I am not Chinese. There was even a time when one kid threw all my stuff on the floor because I asked him to take off his

earphones, sit down, quit talking to people and listen to class. He cussed me out, threatened me and then threw all my stuff on the floor before walking out waving his hands in the air. His friends in the same class laughed and giggled. Some even clapped and took videos. I even had a student who would talk loudly with his friends in the classroom and say that he would beat up my Chinese ass if he sees me in the streets. It was scary, traumatic, and frustrating. (1st interview)

However, there were some participants who clearly experienced such microaggressions but saw it as otherwise. For example, Participant 4 described in one experience what happened when he reprimanded a student for being disruptive in class. But instead of seeing the student's response as a sign of aggression towards him, he saw it as a learning experience for himself.

For example, in my class one time, I asked a student to stop laughing loudly during class work because she was disrupting other students. The student then asked me why she should stop being happy and then proceeded to ask the class if she was bothering anyone. Then she also asked was it better if she was crying and sad instead of being a happy and productive student. I was left dumbfounded on the spot. She believed that she was right, and she defended her belief with reason. If she were a student in the Philippines, as soon as I told her to quiet down, she would have been as quiet as a mouse until the end of the day. I think being vocal about their feelings and beliefs is a good thing since it helps them become more confident when they grow up, unlike most Filipinos who are

sometimes too meek and quiet for their own good and hardly express their honest opinion and feelings. (2nd interview)

There were also some participants, like Participant 1, who saw some of these microaggression events that they experienced as “kids being just kids” or discounted the whole experience all together as if it was their own fault or that it never happened.

Participant 4 elaborated:

I have had problems with students in class like that as well who told me that I should not be teaching them since they can hardly understand me because of my accent. They said I was hindering their learning thus I was not qualified to be their teacher. Well, it might be true that sometimes we do not pronounce some words correctly. (2nd interview)

In the same line of reasoning, Participant 5 described,

Kids would be on their phones, sleeping or chatting loudly with others. And I could not maintain their attention for five minutes. I felt that I was such a bad teacher. They were passive aggressive with me because I did not make any efforts to become close to with them. (1st interview)

Participant 6 shared,

I was a new teacher. I had to sway in the direction where the wind blew because I knew that if I did not that I would be like a nail that stuck out that could be hammered at any time. So I tried to play along with them and kept a low profile...Whenever they said something, I would just smile and nod. Smiling and

nodding made me inconspicuous, allowing me to pass through my transition year without much heartache and headache. (2nd interview)

The toll of their experience of getting to the US and their experience here teaching in the US affected most of the participant's mental health. They described themselves in some of their memories during these times as being "frustrated," "depressed," or that they "have changed." Participant 1 painted a very powerful picture of how these experiences affected his mental health.

I had to grit my teeth through it all. It was frustrating at times, but I knew I could not give up. But it took a toll on me. I lost a lot of weight and then, at times, I could not sleep at night. I started to hide in my room as soon as I got back from work and started to rack my brains what can I do to change things and started to worry what would happen if my plans did not work. I think that was the first time I experienced depression. (1st interview)

Participant 1 went on to relate another incident that clearly shows how his mental health was affecting his physical health.

I got frustrated a lot. I could not even eat lunch at school because my worst class was my class before lunch. I got so mad most of the time with students in that class that by the time lunch came, I did not have the appetite to eat. There was even this one time that a kid sneakily went to my table and got the bubble sheets for the test that we just had, put in the trash and poured Gatorade on it... After I closed the door to have lunch and found out about it, I got so frustrated that I could not hold my lunch down. I started throwing up as soon as I started thinking

about it. Most school days, as soon as I got home, I felt so drained that I did not even have time to eat or change clothes and went straight to sleep. I think during those times I slept like 10-12 hours a day. And you would think that I would gain weight with that but no. I actually lost weight, my cholesterol level jumped, and my blood pressure skyrocketed. And those sleeping hours were not always a refuge for me. I started having nightmares of losing my job and being sent home. I was starting to burn out and the school had only started. (2nd interview)

There were some participants whose mental health was not affected because of their experience in the classroom but because they were longing for or missed their families in the Philippines. Those emotions could be gleaned from some responses of the participants. Participant 2 stated

I missed my family so much because at that time my kids were still very young. My youngest was only a year old when I came to the US and had only spent very little time with him when I was still in the Philippines... I struggled with it and gritted my teeth because I told myself that I would do whatever it took to get them to follow me to the US. (1st interview)

Participant 3 explained

You know, I am a single dad and I have left behind a daughter who is taken care of by my mom... I missed a lot of her first: her first words, her first steps, even her first birthday... It is very hard for me since I miss her a lot. But I realize that this is for the best for her future. (1st interview)

Participant 6 claimed

There were days that I would stare blankly at my students because I was thinking about my own child. There she had a high fever. At that time, I felt the weight of the world on my shoulders, and I just broke down. There was even a time I started to cry in class. (1st interview)

None of the participants utilized any professional help with regards to their mental health, citing reasons that the medical services here in the US were “expensive,” that “they could not afford it,” or that they feared of losing their jobs. Most of the participants also related that they had to “persevere,” “grit their teeth,” or “kept quiet” about their mental health struggles throughout their experience.

Theme Three: Support Systems

The third theme that emerged out of the rich textual descriptions from the experiences of the participants is about the participants’ support systems while processing their work visas in the Philippines and while teaching here in the US. These support systems focused on the financial and material support that they acquired and the mental support that helped them endure the challenges they faced. Three main support systems were perceived from the interviews: family, spirituality, and Filipino hospitality.

Family was seen by all of the participants as their main source of support during their initial phase of applying for a US job and during their teaching years. Some participants related that they had the financial capacity to continue with their application to teach in the US only because family helped them out. The participants also described their family as their “foundation,” their “mental support,” and the main reason why they can persevere. As Participant 1 tells us:

I would also Skype with my wife almost every day, and even sometimes during the school day if she was still awake. I would tell her all my worries and she would advise me what to do, what not to do. Of course, most of the time, I did not follow her advice but just by talking with her I felt that everything got a little better. (1st interview)

It was clear from the rich text descriptions that the family of the participants was the main reason all the participants have endured up to now.

Spirituality also played a major role as a support system to the participants during these times. Some participants describe this spirituality as “lot of prayers” or graces of the good “Lord” or “God” or “Jesus” and attribute their resiliency to their continued faith in their God. For example, Participant 4 shared:

Some of them prayed. Some of them prayed over the phones with their families while crying. I am not a very religious person myself, but I think being religious is one strong point that makes Filipinos resilient in times like those. (2nd interview)

In another experience, Participant 1 related how this spirituality helped his mental constitution.

It was a hard time but thanks to the good Lord, I made it through. It was through my and others’ prayers that helped me get over these tough times. To be honest with you, if I did not have God with me then I would have just cracked under all that pressure and would have ended up in a mental institution. (1st interviews)

However, some participants described their spirituality not as part of religion but as a result of self-reflection and of a positive attitude. This is clear when Participant 5 describes what he sees as spirituality.

. . . through a lot of self-reflection. One thing I do at night when I try to go to sleep is lie down and think about everything that has happened to me throughout the day and try to decipher each event down . . . I lie there, think, and question myself and try to play the possible “ifs”. After those reflections, I try to correct any mistakes I think I have made and try to figure things I am confused about. Essentially, I try to figure out myself. And it is through that self-reflection that I determined that I am happier to be me than to be someone else. (2nd interview)

Participant 6 also described her spirituality as a consequence of her Filipino culture, rather than a product of religion.

Filipinos believe in spirits as we as we do in God. For example, we believe in “usog” or that person or spirit’s temperament or state of mind affects someone else’s. . . our beliefs lies in what our parents have taught us, our belief in the unseen, in spirits . . . these affect how we perceive what is happening around us and thus how we react to these experiences. (2nd interview)

Participant 5 shared a different kind of spirituality that stems from Filipino local beliefs of animism.

...we also have this huge tree in front of our school... Whenever I pass by there, I would always say “tabi tabi po” (excuse me) like most Filipinos would do. And

whenever they would hear me say it, they would ask me about it, and I would say that it is a Filipino belief that spirits inhabit trees like that and it was the respectful way of saying (excuse me) whenever passing by to avoid hitting those spirits and angering them. (3rd interview).

And although embarrassed about being seen, Participant 5 professes that practicing such helps her well-being, as she shared

The first time it happened was when I was very young, when I was in elementary school. I got a really bad fever and so my father called for the “albularyo” (village quack doctor). He said that I accidentally hit a “nunò near a mound in our yard when I was playing ” (“Nunò”, from the word “ninunò” or ancestor is an unseen dwarf-like nature spirit in Philippine mythology believed to be living in earth mounds. Usually depicted as dwarf or elf looking old man in Philippine mythology). He said that we should leave an offering near the mound to appease the “nunò” so my father left a couple of boiled eggs and lit a candle near the mound to appease the nunò. Of course, they also gave me an Ibuprofen to ease my fever. The fever disappeared the following day as if nothing happened. My parents attributed my getting well to the offering that they left at the mound. They said it appeased the “nunò”. Of course, I think the Ibuprofen played a big role, but that incident got inculcated in me and ever since then, every time I would get sick, I would think that I might have incurred the wrath of some spirit. (3rd interview)

She continued,

... A funny thing happened to me during my first week in school. I fell ill the first few days of school. To be honest, I think it was because I was not used to the germs or bacteria here in the US. But in the back of my mind, there was this nagging feeling that I might have offended someone when I passed by that big tree in front of our school the first time I came over and did not say “tabi tabi po”. The thought nagged me so much that I relented to it and decided to leave a boiled egg and lit a candle at the base of the tree... I do not know if it was the NyQuil that worked or that, but I recovered the following day. But the main issue was I was called into the main office afterwards because, apparently, the maintenance guys saw the candle and the boiled egg under the tree and thought some creep put it there. So, they reviewed the security cameras and saw me put it there and pray afterwards. It was the most awkward 30 minutes of my life trying to explain to them what I did and what it meant. (Participant 5, 3rd interview).

And although embarrassed to practice such spiritual beliefs in public, Participant 5 continues to practice them in private.

Another support system that was discerned from the participant’s experiences was the support they received from fellow Filipinos that could be aptly termed Filipino hospitality. This system has overlapping concepts with family as some participant’s described their experience with these other Filipinos as “second family.” They also described the experiences in a very positive light, with some describing it as people who “sympathized with” them, “supported” them, and “treated them like family.” Participant 6 noted this very uplifting experience when she said:

...it was all thanks to the Filipino community there. They helped me out and supported me to get stronger mentally and get over my depression. They kept in touch and would ask me how I was doing or would sometimes drop by just to engage in idle chat. Those small things kept me from thinking about stuff and worrying too much... It was a good thing there were other Filipino families who helped us and treated us like family. I am very thankful to God for them. I think they saved me from going insane. The Filipino community here provided me with more than financial support, they provided with a family when my husband left. (2nd interview)

And it was not just the mental support that Filipinos provided each other. Filipinos also welcomed each other into their own homes, as Participant 1 related:

They provided me free food and lodging during that time and would not take a cent from me. Nothing really can take place of Filipino hospitality. They toured me around the different places... Since I did not have a car as well, they drove me back and forth to my new district. (1st interview)

Participant 7 also echoed this experience of Participant 1 when he shared:

We were complete strangers and had just met then. And yet, they invited us into their homes as if we were blood related... We had access to everything in the house. That was the level of trust that they extended to us and warmth of their welcome. (3rd interview).

Theme Four: Differences between Filipino and American Values and Culture

This theme emerged mainly in response to the second research question: What values, traditions, and cultural artifacts did Filipino teachers experience in Texas public schools, and how do they perceive the essence of these compared to their own cultural traditions and values? The responses that the participants shared reflected their experience on culture shock and their perceived differences in how Filipino students and US students value education. Their shared experiences also showed not only pride in their Filipino values and traditions but also admiration of some US cultural traditions and values. They also shared other positive perceptions about the United States that perhaps could reflect their colonial mentality.

Some participants expressed their culture shock as they experienced for the first time living and transitioning here in the US. These experiences left a huge impact on them, describing the experiences as “shocking,” “excitement,” sometimes “awkward,” causing “anxiety,” and even “embarrassing.” Participant 1 shared his positive experience with culture shock during his initial foray into the US:

I had culture shock. Everything seemed to be super modern. Everything seemed to be fancy. The burgers were huge! Even the most ordinary person had a car. Everyone asked how you are whenever they saw you and said good morning even though they did not know you. To me, it was a totally different feeling. (1st interview)

However, not all of Participant 1's experience of culture shock was positive. In one experience, he relates how he was surprised to see students throw away unwanted lunch items and the embarrassment that ensued when he tried to retain them.

I saw kids throw away unopened milk cartons, untouched hamburgers still in their wrappers, bags of baby carrots, whole apples, oranges, unopened boxes of raisins and others. I felt depressed at seeing that. One time, I even tried to get some of the food out of the big trash can we had in the cafeteria since I felt it was clean and still could be eaten. I was told not to by the cafeteria workers since they said there was a school policy about getting food out of the trash. (1st interview)

Participant 2 also shared a negative impact on him of culture shock during his first-time teaching in the US classroom.

Having 14 years of teaching experience, I thought I was already ready to face whatever challenge would be thrown at me in the classroom. But it was difficult for me. I think my greatest challenge was getting over the culture shock when I first came into the US. The first time I came into a classroom, I saw students were not really interested in learning anything. They were only at school for the socialization, or that their parents told them to go to school, but the kids had no genuine interest in learning. They had very little regard for education. It was the opposite in the Philippines. (1st interview)

Like Participant 2, most participants shared an experience where they saw the differences of how US students and Filipino students valued education. Some participants described American students' value of education as "intrinsic" and as a "sense of entitlement", as a

“right” that not everyone takes advantage of. On the other hand, they described Filipino students’ value of education as a “steppingstone to get them out of poverty,” a “privilege and not a right,” and an “opportunity.” Participant 1 gave a good context to this difference as he shared his experience at a school he taught at in the Philippines.

And there were a lot of poor people there who did not even have enough food to eat... So the students there hardly had any shoes, did not have any new uniforms at the start of the school and looked very tired at the start of the school day. . . .

Apparently, these kids had to wake up before dawn and help their families tend to the fields that they had, feed their livestock, go to the market to sell stuff or cook for their families... And the place that they were at was a mountainous region which means if they had to go to the market to sell stuff, they had to walk around 15 kilometers one way to get to the marketplace. That would be like a 2 hour walk on rough terrain. However, I was astonished at their dedication to go to school and learn. None of them slept through any of my lessons and they all participated with gusto whenever we had activities. (1st interview)

Participant 2 echoed this as she shared her own experience in the Philippines:

They wanted to use their education as a steppingstone to get out of poverty. But the first time I came into the US, I saw that it was not the same for the kids here. I saw students were not really interested in learning anything. . . . They were only at school for the socialization or that their parents told them to go to school, but the kids had no genuine interest in learning. They had very little regard for education. (1st interview).

Participant 4 also shared his thoughts about his experience with how US students value education:

...many teens here do not take their studies seriously or would ask that you give them an intrinsic reason for them to study. By intrinsic reason, I mean that you have to show them the immediate value of what you are teaching to them, in terms of whether they will they enjoy what they have learned or how are they going to use what they learned when they graduate from high school or how will they use what they have learned, specifically what you are teaching them. (1st interview)

Participant 4 also saw that the difference in the value of education between the US and Philippines can be attributed to the difference in resources and funding provided by the government. As he said:

Here in the US, public schools are totally free... They provide everything, even lunch. Unlike in the Philippines, although it is public school, students still have to bring their own materials and their own lunch. This to me shows how much the US value equity and equality of providing education to students. However, I also feel that this has also somewhat contributed to students in the US taking for granted their education. Since its free, they think that education to them is a right, which it is, and not a privilege unlike in the Philippines that you must exert so much effort just to get a good education for your kids. So, students in the US sometimes have this mindset that they are entitled to receive education and

whatever they do with it, whether they try their best or not, should not be an issue.

(2nd interview)

Participant 6 held a slightly different take on this difference in value of education when she said:

In the Philippines, kids see school as their only way to get out of poverty... Here in the US, the land of opportunities, kids think that they can become whatever they want to even without a good education... And they can. (2nd interview)

All participants shared experiences of good Filipino values and traditions, a subtheme that overlaps with the previous subtheme of Filipino hospitality. They described their experiences with words like “filial piety,” “welcoming,” “treated as family,” “very nice,” “showing respect,” and “friendly.” They have related these experiences with noticeable pride. As Participant 1 related his reason for working hard:

We put great importance on family. We have enough filial piety and love for our parents that we would go through many hardships just to take care of them. To us, this is repaying all the kindness and hard work they put in in raising us. This value of ours makes me proud that I am Filipino. (1st interview)

The experiences that the participants shared focused mainly on the values of resiliency, hospitality, spirituality, kindness, hard work, and respect, values that the participants saw as something that helped them overcome challenges here in the US. Participant 5 explained:

I think it is the resilience and meekness of the Filipino that makes us easily adapt to different situations. And it is this resilience and meekness that made me

integrate successfully here in the US. Our spirituality, our closeness to God, also helped me a lot keep me my sanity during trying times and the mental support from my family - our familial values - that kept me going. (3rd interview).

Even though all the participants shared challenging experiences during their initial transition in the classroom here in the US, they still reported experiencing admirable US values and traditions as well that they felt were worth emulating in the Philippines. They described these experiences with US values and traditions as showing “a sense of pride,” an attitude of “independence,” a “celebration,” taking care of “personal life,” and not forgetting about “leisure.” Most participants displayed emotions of admiration for these traditions, and they envied that the Philippines do not have traditions like those.

Participant 2 shared his admiration of such when he talked about how Americans make time to spend on “leisure”:

For Americans, leisure is an important part of their lives, and they spend money and time just to make sure that they get to go on vacations or trips during breaks. But for Filipinos who are mired in poverty, getting a vacation would not be their top priority. It would be getting out of poverty... But they see it as an important part of maintaining their mental health and taking time for their family. And I think that is one important thing we should all emulate. (3rd interview)

On the other hand, Participant 3 admired how American value sports in schools:

I like how they value sports in schools a lot here in the US. To them, football, volleyball, and other sports are such a big thing that most schools set aside a lot of resources just to make sure that students are given this opportunity to excel in

these sports. Even coaches are paid better than other teachers. They even have big pep rallies and send-offs before games, tail gate parties and big attendance in sporting events. And everyone gets in on sports, not just the athletes themselves. The band members, cheerleaders, flag students and others join and participate in these events. Pre-games are big celebrations where they all show their sense of pride for their school and their colors. To me, it is such an amazing thing. (2nd interview)

The participants' admiration for some US values and traditions leads us to the last subtheme, colonial mentality. Although a few participants directly shared their thoughts about how colonial mentality influenced their decision process of applying to the US, most of the participants used words like "superior," "better," or "high regard" when describing their experience of coming to the US. This perception could be gleaned from the response of Participant 1:

Well, in the Philippines, especially in the provinces, people have a high regard for anything that comes from abroad. We see people who have the chance to work abroad, even though the work entails only being a domestic helper or caregiver as people who have struck it rich. But if people would compare those coming let say from the Saudi Arabia, Dubai, or Singapore, which a lot of Filipinos go to as domestic helpers or caregivers, to people coming from the United States, people seem to treat those people with higher regard. And it is not just people, also products coming from the US are treated with higher regard. They see these products as having higher quality or more advanced technology even though its

components would have also been made in Asian countries... And so, given this consistent exposure to the mindset that anything and everything that comes from the US is better, people start having this mindset that the US is indeed better, and many would grab the first opportunity that they could get to go to the US. To me, this is colonial mentality. And TV shows, movies and other media consistently support this mindset. We see Filipinos trying to dress up like HipHop artists, wanting to drive fast cars and buying goods like Aeropostale, and Gucci. They forge products like YSL, Nike and other US brands. Have you ever seen Filipinos make counterfeit Filipino products like the Barong Tagalog? It is because they see US products as far superior that they counterfeit them; that they see these cultural aspects like HipHop as superior that is why they imitate them. We have been so Westernized to the point that we do not even recognize as the effect colonial mentality anymore. (2nd interview)

The same sentiment was echoed by the responses of other participants. Participant 3 explained:

The US has long been recognized as the land where you can fulfill the American dream, regardless of race, age, ethnicity, or anything else. (2nd interview)

Participant 4 argued:

Because if you're in the Philippines and if you are given the chance to go to US, 99% of the time you would grab the opportunity since it would be the right choice for you and your family. (1st interview)

For Participant 7:

I think we would still choose the US. First, I think the US is still much better compared to Canada or any other country. It is a place where people have freedoms not found in any other country. The opportunities here are also endless.

(2nd interview)

Summary

Four overlapping main themes with 10 subthemes emerged from the data analysis of the text rich descriptions obtained from interviews of the seven participants. These main themes were (a) the search for greener pastures and the challenges getting there, (b) challenges faced while teaching in the US, (c) support systems and (d) differences in values and culture. These themes and sub themes were derived from the horizontalization of the data and the textual and structural analysis of the participants' described experiences in response to the research questions. (1) What are the lived experiences of Filipino teachers teaching in Texas public schools? (2) What values, traditions, and cultural artifacts did Filipino teachers experience in Texas public schools, and how do they perceive the essence of these compared to their own cultural traditions and values? These themes and overlapping subthemes as presented in the chapter form the essence of the phenomenon which the study sought to examine. The researcher utilized verbatim responses from the participants to better allow the reader a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the participants as they taught in public schools in Texas. These findings are further discussed in chapter 5.

In the next chapter, the summary of the study is provided, followed by a discussion of the findings and the implications for practice, policy, future research, and

theory. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study, a brief reflection of the researcher on the research process and a closing summary.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

Introduction

Filipino overseas workers are seen by their fellow countrymen as unsung heroes who brave foreign lands and silently endure hardships as they try to earn a living. They do this all in the effort to improve the lives of their loved ones who they have left behind in the Philippines. Many of them come to the US as nurses, caregivers, and engineers. But a growing number of these Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) coming to the US are having a more profound impact on the formation of its future leaders, and hence could have a more profound impact on the US itself. These are Filipino teachers. And although much literature has been published that focuses on the transition, acculturation, and mental health of OFWs, very little has focused on Filipino teachers. Existing literature on the recruitment of other foreign nationals also fails to account for how for the ways which Filipino teachers navigate defining their own Filipino identity within the present Filipino diaspora. Thus, it is important to have a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of these Filipino teachers who are working in the US, which may have deeper implications in the identity formation of their students.

In this final chapter, the findings of the study are summarized and discussed. Implications for practice, policy, future research, and theory are also explored. The

chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study as closure to the entire research process.

Summary of the Study

Filipino teachers teaching in US public schools have been lauded by both students and school administrators alike as very competent and very dedicated teachers. They are seen most of the time as ideal teachers who competently fulfill the role of a devoted teacher and attend to both the academic needs and social-emotional needs of their students. They are teachers who would take teaching positions American teachers shun due to low pay, demanding classes, and jobs in places seen as too rural or too difficult (Boisseau, 2019; Greene Sterling, 2018). Back in their home countries, these teachers are seen as selfless heroes who take huge risks to go to foreign countries to send back remittances to improve the lives of their loved ones. Overall, their remittances, together with those of other OFWs, make up 10% of the Philippines' GDP.

However, the challenges that the Filipino teacher faces go far beyond landing a job in the US or sending money to loved ones. They face challenges that come with acculturation in foreign lands (Berry, 1992, 1997). And although much literature documents the lived experiences of Filipino overseas workers (Yu, 2015; Baek Choi & Thomas, 2009; Ea et al., 2008), very little focuses on the lived experiences of Filipino teachers, particularly those residing in Texas. With the continued recruitment of Filipino teachers due to the increased need for qualified teachers to help bridge the ever-widening learning gap, it is thus important to contribute to the literature that focuses on these teachers who directly influence the formation of future US citizens and leaders. The main

purpose of this transcendental, qualitative, phenomenological study was therefore to explore the lived experiences of these Filipino teachers who are teaching in Texas. I conducted this study to get a deeper understanding of their acculturation process and the challenges and obstacles they faced. The study also aimed to get a glimpse of what role their own cultural beliefs, values, and traditions played in the success of their transition here in the US. For the purposes of the and in order to gain an understanding of the essence of their shared experience, two main research questions were used for this study:

1. What were the lived experiences of Filipino teachers teaching in Texas public schools?
2. What values, traditions, and cultural artifacts did Filipino teachers experience in Texas public schools, and how did they perceive the essence of these compared to their own cultural traditions and values?

A qualitative phenomenological approach was the most practical choice to address these research questions. I deemed it was necessary to ensure that my own biases did not taint the meanings and essence of the experiences of the participants. Thus, a transcendental inquiry approach was selected as the research design for the study. Seven participants, identified through snowball sampling according to the sampling criteria, were invited and agreed to partake in the study. The criteria were that the participants had to be Filipino teachers teaching in Texas public schools, had only been in the US for the past five years, that they came from the same socio-economic background in the Philippines and that they have no other citizenship other than Filipino. Limiting the

participants to these qualifications ensured that although collected data will be diverse, the phenomenon from which it stems from would remain a common factor.

Three-level interviews, with two semi-structured and one open, were conducted to ensure that the data collection process was both flexible and replicable. Throughout the study, I consciously bracketed out my own biases and preconceived notions, as recommended by Moustakas (1994), to ensure that the essence, which would result from the study, would be free from my own biases. Member checking was also completed to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts of the interviews. However, it should be noted that data analysis was halted from 2018 to early 2021 with most of the transcribed interviews, translated transcripts and verbatim transcripts (that had passed through numerous member-checks) were lost as it was housed in a work-related Google drive (which I lost access to due to ending my employment with them). Audio recording and journals of the interviews that were saved on an iPhone and an audio recorder were recovered but most verbatim transcripts and translated transcripts had to be obtained again through the participants. Most of these verbatim and translated transcripts that were sent through email were recovered. However, several of the participants had changed employment and thus lost access to transcripts that were sent through their previous work emails. The researcher then decided to re-transcribe the interviews from the original audio recordings, have the participants member-check the transcripts again and have an outside expert to do the translations. The entire process of obtaining these documents from the participants took some time as the researcher deemed it to ensure that accuracy of the new transcripts was very close to the originals.

The rich text descriptions that were derived from the three-level interviews were then analyzed using the process of horizontalization to generate codes that were then compared to create categories to determine the shared experiences of the participants. This was the start of the phenomenological reduction where we combed through the textual descriptions and identified relevant topics of the participants' shared experience. Significant statements pertaining to these shared experiences were highlighted. These topics or preliminary meaning units were then further grouped to create larger units of analysis. Relevant theme then emerged from these allowed a deeper understanding of the participants' shared experiences as conveyed through significant statements quoting their own words. From there, I reflected on these themes and overlapping subthemes to arrive at a total representation of their experience, representative of the essence of the lived experiences of these Filipino teachers.

Data analysis of the rich text descriptions that came out from the study surprisingly resulted in four main topics and ten overlapping subthemes that reflected the participants' shared experiences. The first theme revolved mainly around these teachers' reasons for coming to the US as they searched for "greener pastures" and the challenges they faced as they made their foray into reality.

The most common theme among the shared experiences of the participants reflected their strong desire to create a better life and opportunity for themselves and their loved ones and thus, applying to work in the US. Most of the participants noted the rampant poverty and low prevailing wages in the Philippines as the main pushing factor for them to seek employment outside the Philippines. The most common challenging

experience the participants reported related to coming to the US on a work visa was maneuvering the Philippine bureaucracy to get the necessary permits and the financial challenges and frustrations that came with it. Many of the participants saw the Philippine governments' requirements for work clearances as unneeded and burdensome to an already overwhelmed applicant.

Another theme that came out of the study was about the challenges these Filipino teachers faced while teaching in the US. Almost all the participants reported experiencing some sort of microaggression towards them, whether from their students, administration, or colleagues. None of the participants directly used the word microaggression in reporting their experiences. However, it was clear through their descriptions of being "mimicked," "made fun of," "cursed," at, or being subjected to "passive-aggressive" treatment were indeed microaggressions that they were experiencing. All participants also reported that such challenges had a profound effect on their mental health, with some experiencing depression and trauma that would live permanently with the participants.

Support systems that these Filipino teachers deemed as their lifesaver was the third theme that emerged from the study. These support systems focused on the financial, material, mental, and emotional supports that the participants deemed priceless as they faced challenges in producing their work permits and transitioning in the US. All participants' seemed to agree that family was their main source of support during trying times, both in terms of the emotional and financial support. All the participants cited their family as their main "foundation" and the reason why they were able to continue and persevere through all the challenges. Other than family, most of the participants also

pointed towards spirituality and Filipino hospitality as other venues of support to Filipino teachers. Most attributed their resiliency to their continued faith in God and to spirituality and their positive attitude towards their circumstances. Some also cited the help and support of their friends and individuals here in the US as one of the reasons they were able to cope with the challenges that they faced.

The final theme that came out of the rich text descriptions was about the differences in values and culture between the Philippines and the US. This theme emerged as a response to the second research question. Most of the participants shared their culture shock as they experienced firsthand (and for the first time) the traditions and culture of Americans. Most described their experience as somewhat “awkward” and “shocking” but as an eye-opener and a learning experience of things to come. The participants also reported a common experience of seeing the difference between how Filipino students and US students value education; most perceived that Filipino students valued their education more compared to their US counterparts. The participants also shared experiences where they showcased their pride in Filipino values and traditions, like resiliency, hospitality, hard work, and respect.

The participants also shared common experiences in their perceptions of some US values and traditions they found worth emulating. For example, most participants shared that American’s “sense of pride” and taking care of “personal life” and not forgetting about “leisure” were important and should be envied by Filipinos. Talking about such things, the participants also shared experiences that related to how they valued some of these beliefs, values, and traditions as more superior to ours, hinting at the idea of

colonial mentality. A few participants directly cited colonial mentality as having an influence in their decision-making process of applying for a job here in the US rather than in other countries. Some of the participants even used the words “superior,” “better,” or “high regard” when describing their experiences here in the US.

In the following sections, I present a discussion that grounds the findings with research examined in the literature review reported in chapter two. Themes drawn from this study were compared and contrasted with the findings from other studies to enhance the credibility, conformability, and transferability of this study’s findings. This discussion offers the reader a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Filipino teachers teaching in Texas as grounded in the extant body of literature.

Discussion of the Findings

The literature reviewed for this study focused on the Filipino worker diaspora, the H1B visa process, acculturation of migrants, and colonial mentality. However, very few studies about Filipino migrant teachers was available at the time of conception of the study. Thus, the reviewed literature provided very little insight to the possible outcomes of the study.

Two research questions guided this study to obtain thick and rich descriptions of the lived experiences of the Filipino teachers teaching in Texas. The study revealed four major themes with ten overlapping subthemes. These findings not only confirmed most of what was revealed in the literature review but also built on and extended the knowledge about the challenges and hardships faced by these Filipino teachers.

In much of the literature that was reviewed, poverty and the financial struggles of Filipinos were pointed as the less romantic reasons why Filipinos brave working in foreign lands (Aguila, 2015; David & Nadal, 2013; San Juan, 2009). All of the participants shared experiences alluded to this reason in their pursuit of getting a job here in the US. This reflects what the literature states about most Filipinos jumping at the opportunity to work in the US as they see it as “greener pastures” where they have the potential to earn more than ten times their salary in the Philippines (Almendral, 2018; Trimbach, 2017).

Other push factors, as cited in the literature as main reasons for worker migration, were also reflected in the responses of the participants. These include poor working conditions, no job security, and lack of professional development opportunities (American Federation of Teachers, 2009). The challenges these teachers faced processing their work permits and maneuvering the Philippine bureaucracy, and the financial and emotional toll they experienced also is confirmed within the literature that discussed the hoops and fences that Filipinos have to jump over at the Philippine Overseas Employment agency and other government offices just to secure their work clearances (Ontiveros, 2017; Trimbach, 2017, Wiley, 2012; American Federation of Teachers, 2009).

The findings of the studies of Aguila (2015), Aguilar (2015), and San Juan (2009) reflect similarities in the hardships experienced by these Filipino teachers and those of Filipinos working in other fields here in the US. In the literature, studies cites that both groups of Filipinos risk being victims of human trafficking, spending thousands of

dollars, and getting into financial debt to be able to come and work in the US (Perea, 2018; Piccio, 2019, American Federation of Teachers, 2009). Cases of human trafficking targeting Filipino teachers have been documented as well. As reported by American Federation of Teachers (2009),

the recruiting companies Omni Consortium, Multicultural Professionals, and Multicultural Education Consultants were indicted on charges of conspiracy to commit alien smuggling, visa fraud, mail fraud, and money laundering. These charges stemmed from allegations that starting in December 2001, they enticed and recruited teachers from the Philippines with promises of teaching jobs in the United States, permanent residency status, and the ability to bring their families to the U.S. In reality, out of the 273 teachers recruited, fewer than 100 actually had a teaching job waiting for them when they arrived in Texas. The teachers paid as much as \$10,000 for the recruiters' services, many times through loans offered by the recruiters. These loans were for 18 months, with a 5 percent interest rate that compounded monthly, translating into an annual interest rate over 60 percent. If a teacher missed a payment, an additional 15 percent was tacked on to the interest rate. The teachers were also required to have a co-signer on the loans who resided in the Philippines, against whom charges could be filed if the teacher missed two or more payments. The teachers were housed in unfinished properties in groups of 10 to 15 and had to ask permission to leave the housing. They were forbidden to own any form of transportation. The recruiters confiscated the teachers' original transcripts, certifications, and credentials so that the teachers could not find jobs

on their own. The teachers were also told that they would be deported if they tried to find their own job or complained about not having a job. (p.17)

Like many victims of human trafficking, most of these Filipino teachers did not get justice and simply persevered through their predicament. And the participants of this study were well aware of the experiences of this early group of Filipino teachers.

However, the participants still chose to endure the financial, emotional, and mental toll just to be able to process their visas and work permits and come to the US to work, and, ironically, to pay off debts they incurred to process them.

Microaggression towards Filipino teachers was one surprising finding that came out from this study. Microaggressions, as noted by Sue et al. (2007), are “brief, verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities that communicate hostile, denigrating and hurtful messages” (p. 273). These microaggressions can be racial in nature. As noted by Sue et al. (2009), this is a new “form of racism which occur in the daily lives of people of color. They are so common and innocuous that they are often overlooked and unacknowledged” (p. 72). Examples of such innocuous acts of racism “include (a) teachers who ignore students of color, (b) taxi drivers who fail to pick up passengers of color, or (c) airport security personnel screening passengers of color with greater frequency and care” (Sue et al., 2009, p.73). Literature even points out that “even the well intentioned White Americans are unaware they hold beliefs and attitudes that are detrimental to people of color” (Sue et al., 2009, p. 72). The tenets of racial microaggression can be so imbedded in the subconsciousness that perpetrators of such acts are unaware or have now no knowledge of their discriminatory actions that they act without guilt or second thought.

These acts can be in form of innocent questions like “Where are you from” or light-hearted jests like “You have a funny accent.” As noted that Sue et al.(2009), “Asian Americans and Latino/Hispanic Americans indicate that they perceive these statements as invalidating and insulting because they reflect a worldview that racial/ ethnic minorities are aliens in their own country” (p. 73).

Racial microaggression can be classified as microassaults, microinsults or microinvalidations (Sue et al, 2007). As noted by Sue et al. (2009),

Microassaults are defined as explicit racial derogations that are verbal (i.e., racial epithets), nonverbal (behavioral discrimination), or environmental (offensive visual displays) attacks meant to hurt the person of color. It is generally deliberate and conscious. Calling someone a “Chink” or “Jap,” White parents discouraging a son or daughter from dating Asian Americans or displaying Asian caricatures of exaggerated slanted eyes and large buck teeth are examples. Microassaults are most similar to old fashioned forms of racism in that they are deliberate and conscious acts by the aggressor. (p. 73)

Clearly, this was the type of racism that Participant 3 experienced when he was called ching-chong by a student in class. And such insult actually is usually directed towards immigrants of Chinese origin, making it more evident that some perpetrators treat all Asians immigrants as coming from the cultural background, bolstering the idea that Filipinos tend to be treated as invisible when looking at the Asian migrants (Sue et al., 2007) and increasing the emotional toll the insult did to Participant 3.

On the other hand, microinsults and microinvalidations tend to be implicit, implied, indirect and, most of all, unintentional. As noted by Sue et al. (2009),

These microaggressions are not consciously intended by the perpetrator, but from the perspective of the recipient, they represent a negative experience. A microinsult is a behavioral action or verbal remark that conveys rudeness, insensitivity, or demeans a person's racial identity or heritage. A White manager who states to a prospective applicant of color that "the most qualified person should get the job" may be perceived as implying that people of color are not qualified. Microinvalidations are actions that exclude, negate or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings or experiential reality of a person of color. When an Asian American is complimented for speaking good English or when Blacks are warned not to be so oversensitive, the underlying messages may be that Asians are perpetual foreigners in their own country and that the experiential reality of racism for African Americans is not real. (p. 73)

The shared experiences of the participants in this study seem to correlate these examples of microinsults and microinvalidations. One such experience that seem to reflect a microinsult suffered by Participant 5 was when someone asked the school that she worked with to see if the postings and filings for her Labor Condition Application (LCA) were done properly.

Well, apparently the teacher who they had before me got fired for doing something inappropriate with a student. Of course, she denied it but was still asked to resign from what I heard. But apparently, she was very popular in school

and was friends with a lot of teachers there. And so when I came in, they all felt that I was taking her job, especially after they found out that I was on a visa. The principal even secretly told me someone filed a whistleblower complaint with the USCIS, stating that qualified US teachers had applied for the job but instead was given to a foreigner. He said that someone even visited and asked to see if postings of whatever were properly done. It was awkward, to be honest. Other teachers would say hi or greet you good morning but never really engaged in a chat with me. They would even talk behind my back and say that I was doing too much with my lesson-games and that I was making them look bad. They even insulted my accent and height, saying I was a midget and all that stuff, and that I was ugly. (Participant 5, 1st interview)

Other than the parts that showed evident overt microassaults directed at Participant 5, the act of co-workers asking to see her LCA filing could be perceived as Participant 5 considered not qualified enough to take the teaching position or working illegally in the US. Similar stories were echoed by most of the participants in the study.

Sue et al. (2007) also noted that such microinsults can also take the form of someone being treated as a lesser person or as a second class citizen or a racial group being ascribed a low intelligence, as shown in Participant 2's experience:

I felt my co-workers were professional but not really friendly with me. There were times that I felt that they were actually making fun of me, of making fun of my accent, or making fun of my expertise on the subject area (Participant 2, 3rd interview).

Over-all, the literature cited microaggressions as subtle, micro insults or dismissive snubs (Allen et al., 2013) but not threats of bodily harm and violence as reported in our findings. However, it should be noted, and as stated by Sue et al. (2009), that “what constitutes racial microaggressions, how they impact people of color and the strategies used to deal with them have not been well conceptualized or research” (p. 72). Few studies have examined microinsults and microinvalidations in detail and most of the research focused on the experiences of Black people, further overshadowing the experiences of Asians and such experiences’ effects on their mental health.

Also, most literature cited microaggressions in the classroom as teacher to students and between students themselves (David, 2013; Sue, 2007; Solorzano, 2000). Research in the literature which focused on acculturation (Aguila, 2015; Berry, 1992, 1997; David, 2008; Nadal, 2009) and acculturative stress (Berry, 1992) however, did not specify Filipino teachers as having encountered events of such extreme instances of microaggression. In contrast, numerous studies described Filipino OFWs as having an easier time acculturating compared to other migrants and even being seen as a model minority (Aguila, 2015; Nadal, 2009; Pido, 1997).

This flexible adaptation is often attributed to their positive attitudes and their fluency in the English language (Aguila, 2015; del Castillo, 2015; Pido, 1997; San Juan, 2010; Yu, 2015). Thus, it was surprising that participants in this study reported that one of the challenges they experienced was being made fun of because of their accents. Although numerous studies did point out that foreign teachers experience discrimination with regards to their accents, these studies mainly pointed to teachers coming from

countries not having English as a second language, such as China. Parents and students who complained about these foreign teachers argued that “students have a tendency to get distracted and confused by unfamiliar accents, which can serve as an impediment to teaching and learning” (American Federation of Teachers, 2009, p. 20). Despite literature long documenting these racial microaggressions against Asians (and Asian Americans), the view of most that Asians are of the model minority and are somewhat immune to racism, as noted by Sue et al. (2009), the experiences of prejudice and discrimination continue to be “overshadowed by the experiences of Whites and Blacks, and research findings for racial groups are often assumed to speak to the experiences of Asian Americans as well” (p. 72). However, the findings from this study are unique and contrast findings in the literature in that participants reported experiencing extreme forms of microaggression. These reported forms of microaggressions ranged from insults to actual threats of violence and bodily harm. This should be a point of concern and it should encourage further research and inquiry.

The findings of the study that these participants had a common experience of mental health challenges were expected but still surprising. It was expected due to their reporting having experienced microaggressions and other challenges. It was surprising however in finding out the magnitude of its effects on their mental and physical health. Existing literature notes that those who suffer microaggressions

feel immediate distress and many report accumulation of such experiences have a detrimental impact on well-being. Participants describe the conflict of responding to such interactions, as well as the protective factors that may alleviate the

anguish they experience when they encounter microaggressions. (Nadal et al., 2014, p. 58)

These microaggressions can then lead to devastating effects on one's psychological well-being, resulting in depression, substance abuse, lower self-esteem, and withdrawal from societal interactions (Nadal et al., 2014; Sue et al., 2007; Allen et al., 2013). Several studies completely support the experiences reported by our participants, especially participant 6 who suffered elevated blood pressure, exhibited eating disorders and depression for a long time, and continue to experience lingering effects. However, numerous existing studies only focused on OFWs working in the fields of healthcare and as maids and engineers as the Filipinos who mainly experienced and reported mental health struggles. No literature was found to have stated that Filipino teachers also have experienced such mental health issues as was determined in this study.

Consistent with the literature reviewed on the Filipino diaspora was the finding that Filipino teachers, like most Filipino OFWs, rely on their family, their spirituality, and the hospitality of other Filipinos for support as they transition to and then work in the United States (Aguila, 2015; San Juan, 2009). The Filipino teacher's dependence on family as their primary source of mental and emotional support are reflected in the works of Aguila (2015) that showed that the basic unit of family for Filipinos remains the single most important source of strength and resilience. For OFWs, keeping in touch with family keeps their homesickness at bay and provides them with the strength to keep on facing their challenges.

The finding that spirituality also played a big role in the mental health of Filipino teachers was also consistent with reviewed literature. This spirituality brought upon by these teachers' religious beliefs is often described as contributing the flexible adaptation of the Filipino diaspora, the resilience of the Filipino OFW, and the overall positive attitudes displayed by the Filipinos in front of challenges (Aguila, 2015; del Castillo, 2015; Pido, 1997; San Juan, 2010; Yu, 2015). This display of spirituality, however, was discussed in contrasting ways, with some participants citing it to be helpful while others citing it as a barrier to adapting more easily to the culture and beliefs of Americans. However, most of the participants' experiences seem to attribute spirituality (versus to religion) as the primary reason for their positive outlook towards their circumstances.

Filipino hospitality, one of the support systems these Filipino teachers relied upon, was also found to be consistent with the reviewed literature (Aguila, 2015; del Castillo, 2015; Pido, 1997; San Juan, 2010; Yu, 2015). It has been noted in this literature that it is through formally and informally established Filipino communities that Filipinos provide support and even counseling to their fellow Filipinos. Support that they provided ranged from financial contribution to simple welfare and well-being checks to ensure that their fellow Filipinos can triumph over challenges. And in most recent times, Filipino migrants have had a growing online presence where they have created virtual communities to keep in touch and check on one another during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another finding from this study, which seems to be in agreement with the existing literature is about the differences in how students perceive the value of education. The

findings seem to show that Filipino youth value education more as compared to their US counterparts. This finding is also in agreement with the literature:

It has always been said that Filipino value education. There is also much evidence suggesting the Filipino youth also value education rather highly... 98% rated having good education as being very important.... A good education is perceived as important as having a good marriage and family life and being able to find steady work. (Bernardo, 2003, pp. 49-50)

The shared experiences of participants showed that most of the Filipino youths they had under their tutelage were more resilient, more dedicated, and placed more importance on their education compared to US students. These teachers shared their perceptions Filipino students saw their education as their opportunity to bring their families out of poverty, ending the cycle of hand-to-mouth existence that is prevalent in the Philippines today. This could be seen as a sign that the lack of resources in the Philippines has become a pushing force for students to persevere in their studies.

On the other hand, American students

... familiarity with and reliance on new technologies shape the nature of their societal relationships, study habits and norms of interpersonal communication and decorum... it heightens their sense of immediacy and alters their norms of societal interaction... attaining a college education is no longer a guarantee of success that it once was. As a result of these and other factors, a growing number of today's generation of college students exhibit a new combination of attitudes, outlooks,

and orientations to work and towards others – frequently described as student entitlement. (Lippmann et al., 2009, p. 198)

This sense of entitlement, as according to Lippmann et al. (2009), is the driving force of classroom incivility, classroom conflict, and difficult student behavior seen in US classrooms today.

Reviewed literature also supported the study's findings that most Filipino educators experience culture shock during their acculturation in the US (Berry, 1992, 1997; Crisp & Turner, 2011, San Juan, 2009). The experiences reported by the participants in the study mirror the different stages of culture shock (Winkelman, 1994). The report of the participants about their initial experience with US traditions and artifacts reflects the 'honeymoon' or 'tourist phase' of culture shock, as such experience was characterized by these teachers' excitement and joy of being in the US. The crisis phase was reflected when the participants shared awkward experiences that caused them embarrassment. However, most participants showed that they eventually were able to adjust to their new environment showing their effective acculturation, a reflection of the adjustment and adaptation stages of culture shock (Winkelman, 1994; Berry, 1992).

The findings that proud Filipino values and traditions had a positive effect on the Filipino educator's acculturation process is also echoed in the reviewed literature (Yu, 2015; Baek Choi & Thomas, 2009; Ea et al., 2008). Findings about Filipino values and traditions like Filipino hospitality, filial piety, resiliency, caring for one another, and performing spiritual rituals reflect literature that shows that the process of acculturation for most of the participants was through integration and not through assimilation (Berry,

1992, 1997, 2013). In this process, the Filipino educators feel that both their cultural heritage and beliefs have value to be maintained and thus, helps them overcome challenges associated with the acculturation process.

Finally, the findings of the study also report that certain US values and traditions were perceived as worth emulating by the Filipino educators. These values and traditions focused on Americans' sense of pride, their attitudes of independence, their celebrations, their taking care of their personal lives, and their not ignoring the importance of leisure. However, these findings reflect the literature reviewed, which showed colonial mentality may have an influence on the decision-making processes of Filipinos (David & Okazaki, 2006, 2010; David & Nadal, 2013). As noted in the literature, American colonization and lifestyle left a deep impression in the Filipino psyche that American culture is far superior, and that American values and artifacts are premiere. This influence of Western superiority is also strengthened by the fact that one of the findings in the study explicitly pointed to colonial mentality as having an influence in these teachers' decision in working as educators in the US. As noted by San Juan (2009), even though thousands are trafficked in the US, OFWs still chooses to come to the US as the effects of American colonialism are deeply ingrained in their identities.

Implications for Practice

The US continues to have a shortage of qualified teachers who are willing and able to teach in American schools. Thus, it is no surprise that Filipino educators continue to try their luck and embrace the challenges of starting a teaching career in the US.

However, and as the findings of our study show, Filipino educators here in the US face a

myriad of far more complex challenges, which should be an eye-opener for both the districts that recruit them and the people who engage them.

One such challenge that surfaced in the findings of this study was that Filipino teachers experienced culture shock and discrimination in their first time teaching in US public schools. There is evidence that these Filipino educators lacked the proper training or orientation to prepare them for what to expect as they fare fielded into the US public school system. Literature further documents this lack of proper training for Filipino educators (American Federation of Teachers, 2009). This challenge implies the need for recruitment agencies and school districts to review their recruitment processes to include training and orientations for foreign teachers. These training and orientations should target specific topics like classroom management, cultural awareness, and other topics that would show teachers what to expect during their initial foray into a classroom in the US and provide them with tools to cope with and face different situations with diverse students. This need to change current practices should be implemented as soon as possible. As demonstrated in the findings of the study, such unpreparedness takes a huge toll on the social-emotional well-being of migrant teachers and can have a trickle effect on how they manage the formation of their students.

Another implication brought about by the findings of this study is the need for cultural sensitivity and awareness on the part of the parents, students, and colleagues of the Filipino teacher. This is to avoid misunderstandings that might lead to feelings of passive-aggressive treatment on the part of the Filipino teacher and to avoid other perceptions of microaggressions. School districts should work to increase cultural

awareness and sensitivity in their schools by including topics about cultural awareness in the curriculum and by providing cultural awareness and sensitivity seminars to teachers, parents and other stakeholders of the district and larger educational community.

The lack of support from educational leaders that some of the participants experienced is another concerning finding in the study. And, as Fultz & Gimbert (2009) note, this lack of leadership is oftentimes seen as contributing to the teacher shortage that most states are experiencing and the financial cost it entails.

Recent scholarship has pinpointed the influence of school leaders' instructional supervision for beginning teachers' growth and development. Without adequate professional support, many new teachers look to other P-12 schools or differing careers for employment at the end of their first year of teaching, thus leaving school systems with vacancies to fill. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2007) has reported that 30% of novice teachers resign within their first 3 years. This attrition rate increased to 50% at the end of 5 years when teacher turnover rates were assessed for novice teachers in high need, urban public school districts. Teacher turnover costs school districts across the nation approximately seven billion dollars annually. (Fultz & Gimbert, 2009, p. 2)

This lack of presence and leadership from school leaders has also been seen as a contributing factor to worsening campus climate and cultures and the increase in student disciplinary issues. Thus, there is a clear need for school leaders to be more present in the daily management of schools and for them to be more cognizant and proactive in addressing school issues, especially those that migrant teachers face. There is a need for

school leaders to be more culturally aware and sensitive, as the experiences of our participants reflected, for them to function as inclusive leaders and to be able to serve as role models to their staff and students.

Implications for Policy

All participants in the study reported challenges faced during the initial stages of the processing of their H1-B visas. Most of them noted the Philippine bureaucracy and its policies as a major burden to them during these times. It could also be noted that, in related literature, it is not only Filipino teachers who suffer this but also the other millions of Filipinos who sojourn out of their homeland to a better opportunity for their loved ones (Ontiveros, 2017; Trimbach, 2017; Wiley, 2012). Thus, there is a need to push for a policy review by the Philippine government on how it processes clearances for OFWs. An audit of the offices directly involved in these processes is needed to ensure that the corrupt practices are completely eliminated and that the process for clearance does not become a burden to the aspiring OFW.

It is not only the Philippine government that needs to review its immigration policies but also, the US. All the participants in the study who came to the US either under a J1 or H1-B visa expressed their fears, in one way or another, of getting their visa canceled, of being sent home, or of not having the opportunity to apply for an immigrant visa. These fears are not unfounded as the current H1-B visa law is antiquated and needs revision (Ontiveros, 2017; Trimbach, 2017). As Trimbach (2017) notes, the current “H1B system perpetuates a US labor gap by causing wages to stagnate” (p. 300) and “limits the

mobility of H1B employees, especially those trying to obtain lawful residence status,” further “causing the internal displacement of US workers with aliens” (p. 294).

Thus, revising the H1-B visa process to ensure fairness to both US workers and foreign workers could drastically reduce the number of companies who abuse the H1-B visa, as well as the number of foreign workers who end up being mired in debt, trafficked, or suffer injustices while under the H1-B visa (Perea, 2018; Piccio, 2019). Human service professionals, immigration lawyers, and school districts themselves could be initiators of this change, utilizing the information obtained from this study to advocate for policy changes within the H1-B law.

Implications for Future Research

It is undeniable that Filipino educators here in the US play a role in one of the most important aspects of the country: the molding of future US citizens and leaders. Thus, the scarcity of literature that explores the lived experiences of these teachers should be of interest and concern. Expanding the current research on the lived experiences of these Filipino educators can increase and enhance understanding with regards to the recruitment and retention of migrant educators and the challenges that they face.

Further inquiry should also be conducted on the four themes and the ten overlapping subthemes that emerged from this study should also be conducted. This is especially necessary for inquiry related to the subtheme on the mental health of these Filipino teachers. The lack of information on the mental health challenges that these Filipino teachers undergo should be concerning since these teachers are in contact with children who themselves are easily socially and emotionally influenced. Information that

would come from this future research would greatly benefit the school districts that employ these teachers and students who undergo tutelage under them. It may also benefit future migrant teachers themselves and could serve as an eye-opener on what they can expect in terms of mental health challenges should they pursue a teaching career in the US.

The findings about microaggression towards Filipino teachers (by both students and colleagues) should also be explored further to extend the findings of this study and to add to the existing literature on microaggression towards migrant teachers, in general. As of now, although there is existing literature on microaggression towards teachers, very little to none reflects the threat of harm and violence that was shown in this study (Nadal et al., 2014; Sue et al, 2007; Allen et al., 2013). Further studies on the types of microaggressions faced by these Filipino educators could give us a better understanding of the underlying motives of racism, hatred, discrimination and point to other factors such as national identity, and gender roles.

Implications for Theory

Although there is a significant number of studies that document the challenges that immigrant educators face inside and outside the classroom, there is very little that specifically documents the lived experiences of Filipino educators (Diokno et al., Modesto, 2020; Reyes et al., 2020). The migration of Filipino educators will continue as long as the opportunities in the Philippines are scarce and as long as there is a teacher shortage in the US. With the continued rise of reported anti-Asian sentiment throughout the United States, there is a need for a more critical analysis of policies, organizational

structures, and societal perceptions that have contributed to the challenges these migrant teachers face.

Using the findings of this study as a foundation, a new study using the intersectionality framework could allow us to explore more deeply the disadvantages that these Filipino educators suffer as related to perceptions of their race, class, gender, and Filipino identity. This framework “posits that multiple social categories (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status) intersect at the micro-level of individual experience to reflect multiple interlocking systems of privilege and oppression at the macro, social-structural level (e.g., racism, sexism, heterosexism) (Bowleg, 2012, p.1267). Intersectionality framework is typically used in studies that involve feminism, poverty, and race issues. However, its potential to unlock deeper meanings into the lived experiences of Filipino educators is boundless. Utilizing an intersectionality framework could allow us a deeper understanding of these teachers’ lived experiences us to better “conceptualize, investigate, analyze, and address disparities and social inequality” that are present in migrant teacher recruitment and retention (Bowleg, 2012, p. 1267).

The lived experiences of the participants in the study provide us with a glimpse into these intersectionalities. This study gives us a deeper understanding of the meanings of these teachers experiences while they were navigating the complexities of racial imbalances and the challenges they faced as new teachers in a foreign country.

This study is thus significant as it makes a contribution to the literature of lived experiences by providing data that is untainted by the lens of theoretical frameworks. Its findings can also be utilized to contribute to the development of new theories or perhaps

contribute to a modified version of phenomenology that could better investigate the intersectionality between the racial imbalances, complications of forming a Filipino identity as part of the diaspora, and other facets that influence the lived experiences of the Filipino educator.

Limitations and Delimitations

This phenomenological study aimed to explore the essence of the lived experiences of Filipino educators as they taught in Texas public schools during their first five years in the United States. The study was performed in an effort to contribute to the literature and understanding about Filipino educators in the US and migrant teachers overall. Several limitations were considered, and several delimitations were put in place that affected the dependability, transferability, and generalizability of the results of the study by.

The first delimitation that was put in place was the choice of transcendental phenomenology approach as the main research design. Although doing so may limited the generalizability of the findings beyond those of the participants of the study, the researcher believed that transcendental phenomenology allowed the essence of the experiences of the participants to be explored without being tainted by the bias of the researcher, which was the original goal of the study.

Another delimitation involved the use of a limiting criteria in choosing the participants. Although doing so limit the transferability of the findings, it also ensured that a common phenomenon would be found in the shared experiences of the participants.

A limitation that should be considered when receiving the findings of this study is whether no research bias truly influenced any part of the research design. As the researcher, I took great strides and conscious efforts to bracket my own bias from the research. Nevertheless, it is probable that the findings of this study are not completely free from my personal bias. As noted by Husserl, for a phenomenon to be properly understood, one must use present experience, or horizons, to provide context to the perceptions that emerged from the lived experiences under study (Moustakas, 1994; Peoples, 2020). It is therefore because of this that the researcher cannot ensure that the study is completely bias-free.

Summary

Filipino educators teaching in the US are burdened with the challenges of acculturation, mental health issues, and their search to form their own identities within their diaspora. Despite this, they still are lauded as competent teachers who mold future US leaders. And yet, only a small amount of literature explores their lived experiences and the essence of what it means to be a Filipino educator in the US. This study aimed to add to that existing body of literature by understanding the lived experiences of Filipino teachers teaching in Texas public schools. A transcendental, phenomenological approach was used to attain this goal, utilizing three-level interviews to obtain rich text descriptions of the lived experiences of the seven participants in the study. A snowball sampling method was employed to find these seven participants.

The findings of the study revealed four common themes. These were: their search for greener pastures and the challenges getting there; challenges they faced while

teaching in the US; the support systems that they relied on; and the differences in the values and culture between the Philippines and the US. These four themes gave rise to ten overlapping subthemes: poverty and the search for a better life; work visa challenges and the Philippine bureaucracy; microaggression towards Filipino teachers; effects on mental health; family, spirituality, and Filipino hospitality; the value of education; culture shock; colonial mentality; proud Filipino values and traditions; and good US values worth emulating. These findings were supported by rich text descriptions collected from the interviews and coded during the data analysis process.

Overall, the literature reviewed for this study supported the findings of the data analysis. Major similarities between the literature and the findings included the reasons why Filipino teachers foray into teaching in the US, the challenges the Filipino teachers faced while processing their H1-B visas, and their perceptions of US values and traditions. There were also similarities between the reviewed literature and the findings about exhibiting a strong preference for anything Western, a good indicator of colonial mentality.

However, several surprising findings were different from reviewed literature. One of these findings was the threat of microaggressions against Filipino teachers. Most of the literature reviewed for this study noted that Filipino teachers are lauded and highly sought after and are seen as easily adaptable to foreign workplaces. The literature lacked in finding of threats of violence against Filipino teachers. It is thus highly recommended that further studies be done on the findings of the study.

The study's findings also had several implications for practice, policy, future research, and theory. Implications for practice include the call for school districts and recruitment agencies to review their recruitment process to better prepare migrant teachers on what to expect during their tenure in US public schools. Another implication for practice is the call for cultural sensitivity and awareness training of students, parents, and future colleagues of these migrant teachers.

A review of existing H1B laws and policies and the overhaul of the Philippine government's systems for its OFWs are implications for policy that became evident from the findings of the study. Further inquiry is recommended as some findings determined in this study were unique when compared to reviewed literature.

The intersectionality and symmetry of the challenges faced by Filipino educators also calls for further research on the lived experiences of these teachers using an intersectionality framework lens. This implication for theory could lead to a deeper understanding of their lived experiences and better understanding of the social inequalities that they face.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

Level 1 Interview:

The level one interviews will be open format interviews and will be very informal. This is to build rapport and put the participant at ease during the interview process. Previous preparations like choosing a convenient yet private area to conduct the interviews and pre-setting the equipment beforehand should also help in putting the participant at ease. The interview will be done in either Filipino Tagalog or English, whichever the participant is comfortable with. During this first round of interviews, the researcher will greet the participant, re-introduce the topic and goals of the study, explain his role as researcher, allow the participant to introduce himself and verify his or her consent to be interviewed. The participant, at this time will also be assured of confidentiality of all identities, identifying information and responses that will be obtained through the interviews. And although the interview will be a free-flowing meeting with the participant (that may last more than one meeting) where additional and supplemental questions may be tackled, the following initial questions will be asked:

1. Tell me something about yourself, your education, and your background while you were in the Philippines.
2. How long did you teach in the Philippines and what were memorable experiences for you while teaching there?
3. When and why did you choose to move and work here in the United States? Paint for us a picture of how it happened.
4. What were memorable experiences for you while transitioning living here in the United States? What were the challenges? Enjoyable experiences?
5. What memorable experiences did you have during your first few years of teaching here in the United States? How would you compare them with your experiences back in the Philippines?
6. What notable cultural or social artifacts, traditions, or values of the American way of living did you experience and were memorable to you during your transition here in the United States? How would you compare them to the cultural traditions, artifacts, and values of the Philippines?

Level 2 Interview:

Before level two interviews begin, the researcher will provide a review of the analyzed data to the participant as part of member checking. By the time level two

interviews start, it should be expected that the participant should have already read the provided copy and so the questions to be initiated during this would focus on expounding and clarification of on certain details:

1. Looking at the transcriptions of the first interviews, do you see any errors? Is there anything you would like to expound on? Clarify?
2. Listening to you talk about could you tell me more about it?
3. I am slightly confused when you talked about Could you clarify this for me? What did you mean by?
4. What memorable experiences did you have during your first few years of teaching here in the United States? How would you compare them with your experiences back in the Philippines?
5. What notable cultural or social artifacts, traditions, or values of the American way of living did you experience and were memorable to you during your transition here in the United States? How would you compare them to the cultural traditions, artifacts, and values of the Philippines?

Level 3 Interview:

Before beginning the Level 3 interview, the researcher will provide copies of the transcripts for member checking. This is for participants to identify any errors, provide clarifications and areas where they can expound on. It is important to build trust and rapport with the participants during all levels of the interview process. As such, it is always important to thank the participant at the end of each interview, shake their hands as a personal gesture of gratitude and keep in touch during the interim between interviews.

APPENDIX B

Sample Letter to Prospective Interviewees

Date: _____

Dear _____,

Greetings! My name is Jeffrey Chua, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Secondary Education and Educational Leadership, College of Education, Stephen F. Austin State University. As part of my dissertation, I am conducting a phenomenological inquiry regarding the lived experiences of Filipino teachers teaching in Texas. I am conducting this research in the hopes that the study could provide a deeper understanding into the acculturation process of Filipino teachers and information that could be helpful in teacher preparation programs looking to bring in Filipino teachers into the U.S. public schools. In light of this, I would like to invite you to become a participant in this study.

Participation in this study will involve three-level interviews, each one spanning from 30 to 45 minutes each. The format of the interviews will be semi-structured, with the questions open-ended and focusing primarily on your experiences transitioning into teaching in Texas public schools and American living.

As part of the interview protocol, your responses and any data collected will be treated with confidentiality at all times and your identity and/or any identifying fact (e.g., name of school, district, etc.) will remain anonymous throughout the study. Data collected during the interviews will be stored for three years, afterwards destroyed to ensure privacy and confidentiality of information.

Your participation in the study will be beneficial to other Filipino teachers and will truly be appreciated, thus I highly encourage you to do so. If you choose to participate, please sign, and return the attached Agreement to Participate through the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope or through email at jeffrey.chua@tylerisd.org.

Should you have any questions regarding the study, or should you need more information regarding the research design or interview protocols, please don't hesitate to

contact me at the aforementioned email address or at (843) 4967848, or contact Dr. Karen Embry-Jenlink, chairman of the dissertation committee at (936) 468-1784. Any concerns with your rights as participant should be addressed to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at ph. # 936-468-8808.

Thank you and I look forward to your participation in the study.

Sincerely,

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APPENDIX C

Agreement to Participate

I consent to participate in the study by meeting with the researcher in three 30–45-minute interview sessions. One of the interviews will be face to face and two will occur through digital media, e.g., SKYPE, Face Time. Interviews will not be held at the participant’s place of employment.

I understand that the purpose of the study is to look at the lived experiences of Filipino teachers teaching in Texas and that results of it could provide a deeper understanding into the acculturation process of Filipino teachers and information that could be helpful in teacher preparation programs looking to bring in Filipino teachers into the U.S. public schools.

I also understand that all responses, my identity, and any identifying information will remain confidential, and that I can contact the researcher, or the dissertation committee advisor should I have any questions regarding the study. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my participation at any time during the study. Any concerns with your rights as participant should be addressed to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at ph. # 936-468-8808.

Teacher Participant

Date

Jeffrey Chua

Date

Note: The participant will receive a copy of this letter for his/her information, and the researcher will keep a signed copy in his files.

VITA

Jeffrey Chua graduated from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines Lab High School in 1990. He received a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from the University of the Philippines in 2000. He pursued a master's degree in Chemistry from the Ateneo de Manila University shortly afterwards but was unable to complete his dissertation as he had to move to Lake City, South Carolina in 2007. There, he worked as a Science teacher at Lake City High School from 2007 to 2010. In 2010, he moved to Tyler, Texas and was employed as a Science teacher at John Tyler High School from 2010 to 2018 and also as Science Department Chair from 2012 to 2016. He earned his master's degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Texas at Tyler in 2012 and was accepted into the 2015 Doctoral Cohort at Stephen F. Austin State University, where he earned a Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership in 2021.

Style manual designation: *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Seventh Edition*

Typist: Jeffrey Chua, B.S., M.Ed.