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Being a Trafficked Teacher: An AsianCrit Autoethnography Exploring the Exploitation of Filipino Migrant Teachers in Louisiana

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BEING A TRAFFICKED TEACHER: AN ASIANCRIT AUTOETHNOGRAPHY EXPLORING THE EXPLOITATION OF FILIPINO MIGRANT TEACHERS IN LOUISIANA

A Dissertation

by

CHRISTOPHER R. JOSE

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this autoethnographic study is to critically explore the lived curriculum of Filipino migrant teachers trafficked by a Louisiana school district through the theoretical lens of AsianCrit. Using the core tenets of AsianCrit, this study wrestles with the injustices of this lived curriculum as part of a broader set of hegemonic curricular experiences and illustrates the ways in which such injustice continues to permeate the lived curriculum of migrant teachers. Broadly, it considers critical race theory in education, the specific application of AsianCrit to the field of education, the experiences of migrant teachers, and the nature of human trafficking in the United States. This study makes a valuable contribution to the literature by outlining the effects of the human trafficking of teachers and the invisibility of Asian American teachers in the United States.

DEDICATION

I dedicate the completion of my doctoral program to my family for their ceaseless love and support. To my mother, Margie, who is my guardian angel and loves me unconditionally. To my father, Danny, who is now in heaven yet inspired me to tell our story. To my brother, JP, and his wife, Wendy, as well as my nephews and niece, all of whom supported my journey to the United States. To my husband, Jason, who has been my rock throughout this process and has patiently listened to me talk about all of my joys and struggles. I appreciate your love and patience.

Lastly, this work is dedicated to all Filipino teachers in Louisiana who endured hardships throughout their immigration experience. Our stories shine throughout the realm and will always be visible in the eyes of the world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I will always be grateful to Dr. Laura Jewett, chair of my dissertation committee, for all her mentoring and advice. I appreciate her patience, guidance, and mentorship in my research and her willingness to guide me throughout my doctoral program. I will always treasure the memories of us attending conferences at the Curriculum and Pedagogy Group in New Orleans and the LSU Curriculum Camp in Baton Rouge.

My thanks also go to my dissertation committee members: Dr. James Jupp and Dr. Paul Badenhorst. Their advice, input, and comments on my dissertation helped to ensure the quality of my intellectual work.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> Mabuhay! Welcome to the United States! You do not have a job yet. I will confiscate your passport, and you will pay me 10% of your monthly net income. If you report me, I will send you back to the Philippines. – Recruiter to the newly arrived Filipino teachers

This dissertation hearkens to the welcome message that one encounters whenever they cross the state border into Louisiana: *Bienvenue en Louisiane*, meaning "Welcome to Louisiana." Ironically, as welcoming as the state is to visitors, this study demonstrates that, for us—a group of Filipino teachers, myself included, who were recruited to teach in the state's public schools—the lived curriculum of this hospitality is "always dangerous. Never innocent" (Foucault, 1972, p. 324). A lived curriculum are teacher's experiences that are not planned nor written in the lesson plan or syllabus (Aoki, 1993). These experiences happens inside or outside of the classroom, for example, immigrant teacher's experience in migrating to the United States.

The purpose of this autoethnographic study is to critically explore the lived curriculum of Filipino migrant teachers trafficked by a Louisiana school district through the theoretical lens of AsianCrit. Using tenets of AsianCrit, this study wrestles with the injustices of this lived curriculum while assessing their links to a broader set of hegemonic curricular experiences. It also aims to uncover the ways in which such injustice continues to permeate the lived curriculum of migrant teachers under the critical radar. Essentially, what I hope to achieve through this study

is an understanding of the meaning of undergoing immigration to the United States (US) as a trafficked teacher? Toward this end, this dissertation begins with an introductory chapter that describes the context and background of this complicated lived curriculum and highlights its significance by summarizing key research in the relevant literature. Chapter 1 concludes by summarizing the key perspectives that have framed my research journey, including intersecting theories and research methodologies related to the use of autoethnography as a mode of inquiry at the intersection of the self and the other, but also a mode of crafting its representation in line with traditions of AsianCrit.

Background

Since I was young, my parents always dreamed of us living in the United States. I can recall my father telling us wonderful things about how "great" it would be to live there, that living there would improve our lives financially. I witnessed my cousins and friends migrating there and saw how accomplished they became after migrating, and I continued to believe in my parents' dream. In college, I studied to be a secondary technology teacher, and my dream of living in the United States largely faded. I did not think that the United States would hire foreign teachers. However, in 2006—two years after I graduated college—I began to see advertisements in the newspaper for teaching jobs in the US: "Teach in the USA!"

Evidently, there was a demand in the United States for foreign teachers (Dillon, 2009). I could feel my dream to live in the United States reignite. I began to conduct some research on the matter, and the most common specialty needs appeared to be in mathematics, science, and special education. As I had studied to be a secondary technology teacher, I needed to return to school to study another specialization, and I chose Special Education. So, I went back to college

to take graduate courses in special education while working full-time as a technology teacher at a private school.

In January 2008, I saw an advertisement in the newspaper for teaching jobs in Louisiana across multiple specializations, including special education. Once I saw that, regardless of whether I was ready or not, I felt compelled to push through any doubt and apply. I was in the middle of writing my master's thesis at the time, but I felt that it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, so I refused to let it go. After applying, I contacted the agency to verify that it was a legitimate company. In response, they sent me a brochure that they use for advertisement purposes in their recruitment efforts for US public schools. This brochure made me think that the agency was legitimate, as it had a proper address in the United States and advertised itself to many different public schools. Figure 1 shows a sample of the brochure, which comes from the Nunag-Tanedo et al. v. East Baton Rouge Parish School Board et al. (2012) case artifact.

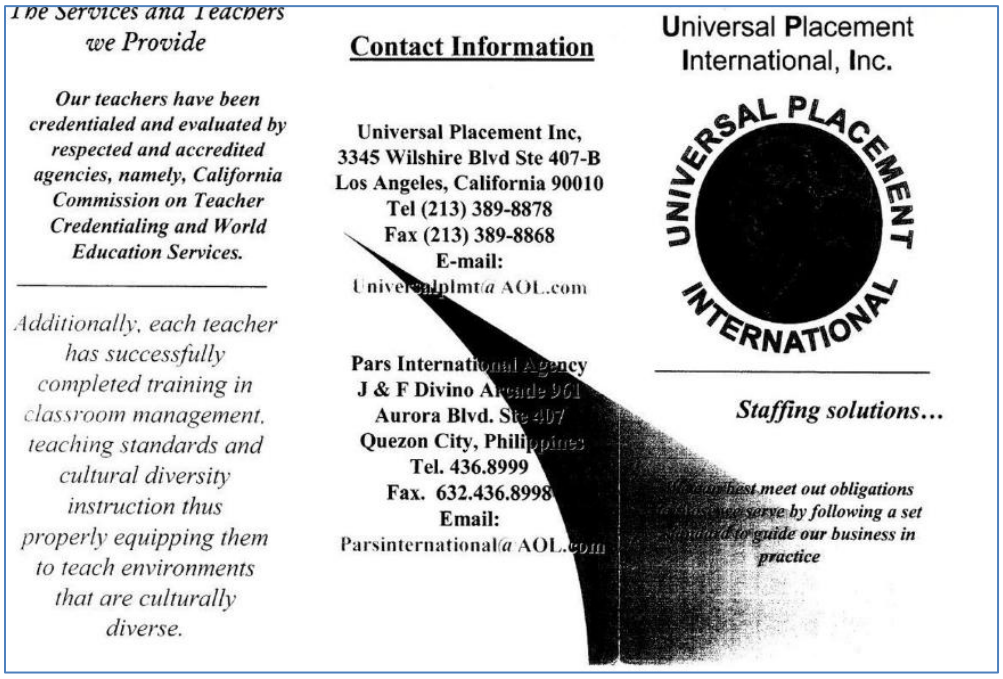

Figure 1: Placement agency brochure.

Luckily, I was able to get through the first round of applications and interview with the school principals from the different schools such as in the elementary and high school. In addition, the head of the school district's human resources department were included. The interview was held in one of the most luxurious hotels in Manila. When I arrived, I saw that there were hundreds of teachers interviewing with the same agency. I was shocked, as I did not expect anywhere near this many people to be interviewing alongside me. Despite my surprise, holding my curriculum vitae and teaching portfolio, I was ready to show them that I was ready for the US teaching job. The day after the interview, I got a call to inform me that I got the job. I was excited, scared, and thrilled all at once. I thought that my experience in the US would be the great one that my father imagined for me—but that call was the start of the terror that will haunt me and my fellow Filipino teachers forever.

Due to post-Katrina teacher shortages in 2007, many public school systems in Louisiana recruited almost 350 teachers from the Philippines to teach in the United States. It hired a Philippine employment agency to manage certification and immigration applications for all recruited Filipino teachers. The agency, in collaboration with the school system's human resources department, flew the director and school administrators to the Philippines free of charge but charged the prospective Filipino teachers for all of the associated expenses. In total, the agency charged each teacher nearly $12,550 to process their application and pay for the agency's services. This process was highly exploitative and, as a result, we all became victims of human trafficking. I am a part of this story.

Our experience as migrant teachers in Louisiana quickly proved to be exploitative, so we collectively filed a case against our recruiter, Universal Placement International, for human trafficking violations. With the help of the American Federation of Teachers and the Southern

Poverty Law Center, we were able to acquire the strength and resources necessary to fight the agency and the school district. Our experience and legal case were featured in both local and national news, which detailed the cruelties of our recruiter and the disingenuous and exploitative actions of the school district that hired us. However, our experiences remained largely invisible in the public consciousness of our community and unexplored in the academic literature. This lack of public recognition and analysis prompted me to pursue this research project—to tell our story, critically explore it and, in turn, become visible.

Framing the Journey

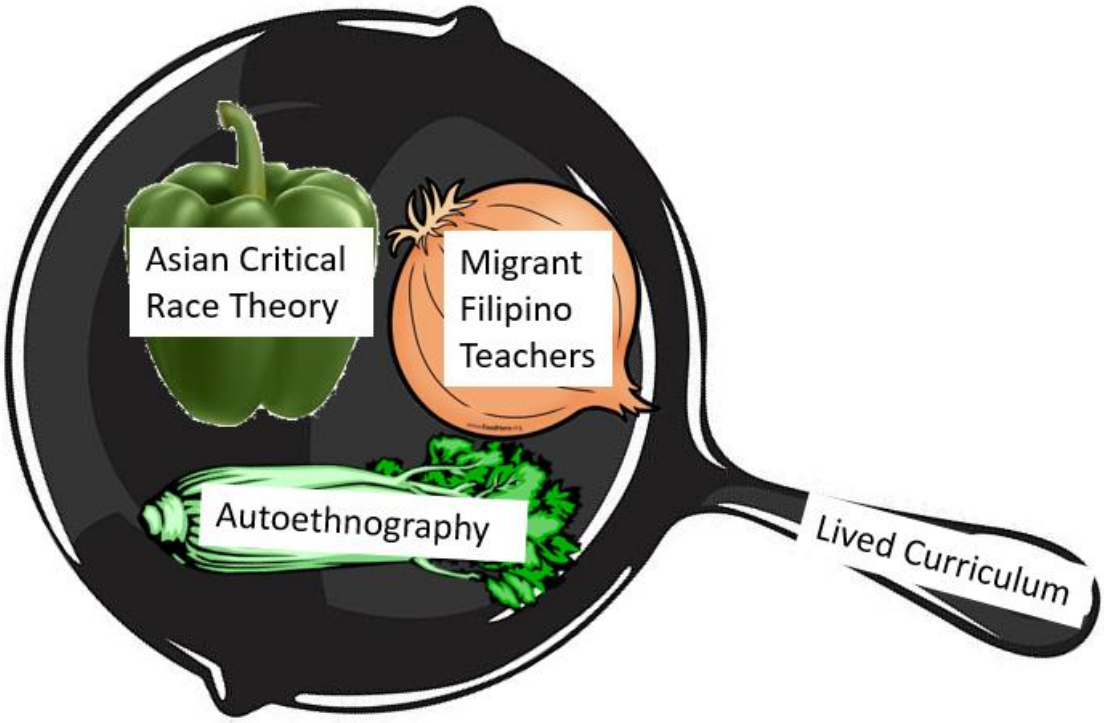

Figure 2: My research holy trinity

The use of metaphors in qualitative research, specifically autoethnography, can evoke stimulating, imaginative, and emotive responses (Muncey, 2010, p. 63). As I have lived in

Louisiana for 11 years, immersed in its culture and society, I feel as though I have easily become "one of them." As Louisiana is known for its cuisine, I used one of its culinary foundations to convey the framework of my research (see Figure 2). The "Cajun Holy Trinity," the foundation of most of the state's traditional recipes, consists of celery, onion, and bell pepper. Gumbo and Jambalaya are among the most popular Louisiana dishes with this trinity as their foundation. Cooks usually use a cast iron skillet to cook all of these dishes. My study comprises three major concepts: Asian critical race theory, autoethnography, and migrant Filipino teachers. Like the Cajun Holy Trinity, I cooked these concepts together using lived curriculum to analyze them together.

As a migrant Filipino teacher in the United States, I critically explored my experiences, events, and artifacts (as well as those of my fellow migrant Filipino teachers) to achieve a greater understanding of this lived curriculum alongside other social and curricular forces that have given rise to our uneasy exploitation. Autoethnography is the research design that I employed, as I am a participant in this study. Autoethnography is the study of the self and others in relation to cultural and social contexts. Using an autoethnographic approach in line with that of several previous works (e.g., Jewett, 2008; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010; Adams & Herrmann, 2020; Teo, 2022; Kim, Jang, Jung, Son, & Lee, 2023), I was able to write my own story as a Filipino migrant teacher at an urban Louisiana school. I explored my experience trying to teach in the United States with no knowledge of local racial dynamics or cultural literacy. I served as both the data and the research instrument analyzing myself and the way in which I struggled alongside fellow immigrant teachers and our students. This work aligns with the perspective of Delgado (1990), who supports the telling of unheard voices through stories, raising our voices and relaying our experiences to allow patterns and themes to emerge and intersect with the AsianCrit

paradigm. Through the presentation of my stories—my immigration process, classroom experiences, and reflections—I can center myself within my own experiences and identify relevant themes in order to obtain a better understanding of my own lived curriculum. In addition, I can derive greater meaning from it in relation to AsianCrit and then connect these meanings to larger curricular forces that exploit, albeit to a lesser degree, the labor of teachers and students (though not all teachers equally).

On the other hand, AsianCrit provides a valuable theoretical tool with which to interpret the experiences of teachers in the United States. Our story of social injustice offers a view into how we were expected to teach in US classrooms without the proper implementation of the school system's socioeconomic, ecological, cultural, federal, and state education policies. As migrant teachers, we were placed in schools boasting low school ratings, high poverty rates, and majority-minority student populations. We were deployed as part of a plan to "turn failing schools around—to "fix" them by "narrowing the achievement gap." Looking at the experiences of Filipino teachers through the lens of critical race theories allows this study to explore the ways in which the East Baton Rouge Parish School System exploited the achievement gap while victimizing immigrant teachers and ignoring what Ladson-Billings (2006) referred to as the educational debt owed to marginalized students that we were trafficked to "serve." I used Aoki's (1993) notion of lived curriculum as an ongoing heuristic to connect my lived experiences of the past to my present as well as the lived experiences of others. Kincheloe (2004) evokes Aoki to describe the lived curriculum as a "means allowing the teacher's experience to move beyond the facts, by allowing him or her to understand his or her cultural world" (p. 24). According to Aoki (1993), the notion of lived curriculum can be understood as a "process of coming to a deep understanding of who we are and moving beyond" (p. 267). Such an understanding of the

particular Filipino migration experiences explored in this study necessarily entails a social and cultural critique, but it is also deeply personal to me to highlight the human beings that our traffickers ignored and sought to erase. By exploring our experiences, this study points out key tensions and challenges that arise in the immigration process. Through Aoki's (1993) notion of lived curriculum, I hope to make my account a collective story of curricular forces through which we emerge as visible.

Problems and Significance

To give both breadth and depth to my autoethnographic study, this study draws from AsianCrit (Chang, 1993; Muses, 2013; Kim-Bossard, 2022) as a critical lens to critically explore the lived curriculum of Filipino migrant teachers in Louisiana. My primary research question is as follows: What does it mean to experience immigration to the United States as a trafficked migrant teacher from the Philippines, and what might this mean in terms of its impact on education?

This work makes multiple valuable contributions to the literature. First, it contributes Asian American immigrants' voices in the modern post-truth era. "Post-truth" is a social condition that threatens people's trust in science and their own critical thinking (Valladares, 2022). Some people disagree with what is generally considered to be true or valid and, in turn, get their information from unreliable sources. Some of these sources are politically biased and make an active effort to brainwash their consumers. Against this background, the current political and media landscape in the US shuts out Asian American voices, perceiving Asian American immigrants as "illegals" whose labor is sought but remains, in a sense, invisible. These circumstances threaten our visibility and our very existence, as many on social media lack the ability to think critically in order to determine whether a post or story is true or not. As Kim-

Bossard (2022) states in her autoethnographic research, “As an immigrant, I have employed overworking and being invisible whenever I could as the two main strategies (to make it in the words of which I have become part).” (p. 361). Her experience parallels our experience as migrant teachers and as Asian Americans; we work so hard, but our hard work is never recognized. The lived curriculum explored in this study is textured by contradictions: immigrants’ hope and belief in the “American Dream” and public schooling as a cradle for this dream are juxtaposed with the suffering of human trafficking. These elements of hope, dreams, and suffering coexist within a lived curriculum that is, in essence, a living curriculum. Critically exploring this curriculum can help society to understand that coming to the United States often represents a daunting process. Second, it enables Asians, who are usually stereotyped as the “quiet minority,” to show society the ways in which we are victimized in the post-truth era—as well as how we resist. My hope is that our stories help to fight against the injustice of post-truth and make clear to society that coming to the United States is not an easy process. Third, it addresses a severe gap in the literature, as research on the intersection of migrant teachers and AsianCrit is scant. Current research on AsianCrit focuses on Asian Americans’ curricula in basic education (An, 2016) and higher education (Muses, 2013). This research, in contrast, focuses on Filipino migrant teachers in Louisiana, highlighting the voices of those who have historically been neglected by the academic community and making their journeys more visible.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature on critical race theory, Asian critical race theory, and the general state of migrant teachers in the US. Notably, it covers studies focused on the perceived meaning experienced by victims of human trafficking and Asian migrant teachers. For example, it evaluates the work of Ladson-Billings (1995), who provides a framework on how teachers can incorporate critical race theory into their teaching and learning. Chapter 2 also

expounds on the criticality of AsianCrit through education, violence, and human trafficking. As Asian Americans have been subject to more hate since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, this chapter dives into the work of Stop AAPI Hate to assess broad trends. There is a serious gap in the literature when it comes to the experiences of Filipino migrant teachers in the US. Our voices are rarely considered part of the overall Asian American experience, and this chapter illustrates that gap.

Chapter 3 details this study's methodology. I use autoethnography as my research design, depicting our selfhoods, subjectivities, and personal experiences in order to describe, interpret, and represent our lived curriculum as Asian American migrant teachers (Adams & Herrmann, 2020, p. 2). I also share my positionality as a qualitative researcher through metaphor—as a gumbo recipe. This chapter explains the interconnectedness of my world through my lens as an autoethnographic researcher. I collected data primarily through interviews and my own personal experiences. The participants in this study were Pedro, Dakila, Dalisay, and me, all of whom were Filipino migrant teachers in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System in the state of Louisiana. I analyzed the data using reflective thematic analysis and vignettes. I also share this research's reflexivity, discussing the trustworthiness and rigor of the research design and methodology.

Chapter 4 discusses the findings of this research using vignettes. Based on the data I have collected, I constructed four vignettes to represent the most prominent themes. The first vignette illustrates the root causes of migration and discusses why we immigrated to the US. The second vignette discusses our immigration experiences as victims of human trafficking. It explains the illegal activities of the job agency that trafficked us. The third vignette illustrates the struggles surrounding teaching overseas, including the need to learn the culture, confront the language

barrier, and overcome countless challenges and unfamiliar elements. The fourth vignette discusses whether we chose death or dreams as we navigate the inherent limitations of being a migrant teacher in the US. It sadly exposes the sacrifices that we have made for our families and for professional experiences. The traumatic events that we experienced encapsulate the struggles of integration. I weaved AsianCrit into the analysis as a tool to assess the interactions between the roots of the main themes. This chapter also presents several major findings regarding the exploitation of laborers in education. First, it reveals how human trafficking and exploitation affect people on material, emotional, familial, and educational levels. Second, it illustrates how the pursuit of the American Dream encourages people to come to the US even if they understand the sacrifices required to do so. Lastly, it discusses how Asian American teachers are still invisible in the eyes of their schools and communities. I end this chapter by directly answering my research question using the vignettes as the foundation of my reasoning.

Chapter 5 concludes this study by summarizing the intent, findings, and implications of the research on multiple levels—macro, meso, and macro—in order to present an organized depiction of this study's contributions to the literature. Additionally, to end this chapter, I offer some personal reflections on the research underlying this study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter illustrates how the combination of AsianCrit, migrant teachers, and autoethnography constitute a solid foundation for a research project. Figure 3 (see below) visualizes the structure of this chapter's literature review. It begins by introducing critical race theory and detailing its meaning, origins, and tenets. It then discusses how critical race theory is used in the field of education, particularly when it comes to race relations within schools and communities. Next, I explore a specific branch of critical race theory—Asian critical race theory (AsianCrit)—which serves as an analytic tool in the examination of my own experiences, discussing its origins and basic tenets. This category is visualized with an arrow going back to critical race theory and critical race theory in education because it draws some concepts, principles, and tenets from these theories. I discuss current trends and research on AsianCrit in relation to education, exploitation, and trafficking. Lastly, I review pieces on violence and human trafficking, with a specific focus on studies and reports that address experiences of Asian American violence and Filipino teachers who were victims of human trafficking in Louisiana.

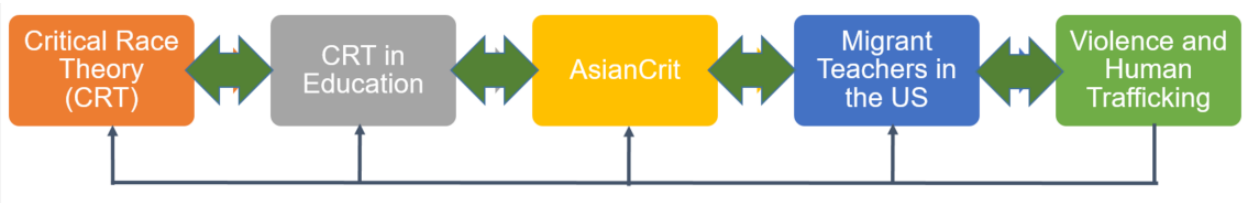

Figure 3: Literature framework

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory is driven by a group of activists and scholars working to transform existing dynamics of race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 2). It is an approach and a body of literature that serves to challenge dominant racial stereotypes of social dysfunction and inferiority through the introduction of new perspectives on historical events and predominant social practices in the United States. Critical race theory cultivates epistemological and ontological space in which to confront racial inequalities in the United States. This movement has its origin in critical legal studies and radical feminist movements. The field of critical legal studies argues that the law supports the privileged while subjecting the underprivileged to severe disadvantages. In other words, those who are wealthy and powerful use the law as a tool to oppress marginalized peoples. Over time, frustrated people of color centralized race in this field, leading to the emergence of critical race theory.

During the 1970s, lawyers and activists across the country experienced advances of the civil rights movement from the 1960s (p. 3). This motivation propelled the early leaders of this movement, such as Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado. Derrick Bell, a former teacher at Harvard Law School, is generally considered to be the intellectual father of critical race theory due to his interest-convergence thesis, a core tenet of critical race theory. Alan Freeman wrote several leading articles on how the United States Supreme Court has engaged in race jurisprudence and legitimized racism. In the summer of 1989, Delgado and Stefancic (2017) wrote about how other critical race theorists had joined the movement's first workshop at St. Benedict Center outside of Madison, Wisconsin. While critical race theory largely concentrates on African Americans, other branches have emerged, including Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribCrit), and South Asian Americans Race Theory

(DesiCrit), to offer a broader picture of the central paradigm. These branches work individually and collectively to facilitate discourse on white supremacy and confront racialized inequality.

Critical race theory has five major tenets. The first tenet is that racism is ordinary (Bell, 1992; Lawrence, 1995) rather than aberrational. In other words, racism represents "normal science"—the standard manner in which society operates in the everyday experiences of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). According to Delgado and Stefancic (2017), racism is ordinary because it is not acknowledged and difficult to address (p. 8). One example of this dynamic is colorblindness, or the ideology that the best way to end discrimination is by treating all individuals as equally as possible without regard to their race and culture. This ideology creates a society that rejects racial experiences and invalidates the unique perspectives of people of color. Looking back at our school district's teacher-onboarding process, we were treated similarly to newly hired local teachers, though this approach was unsuccessful, as the district simply assumed that we would know everything about US culture and policies. This dynamic ties into a core tenet of AsianCrit—*Asianization*—which I explore later in this chapter.

Bell's (1980) second tenet is "interest convergence" (p. 518), which refers to the notion that racism advances the interest of white elites (materially) and working-class whites (psychically), both of which represent large segments of society and have little incentive to eradicate racism. Bell (1980) illustrates this concept well in his analysis of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the US Supreme Court decision that outlawed racial segregation in schools. He explains that the court's decision was not a result of moral advancement but rather a decision that was necessary to advance US efforts during the Cold War and facilitate desegregation in the South, which had begun to be viewed as a barrier to the region's economic development. As Bell (1980) points out, one of the factors of this law is that many schools are still segregated and

disproportionately low-income. Looking just at East Baton Rouge Parish School System (the school district featured in this study), there are clear racial and social differences between the north and south sides of the city. Southern Baton Rouge schools predominantly comprise white and middle-class students, while northern Baton Rouge schools are predominantly African American and low-income, often in areas with high crime rates. According to US Census Bureau (2017) data, the racial or ethnic group with the highest proportion living below the poverty line is African Americans at 64.6%. In Baton Rouge specifically, African Americans make up both the majority of the population and the majority of people living in poverty. The majority of the Filipino migrant teachers were assigned to teach in the north side of Baton Rouge or "the hood," as our students referred to our neighborhood, our schools, and sometimes even themselves. We did not understand the race and class relations within the school district in general let alone those pertaining to us and our students at work. We were "foreigners" and had no idea what to expect. One thing I did not understand at the time was why the school administrators hired us "foreign teachers" instead of local teachers—and why they chose us specifically. These are questions that I aim to answer through this research.

Delgado and Stefancic's (2017) third tenet is that race is a product of social thought and social relations. In other words, race is a social construct. They argue that racialized constructs do not correspond to any biological or genetic reality. Rather, notions of race represent categories that society has invented, manipulated, and, when convenient, retired (p. 9). With regard to Asian Americans, this dynamic builds into the strategic (anti-)essentialism that "recognizes and counters the ways that white supremacy racializes Asian Americans as a monolithic group" (Iftikar & Muses, 2018, p. 940). Filipinos, grouped as Asian, are stereotyped as good in math and science, which affected some of our teachers who struggled with those

subjects. In fact, some were assigned to teach math despite not being certified or experienced in teaching it. To the school administrators, we were one group of people who all thrived in math and science.

The fourth tenet is intersectionality, "which means the examination of race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation and how their combination plays out in various settings" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 58). The notion of intersectionality transcends critical race theory, as it is widely employed by feminist, queer, and postcolonial approaches (Crenshaw, 1991). This tenet offers an analytic tool through which we can achieve a greater understanding of the conditions experienced by Filipino migrant teachers, the majority of whom are women from poor to middle-class backgrounds, many of whom had to sell their homes and land to cover the recruitment agency's fees.

The fifth tenet is counterstories. According to Delgado and Stefanic (2017), "counter stories are narratives or composite stories that speak to power to defy myths, derail stereotypes, and expand people's notion of the human condition" (p. 49). Critical race scholars view experiential knowledge as an advantage deployed by people of color through various modes of inquiry, including autobiographies, biographies, testimonies, and narrative-driven research articles. Using factual details, historical references, and literary devices, these stories offer first-hand accounts of racialized inequality and injustice. Critical scholars, such as Bell (1987), Olivas (1990), and Solorzano and Yosso (2002), use this strategy to challenge grand narratives and beliefs. I wrote my story as a Filipino migrant teacher to counter the social narrative that Asian immigrants take jobs from US workers without encountering the hardships faced by other immigrant groups. This study also counters that narrative through a critical exploration of the lived curriculum of our journey to the United States.

These tenets of critical race theory constitute a basic theoretical framework through which to critically explore the lived curriculum of human trafficking that I shared (and continue to share) with my fellow Filipino migrant teachers while constructing a counterstory that pushes back against hegemonic social constructions of the Asian immigrant experience. The next section focuses on critical race theory's specific application to educational contexts.

Critical Race Theory in Education

Critical race theory, despite its origin in critical legal studies, is today integrated with multiple other fields, including, sociology, history, ethnic studies, and women's studies (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). The field of education has been at the forefront of research using critical race theory. The main goal of incorporating critical race theory into research in the field of education is to "understand issues of schooling such as discipline and hierarchy, tracking, affirmative action, high-stakes testing, controversies over curriculum and history, bilingual and multicultural education, and alternative charter schools" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 6). Notably, autoethnography has been used in several critical race studies on the topics of education, schooling, identity, and social justice. One example of such critical and autoethnographic work comes from Hughes (2008), who addresses the intersections of race, class, and gender from the perspectives of himself as a Black professor and "Maggie," a white urban schoolteacher, connecting autoethnography to critical race pedagogy. His work suggests that any sustainable school reform must begin with critical reflexivity and collection action. Another example is Wilson and King's (2016) autoethnographic study on the following question: "How do Black women, as directors of informal STEM programs, position themselves to design and implement effective and culturally relevant programs for Black and Latino middle school

students?" (p. 190). This study relays the cultural experience of directors in the study and assesses how the intersections of race, class, and gender have interacted in complex ways to shape their identities as Black working-class women in positions of power. This critical autoethnographic work in the field of education demonstrates strength in terms of how this research paradigm can improve the epistemology of the relations of Asian American migrant teachers.

Gloria Ladson-Billings (1999), one of the main proponents of incorporating critical race theory into education, provides a framework for how teachers can integrate the theory into their teaching and learning using her proposed method of culturally relevant pedagogy. This method entails three main elements: academic achievement/student learning, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. These elements help teacher education institutions to help both teachers and students develop sociopolitical consciousness—the "so what" factor. Why do we need to learn sociopolitical consciousness? Why do we need to understand democracy and economics? Such an understanding of the world's many social and political contradictions provides students with a high-quality education that enables them to understand and respect all of their fellow students' cultures and traditions. These propositions can help in the development of curricula for teacher-preparation programs, especially those for migrant teachers.

It is essential to explore critical race theory epistemology in the field of education. Critical race theory emerged as a powerful theoretical and analytical framework within educational research (e.g., Duncan, 2002; Lynn, Yosso, Solorzano, & Parker, 2002). Delgado Bernal (2002) discusses how critical race theory can provide a valuable lens for qualitative research in the field of education. Elements of critical race theory that are pertinent to research endeavors include the perceived importance of a transdisciplinary approach, a challenge against

dominant ideologies, the centrality of race and racism (as well as their intersectionality with other forms of subordination), and a commitment to social justice (p. 109). Critical race theory's emphasis on experiential knowledge allows researchers to embrace the use of counterstories and other methodological and pedagogical approaches that view the communal and familial knowledge among communities of color as a source of strength. Students of color can be regarded as knowers with the potential to transform schools into places where the experiences of all individuals are acknowledged, taught, and cherished (p. 121). From this perspective, critical race theory can help to uncover the possibilities of race-gendered epistemologies in educational research and practice (p. 110) and, in turn, explore the lived experiences of Asian migrant teachers.

The view of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) in critical race theory that "race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States" (p. 48) highlights Asian American teachers' experiences as students and teachers and the inequity that they often encounter in educational contexts. Some core curricula in both basic and teacher-specific educational institutions are still not culturally relevant and often fail to represent cultures in inclusive and transformative ways. This is because many such curricula have been crafted by white men, resulting in them showing a one-sided approach to culture that does not properly reflect the history, language, and cultural assets of African American, Latino, and Asian people. How do we integrate critical race theories into Eurocentric curricula? Dr. Berry and Stovall (2013) discuss the ways in which race-based elements can be incorporated into curricula in a way that provides an avenue for teachers and curriculum developers to advance the lived experiences of Black men like Professor Bell and Trayvon Martin. Furthermore, through the incorporation of counterstories and critical pedagogy, students develop critical perspectives that

they can apply when considering the lived experiences of Black men and the injustices that they live through.

How can this model help international teachers in American classrooms? In a research study set in Australia, Cruickshank (2004) explores what constitutes effective preparation for foreign-trained teachers and shows that additional preparation for migrant teachers through a flexible, inclusive, and structured program would be greatly beneficial (p. 126). While not directly relevant to our topic in terms of setting, the study offers a solid model for preparing migrant teachers. When we came to the United States, we had no special training covering what we should expect to encounter in the US with regard to its core curriculum, history, or culture. At least in Louisiana, there were no programs in place to teach foreign-trained teachers about local racial, cultural, and societal dynamics.

Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit)

Critical race theory has is associated to the social foundations of education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Delgado Bernal, 2002). Alongside the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, the Black, Brown, and Yellow Power movements of the 1970s, the multicultural education movement in the 1980s, and the anti-racist and social justice education movements following the turn of the millennium, critical race theory is both part of the history of education and a means of analyzing it (Chapman, 2011, p. 220). AsianCrit emerged to address the need for a framework centered on race studies pertaining to Asian Americans (Chang, 1993; Museus 2013; Teranishi, 2010). AsianCrit draws on the fundamental principles of critical race theory: it recognizes that racism is endemic in US society, it crosses epistemological boundaries, it reinterprets civil rights law on the basis of its limitations, it portrays legal claims as neutral, and

it challenges historicism (Ladson & Tate, 1995). AsianCrit's unique tenets are discussed later in this section. Figure 4 illustrates how this study uses AsianCrit as a lens through which to assess the experiences of Filipino migrant teachers. Through the AsianCrit framework, I can analyze our experiences with race as the central component in understanding *why* we went through what we did.

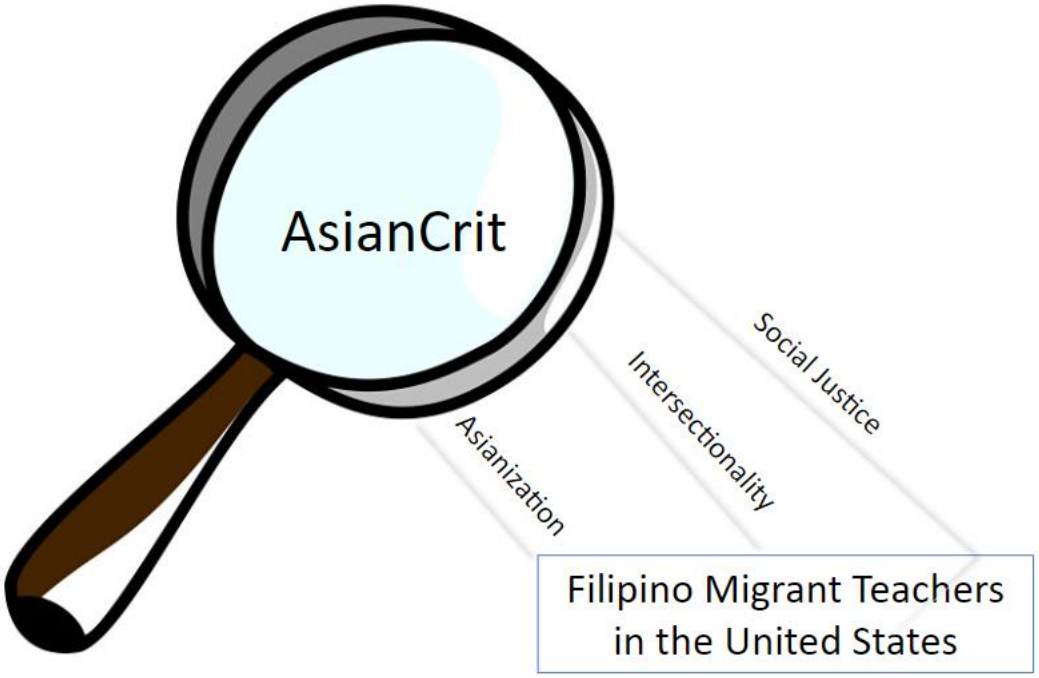

Figure 4: AsianCrit framework of this study

Historically, Asian Critical Race Theory first emerged through legal studies, in line with other branches of the core theory, with Chang (1993) spearheading AsianCrit scholarship. Chang (1993) set the field in motion by discussing nativistic violence and discrimination against Asian Americans throughout history. He began with the killing of Vincent Chin in Detroit in 1982. Chin was a Chinese American killed by Detroit autoworkers because "it was because of people like Chin […] that [they] and [their] fellow employees were losing their jobs." The two men responsible were found guilty but were only sentenced to three years of probation and a fine of

$3,780; they did not serve a single day in jail. The case was brought to the US Justice Department, at which point a retrial was held in Cincinnati. Ebens was ultimately acquitted, in large part because jurors in Cincinnati had had very little exposure to Asian Americans this time. According to Chang (1993), this killing was not an isolated episode; the violence stemmed from anti-Asian feelings that often arise during times of economic hardship (p. 1253). Another account is the deadly beating of Navroze Mody (Indian American) in New Jersey in 1987 by a gang of 11 young people. At the time of the beating, Mody was with a white friend, whom they did not harm. No murder or hate crime charges were brought against them. Three of the assailants were convicted of assault, and one was convicted of aggravated assault. Why? Indian Americans were the fastest-growing immigrant group in New Jersey at the time, and the rate of racially motivated hostilities grew alongside the Indian American population. A gang known as the "Dotbusters" published a letter in *Jersey Journal* saying that it "would go to any extreme" to drive Indians from Jersey City. A wave of violence against Indian Americans began the next day (p. 1254). In 1877, on the other side of the country in Chico, California, white arsonists murdered four Chinese people by tying them up, dousing them with kerosene, and setting them on fire. The arsonists were members of a labor union associated with the Order of Caucasians, which blamed the Chinese for the economic woes suffered by all workers. In the Chinese Massacre of 1885 in Rock Springs, Wyoming, a mob of white miners angered by the Chinese miners' refusal to join their strike killed 28 Chinese laborers, wounded 15, and chased hundreds out of town. In the court case that followed, the jury failed to indict a single person (p. 1255). Another group of migrant workers exploited by their employers comprised the 71 Thai garment workers in Los Angeles, California (Su, 1998) who had been held in virtual slavery behind fences topped with razor wire and forced to sew garments in harsh conditions. Mostly women,

these workers were locked within a factory with all the windows boarded up so that the people outside could not see them. Evidently, there has been a significant degree of violence against Asian Americans throughout US history on account of their race or ethnicity.

Tenets of AsianCrit

I employed the tenets of AsianCrit, as outlined by Iftikar and Muses (2018), to analyze our experiences as Filipino teachers in the US. The first tenet of AsianCrit is *Asianization*, which refers to Asian Americans being seen as foreigners in the eyes of Americans. It also refers to the reality that racism and nativism are pervasive aspects of American society that socially racialize Asian Americans in a distinct way. They lump all Asian Americans into a monolithic group, racializing them as overachieving model minorities, perpetual foreigners, and constitutive of a threatening wave of yellow peril. American society has also racialized Asian American men as emasculated beings and Asian American women as submissive, hypersexual objects (Iftikar & Muses, 2018, p. 23). Iftikar and Muses highlight the ways in which racialization shapes laws and policies that impact Asian Americans as well as their identities and experiences. It is important to continue talking about this topic because it is far from a relic of the past—various manifestations of injustice stemming from this kind of racialization are still occurring today.

The concept of Asianization is further demonstrated by the climate of anti-Asian sentiment that persists due to the sense of "foreignness" that distinguishes the racism aimed at Asian Americans (p. 1258). During the COVID-19 pandemic, Asians were regularly attacked due to the origin of the virus being Wuhan, China. People wrongfully viewed Asian Americans as carriers of the virus, resulting in them being attacked on account of their race in public spaces. In this phenomenon, we can see a reflection of the Yellow Peril, a color-metaphor indicating that

East Asians represent an existential danger and threat to the Western world. Over the last few years in US schools, Asian students have often been bullied and attacked because "they have the virus" or "they brought the viruses" into the community. For example, a middle school student in Los Angeles was assaulted during the first year of the pandemic due to his Asian background (Roy, 2020). Of course, this begs the question: Are Asian American teachers affected too?

The concept of Asianization also covers the view of Asian Americans as "model minorities" (Hartlep, 2013) and "overachievers." The model minority stereotype has profoundly influenced the individual identities and experiences of Asian Americans in American society. Chang (1993) explains how the model minority myth's portrayal of Asian Americans as hardworking, intelligent, and successful covers up the injustices and aggressions that they suffer. First, it suggests that, as generally successful citizens, the public, policymakers, and the judiciary can ignore or marginalize the contemporary needs of Asian Americans (p. 1259). Second, it effectively denies the existence of present-day discrimination against Asian Americans and the present-day effects of past discrimination while legitimizing the oppression of other racial minorities and of poor whites (p. 1260). Third, it renders the oppression of Asian Americans invisible. This not only hurts Asian Americans for obvious reasons but also hurts other racial minorities and poor whites, who are blamed for not being as successful as Asian Americans. African Americans, Latinos, and poor whites are told, "Look at those Asians—anyone can make it in this country if they really try." This line of thinking is then used to campaign against government social services and programs for "undeserving" minorities and poor whites (p. 1264). In an example from this study's topic, it is very likely that we Filipino migrant teachers were expected by school administrators to know everything about US school policies, students, and communities because we were Asian. The model minority stereotype actively negatively

affected our first year in the classroom. It feeds into the institutional racism (Scheurich & Young, 1997) that also brought us to the US through the school system's policy of hiring migrant teachers. As Asians are stereotyped to be good at math and science, a disproportionate number of us were pushed to teach math or science, including those who were only certified to teach language or art, for example. Personally, I was assigned to teach eighth-grade social studies (Louisiana history) despite having no background in or certification for the subject. The coordinator gave me a textbook on *Louisiana history* alongside the teacher's manual and said, "Start reading. You have one week to prepare. Good luck!"

The second tenet of AsianCrit is *transnational context* (Muses, 2013), which highlights the importance of historical and contemporary context for Asian Americans. It emphasizes that a proper understanding of how racism shapes Asian American experiences must be informed by a critical analysis of the ways in which both historical and current economic, political, and social processes within the US shape the conditions of Asian Americans. AsianCrit analyzes transnational context because a comprehensive understanding of how racism impacts Asian Americans must be informed by a knowledge of how historical and current processes that transcend national borders—such as imperialism, globalization, war, and migration—shape the conditions of Asian American people and communities (p. 24). This tenet represents one of the major differences between AsianCrit and the other branches of critical race theory. It explores how Asian Americans are affected in the immigration process to the new country. When we compare this tenet to the general critical race theory framework, this tenet in AsianCrit is distinctive. This tenet constitutes an integral part of my study and its exploration of our immigration experiences, processes, and struggles.

The third tenet of AsianCrit is, in line with critical race theory, an *analytic tool* with which to deconstruct the experiences, events, and policies of Asian Americans. When one uses AsianCrit for research or methodology, it inevitably becomes the focal point of the project. This tenet underlies the usefulness of AsianCrit as an investigative tool for education research. One example of a critical race theory tool that has been highly successful is *testimonio*, or personal narratives that serve as evidence of oppression, marginalization, mistreatment, or injustice. This methodology provides a voice to our Latina and Chicana sisters, enabling them to speak out about injustices, struggles, survival, and resistance. By using AsianCrit as an analytic tool, Filipino migrant teachers can analyze their individual stories and compare them with those of other teachers. One example of how the Filipino teacher's experiences can provide an analytic lens on how they were expected to teach in American classrooms without being properly prepared for the school system's socioeconomic, ecological, and cultural aspects or the federal and state education policies that apply to it.

The fourth tenet of AsianCrit is *(re)constructive history*, which underscores the importance of (re)constructing a historical Asian American narrative. Like critical race theory's tenet of revisionist history, the tenet of (re)constructive history emphasizes the need to re-analyze US history to expose the racism directed toward Asian Americans. However, this tenet goes beyond re-examination to emphasize that Asian Americans have been racially excluded from American history and advocate for transcending this invisibility to construct a collective Asian American historical narrative that shines a spotlight on the voices and contributions of Asian Americans in the United States. Such a historical narrative would bolster the public's understanding of the current conditions of Asian American communities and help us to

understand how education can be reshaped to better engage with and foster success among Asian American students in higher education.

The fifth tenet of AsianCrit is *strategic anti-essentialism*, which is based on the assumption that race is a social construct that can be shaped and reshaped by economic, political, and social forces. Building on the concepts of anti-essentialism and strategic essentialism, strategic anti-essentialism acknowledges that dominant and oppressive economic, political, and social forces impact the ways in which Asian Americans are racially categorized and racialized in society but also highlight the reality that Asian Americans can engage in actions that affect these processes (p. 26). In other words, there is no singular "Asian American experience."

The sixth tenet of AsianCrit is *intersectionality*, which is based on the notion that racism and other systems of oppression intersect to collectively shape the conditions under which Asian Americans exist. As a result of these systematic intersections, racial identity and other social identities (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, class) mutually shape Asian American experiences. This tenet mirrors the core intersectionality tenet of critical race theory, acknowledges the omnipresent and intersecting nature of systems of social oppression, and rejects the notion that any one form of oppression is more or less salient than others.

The seventh tenet of AsianCrit is *story, theory, and praxis*, which underscores the notion that counterstories, theoretical work, and practice are inextricably intertwined elements in the analysis of Asian American experiences and advocacy for Asian American people and communities. Building on the work of critical race theory scholars who emphasize the value of stories (e.g., Yamamoto, 1997) and TribalCrit scholars who emphasize the link between story and theory or theory and practice, AsianCrit analyses assert that stories inform both theory and practice, that theory guides practice, and that practice can excavate stories and use theory for

positive transformative purposes. This also recognizes the relevance of imperial scholarship, or the notion that the voices of people of color and the work of intellectuals of color have been historically marginalized in academia. AsianCrit suggests that the voices of Asian Americans and the work of Asian American intellectuals can and should inform theory and that knowledge in all of these forms can and should inform practice.

As AsianCrit is an emerging branch of critical race theory, there is little existing research focused specifically on Asian American teachers, though that's not to say that none exists. In the K–12 field, An (2016) explores the presence of Asian American history in state-level US history standards, and her findings highlight the limited presence of Asian Americans in US history curricula. In higher education, Muses (2014) provides practical recommendations to address factors that hinder Asian American students in higher education. More generally, Sheets and Chew (2002) depict the invisibility of Asian Americans in both research and teacher preparation. I hope that this study shines a light on Asian American teachers in the United States, especially Filipino teachers, and encourages future research.

Current AsianCrit Research

During the COVID-19 pandemic, anti-Asian and anti-immigrant attacks dramatically increased in frequency (Horse et al., 2021). Throughout much of the pandemic, former US President Trump dubbed COVID-19 the "China Virus." The Atlanta spa shootings of March 2021 demonstrated the potentially dire consequences of anti-Asian discrimination. According to CNN (Vera & Hanna, 2021), eight people were killed by one suspect, Aaron Long, at three different spas in Atlanta, Georgia. Of those who died, six were Asian and two were white. All six of the Asian victims were women. The suspect was motivated to carry out the shootings because

he saw them as a temptation that he wanted to "eliminate." If the police had not stopped him, he would have carried out his plan to drive to Florida to shoot up more spas. Across the country, California has seen a particularly sharp rise in anti-Asian hate crimes according to the state's attorney general. It is important to highlight these atrocities and, more broadly, the ongoing wave of hate against Asian Americans. As victims of human trafficking, we share in these experiences of discrimination. This wave of violence calls to mind the murder of four Chinese immigrants that took place in February 1877 in Chico, California. The murder, hate, and violence remain the same today.

Teo (2022) shares his account as a migrant Asian Australian high school teacher needing to engage in racial performativity and attempting to find solidarity and address race within his white Australian high school. His findings reveal that little progress has been made with non-Indigenous minority teachers from a critical race perspective. Autoethnography connects deep personal experiences like race, culture, language, marginalization, and privilege to broader educational and societal contexts by addressing how power and privilege play out in practice. Teo's (2022) words really demonstrate the racism that Asian teachers at white Australian schools are subjected to

> I had to teach mathematics even though it was not one of the subject areas I was trained in—to my White school administration and colleagues. I mean, us Asians can't really complain. We're not Indigenous and, comparatively, we have it really good, don't we? (p. 6)

This research depicts the racism experienced by Asian teachers working in white Australian schools. Teo (2022) furthers the discussion in his article on critical collaborative inquiry between AsianCrit and autoethnography. He acknowledges the growing methodological

complexity of CRT and advances the collaborative potential of AsianCrit and autoethnography through an investigation of their theoretical and methodological intersections. His inquiry into AsianCrit "urges him to challenge the majoritarian story or dominant narrative in the same way that postmodernism requires incredulity to the metanarrative" (p. 584).

Teo's (2023) more recent research illuminates the narratives of Asian Australian teachers through personal and professional practices, using AsianCrit to analyze his experiences:

> Like remember at the start of the year when COVID was happening? We were all like, 'Shit, they're going to come for us, like Chinese […] Chinese-looking people. We're going to be racially profiled on the street and stuff like that. And it happened […] I was at Coles [supermarket] or something, out wearing a mask, and then some guy […] when I passed him, he said something like, you know (shaking his head), 'F you Chinese and your masks and things. (p. 4)

"Orientals" have been constructed as silent for a long time (Said, 1978). As our stories of migrant teachers are not the dominant narrative of migrant workers, it is important to share them to contribute our personal experiences as victims of human trafficking.

Discussing current AsianCrit work with autoethnography, Kim-Bossard (2022) explores the use of autoethnographic storytelling to examine the silenced space as an Asian immigrant in the United States. She uses collage as an initial step in storytelling to explore deeper meanings associated with narratives about my lived experiences (p. 359). The invisibility of Asian teachers in US schools has been a persistent issue on account of the model minority myth and the pervasiveness of Asianization, which generalizes the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity that exists within the Asian American population (Museus, 2014). Kim-Bossard's (2022) research question is as follows: How does a Korean migrant teacher navigate and negotiate racial power

dynamics in the United States? By exploring the Asian American experience as a teacher, she showcases the challenges and intersectionalities of her very being. Strategizing her existence to "fit in" with society is necessary:

> I chose to shorten my name to 'fit in' better. I quickly learned that I could not get away from Asian stereotypes living as an immigrant. I have been mistaken numerous times as Chinese and grouped together with people from other Asian countries. (p. 360)

It is crucial to understand that the population of Asian Americans comprises many distinct ethnic communities—not just East Asian or "Chinese-looking" people. We must work harder to be able to be seen and grow as professionals. As Kim-Bossard (2022) shares, "As an immigrant, I have employed overworking and being invisible whenever I could as my two main strategies to 'make it' in the worlds of which I have become part" (p. 361). This aligns with our experience as teachers, as which we had to work hard, commit to our classes, and prepare for instruction every day. As we navigate the US's education system and culture, we must think and work harder for both our students and ourselves.

Current AsianCrit research explores the early-career experiences of Korean immigrant scholars in higher education. They negotiate using AsianCrit as a tool in their collaborative reading group. Such studies typically assess racial experiences and the tensions surrounding AsianCrit from a transnational perspective. The findings generally point to the need to expand AsianCrit scholarship in a way that highlights utility and possibilities to support transnational or first-generation Asian American identity exploration in higher education. They call for researchers to identify "who we are" in this highly racialized social context using collaborative autoethnography as a research design to methodize our work and analyze it through the tenets of

AsianCrit. Their work shows their visibility as Korean women. In the words of Kim-Bossard (2022)

> This study is a reflective and forward-looking journey on how we navigate our constant feeling of living on the border to find our voice and make sense of our existence in this highly racialized society. This research calls to extend AsianCrit's tenet of transnational perspective to include the experiences of first-generation immigrants. This tenet focuses on American society and Asian Americans that are not captured: first-generation Asian immigrants and/or newcomers in the US. (p. 11)

This is an insightful finding, as we Filipino migrant teachers are considered to first-generation immigrants. AsianCrit currently focuses on second-generation (and above) Asian Americans. It is important for AsianCrit to also capture first-generation immigrants, as we constitute an important part of the whole. Our frames of reference enable us to see race in a unique light, to see that "power in the global contexts been shifted toward an understanding or race as majorly about exercising power entangled with White supremacy, as we had been racialized in the US where race is the primary fabrication of society"" (Kim-Bossard, 2022, p. 11).

Wu and Nguyen (2022) use AsianCrit in their qualitative research to examine how two Southeast Asian American students faced exclusion and erasure before and during the COVID-19 pandemic and assess how their Southeast Asian American teacher advocated for them at a public elementary school in the Pacific Northwest. Their research uncovers several major themes. The theme of "encountering exclusion and erasure in school" highlights the absence of Asian American perspectives and experiences in the curriculum. For example, Asian American

students do not see people of their ethnicities and cultures reflected in the ELA and history curricula. In addition to the curricula, students also felt excluded due to the insufficient availability of support resources (p. 5). For example, the school failed to provide interpreter services for their parents, who could not speak or understand English. Additionally, the school routinely perpetuated the fallacy of a singular Asian American narrative. Another interesting theme apparent in this research comes from how the Vietnamese teacher responded to the exclusion and erasure of Asian Americans in his school (p. 6). When teaching poetry, she incorporated Vietnamese language and cultural traditions into her lesson plans to illustrate her own background alongside the poem "Where I am from?" to teach the students about Vietnamese culture through their own cultural lens. The teacher also held celebrations for Vietnamese New Year in their school activities. This teacher clearly fought back against the curricular exclusion of Asian American practices from US curricula (An, 2016), highlighting the need to make such efforts far easier to mitigate the invisibility of Asian Americans in US history.

Kim (2023) also employs AsianCrit, using critical ethnography in child-parent research. The aim of their research is to encourage conversations about Asian American children's perspectives on race and racism. The findings indicate that Asian American children have fewer opportunities to explore and discuss race and racism—especially anti-Asian racism. Asian American families typically refrain from talking about such matters, making Asian American children feel like they are on their own (p. 10). Their study also shows that children begin to express their concerns about race once they begin to be subjected to stereotypes and biases at school. In line with other studies, this one shows school curricula lacking lessons on Asian American history and highlights the problem of Asian American students being bullied. In the

next section, I discuss the demographics of migrant teachers and the immigration requirements to work in the US.

Migrant Teachers in the United States

US employers have been looking to other countries to recruit foreign workers for decades now. In the 2018 fiscal year alone, the United States Department of Homeland Security reported that there were 570,368 non-immigrant admissions for temporary workers and trainees in specialty occupations. Of the estimated 8.1 million teachers currently working in the United States, approximately 857,200 are migrant teachers. Migrant teachers apply for admission into the US using the H1B (work visa) program or the J1 (teacher exchange) program. The top five countries of origin among foreign-born teachers in the US across all non-postsecondary categories are Mexico (15%), India (5%), the Philippines (5%), Canada (4%), and Cuba (3%). Evidently, there have been significant labor shortages in the field of education over the years in the US, forcing schools and other organizations to look internationally to fill open positions. Putting just India and the Philippines together, we can see that at least 10% of migrant teachers in the United States came from an Asian country.

As a result of labor shortages, many school systems across the country are looking outward. For example, California has seen a steady rise in the number of foreign-trained teachers since 2001 (see Figure 5). They have also seen a 33% increase in the number of Asian American teachers certified to work as teachers. Notably, the majority of this 33% increase is made up of teachers from the Philippines, and this figure was most pronounced in 2003 (Furuya, Nooraddini, Wang, & Waslin, 2019). Assessing the experiences of Asian American migrant teachers is critical to understanding the process behind their recruitment and every one of its exploitative elements.

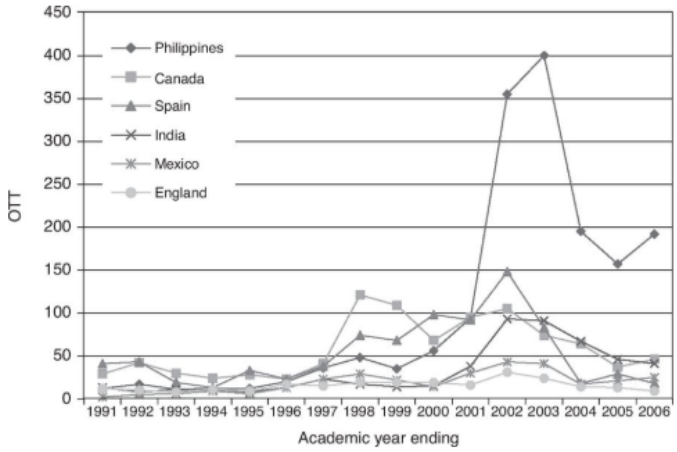

Figure 5: Foreign-trained teachers credentialed in California (by year)

Shifting the focus to the state of Louisiana, there was a severe teacher shortage across much of the state in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The effect of the hurricane killed more than 1,400 Louisiana residents, cost billions of dollars in property damage, and forced more than one million people to flee its devastation. Among the displaced were around 65,000 public school students who attended public schools in the struggling Orleans Parish District. Some families that fled New Orleans went to the nearby cities of Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Houston, and Dallas or to small northern parishes in the state. Thus, there was a rapid rise in the number of students in these cities and parishes, including in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System, resulting in a severe teacher shortage, especially in elementary education, special education, science, and mathematics. In response, the school district's human resources department and school principals collaborated with an employment agency to look for foreign teachers.

Different Louisiana school districts recruited approximately 350 teachers from the Philippines in 2008. It contracted a Philippine employment agency to manage certification and immigration applications for all recruited Filipino teachers. The agency, in collaboration with the school system's human resources department, flew the director and school administrators to the

Philippines free of charge but charged the prospective Filipino teachers for all of the associated expenses. In total, the agency charged each teacher nearly $12,550 to process their application and pay for the agency's services. This process was highly exploitative and, as a result, we all became victims of human trafficking.

Historically, the United States has imported foreign workers through its non-immigrant work visa program. So, why did the US hire Filipino teachers? The Philippines was colonized by the United States from 1898 to 1946, and our education system was designed similarly to that of the US. For example, it employs the US's curriculum standards and system structure and uses English as its medium of instruction. Thus, it is relatively easy (in the context of foreign-trained teachers) to recruit and train Filipino teachers to teach in the US education system. This dynamic explains why Louisiana parish schools sought to hire Filipino teachers. Even today, US school systems are still hiring Filipino teachers through the Teacher Exchange Visitor Program. Of course, US schools also take in teachers from other Asian countries.

This curriculum discourse provides evidence that the story of Filipino migrant teachers can be told through its intersection with AsianCrit. This is one of the fundamental components of critical race theory; it provides us with a medium with which to present our narrative through counterstories to understand the roots of the injustice faced by these teachers.

Lastly, changes to US immigration policies by the Trump Administration are increasingly threatening the ability of immigrant teachers to work and thrive in the United States. According to George Mason University's Institute of Immigration Research (Furuya, Nooraddini, Wang, & Waslin, 2019), 11% of all teachers in the United States are immigrants, even with foreign-born teachers generally being underrepresented across all teaching categories aside from postsecondary education. However, the current political landscape and instability in US

immigration policy are having a negative impact on US school districts and universities that depend on qualified, experienced migrant teachers to educate and prepare the next generation of American workers.

Violence and Human Trafficking

Within the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a significant rise in the rate of violence against AAPI (Asian American Pacific Islander) communities, with more than 3,800 anti-Asian incidents reported. Asian American workers were unavoidably impacted by this violence; it occurred at their places of work and at other previously innocuous moments of their daily lives. Stop AAPI Hate (2023) was created in response to this alarming escalation of xenophobia and bigotry. This coalition tracks and responds to incidents of hate, violence, and harassment against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States.

The STAATUS (Social Tracking of Asian Americans in the US) Index, published by the Asian American Foundation (TAAF), shares an annual survey of attitudes towards and stereotypes of AAPIs. The STAATUS Index began in 2021 at the height of COVID-19 pandemic. The 2023 STAATUS Index indicates that 1 in 2 Asian Americans feel unsafe due to their race and that 19% of Asian Americans feel that schools and universities are either unsafe or uncomfortable (p. 42). It also shows that the majority of Asian Americans feel unsafe in the US on account of their race/ethnicity; this is particularly true when they ride on public transportation, but the feeling extends to their neighborhoods, schools, and places of work. The tropes and stereotypes portraying Asian Americans as the yellow peril, the perpetual foreigner, and a model minority remain relevant in American society. Americans still overwhelmingly view Asian Americans as model minorities—nice, hardworking, and smart—but 32% of the Asian American respondents indicated feeling that they do not belong in schools or at universities.

Asian Americans remain largely invisible within American society, as many respondents still struggle to name prominent individuals and historical events. For example, to this day, Americans still cite Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee as the most prominent Asian Americans. Three out of 10 Americans cannot recall a significant Asian American historical event or policy. However, it's important to note that Americans are open to learning more about AAPI stories and history, and this willingness aligns with academics' recommendations to incorporate Asian American history into educational curricula and state standards. Such progress is important, as fear and violence still haunt Asian Americans; just imagine how scared we migrant teachers were when hearing such stories on the news while living in the US and working in American schools.

According to the United States Department of Homeland Security, human trafficking entails the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. Around the world, millions of men and women are trafficked each year. In Louisiana alone, there were there were 744 uncovered cases of human trafficking in 2019 according to a report from the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services. Evidently, human trafficking is still prevalent and affects many people, including in the United States.

Many are unaware that teachers can be involved in human trafficking. In 2007, 350 Filipino teachers were brought to Louisiana to teach in public schools, though the majority were assigned to the East Baton Rouge Parish School System. These teachers were forced to endure harsh living conditions, contract fraud, and harassment by the recruiter (Mairi Nunag-Tanedo et al. v East Baton Rouge Parish School Board et al.). With a shared vision, the Filipino teachers reached out for assistance to the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) to file a federal class-action lawsuit against the East Baton Rouge Parish School System. The ruling in this case ordered Los Angeles-based labor recruiter

Universal Placement International to pay the Filipino teachers for what they had to endure. The teachers' experiences were briefly cited in Ashley Dunn's (2016) paper on trafficked teachers (2016), in which she framed their unfortunate circumstances as the result of for-profit international teacher recruitment, through which school districts paid a finder's fee to the recruitment agency of up to $11,500 per teacher.

The question naturally arises: Have there been Filipino migrants aside from teachers who have fallen victim to human trafficking? Unfortunately, yes. In fact, three Filipino migrant workers died not too long ago in the explosion of an oil platform in the Gulf of Mexico near New Orleans, Louisiana. Following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010, shipyards in the Gulf needed more workers. Due to staff shortages, they reached out to Philippine recruitment agencies to recruit more workers. There were more than 150 Filipino welders, pipe fitters, scaffolders, and riggers working in the Gulf. The Filipino migrant workers later reported enduring abusive and exploitative working conditions. Francisco and Rodriguez (2014) covered this exploitation in "Coming to America: The Business of Trafficked Workers," which focused on the illegal aspects of the situation that managed to be characterized as "legal" migration through the United States guest worker program.

As I am one of the Filipino teachers who worked in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System, I sought to study my own personal account of my experience as a victim of human trafficking. This study contributes a valuable first-person account to the literature. As one of AsianCrit's tenets is the presentation of counterstories, I made heavy use of them to critically explore my experience as an Asian migrant teacher in the United States. Our voices in the field of education need to be heard and studied so that we can properly understand the roots of US racism and white supremacy as they pertain to Asian Americans.

Chapter Conclusion

When we came to the Louisiana schools, we were shocked and nervous. Many of us had not experienced teaching in the United States. While the teacher-education programs in the Philippines are patterned slightly in line with those of the United States, multi-cultural education was not part of or emphasized in the preparation of new Filipino teachers. We did not understand the school community, our students, their families, or the challenges faced by the school. This overwhelmed and stressed us during our first year of teaching. We were not given any pre-service courses or professional development programs regarding the differences we would experience after shifting to American classrooms. The language barrier and the differences in school policies from what we knew in the Philippines crippled us. Given all of this, classroom-management issues were evident in our classrooms. [Autoethnographical excerpt]

This research project contributes the voices of Asian American immigrants to the literature on the modern *post-truth era*. The current political landscape shuts our voices down, perceiving us as illegal and not part of American society. Our stories can reveal to society the hardships that we have faced just to reach the American dream. Revealing the lived curriculum of my immigration process will hopefully help society understand that coming to the United States is a daunting process. Asians, generally stereotyped as the quiet minority, must show society how we are victimized in the post-truth era. I hope that our stories help to fight against the injustice of the post-truth era and that our stories change society's misunderstanding that coming to America is a straightforward process.

Little research has assessed the conditions of Asian migrant teachers in the US through the lens of AsianCrit. Existing AsianCrit research focuses on Asian American curriculum in

basic education (An, 2016) and higher education (Muses, 2013). This research provides a framework that can help migrant teachers before even their first day of teaching in an American classroom. This framework also contributes to calls to decolonize education science and add race-based epistemologies into teacher-education programs (Jupp, Berry, Morales, & Mason, 2018).

Figure 6: Integration of concepts

Figure 6 conceptualizes my research study in terms of its exploration of how I survived throughout my immigration journey. The questions of "Who am I?" and "How did I survive?" are central to this framework, surrounded by the "Edgeland" of immigration I needed to survive, the AsianCrit lens through which I am assessing my own experiences, my plight of my fellow migrant workers, the related efforts of teacher activists, and the (re)construction of history needed to properly understand what we went through. This framework lays a very strong

theoretical and epistemological foundation for my study, and I hope to answer the two central questions at the end of the study.

In the next chapter, I present my autoethnographic research design, which entails the study of the self and the other. This research design allows me to explain the "edgeland" (Rapport, Wainwright, & Elwyn, 2005, p. 38), or the transitional area between established and new methods. This land or area helps me to explain how I survived as a migrant teacher in the US through the lens of Asian critical theory and in the context of transnationalism teacher activism.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the autoethnographic research design and methodology that I used to gather and analyze data for this study. Toward these ends, this chapter begins with a detailed discussion of my positionality. Next, I discuss the study's overall research design, data-collection and -analysis methods, and setting. I also discuss confidentiality, reflexibility, and the research timeline to confirm that all participants were protected in the conduct of this study.

Positionality

It is vital for critical researchers to present their positionality, and this section answers the critical question: Who am I? According to Saldana (2015), acknowledging "your positionality within your study reflects on how we can decenter our own values, attitudes, and beliefs and focus on the opinions, concerns, fears, and sometimes anger expressed by those different from you" (p. 140). Thus, I thought it would be best to present my positionality as it is inspired by my state of residence, Louisiana. This is my first home state in the US. I learned to love it. The state is known for its Creole cuisine and delicacies—most notably *gumbo*, a Creole dish that consists primarily of flavored stock, meat, okra, and the "Cajun Holy Trinity" of Louisiana cooking: celery, bell pepper, and onion. The word "gumbo" stems from the West African word for okra. As this is a popular dish in Louisiana that serves as a metaphor for the city's (and, more broadly, southern Louisiana's) famed cultural mélange, I felt it best to introduce my positionality of multiple intersubjectivities through a Gumbo recipe of sorts. This recipe effectively summarizes

"who am I" as a researcher while reflecting the diverse community of Louisiana that houses a complex harmony and peace (as well as some generative dissonance).

Ingredients:

1 cup of experiential learning; 1 cup of queer theory; 1 cup of critical race theory; ¼ cup education technology; 2 tsp. lived experience; 1 tsp. paradigms; ½ cup holistic; ½ cup statistics; 1 cup of analytics; ¼ cup of objectivism; ½ cup constructivism; 2 lbs data analysis; 1 pack of problems; 1 thinking with theories

Directions:

In making a gumbo, you always start with the roux. I am starting mine with a combination of data analysis (flour) and problems (oil). Those two ingredients constitute the foundation of my research as they will drive how theories emerge from my research. Instead of using the stirrer, use thinking with theories, as your primary tool for stirring the pot. You need to make sure that you stir these two for a long time, as they are critical to the taste of your gumbo. You'll know when to stop stirring once you've reached the "threshold," at which point you're ready for the next step.

The next part of the recipe is the Cajun Holy Trinity, which consists of my paradigmatic lenses through which I have developed my theoretical approaches to my research. As the base of the recipe, I am mixing the Migrant Filipino teachers as my onion, Asian Critical Race Theory as my bell pepper, and autoethnography as my celery. See figure 2. We need to mix experiential theory, critical race theory, and queer theory in the pot. I am incorporating critical race theory as an immigrant from the Philippines to the United States, sharing and analyzing my experience as a Filipino teacher in an American classroom.

I explore how my teaching philosophy changed during my first year working at a school which consisted primarily—98%—of those receiving free or reduced-price lunch and minorities. Furthermore, John Dewey's theory on experiential learning is my core belief in curriculum development. Teaching should relate to real-world experiences through collaboration among students and teachers. As a married gay man, queer theory explains the challenges that I have faced living in a third-world country with a Christian family as well as the shift that I experienced moving to a first-world country in which the LGBT community is more accepted. This paradigmatic triad explains my positionality in the world. Now, you must add all of the remaining ingredients to the pot. As a researcher who specializes in education technology, my perspective toward technology and learning will always come out. Diving into the lived experiences of learners regarding how they use technology and curricula will always come out in my research agenda.

In developing this research agenda, I consider myself a "mix" person in the scuffle between constructivism and objectivism. I do not consider myself to be a "purely qualitative researcher" or a "purely quantitative researcher." I am mixed, as I believe that it is best to have both. Why have only one when you can have it all?

Let the ingredients sit and boil for the next hour and serve with rice. I like to eat my gumbo with potato salad, like people from the Acadiana region. It is also good to eat the next day; the more it sits, the better.

As I relay my story as a migrant teacher, autoethnography is the most appropriate research design for critically exploring my journey to the United States.

Research Design

This section offers a general discussion of autoethnographic study design. It presents multiple definitions of autoethnography, a brief historical overview of autoethnography as a research design, and an explanation of why I chose this methodology for my study.

Reed and Danahay (1997) define autoethnography as a critical study of oneself in relation to one or more cultural contexts. Similarly, Hughes and Pennington (2017) define it as the examination the relationships between humans and their sociocultural contexts. Autoethnography enables us to explore how our stories relate to other events, theories, and stories and, in the case of my study, how they form a living curriculum via critical autoethnographic analysis. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2010) offer a deeper description, defining autoethnography as an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. In this light, autoethnography not only assesses the surface of the individual story but also uncovers and moves through palimpsest-like layers of innate and multifaceted consciousness of the self. For an autoethnographer to move through these superimposed layers, they must be vulnerable, emotional, and able to produce evocative stories that combine social science and literature (Reed & Danahay, 1997).

In general, this study uses Adams and Hermann's (2020) definition of autoethnography, as it is simple but captures the totality of this research: "autoethnography is comprised of three interrelated components; thus, it uses self-hood, subjectivity, and personal experience (auto) to describe, interpret, and represent (graphy) beliefs, practices and identifies of a group or culture (ethno)" (p. 2). Studying my interior experience as a migrant teacher and interpreting my stories as a Filipino teacher through the lens of AsianCrit enabled me to explore below the surface of my story. It provided me a way to connect my interior experiences, social stories, lived

experiences of cultures, and critiques of social structures, critical concepts, or theories to the lived curriculum through superimposed layers of consciousness and sociocultural truths.

While autoethnography as a practical form can be traced back to at least the late 19th century (Jewett, 2008), the term itself gained prominence in the late 1970s. Hayano (1979) was among the first to use the term, though he credits Raymond Firth with coining it. Ellis (2008) links Hayano and Firth by crediting Hayano with propelling auethnography to the academic mainstream. Hayano (1979) recognizes Kenyatta's book *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938/1965) as the first published autoethnography. Notably, the 1970s have been referred to as "the fourth moment […] [a] crisis of representation" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 24) in qualitative work. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011) describe the period as a "crisis of confidence" in the research community stemming from a transition from postpositivism to postmodernism. Looking forward to the 1980s, scholars like Anzaldua (1987) and Valenzuela (1999) reject conventional ways of thinking about and conducting research. This movement provided a way for social scientists to incorporate personal experience into the research process, as autoethnography "acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, researcher's emotion, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they do not exist" (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, p. 274). During the 1990s and 2000s, autoethnography became an accepted form of research across multiple disciplines. Sociologist Carolyn Ellis popularized autoethnography, extending the field within and beyond communication studies. Today, many studies take an autoethnographic approach. A key milestone in the field took place when Adams and Herman launched the Journal of Autoethnography—the first of its kind—in January 2020. It is important to show how this field has grown and provide a voice to researchers who can provide multilayer theories of life in general as well as specific events.

Using autoethnography, the researcher takes a systematic and scientific view of personal experiences in relation to cultural groups identified by the researcher as like the self or as others who differ from the self. In this way, autoethnography can function as a stand-alone methodology or as a complementary method for assembling data from five traditional empirical approaches to qualitative research: phenomenology, ethnography, narrative inquiry, case study, and grounded theory (Hughes & Pennington, 2017, p. 37). The difference between autoethnography and other research designs lies in the disciplinary roots shaping their focus and means of both collecting and analyzing data. In this sense, autoethnography is a truly stand-alone methodology. Jewett (2008), as an example of an autoethnographic work in curriculum studies, gathered her data for three years while engaging in multicultural education and learning to dance the zydeco, exploring its semblance of intimacy on the dance floor and its implications for curriculum and research. According to Jewett (2008):

> curriculum and autoethnography can be located as modes of relation, where the play of epistemological forces replaces technocratic force; where we experience the relative weight of history, knowledge, and power; feel the reciprocal touch of self and other; and embody the mysterious momentum of intimacy. (p. 160)

The primary reason I pursued an autoethnographic inquiry is that I am a part of the story. Autoethnography as a methodology helped me to study my own lived curriculum in relation to that of others. My lived curriculum (Aoki, 1993) is the primary subject of my research. This lived curriculum also includes the "messy world" of other immigrants, specifically Filipino migrant teachers. I am a Filipino migrant teacher who was part of a group of 350 such teachers seduced into coming to work in Louisiana to alleviate the teacher shortage. As an observer of and participant in my own experience, autoethnography was undoubtedly the most appropriate

research design to achieve a proper understanding of how I contributed to breaking the *silence* of Asian immigrants in the United States. Additionally, I critically explored how I and other migrant teachers navigated and are still navigating the challenges of migrating to the United States as an Asian teacher. This research methodology weaved together the intangible and complex feelings of this lived curriculum in a critical manner. It enabled me to explain the "edgeland" (Rapport et al., 2005), or the transitional area between established and new methods. This land or area helped me to explain how I survived as a migrant teacher in the US through the lens of Asian critical theory.

In addition, autoethnography serves as an effective way to share unheard voices from marginalized communities. For example, Teo (2022) shares his account as a migrant Asian Australian high school teacher needing to engage in racial performativity and attempting to find solidarity and address race within his white Australian high school. Its findings reveal that little progress has been made with non-Indigenous minority teachers from a critical race perspective. Autoethnography connects deep personal experiences like race, culture, language, marginalization, and privilege to broader educational and societal contexts by addressing how power and privilege play out in practice. Teo's (2022) words really demonstrate the racism that Asian teachers at white Australian schools are subjected to: "I had to teach mathematics even though it was not one of the subject areas I was trained in—to my White school administration and colleagues. I mean, us Asians can't really complain. We're not Indigenous and, comparatively, we have it really good, don't we?" (p. 6). Teo (2022) furthers the discussion in his article on critical collaborative inquiry between AsianCrit and autoethnography. He acknowledges the growing methodological complexity of CRT and advances the collaborative potential of AsianCrit and autoethnography through an investigation of their theoretical and

methodological intersections. His inquiry into AsianCrit "urges him to challenge the majoritarian story or dominant narrative in the same way that postmodernism requires incredulity to the metanarrative" (p. 584).

Furthermore, I used autoethnography through a critical lens to tell my story of coming to the United States as a migrant teacher. According to Hayano (1979) autoethnography creates an alternative venue for marginalized voices. With this in mind, I questioned and unveiled my story through research. Data-collection process lies at the heart of critical autoethnographic work (Hughes & Pennington, 2017, p. 29). Anderson (2006) notes that:

> Hayano argued that as anthropologists moved out of the colonial era of ethnography, they would come more and more to study the social worlds and subcultures of which they were a part. In contrast to the detached-outsider characteristic of colonial anthropologists, contemporary anthropologists would frequently be full of members of the cultures they study (p. 376).

Using autoethnographic inquiry helped me to process my grief. Matthews (2019) argues that the use of autoethnography helps people to process grief following the death of a loved one. In sharing the death of my father and of fellow teachers who lost their lives during the trafficking process, I was able to explore and examine these traumatic losses. This research design "makes use of therapeutic writing and allows us to learn more about how people process significant trauma without infringing on the grief of others" (p. 8). The story of my father's death ultimately changed my life and my perspective on US immigration and how limited we are—in addition to our vulnerabilities as victims of human trafficking. This research relayed my worst experiences and offered me a way to cope with my life's horrors (p. 1).

Toward these ends, my study drew elements of autoethnographic design from Hughes (2008), Jewett (2008), and Wilson and King (2016). In line with Jewett, I relied on fairly standard ethnographic data sources: informal and formal interviews as well as document analysis. I departed from this slightly, however, and, in line with Hughes (2008), drew from reconstructed memories of pivotal—and sometimes traumatic—events regarding the lived curriculum of human trafficking that I shared with my fellow teachers. However, as Hughes and Pennington (2017) write, reconstructed memory "is used to gather baseline data for transcription. Autoethnographers engage in remembering past lived experiences to prompt immediate sensory responses in the form of images" (p. 66). By juxtaposing these reconstructed memories with current data sources, I created a layered account that leverages the complexity and problematic aspects of memory to tease out the effects of the data as well as the effects of the experiences represented by it. However, my autoethnographic design also acknowledges, drawing from Jewett (2008) and Ellis and Bochner (2010), that the writing process behind autoethnography is a form of data analysis in and of itself. Later in this chapter, I discuss specific methodological elements of this autoethnographic design.

Setting and Participants

This section provides an overview of this study's setting and participants, capturing the events that occurred when we discovered the US job opportunity in our local newspaper as well as everything up to the final decision of our legal case.

Setting. This study focuses on the state of Louisiana, which was dealing with a severe teacher shortage in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The hurricane killed more than 1,400 Louisiana residents, cost billions of dollars in property damage, and forced more than one million people to flee its devastation. Among the displaced were around 65,000 public school

students who attended public schools in the struggling Orleans Parish District. Some families that fled New Orleans went to the nearby cities of Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Houston, and Dallas or to small northern parishes in the state. Thus, there was a rapid rise in the number of students in these cities and parishes, including in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System, resulting in a severe teacher shortage, especially in elementary education, special education, science, and mathematics. In response, the school district's human resources department and school principals collaborated with an employment agency to look for foreign teachers.

The Louisiana public school system recruited approximately 350 teachers from the Philippines in 2008. It contracted a Philippine employment agency to manage certification and immigration applications for all recruited Filipino teachers. The agency, in collaboration with the school system's human resources department, flew the director and school administrators to the Philippines free of charge but charged the prospective Filipino teachers for all of the associated expenses. In total, the agency charged each teacher nearly $12,550 to process their application and pay for the agency's services. This process was highly exploitative and, as a result, we all became victims of human trafficking.

When we arrived in the United States, I was both nervous and excited. The agency staff member advised us to stay overnight in Los Angeles to acquire a Social Security number. One of the agency's staff members greeted us enthusiastically at the airport with "Mabuhay!" and "Welcome to the US." This staff member's name was, for the purposes of this study, Erika (name changed for confidentiality). I didn't realize before landing that four other Filipino teachers were on the same flight as me, as we were not introduced when we were together in the Philippines. Following the 20-hour flight, I was exhausted but delighted that the flight had been successful and that I was able to successfully get on the immigration/customs line. The other

Filipino teachers and I then piled into a black Suburban driven by Erika. The excitement of everyone in the group was palpable now that we had finally landed in the United States. One of the teachers made a phone call to her husband in the Philippines to tell him that she had arrived safely and that she already missed her kids. As Erika drove us to the Social Security Administration, despite our nerves and fatigue, we were all impressed by the apparent efficiency of Erika and the agency as a whole. Once we arrived and began to fill out paperwork, Erika advised us to put the address of the placement agency as our address. As we were very tired and effectively clueless about the process, we simply followed what Erika told us to do. I remember being thirsty and hungry while waiting for my turn to submit my application. At that time, we disclosed our social security number and did not realize how sensitive and confidential social security numbers were. Once my number got called, I submitted all of my immigration documents to the Social Security Administration official and successfully applied for my number. Once all of us had done the same, Erika drove us to the agency's office. All of the staff members were smiling and welcoming us, and we were ultimately brought to the office of the agency's owner. We were tired but smiling and excited when she said there was a contract we needed to sign. The contract is on the table, she is staring at us and waiting for us to sign the documents.

This was a serious and shocking turning point. I felt the anxiety surge through my body, and I had to call my parents. This was the first time that I felt that there was something wrong with the process. You could feel the confusion of my other colleagues when they were presented with this new contract. We did not know much about our rights and our options at this point, as we had already paid the agency a lot of money. At the time, we only had one choice: to sign the contract.

When I got to Baton Rouge, a Filipino teacher welcomed me and brought me to my new apartment. All of the Filipino teachers under the agency were assigned to the same apartment complex. We did not have a choice regarding who we wanted to live with or what part of the apartment complex we wanted to live in. Everything is already planned. I was assigned to an apartment housing five other teachers—making me the sixth person in a two-bedroom apartment.

We didn't know at the time that there would be more surprises the day we got called to the school district office. The human resources administrator said that we had not yet been assigned a school; in other words, we didn't have a job yet. We were forced to go through another interview process with different school principals. I was certified to teach elementary special education, but all such spots had already been filled. I had to interview for the spots that were still open, those being a middle school social studies position and a middle school special education position. Fortunately, I passed the interview and ended up as a middle school social studies teacher.

This setting serves as the foundation of our story. Of course, this is only my story. Each teacher has their own stories to tell, and putting all of our stories together to analyze the multiple levels of consciousness within them offers a grand narrative of a migrant teacher.

Participants. It is important to capture the stories of other Filipino teachers who were also victimized by human trafficking. Interviewing other teachers helped me explore this lived curriculum as a collective story housing individual sets of experiences. The criteria to participate in my study were as follows: (a) be a certified Filipino teacher who migrated to Louisiana; (b) used the Universal Placement International agency for immigration and placement services; (c) was a victim of human trafficking. To select my participants, I employed purposive sampling, or the inclusion of "particular subjects […] because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of

the developing theory" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). In this manner, I recruited three other Filipino immigrant teachers as external data sources. This study was approved by UTRGV's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. I used pseudonyms in naming my participants—Dalisay, Pedro, and Dakila—to protect their identity.

Dalisay is a female elementary education teacher who specializes in mathematics. She came to the US about five months before I arrived in Baton Rouge. She is married with children and has been teaching mathematics for 28 years, 14 of which were spent teaching in the Philippines. Prior to our experience, her family had been looking to work overseas; for example, her husband was actively looking for work in Canada. But when she saw the job opening in the newspaper, she leaped at the opportunity. She was one of the first Filipino teachers to arrive in Baton Rouge after Hurricane Katrina. Her main motivation for migrating was a search for greener pastures for her family as well as her continued professional development.

Pedro is a male elementary education teacher who specializes in bilingual education with 13 years of teaching experience. We arrived at Baton Rouge at the same time. Currently, he lives and teaches in the state of Nevada. Prior to our experience, he had also been looking for a job in another country to help with his family's expenses and achieve financial stability. Before his time teaching in the US, he taught mathematics internationally in another Southeast Asian country. His experience there really motivated him to teach in the US, enticed by the information provided by his American colleagues there.

Dakila is a female middle school teacher who specializes in science, which she has been teaching for 49 years. She was primarily motivated to migrate to the US to professionally challenge herself. As she was close to retirement, she wanted to experience teaching in the US.

The main reason she continues to teach is to pay off the loan she took out to pay the agency's fee. She loves teaching the scientific process and chemistry to her students.

My study's setting and participants offer fertile ground upon which to critically explore our lived curriculum of human trafficking using concepts and themes from AsianCrit.

Data Collection and Protection

I collected my data in two ways: interviews and reflective journaling (using document and artifact analysis).

As part of my first data-collection method, interviews, I had to interview *myself*. Auto-interviewing consists of a two-step emic process: memory recollection and the transcription of those memories into words. Boufoy-Bastick (2004) offers a strategy on how to auto-interview in a way that purposefully seeks gaps in self-awareness. Autoethnographers can reconstruct life histories to explore and facilitate insight into their evolving worldviews, aiding in the discovery and problematization of assumptions that give mention to thoughts. The two-step auto-interview process can be described in greater detail as follows:

- Memory recollection facilitated the gathering of baseline data for transcription. I used pictures of my travel to the US, my Louisiana classroom, my family, and my school as well as immigration documents and payment receipts.
- The transcription of these memories induced vicarious experiences, fostering thick descriptions of memorable events that created vicarious experiences.

The remaining interviews were conducted at the convenience of the participating teachers so as to not interfere with their professional or family affairs. At the time of the interview process, COVID-19 health and isolation protocols were still active, so I needed to follow

UTRGV's IRB rules and regulations. The participants were assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality of their replies. I met with them via online web conferencing software and recorded the conversations to capture the teachers' experiences in detail. Due to the university's guidelines pertaining to human subject research during the COVID-19 pandemic (University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Office of the Executive Vice President for Research, Graduate Studies and New Program Development, personal communication, March 2, 2020), I could not meet with the participants in-person for these interviews. The data from the interviews was stored and secured in a password-locked computer to which only I have access.

This interview was designed as semi-structured, meaning that the questions below served simply as a guide to acquire information about the experiences of the Filipino teachers. I asked probing questions to dig into the lives and events of the participants.

- Tell me about yourself (years of teaching experience, subject, and grade level taught).
- How did you find out about the teaching job in the United States?
- How was your experience in the interview process? How did you felt during this process?
- When you got to the United States, what happened?
- What were your living conditions like in Louisiana? How's your apartment? Transportation?
- How did you find out the school that you would be teaching at?
- Tell me about how you prepared for your first day of school?
- Can you describe a typical day of a Filipino teacher in Louisiana?
- Could you walk me through a typical week of a Filipino teacher in Louisiana?
- What are some challenges that you experienced at home and at school? How did you cope with these challenges?

- How would you describe the way you feel when you remember something from our time together?

The second data-collection method that I used was reflective journaling. I remembered my past lived experiences to prompt immediate sensory responses in the form of images and poems that provided highlights of my data. Muncey (2010) defines the results of such efforts as snapshots, which describe both literary and pictorial episodes that serve as a catalyst to conjure up feelings and thoughts (p. 55). I collected my artifacts based on pictures, official documents, receipts, and online accounts to help formulate my timeline. Additional data that supported our stories included news articles, blog posts, and legal documents. Our story was featured in multiple news outlets, including the *New York Times*. Filipino teachers in Louisiana had an anonymous online blog, the Pinoy Teachers Hub, featuring communications, comments, emotional updates, and status reports on litigation. This blog enabled us to share our stories with the world—anonymously, as we did not want to be known during the case and be victims of bullying, especially at the behest of the placement agency. As our case was taken to federal court, we shared our narratives as legal evidence. With the help of the Southern Poverty Law Center, we fought against our recruitment agency. Legal documents about our human trafficking case are available on their site. Although the majority of my writing consists of literal description, I wrote more about my imaginative participation through poetry or prose. I gathered these artifacts to aid my imagination in writing about my experience (p. 59)—and to make my writing as detailed as possible.

This section provided an overview of how I collected my data, providing substance to my research. In the next section, I discuss how I analyzed the gathered data.

Data Analysis

Analyzing qualitative data is a vital aspect of this research, and this section describes how I analyzed the data. In general, I analyzed the interview data using reflective thematic analysis. I then transcribed the interview data (alongside the data from document analysis) into a protected online document, Atlas TI. According to Braun and Clarke (2021), reflective thematic analysis is an approach to thematic analysis within a qualitative paradigm; it plays an active role in the coding and development of themes, the subjectivity of the process, and the importance of the researcher in terms of their assumptions and practices (p. 293).

The process of how I analyzed my data was as follows. First, I created initial code for each interview through line-by-line analysis. Coding is the process of using codes and labels to capture relevant meanings in data in relation to the research questions (p. 284). Then, I decided what do code and added new codes to the transcript. Next, with the help of the software, I collated codes and themes with the supporting data before going back into the data to gain a deeper understanding of each individual code that I developed. Below is an excerpt of how I analyzed the interview and coded it line by line through the software.

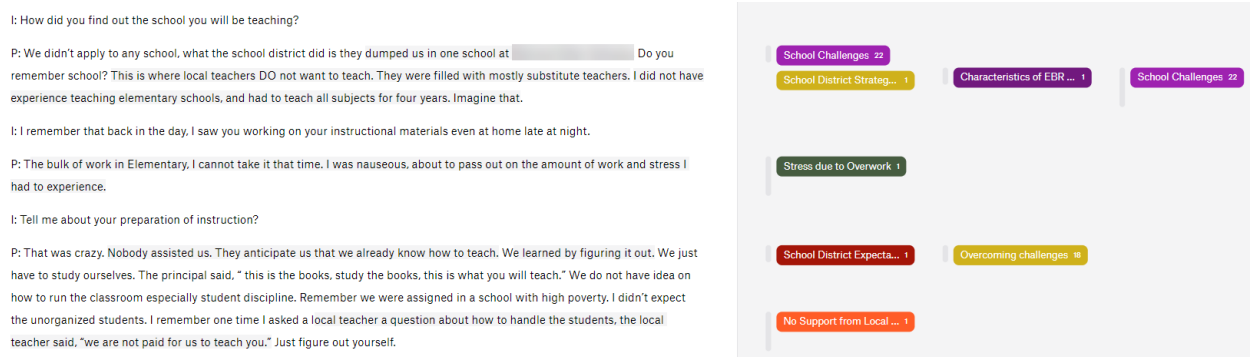

Figure 7: Line-by-line coding analysis using Atlas software

Through coding and analysis across themes, the software presented emerging themes, or the concepts that commonly emerged through the coding. Below is a *treemap* visualization of the

themes and concepts that emerged. This map helped in my evaluation and analysis of the concepts and codes.

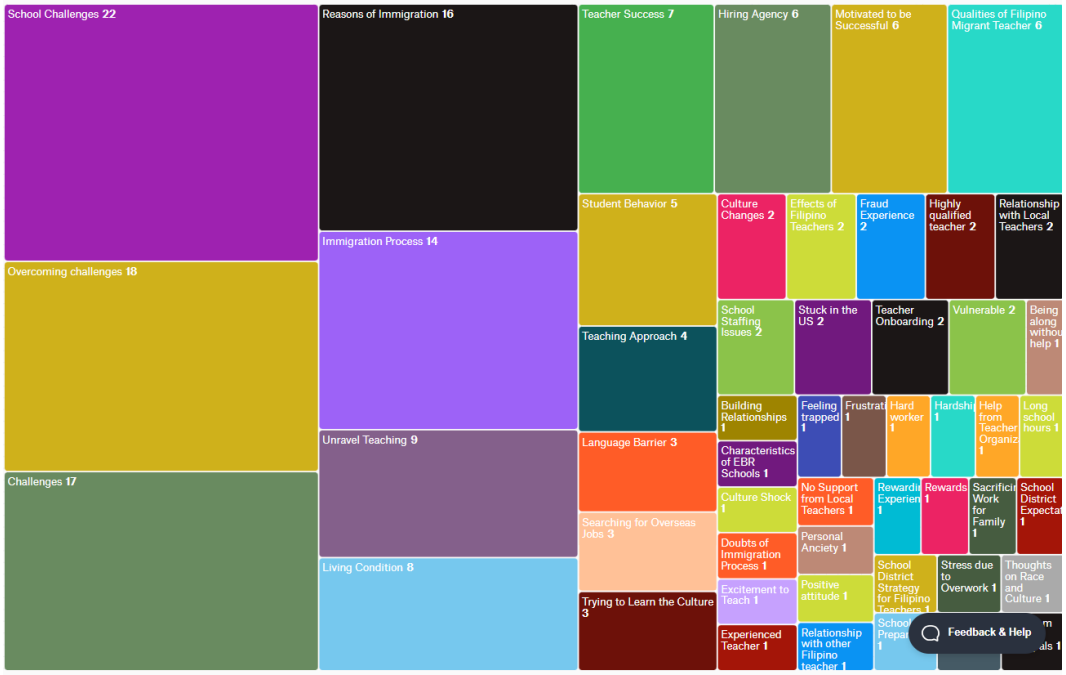

Figure 8: Visualization of codes using a tree map

Next, I constructed vignettes to represent major themes. According to Barter and Renold (1999), vignettes facilitate the exploration of actions in context in order to clarify people's judgements. This method helped me to organize and present our lived experiences as major events while exploring each participant's unique view. With the help of constant comparison, four major themes emerged from the analysis: (1) roots of migration; (2) immigration experience of a trafficked teacher; (3) foreign teacher; and (4) sacrifice. These vignettes are composites of multiple stories from different participants, including me, woven into a single narrative. As autoethnography is the story of myself and others, it is vital to weave our stories into a coherent voice.

The vignettes emerged through the analytic tool of Scott's (2004) conditional relationship guide, which helped me draw on themes through the findings and linking structure with process. Table 1 below analyzes each vignette.

Table 1: Conditional relationship guide

Vignette	**What**	**When**	**Where**	**Why**	**How**	**Consequence**
Ugat - Roots of migration	Movement from home country to another country	Seeking professional challenge Better life for self, family	Workplace	Better opportunities American Dream Asian teachers are good at math and science	Recruitment Agency	Leave family in the Philippines
Biktima – Immigration experience of a trafficked teacher	Experienced exploitation	Immigration process Departure from the Philippines Arrival in the US	Victim's residence Airports Recruiter's office	Illegal activities of recruitment agency	Confiscated passport Exorbitant placement fees Illegal Contractual Practices	Human Trafficking School district did not know about our hardships Did not call the police
Dayuhang Guro – Decipering Overseas teaching	Foreign-prepared teacher	Survival curriculum Learning the culture	Classroom	Limited knowledge of US curriculum	Overcoming challenges	Classroom-management problems Language barrier
Sacrifices - Sakripiso	Sacrifice of something personal	Experience of vulnerability	Traumatic experience	To replace something	Reach for American dream	To pursue career in education

This method helped me to organize and present our lived experiences as major events, facilitating an effective exploration of participants' views. Through vignettes, I was able to share and contrast my autoethnographic account, weaving it into the major problem of this study: What does it mean to experience immigration to the United States as a trafficked migrant teacher from the Philippines, and what does it mean in the field of education?

The vignettes revealed four main themes in the data. I used *Tagalog* words to categorize the vignettes as a more Filipino—more personal—way of explaining the categories. In the next chapter, I explain the meanings behind each vignette and how they came about in our narratives.

Research Timeline

Table 2: Research timeline. The table below breaks down the timeline of my research project.

Task	**Timeline**
Contact participants via e-mail	1 day; August 10, 2021
Schedule interview	1 day; August 17, 2021
Interview	1 week; August 24–28, 2021
Transcribe interviews	1 week; August 31 – September 4, 2021
Interpret and analyze interview transcripts	2 weeks; September 5–18, 2021
Conduct second-round interviews to get more data on emerging themes	1 week; September 21–25, 2021
Transcription of the second round of interviews	2 days; September 26-27, 2021
Interpret and analyze interview transcripts	2 weeks; September 28 – October 2, 2021
Report findings	2 weeks; October 3-16, 2021

Reflexivity

To address potential issues with trustworthiness in autoethnographic work, I discuss here reflexivity alongside existing qualitative constructs from Hughes and Pennington (2017), who explain that reflexivity as rigor is such an integral metaphor of autoethnography in critical social

research that it is embedded within the three approaches to legitimizing this alternative qualitative method. When autoethnography is employed in research, it is subject to a particularly high level of scrutiny. Rigor alone can be defined as adherence to strict standards of implementation, yet qualitative work embraces the need to adjust methodology to the needs of the inquiry.

Under reflexivity as rigor, we can use the general criterion of trustworthiness (Glaser, 1998). Other criteria for qualitative research include fit, workability, and relevance. I also incorporated two more strategies to boost the trustworthiness of this qualitative research: member check and thick description (Bogdan & Bilken, 1998).

The first criterion for judging a qualitative study is "fit," which is another word for validity. One way to boost fit is through the use of line-by-line analysis. This study constantly compares concepts using various instruments in the coding process, including line-by-line analysis, software reports, and conditional matrix guides. The second criterion is "workability," which pertains to the accountability of the concepts in the resolution of participants' main concerns. During the interview process, teachers articulated their concerns about human trafficking and education. After each teacher expressed their concerns, I asked them how they sought to resolve them. The third criterion is "relevance," meaning the reason why the research is important—that being its ability to address the concerns of the participants (p. 18). In a broad sense, this study achieves this by presenting an important event among Filipino Americans: the trafficking of teachers. Another way this autoethnographic study upholds its trustworthiness is through "member check," which verifies the results of the collected data with the participants. After each interview, I offered a summary of the whole interview process and checked whether the respondent's positions were valid and reliable. If there were any unreliable or different views,

the necessary modifications from the interview were made. This means I had to ask additional questions to clarify their statements. Lastly, this study offers a thick description of the research project, meaning that it engages in extensive and careful descriptions of the temporal, geographical, and cultural context of the study. As can be observed throughout the research paper, its methods, analysis, participant profiles, setting, and results are extensively described and discussed.

Autoethnography as a research design encapsulates *how* I critically explored the lived curriculum of migrant teachers in Louisiana. Inequity and oppression do not only affect students; they also affect migrant teachers. The use of autoethnographic auto-interviewing and memory recollection provided an answer to my question: What does it mean to experience immigration to the United States, and what does this imply in terms of education?

In the next chapter, I present and discuss the major findings of my research through the use of autoethnography and analyze them through the lens of AsianCrit.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The often unheard or invisible stories of Asian American migrant teachers become visible from researchers who understand that the world needs to hear our stories. According to An (2016), accounts of the Asian American experience are ignored or obscured through the model minority myth carried out through the white-stream curriculum. I am here to expose and explore the nature of the injustices and exploitation that many Americans do not know – or do not see in books or other forms of media. I am presenting our stories in the messy world of US migrant teaching – precisely, my experience as part of that world. Through my personal and other Filipino teacher stories, we describe those unheard stories through and within that *edgeland* (Rapport et al., 2005). If we do not describe what is going on in the *edgeland*, we are missing many stories that can influence the effects of other parts of social experiences (Muncey, 2010). I am here to share and tell specific missing stories of Filipino migrant teachers in Louisiana that connect to countless other missing stories of Asian American migrant teachers in the U.S.

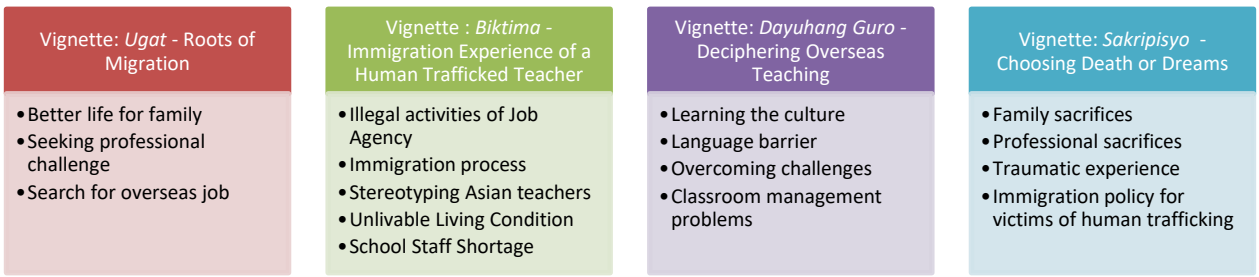

Figure 9: Major themes through vignettes

The figure above organizes major thematic events in our experiences, as these vignettes were constructed to represent significant themes. In each vignette, I highlighted the experiences of the Filipino teachers I interviewed, as well as my own experiences. Each section provides an analysis of its curricular tension with the studies. The figure shows the different sections of the vignettes in which different categorical themes emerged. In Vignette: *Ugat* - Roots of Migration - I show the starting place in why we decided to teach overseas. *Ugat* is in Tagalog, which means roots. What was the *ugat* of our decision to even consider working outside the Philippines? The following Vignette tells the story of our immigration experience as a human-trafficked teacher. *Biktima* is a Tagalog word which means victim. This is a thematic discussion of how we become *biktima* of human trafficking. Our experience is uncommon to other migrant worker as we are trafficked as a 'white collar' professional living through the urban life of Baton Rouge. Who would have thought that human trafficking is still happening in the capital city of Louisiana? Deciphering overseas teaching is the third vignette and shows our experiences in teaching. The third vignette focuses on our teaching and exploring the curricular tensions inside and outside the classrooms. *Dayuhang Guro* which means foreign teacher. We were equipped and prepared to teach in a Philippine classroom. However, are we prepared to teach a *dayuhang* (foreign) classroom? Lastly, vignette four is about choosing death or dreams, which shows the limitation of possessing a human trafficking visa. This theme epitomizes a devastating limitation of US immigration policy for victims of human trafficking. *Sakripisyo* means sacrifice – what sacrifices do we have to endure as a victim of human trafficking? Would *sakripisyo* eventually turn into the death of our dreams? How many sacrifices do we have to endure?

Our experiences are not just stories – it is the lives and experiences of other people that make the cultural conflict concrete (Langellier, 1999). I was lucky to be able to interview three

other Filipino teachers who had similar experiences of being trafficked. All of them have ten or more teaching experience in the Philippines. They went and arguably are still going through a similar process of ongoing grief as I am. Their participant profiles were briefly described in the previous chapter. Weaving our stories together reflects a powerful *super* story of our experience as a Filipino teachers and a victim of human trafficking. I presented each vignette section of *My Story* and the *Story of Others. My Story* is the literal meaning, which means sharing my specific story in detail. The Story of Others are the stories of Pedro, Dakila, and Dalisay on the accounts they have shared in my interview. I have structured each vignette to expand our stories, parallel them into each vignette, and present their voices properly and respectfully. In addition to My Story and the Story of Others, I discussed how the vignette relates to current literature and right after the symbol "**xxx**." It is easier to capture the participants' stories and simultaneously go back to the data relating to the vignette.

As I experienced the data gathering and writing the unpleasant or pleasant times of my life, I share that it was not an easy process. It was painful to go back to the terrible parts of the process. Gathering data on and representing these experiences means reliving them in a way that challenges the *silence* engrained into us and sometimes still leaks into our stories. I tried to respect the silence of participants' stories (including mine) while still listening and representing them. However, there are still silences – trauma-hone, narrative lacunae – that this study leaves unfilled for now.

Vignette: *Ugat* - Roots

My Story

Christmas lunch is the most important holiday in the Philippines as this is the day when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, and all of our families get together for lunch or dinner. Everybody brings their most delicious and expensive dish that they would like to share with the family. As I eat my favorite noodle dish, pansit, my auntie simultaneously updates the family on how her daughter was successful in the US. I always try to eat with them to hear updates from my cousin. My auntie said, "My daughter bought her new house in Los Angeles. She works two jobs to earn more money. Chris, it would be best if you were a nurse to go to the US and buy whatever you like. Do not be an engineer here, and the pay is not good. Just do nursing." As I listen to her, I am tense on how to reply. I wanted to pursue engineering. Then I said, "I do not know if I like to handle human blood. Not sure how I feel about that and taking care of patients." Then she argued, "You will not get jobs here for engineering; you will fail. Many engineering students fail in their first year."

As I continued to eat my pansit noodles and lumpia, I started to think that she might be right. I might fail as an engineering college student. I do not see many engineering jobs as well. I only see advertisements in the newspaper, "Work in the USA as a Nurse and earn US money!" I am not good at Math, so there is that.

My dad, who already had some alcoholic beverage, sat at the same table with us, looked at me, and said, "Chris, go to America; you do not have a future here. I want you and your brother to live a better life in the US. There is not much here for you. There is no progress in this country. You will end up like your Uncle Mike, who died with no money." I do not have any

more appetite as my whole family is trying to persuade me to leave. I feel the butterflies in my stomach as I re-think my future. Is this a sign? Do I need to start working on it?

In preparing for my role as a special education teacher in the United States, I had to complete graduate courses in Special Education. I worked very hard to complete this goal – and to prepare myself to teach Special Education in another country. In a conversation with my classmate, I said, "I am not sure if the skills I learn from our courses will prepare us for the job, but I know I will try my best to be a very good one. If I choke in the middle of the classroom, so be it. I still want to complete my program and have destiny do the rest." My graduate-level training and teaching experience, I thought, will prepare me for the job. Unfortunately, it is not enough.

Story of Others

Dakila: I came to the US for greener pastures. However, I have an okay job in the Philippines working with a private school with benefits. I want to provide my family with a better future for my family and my kids. Although my daughter is in [not disclosed country], I still want to provide a better opportunity for me and my family.

Pedro: I know there was this significant need (of teachers) because they are in shortage of classroom teachers. So when we came, my wife and I have been trying to look for overseas opportunities, even outside of the US. It did not work much about it, but I know that working in the US is the dream. All my friends and family would like to go to the US if there is an opportunity. I want my family to be financially stable, not just for me but also for my kids.

Dalisay: Although I have an okay job in the Philippines working with a private Filipino-Chinese school, they offer good benefits. I also look to migrate for personal and professional

development. Number 1 is still for my family's greener pasture and for my kids to have a better future outside the Philippines. Another reason I would like to move here is because of professional challenges and ongoing development. The US has excellent professional development programs that I could benefit from. I know it will be challenging, but I am up for it.

xxx

Filipinos always look to the United States as a land of dreams and prosperity. It is noticeable in Filipino and Hollywood movies and advertisements showing the US as a prosperous country compared to the Philippines. Having your own house, car, and high-paying job, compared to the Philippine salary, are some of the examples of this U.S. fantasy perpetuated by the media. Young Filipinos seem especially susceptible to this immigration narrative. Furthermore, families pass the narrative of the American Dream through storytelling. I remember how my father told me since I was younger to migrate to the United States after I finish college – for better opportunities. During family reunions or celebrations, you always hear something about a successful relative who has the means to live comfortably. The myth of the American Dream proliferates through Filipino families and whole communities. So much so that it can seem almost irresistible. The following vignette shows a snapshot of a Christmas lunch with relatives and explores the *ugat* or root of how I started to think about migrating.

My snapshot, my family inclined my occupational goal from an engineer to become a nurse, then become a teacher. This is to lay down the tracks of my overseas migration. It felt like our dreams were limited to only this path – nursing, education, domestic helping, and seamen. According to Gallardo Batalova (2020), these are the top professions primarily available, and Filipinos predominantly occupy the sciences and service occupations. These holiday conversations happen at every Filipino gathering. Each Filipino family has at least one relative who is working overseas. Furthermore, their family members would boast or share how 'well'

their family member is doing. Even as a child, we are exposed to drive our dreams and goals to make it outside of the Philippines. At that time, it felt like migrating overseas was the only path for Filipino children.

Making a Better Living is one of the roots that showed in the data. My fellow teacher Dakila says that she looked for a job overseas. “Similar to me, although I do not have a family, I understand that I would need to go overseas to earn more as a teacher. Looking into teacher salaries around the world, the United States, at least, is one of the highest-paying teacher salaries. Philippine public school teachers receive 400 dollars a month, which has not increased much over the past decade. It is not very good for teachers to sacrifice their livelihood to teach, barely earning a living wage. I was fortunate to get into private high school and college and live a decent life. Dakila also has a similar experience as me, but we still think that we would need to get out of the Philippines to have a better life. A starting salary for a Filipino public school teacher salary is 27,000 Philippine pesos, which is about 540 US dollars per month, according to the Philippine Department of Education salary scale. The average cost of living in the capital city of the Philippines is about $580. This means that teacher wage is below the average cost of living.

Hagood and Ducoff (1946) discuss analyzing the migration’s ‘push-pull’ factor – and economic forces based on poverty or cost of living as one of the ‘pushes’ why people migrate to another country. This is also true for most overseas Filipino workers who decide to work in other countries besides the United States (Asis, 2006). The so-called American Dream is also a dream for non-Americans such as me when we try to look at areas of opportunity outside the Philippines. Through Hollywood movies, media advertisements, and social media – we could see the glitz and glamour of the US – and maybe dream of getting that opportunity. Without a doubt,

due to the teacher shortages in 2007 (post-Katrina), the Louisiana public school system immediately needed to recruit more teachers north of New Orleans. After Katrina, most New Orleans families evacuated to nearby cities such as Baton Rouge, Tangipahoa, and Avoyelles parishes. These parishes needed to accommodate the high number of students. Hence, the school districts were able to tap into Filipino teachers, who are ready and certified to teach the students.

The placement agency in the Philippines connected us with Louisiana schools and guided us through the recruitment and immigration process. Please see Figure 1 - Brochure of the placement agency to the US public schools. I remember seeing the agency's ad in the newspaper, which read “Teach in the USA,” and thinking I finally had a chance. It felt almost like fate seeing that ad after all of my family’s well-meaning immigration pressure. Likewise, other participants in this study reported feeling initially like teaching in the U.S. was somehow “meant to be.” The Philippine government has a database of placement agencies indicating which are legal and which are not. Our placement agency was on the legal list, and we all submitted our applications. In order to process your application, we had to pay almost 5000 dollars. Since Filipino teachers are, in general, already financially strapped, most teachers do not have this amount of money. So, the placement advised the teachers to borrow money from a financial company. Little did we know that the placement agency and the financial company were related. This is one of the schemes that they were planning. We did not know that this part of our lives changed forever.

Looking into the recruiting side, why did the school district choose the Philippines to recruit new teachers? Why not other countries, especially those who are native English speakers? We can look at this point through one of the tenets of AsianCrit’s Asianization – model minority myth (Iftikar & Muses, 2018). The school district has an understanding that recruiting more

Math and science teachers in the Philippines is a cheaper cost compared to other countries. As Asians are generalized to be good in science and math, they have an idea that they can quickly get their human resource need in the Philippines. Model minority myth exposes that people see Asians as hardworking, successful, and patient, which would fit the needs of the school district. However, the school district does not understand that we have excellent English Social Studies Special Education teachers who can also serve the school district's population.

Looking into another reason that emerged is to seek professional challenge. Experienced teachers seek challenges when they think they can do more and do better. For us, this American Dream has been a nightmare. One of the Filipino teachers whom a local news agency interviewed said,

> "I thought this is my dream place because this is my dream to come to this country. Because this is a promised land. I thought this is, but it is not," one of the teachers said.*"* (Williams, 2019).

Dalisay sees that migrating to another country and culture would be a challenge. It is an innate quality for excellent teachers to face and overcome challenges and learn from them. As we are ingrained that being in the United States is promising, we think we can also work similarly with the American teachers. We see that working in the United States as a growth in our professional development. We know that the school system provides us with the career growth that we would like to achieve. These findings share across stories that we want to grow further and develop professionally. We got minimal onboarding development to prepare for our first year in the school; however, we got continuing professional development after our first year of teaching. Unfortunately, I did not get professional guidance in my first year to teach middle school Social Studies. I was assigned to teach social studies, which is Louisiana history, and at

the same time, to do special education programs. I do not have any experience in teaching social studies, nor do I have expertise in Louisiana history. However, I had no choice but to cope with the change and still teach it. It was very challenging as I am learning and teaching simultaneously, trying to read history textbooks and figure out how to teach it.

This section highlights why Filipino teachers migrate to the United States - an optimistic hope. It is a life-changing decision that teachers have wished to have a better professional and economic life in the United States. Looking into the lens of AsianCrit explored the *pull* of how and why employment agencies and employers choose us to fill the need. I felt that I was granting a wish to my father at the Christmas dinner table with my father, and him begging - for me to migrate to the United States. We did not know then what or how the process would look like, but it turned the tide into a disaster.

The findings of this vignette - roots of migration - as movement from one country to another. Filipinos migrate because they seek professional challenges and seek a better life for themselves and family. The reason why is to chase for the 'American Dream' and have better opportunities. We used personal recruitment agencies to process immigration papers and serve as a middleman with the US school district. The consequence of the migration is to leave our family and friends back home. Exploring this finding rethinks AsianCrit's tenet of Transnational Context because of the history of American colonialism in the Philippines from 1898 to 1946. According to Muses (2013), "Transnational contexts highlight the importance of historical and contemporary national and international contexts for Asian Americans. It also informs how racism impacts Asian American lives… such as the emergence of global economies and migration – that shape the conditions of Asian American people and communities. This tenet shows how the Philippines position itself as a supplier of professional workers in the United

States – nurses and teachers are among the top professionals. With this, the Philippines share 4% of immigrants in the United States according to Pew Research Center's American Community Survey (2018), the top four countries to produce. Our role and experiences in the AsianCrit's tenet share a significant role in exposing complex ships and unheard stories of Asian immigrants in the United States.

In a news article, President Monaghan, the president of the Louisiana Federation of Teachers at that time, said, "It is disgusting. It is un-American, and it is unacceptable" (Williams, 2019, page number). The fact that the head of the human resource department of the school district and the placement agency colluded with each other shares a sad state of affairs for the human resource management of schools in the United States. The head of human resources also got some bribe money from the placement agency. It is a sad state where the collusion of the head of HR and the placement agency took advantage of the poor teachers of the Philippines and their pursuit of the American dream.

Our pursuit explores the motivation and aspirations to seek better opportunities that are dwindled and exploited by illegal activities. Similar to what happened with the death of Filipino overseas workers in the oil platform in the Gulf of Mexico after the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill of 2010. It shows the illegality of employment activities to exploit Filipino workers. Similar to our experience, Filipino workers in the Gulf experience exploitative working conditions and abuse from their employers. Although our experience is at schools, we both experience abuse and exploitative working conditions from our employers and recruiters. Overseas employers benefit from our motivation and aspirations and use them to exploit our dream to have a better life.

This research highlights and expounds on AsianCrit's tenet on Transnational Context (Muses, 2013). Immigration of Filipinos in the US is an essential historical context for Asian Americans. Our experience as teachers opens up a dreary condition in the contemporary world. Through immigration, it shapes the conditions of Asian American people and the communities throughout the US (p. 24). As immigrant teachers, we were able to contribute to students and families who were affected by Hurricane Katrina. We were able to bridge the teaching employment gap of Louisiana and be able to serve – even with the harsh conditions we were experiencing. There is still human trafficking and exploitation happening in the contemporary workforce. Asian labor is being exploited as Filipino immigrant workers in the United States share 4% of immigrants according to Pew Research Center's American Survey (2018), which is the top four countries to produce. It reflects the contribution we produce to the employment of the American workforce. In education we are contributing to the economy through education – and this is a crucial context historically in the US. This critical lens exposes the truth of the conditions we have experienced.

The next section of this chapter exposes our experience as a human-trafficked teacher and the exploitation we received from the employment agency and school district.

Vignette: *Biktima* - Immigration Experience of a Human Trafficked Teacher

My Story

It was a hot day in Manila, and I was carrying two big pieces of luggage with me – like my whole life fit in this luggage. My dad and mom brought me to the Manila airport. We did not talk that much, but I felt the sadness in the air. I know that I am going to miss them very much as this is the first time I am leaving home. Once we got to the airport, tears in my eyes started to come down. I did not want to look at my mom as I knew she would be emotional. As I could not do that before leaving, I knew she was also crying. We looked and hugged each other very tightly, wishing each other all the best. My emotions were all over the place as I knew that I would miss my mom very much. I whispered, "Mama, I am doing this for us so that I have a better life in the US. This is a sacrifice I need to make so that I can take care of us. I hope that you have strength with you. Pray for me that I will be successful. My goal is to bring you and Papa with me. Have patience. I love you very much." She hugged me again for the last time and felt the tears on my shoulder. I had to release myself from her – and she understands. I waved my hand goodbye with my luggage as I entered the airport.

At the airport, I met three other Filipino teachers also going to Baton Rouge. They all went through the same process as me in getting our job and visa. We do not know each other - nor have we met before. I am the only one from Manila, and the other teachers came from the provinces. You could feel the nervousness of all as we embark on the new journey. I heard one of the teachers say, "I hope my decision is right for my family. I had to leave two of my girls (children) behind. It was so hard to leave them, but I have to do it to provide a good opportunity for them." We all have the exact flight path from Manila to Long Los Angeles.

After a twelve-hour non-stop flight from Hong Kong International Airport, we arrived at Los Angeles airport. Finally, we arrived in 'Hollywood,' in the United States, to work – so happy and excited. I was also tired, as I was not able to sleep, and my anxiety about migration was getting into me. Going through customs and immigration was a breeze. The agency received us with smiles and brought us to their office in Los Angeles. This was our first time in the United States, and we felt mixed emotions - excited and nervous. When we got into the office, the owner welcomed us. The conversation started happy and welcoming and went down to business. When she started talking about business, you could feel our uneasiness as there seemed to be a new obligation that we were not aware of. A new contract was presented to us that we need to pay another 10% of our gross monthly income, and we need to surrender our passport. At that time, I was feeling hot and confused. We have to pay them again, in addition to the payment when we were in the Philippines. At that point, I do not have a choice. We flew across the Pacific Ocean with new hopes and dreams and were crushed by the new payments we had to make. We signed the contract and surrendered our passports. I did not know at that time that surrendering the passport was illegal.

During lunchtime, my brother took me out for lunch in Los Angeles and welcomed me with his wife. I was nervous because I did not know how to explain to my family about the additional 10% of payment, and my passport was not with me. I did not tell him that time because I wanted to enjoy the short time I was with them before I flew to Baton Rouge the following day.

The next day, we flew to Baton Rouge with a connecting flight from Houston. From the concrete jungle of Los Angeles, I see more rivers and plains as we land in Louisiana. This is our first time in Baton Rouge, and it does not look like what we usually see in Hollywood movies,

where you see significant buildings and highways. I see oil refineries, a meandering river, and the neighborhoods. Fortunately, we were welcomed by a group of Filipino teachers.

From the airport to our new apartments, the teachers started to show us the city. Where to shop for groceries and how to get to the school district office are some of the examples they started to explain. When we get into the apartments, you can see that it is a typical apartment with parking in the middle of the complex. This is the time we were assigned to our specific apartment units. We did not have a chance to choose our apartment; we were placed in whichever unit was available, or you could squeeze in. I was able to get assigned to a unit where we have six people in the unit. I share a bedroom with another teacher. I tried to settle and unpack – but my mind was still figuring out about the new contract I received.

Story of Others

Dakila: The bad thing about that, too, is that I felt that the agency got us by the neck. It is like they own us and manipulate everybody. They even told us, "If you do not follow me, we will send you back to the Philippines! I received my (Social Security) card after two months with the envelope open. UPI received my card in California, and I am afraid I lost my privacy and security for what they did to me. I was also instructed to sign a paper, but I was not allowed to read the 4 to 5-page contract. We were warned not to ask many questions regarding the contract because, according to Francis, Miss Navarro does not like people questioning that stuff… Miss Navarro is always deciding our rental and rights. Our rental is higher compared to other leases. I found it so unfair.

Pedro: I was terrified of the financial institutions I owe money. I worked hard and religiously paid them with what I had. At that time, I did not buy anything for myself. It is constantly sending money. It is a struggle and hardship with the agency, and the

agency will send us a letter every time because we do not pay. 10% of our monthly net income I have to send to the agency.

Dalisay: I was so nervous and homesick. I have to pay for my money. There was a time I got into an accident; my wrist was injured while I was decorating my classroom. This is because of the anxiety and depression I felt thinking about the harassment we got from the agency. Sometimes, when I teach and think about our situation, I feel nauseated. At that time, I wanted to quit – but I could not because I had to pay back the money.

xxx

Every immigrant always remembers their experience of their journey from home to the new country. I vividly remember that this was the first time we associated that something illegal was going on with our process. The following section describes a snapshot of my journal from the Philippines islands to Los Angeles, California.

This snapshot depicts the injustices of the recruiter when we arrived in the US. Our passport was confiscated, additional fees we had to pay, and the emotional distress that the recruiter poised on us. We did not call 911 or the police department – we did not know what to do.

Looking into the lens of AsianCrit's commitment to social justice (Iftikar & Museus, 2018, p. 941) shows that racism translates into its pursuit of human rights violations and trafficking. Our story here shows the unheard voices that the society did not know. We are unknowledgeable of US laws and policies – and indeed did not know what to do when our form of identification and additional fees welcomed us in a new country that we thought would protect us. This is a form of exploitation that is still happening in 21st-century America. Human trafficking can be interpreted as sex trafficking, forced labor, and debt bondage (San Francisco Human Rights Commission, 2022). What we have experienced is something different from those

three types—not through sex, forced labor, or blue-collar jobs. This is something that happened for white-collar jobs, such as in the field of education. Through this tenet, we are advocating to end all forms of oppression – such as the human trafficking of teachers. AsianCrit is dedicated to advocating for the end of all forms of oppression and exploitation. In whatever forms of dehumanization of Asian teachers within the United States and the world, it is still happening.

Asians are being exploited or murdered because of labor. Looking back to the killing of Vincent Chin in Detroit in 1982 because Asian people like Chin – were losing jobs in the auto industry. The Chinese Massacre of 1885 in Rock Springs, Wyoming, killed 28 Chinese laborers because Chinese miners refused to join their worker's strike. These are some of the many incidents of Asians being murdered or exploited through labor – because of hard work and the dream of having a better life in the United States. We can get a parallel analysis of the similarities of the experiences of Filipino shipyard workers who reported that they were abused and exploitive working conditions Francisco & Rodriguez (2014). When we arrived in the United States, we felt stuck and could not even call the police or 911 about the exploitative practices. This is due to our contractual obligations to fulfill and the massive debts we gained from this experience. Many of the immigrants come from poverty, and they understand that we need to do hard work. This section highlights the exploitation we received from the sophisticated recruitment agency coming from the point of departing the Philippines to living in the United States. It exposes the hard lesson of the American volatile labor system that coerced us into contracts that amounted to "virtual servitude." The agency drained our salary, and we could not make any more payments due to the severely high-cost loans.

With the assistance of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), we filed a federal class action lawsuit against East Baton Rouge Parish

Schools (Mairi Nunag-Tanedo et al. v East Baton Rouge Parish School Board et al.). Our case is rare as it shows the exploitation at schools. I am sure that other recruitment agencies and school districts victimized more Filipino teachers. Unfortunately, their stories might not be heard or seen by people. As of date, Ashley Dunn's paper (2016) on Trafficked Teachers highlights our stories. I am sharing my story as a first account of my perspective and analyzing it firsthand in AsianCrit's framework. Our school leadership needs to be more careful in hiring migrant teachers outside of the US, as they are an easy target of illegal recruiters. For us, it is the Universal Placement agency that illegally trafficked us to work without the school leadership knowing. The school district 'knows' about it by illegally partnering with the human resource head.

This curriculum experience has been negatively emotional for us foreign teachers and our families. I draw back to Aoki's (1993) lived curriculum process of coming to a deep understanding of who we are and moving beyond (p. 267). This research allowed me to provide a thorough understanding of Filipino migrant teachers – and how we felt during the immigration process. Every time we go to the classroom, we always bring 100%, with a smile, in front of our fellow teachers and students. Neither did they know the hardships we were experiencing at that time. When we prepare for instruction at night, I hear my co-teacher in the apartment crying and talking with her family members in the Philippines. She shares these experiences through hardships and sacrifices to have a better opportunity for them. A better life for our family is indeed a root of immigration, that most labor workers explain why they want to push through the exploitation they are experiencing.

In 2020, there was a significant rise in violence against AAPI (Asian American Pacific Islander) communities, reporting more than 3,800 anti-Asian incidents within the first year of the

COVID-19 pandemic. This violence impacted Asian American workers, whether it happened at their place of employment or during other moments of their daily lives. With this, Stop AAPI Hate (2023) was created as a response to the alarming escalation in xenophobia and bigotry. The coalition tracks and responds to incidents of hate, violence, and harassment against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States. According to the Stop AAPI Hate National Report (Horse et al., 2021) report, verbal harassment (63%) continues to make up the most significant share of the total incidents report, with 16.2% of physical assault coming as the second largest category, followed by the civil rights violation – e.g., workplace discrimination, refusal of service, being barred from transportation, and housing-related discrimination which accounts 11.5% of total incidents. The seventh-ranked site of discrimination, according to the report, is schools. This is not a surprising fact, as many Asian American students experience discrimination and racism at schools. A narrative from a student shares

> I was walking to school when a woman stuck her hand out of her window and started screeching racial slurs at me. She called me c—k, a b---h and told me to go back to my country and go to hell. I told her to have a nice day and tried to walk away. She found me on a different street and stuck her middle finger at me—Burlingame, California (p. 13).

Harassment of Asian American students is unfortunately alive in the United States, especially in the state of California, where the majority of Asian Americans live. I also experienced similar harassment in Louisiana by one of my students, but I tend not to report it. Why? Because it is my first week of teaching, I do not know what to do first and do not want to go through an investigation with my principal.

Human trafficking was not shown in the AAPI report. However, according to the Global Estimates of Modern Slavery (2022), they estimate that at any given time in 2021, approximately 27.6 million people were in forced labor internationally. It is indeed disheartening that this crime is still ongoing not only in the US but across the world. There are no other published incidents of human trafficking happening at schools in the report. Which means our incident was very unique. Sharing our incident helps people understand that human trafficking also happens at schools and in education. When we came to our schools, we thought that schools were equalizers – but not really. We had hoped that our search for our dream would start at school, but unfortunately, that did not come true.

The vignette's significant finding is that victims of human trafficking experience exploitation before they even arrive in the US. It goes through even before the departure until going through the 'new' country. It involves illegal activities of recruitment agencies by confiscating victim's passports, requesting exorbitant placement fees, and illegal contractual practices. When you are a victim of human trafficking, your employer might not know your situation, and you end up not knowing where to go for help. Looking into AsianCrit's lens, the school district did not see us struggling and being victimized by the employment agency. We are invisible in the eyes of the school district because, through the model minority myth (Museus, 2009; Suzuki, 2002), we are the silent race. In the model minority myth, we are universally successful and do not face any racial challenges. This covers the hardships and challenges we had to go through, and the school district remained silent and blinded.

The next part of the vignette describes our story with schools, school districts, and the curriculum.

Vignette: *Dayuhang Guro* - Deciphering Overseas Teaching

My Story

When we came into the Louisiana schools, we were 'culture shocked.' It means for me that this culture that I am experiencing is unfamiliar. With this, I feel surprised, uncertain, and confused. Many of us have not experienced to teach in the United States. As the teacher education programs in the Philippines are patterned slightly with the United States, multicultural education is not part of or emphasized in preparing new Filipino teachers. We did not understand the school community, our students, their families, and its school challenges. This overwhelmed and stressed us in our first year of teaching. We were not given any pre-service courses or professional development programs about how different it is to teach in an American classroom. The language barrier and the difference in school policies from what we knew and the Philippines crippled us. With this, classroom management issues were evident in our classrooms. Welcome! You have a new employment contract that we need to sign and agree to. In addition, I would need to get your passports. The new contract stipulates that you must pay twenty percent of our biweekly net pay for three years. So, if you get paid 3,000 dollars a month, we must pay them 600 dollars monthly."

"I asked the principal what the social studies topic is for eighth grade. "Louisiana history", he responded. I nervously said, "I do not know about Louisiana history; I just got here in Baton Rouge, and I barely know US history. Do you have ideas on how I can prepare? The first day of class is next week." The principal walked into an office, got a Louisiana history textbook, and gave it to me. "Here is the textbook; start reading." At this time, I was so nervous, stressed, and struggling with the events that happened to me in the past days. The only good thing that happened is I got a job and did not have to go back to the Philippines."

I remember how challenging and intense my first two years of teaching. It felt like going back as a first-year teacher with no preparation. I am trying to figure out classroom management strategies I have learned in the Philippines, but it was not the same because it was not working. On my third day, I already saw students fighting. As one of my co-teachers warned me in the beginning, do not touch them, say "stop!" and other verbal commands – or else you might get fired and sued by the student's parents. Student behavior was a problem, and it was demanding for me to control. In addition, I am learning Louisiana history at the same time. I remember saying "Battle of New Orleans" in a foreign accent, and my students laughed at me. Also, in Louisiana history, there are a lot of French names and places that I have to learn and teach. I never learned French or these words. Googling the pronunciation and meaning of the words was my best friend.

I spend almost until midnight preparing for instruction and ensuring I am ready for the next day. Teachers, in general, do not have time to prepare instruction at school as they are mostly filled with meetings. In addition to preparing for instruction, I am also tied to completing my IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) for my special needs students. It was much work, figuring out and undertaking to complete all the necessary tasks for my role. I pray every night for God to provide me guidance and strength, as this is something I cannot control. As we are stuck with high debt and much work- in a foreign country, we have to triple our efforts to be successful.

Story of Others

Dakila: I have a solid Filipino accent, so the students did not understand me. I had to readjust with the language and also understand their words – it was my first time hearing YALL. It was so difficult to understand and to teach them. The parents were uncooperative with us.

When I report a problem in student behavior, the parent would not believe me. They would say, "Oh, my son would never do that; he is respectful." Even though I shared the incident with a very descriptive statement, they would still not believe me. I felt no support from anyone. Oh my god, imagine that. They do not care about me.

Pedro: I work until 1 AM to prepare for my class daily. It is almost triple the preparation I had to do compared to when I was in the Philippines. I had to study and read the contents and be able to explain it very well. Sometimes, I have to call my local co-teacher to ask questions about language. I almost cry every night, but it seems I do not have a choice; I need to endure and survive this experience to repay my debt. Moreover, the classroom management is not there. It is not perfect, and the culture is the biggest issue; that is why the classroom is not running smoothly. I can hear the yelling and all that and the rise of the voice, and so I thought at the beginning that would help me, but actually, no stress me out, and then. I have never seen students kind of like cricket. They were jumping all over tables and chairs.

Dalisay: First, they put me in a 2nd-grade classroom where I did not know how to teach the students. I did not know then that all students in my class were problem students - meaning poor academic achievement and poor behavior. They did not inform me that my students would have moderate to severe behavior. Students were jumping from one seat to another; they could not sit comfortably. They even run and fight among themselves! It was a struggle for me how to handle these types of behavior. I did not have this type of problem in the Philippines. Furthermore, if I tried to talk to them, the student would say, "Who are you to talk to me like that? You go back to China!" They do not know the Philippines. They only know China.

I usually go home at 6, and I go to school at 6. It is panic and chaos. After the student leaves school, we have to prepare in the classroom all of the activities for the next day.

Remember, in elementary they have stations and centers, so you have to make sure the activities are ready for each center and station the next day - at least three varied activities. Sometimes, I did not finish my six and had to continue working at home to finish preparing for instruction. Until in the morning when we get there in the morning, we are still working. Once the bell rings at 7 a.m., all activities are prepared and ready for the children. I survived for four years. I struggled for 1st and 2nd year. However, 3rd year, I felt better and understood what to do. I could catch their attention; I knew how to approach them in the classroom. We figured out how to do all that.

xxx

Dayuhang Guro is a tagalog word means foreign teacher. We came to the United States as *dayuhang guro,* with some knowing what to expect and some not. Some of us already know what to expect in an American classroom, but we do not know what to expect until we get into action. We understand that students from the Philippines and the US are different, but at the back of our minds –can we manage it? Can we handle the difference and change of an American education? We all are qualified to teach; that is why we are here – but are we ready? Louisiana is known for its *bayous* **–** a marshy outlet of lake or river. Teaching in Baton Rouge, located by the Mississippi River, is like teaching in a Bayou School.

Teaching in a new country is a challenge that immigrant teachers have to experience. We understand the practicalities of pedagogy – and how it can be implemented in the classroom. Nevertheless, how did we go around and learn content areas that we were not trained? What do we do when we do not understand our student's culture and language? I am pulling in Aoki's (1992) *other* curriculum, the lived curriculum. Our lived experience as teachers in the US classroom shows how we have to deconstruct our teaching preparation and be able to apply it to work. As we have experienced the negative way of it – it feels like a *survival* curriculum. We

had to survive in the darkness that we were in – poor living conditions, the high amount of debt, and the harassment we got from our recruiter.

This account is an example of the preparation of teaching that is not written in our teacher preparation areas. We had to adjust how we think and teach to achieve curriculum ideals (Maxwell et al.; C., 2020). I had to read and study Louisiana history at the eighth-grade level for two weeks and prepare to teach. My perspective as a teacher is that ensuring high-quality instruction and learning is my priority. I made sure I was ready each time I stepped into the classroom.

We arrived in the US with limited knowledge of US race and culture. I have never taught or even talked with African Americans. The first interaction I had was with our principal. As our school had almost ninety-five percent African-American students, I had to learn first how to communicate. This was my first challenge as I did not understand their language – it differs significantly from what I have learned. Pedro and Dakila also had similar experiences trying to understand the language in the first month of teaching. Bringing in Ladson-Billing's (1999) socio-political consciousness could have helped us understand more about our students. As this is one of her propositions for developing a culturally relevant pedagogy, it would provide a better consideration of how we develop our curriculum and approach our students.

Our experience could bring additional knowledge to the critical race theory in education. As the primary goal of critical race theory in education is to "understand issues of schooling such as… controversies over curriculum and history." (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 6), the controversy of our experience as a foreign teacher in the US develops the knowledge on we were handicapped into schooling and living. As foreign teachers are part of the teaching population, our experience provides stories of the dark side of schooling. Through the lens of critical race

theory in education (e.g., Duncan, 2002; Lynn et al., 2022), I could share accounts of our stories to view them through the Filipino migrant teacher experience. Through this, I could explore our lived experience through the critical lens of AsianCrit. As a *dayuhang guro,* I could share our story in this sense of truth and sacrifice.

The significant findings of this vignette are that overseas-trained teachers practice a 'survival curriculum,' which means designing and implementing pedagogy without assistance and guidance – at the same time, victims of human trafficking at schools. We figure out curricular processes and practices with limited knowledge and experience of the new school or place. Classroom management and language barriers are some of the consequences and challenges we had to go through in the first years of teaching. The autoethnographic account of Teo (2022) shares a similar experience as a migrant Asian Australian high school teacher's racial performativity within a white Australian high school. He mentioned, "I had to teach Mathematics even though it was not one of the subject areas I was trained in – to my White school administration and colleagues." (p. 6). His autoethnographic account as a migrant teacher and intersects with AsianCrit delves into the similarities of how I had to teach Social Studies even though this is not my subject matter expertise. His experience connects to how Asians are brought into the school setting, thinking that we 'all know' and we will say 'yes' to all of the tasks given to us. This falls into AsianCrit's model minority myth (Chang, 1993) that portrays Asians as hardworking, intelligent, and successful. Indeed, this is a problem that denies the existence of present-day discrimination against Asian Americans and the present-day effects of oppression of other racial minorities. In other words, it furnishes the oppression of Asian Americans as invisible. Kim-Bossard (2022) said

> I chose to shorten my name to "fit in" better. I quickly learned that I could not get away from Asian stereotypes of living as an immigrant. I have been mistaken numerous times as Chinese and grouped with people from other Asian countries. (p. 360)

This section explains our lived experiences as an Asian American teacher. This breaks our silence and unheard voices within the school walls of Baton Rouge. Through AsianCrit's lens, weaving our connected stories exposes the unheard scheme of school districts in employing and hiring teaching labor from Asian countries, specifically the Philippines. The following vignette shares an unforgettable incident that happened to me regarding the death of my father.

Vignette: *Sakripisyo* - Choosing Death or Dreams

My Story

January 11, 2016, was when my dad passed away in the Philippines due to cancer. At this time, I was in a US Immigration Status of T-Visa, which is the visa for victims of human trafficking. This is a step towards my green card, which is the US permanent residency. To be eligible, one requirement is to maintain a continuous physical presence in the United States for at least three years. At this time, I was still in that period; hence, to see my dad in the Philippines would break my eligibility. If I leave the US, I will be ineligible for the permanent residency qualification. I was broken - in tears, on the floor, crying about what to do next. I made a phone call to the immigration attorney to ask for advice. The attorney mentioned that I can ask for a travel parole with the immigration office to give me a travel parole for me to travel without affecting my continuous residency. I had to prepare some documentation that my dad passed away. Imagine asking for my grieving family to send me documents of my father's burial, death

certificate, and his last pictures before he died. In preparing for the documents, I am choked to see a picture of my father before he died. I was confused, perplexed, sobbing – disheartened.

Going into the immigration office, I hoped they would grant me this travel permit. He was holding me all the documentation of my father's death. You could see in my eyes how I have been crying and bereaving with the death. I showed the officer my application and documentation, still hoping. The immigration officer reviewed my status. He saw the pictures of my dead father and documentation of his death. He asked some questions about my current status, and I answered them as clearly and correctly as possible. Then, he said, "Due to your current immigration status of human trafficking, if you leave the US, your physical presence will cease. With this, I cannot grant you a travel permit, unfortunately." Hearing his decision for me to choose if I needed to see my father and stay for a green card had me kneeling and sobbing in the office. I did not understand what to do. I did not understand why they did not grant me a parole. I was confused and angry – but I had to make a decision – whether to leave the US and visit my father or drop my application to become a permanent resident. It is like choosing death or dream.

Driving back from New Orleans to Baton Rouge with the decision in mind, I remember crying the whole way and having to pull over on the side of the road. With the help of my family, we decided to stay in the US. If my father is still alive, he would choose for me to stay to continue my journey in the United States. We chose to pursue our dream. This was one moment when I was so vulnerable and helpless. I will genuinely carry this emotional horror for the rest of my life.

Story of Others

Dakila: I got homesick, but I told myself I was already here; I am determined. Hardship has been the payment of the money. They owe us an agency and the other financial institution we were recommended from. At one financial institution, I owe 800,000 pesos without me knowing. The amount of money we agreed on before I left for the Philippines was different when I got here in the US. That was hard. I almost paid them 35,000 dollars. It was challenging because, at that time, I had to send money to my children in the Philippines. I have to give it to other relatives as well. At that time, my salary was almost gone, and I was living paycheck to paycheck. There was a time when my auntie died in the Philippines, and I could not go back home. The immigration limitations bound us, and I had to choose to stay in the US. If I leave, I will not be able to be back here with my teaching job. I was so devastated. The only thing I can do is to provide money for the funeral. I still cannot forget her burial – I cried the whole day and could not do anything.

Pedro: I have two children, and my wife cannot work at the time; because of each I could, I would sacrifice hours for myself And my family. However, I cannot sacrifice the job that is providing for us. Right, so I have to give it all. In order for me to continue to provide for them. Moreover, for myself and because that was an important part that I am on Of also how we are going to be successful in in in In the next. A year, so I have to work overtime until midnight until 12 until until 2 am preparing reading. In all of that, but it was after that, when, after the project achieved assignment, there were ten students, I was given 10 cents, they said, Okay, you only going to have 15 maximum. They did that, they gave me 15. So there is a difference between going into the classroom and doing it, in the end, going there, and to accomplish something and to help every child and succeed in your classroom, and this, I think. At the same time, we were

hired and brought to the United States because you wanted to have no child left behind in every classroom, and so they wanted it to happen; I think this is one of the things sticking to my head. And then I am here to do the mission, which is to have every child. So because we were also brought into a city with a high poverty rate, not just that it is a combination of academics and behaviors and then social studies. So, um, there are so many issues in the society within that Community that you need to submerge yourself in understanding that.

Dalisay: Of course, don't you know that every night I cry? I ask myself, "After paying the agency, I will go home." I thought America was great, but not really. Every time I get my paycheck, 400 is deducted from my monthly gross income. Oh my god - I am already physically, emotionally, and financially tortured. Imagine that. How dare the agency do that to us? I was so mad! The agency did not know what type of suffering we were already experiencing, and now they are doing this to us! Remember that I must send money to my family back in the Philippines. I have nothing in my paycheck that I realize the term living paycheck to paycheck.

xxx

This vignette shows the darker and deeper side of us when we experience death in our family or relatives. *Sakripisyo,* which means sacrifice in Tagalog, shares death, grief, and my traumatic loss. Autoethnography as a research design supports examining stories that can be uncovered in traditional research methods (Matthews, 2019). With this, I could examine, evaluate, and analyze our stories –together with my co-teachers. As I write this part of my experience, it shows my 'feelings,' which is a significant part of the research process (Ellis, 1993). As I wrote the death of my father and how I could not see him, I had to process the pain. The picture above shows his casket and funeral that my mom sent to me – when I was grieving alone. This is the only memory I have of an account of his funeral. Autoethnography brings out

the pain and sorrow I have without showing statistics and numbers, just the truth and my lived experience.

Pedro chose to stay in the United States instead of going back to continue her teaching job. Due to US immigration policies for human trafficking, it is difficult to go back to the origin of the country – then come back to the US. The human trafficking visa is called the T-Visa, where you can obtain lawful permanent residence (US Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2021). One qualification is a continuous physical presence in the United States since we were granted the T-Visa. In other words, to get permanent residency, which is my dream, I cannot leave the US for years. Unfortunately, at the time of my father's death, I was within three years of continuous physical presence. Do I leave my dream to become a permanent resident or to see my father's funeral?

Bringing in AsianCrit's tenet of transnational context on immigration (Muses & Iftikar, 2013, p. 24) shows how the US immigration policy can affect Asian immigrants, especially victims of human trafficking. As Filipino teachers in the United States, we are bound by the rules and regulations of the United States. We must comply with the rules – whether it makes sense or not. Being continually in the US for three years does not make sense in our goal of becoming a permanent resident. It should not affect the application for permanent residency. The relationship of the US with other Asian countries impacts the lives of Asian Americans, who can contribute to a better understanding of how racism operates within US policy and international relations (p. 25).

Our stories as Filipino human-trafficked migrant teacher perfectly aligns with the Critical Race Theory's tenet of counter-story (Bell, 1987; Olivas, 1990; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). The exploitations, family death, and immigration limitations contrast the dominant narrative that

Asian migrant teachers do not have challenges in education. This also contrasts with the stereotype that we all are experts in Science and Mathematics. Similar to Kolano's (2016) AsianCrit counterstory, he challenged the Asian American flawed ideologies of smartness and how it is critically flawed. Through this tenet, we could center our story away from 'smartness as cultural wealth" (p. 1160). The constructions of our stories talk back to the hegemonic social constructions of the Asian immigrant experience.

This vignette's significant findings explored my experience writing in grief using Autoethnography. As Matthews (2019) examined, writing through grief can help process pain after the death of a loved one. Similar to Matthews, I had a difficult time writing the death account of my father. Especially since I was not able to visit him during his funeral due to immigration limitations, this was the longest one to write. Just writing the first paragraph of my account, tears fall, and my nose clogged in, examining how I feel. I had to pause and reflect when I felt this. What helped me go through it? I am going through pictures of my dad on my phone – fun images of my family vacationing in Las Vegas, his favorite place. Oh, he loves to gamble – go through the slot machines and the casino tables. If he wins, he would call us and say, "Let us all go to buffet! My treat." That is the signal if he wins. Remembering good times with my father helps me go through trauma. I had to go back to writing that this feeling is a 'normal' incident as I go through it. "Autoethnography makes us use of therapeutic writing and allows us to learn more about people process significant trauma without infringing on the grief of others…" (p. 8). Remembering that the process would help me cope with my life's horror and this process of writing would help me overcome the grief.

Filipinos working overseas are easy targets of these illegal activities because we *need* it. Our families need it, or else we will not have food on the table. According to the Philippines

Statistics Authority, it is estimated that there are 2.2 million Filipinos worked overseas in the year 2019. This diaspora of Filipinos shows the amount of workers who try to get out of the Philippines to provide for their families. Many *do not have a choice*, similar to my respondents Pedro, Dakila, and Dalisay. All of them do not have a choice but to go overseas to provide a better life for their family and would sacrifice everything to provide for them.

I share a blog post from one of the Filipino teachers about the untimely death of one of the Filipino teachers who first came out to report the illegal activities of the recruiter.

From Pinoy Teachers Blog, (2011)

Loida – Epitome of Love, Integrity and Courage

While we have many reasons to celebrate the coming of the new year with positive developments in our struggle both here in the US and back in the Philippines, we are deeply devastated by the loss of an exceptional colleague. Loida Virina, who was one of the brave teachers who early on stood up against the tyranny and abuse of our placement agency, was in a car that was involved in a vehicular accident that claimed her life.

Indeed, there is more immense force than all of us, and when your time comes, it is your past actions and decisions that will be left for us in this world to remember you.

To the family of Loida, this blog would like to let you know that Loida lived an honorable life. To Loida's three children, we would like to tell you that your mother has proven to the world the kind of person she was. Though cut short, she lived a life that is the epitome of love, integrity, and courage. She stood up for what was right during a time when most would rather sit on the fence and wait for

> others to step up. She was a brave soul willing to voice out an injustice despite the risks others are afraid to face. She did these not only for herself and her family but for the greater good.
>
> Loida took to heart her vocation as an educator. Not only did she teach us in words but, most importantly, in her actions as well. Loida died on the day we celebrated the birthday of Martin Luther King, and in her small way, she has taught us by example the lessons of MLK - that we have to take action against oppression.
>
> Loida, we will miss you. Loida, we salute you.

The sadness of this letter to Loida explains the love and courage she shared with the Filipino teacher community. Her courage and efforts to initially report the tyranny and abuse of the agency are known to the Filipino teacher community. This also shares the vignette on Sakripisyo choosing death or dreams – as her death reminded us to be strong in our sacrifices. Loida's courage inspires us to stand up and focus on helping our community fight the injustices of migrant teachers. This letter shines to the other Filipino teacher community to continue the fight against human trafficking and to continue to live our dreams as Americans.

Telling our counter stories (Yamamoto, 1997) elevates our voices and experience as victims of human trafficking in education. It allowed our narrative to rise and challenge the normal perspective – that we are okay because we are model the minority – which is untrue. As stories are grounded on the foundation of Critical Race Theory and Asia (Delgado, 1989; Museus & Iftikar, 2013), our story reveals the truth, which can add valuable knowledge and counter-dominant hegemonic narratives. Migrant teachers do not always have an excellent 'American Dream' experience migrating to the US. We go through challenges and enslavement,

bondage, and servitude with employers and exploit our skills to work in the school systems. As each teacher has a different story, my story adds to the theory and praxis of migrant teachers in the US and how Filipinos are treated along the way.

Summary of Findings

Going back to my main research problem – what does it mean to experience immigrating to the United States as a trafficked migrant teacher from the Philippines, and what does this mean in terms of education? The following section summarizes the significant findings into three: (1) the exploitation of labor workers in education; (2) migration and pursuit of the American dream; (3) invisibility of Asian American teachers.

The Exploitation of Labor Workers in Education

This research reveals exploitative experiences of victims that center in some ways on the exploitation of labor, material, emotional, familial, and education. This sort of exploitation is still alive in the contemporary world. You would think that exploitation is only affected through blue-collar jobs; unfortunately, it also happens in white-collar jobs as well. It was alive within the walls of schools, where we thought a place where we feel we are safe. Indeed, it was not a place where we felt safe, and we were troubled by the transgression of our recruiters.

This finding encapsulates the vignette of Biktima – The immigration experience of a trafficked teacher as it depicted the injustices of the recruiter and school districts before we arrive and upon arrival in the US. It involves the exploitation and illegal activities across the board. It also shapes the unlivable living conditions we had to experience in Baton Rouge and other Louisiana cities – messy apartments, six teachers in two-bedroom apartments, and infected rooms are some examples.

Migration and Pursuit of the American Dream

Migrants go to another country for a better family life, as Hagood and Ducoff (1946) push-pull factor – to escape poverty and have a better life. In migrating to another country, we face many barriers and challenges that we must go through, and crime and illegal activities can be compromised. The fact that some migrants think that the US is a promised land is disheartening because they think that it is all bounty and happiness. Unfortunately, this pursuit of the American Dream is not always the positive outcome that we always would like to have. Migrants come to a new country with nothing in their pockets and sometimes with more debt than their home country. Nevertheless, we still pursue and push toward work and experience harassment.

The vignette Ugat – Roots of Migration encapsulates this finding as understanding the roots of migration explains why we are migrating and still pursuing to migrate to other countries even though we know it will be challenging. Better family life, seeking professional challenges, and searching for overseas jobs are roots that emerged based on our stories. It builds a foundation for why we pursue the American Dream and why we wish to have it. Another vignette connected to this finding is the Sakripisyo – choosing death or dreams. This vignette shares the family sacrifices and traumatic experiences we undergo throughout the process. We sacrifice to leave our home country, our friends, and established life in the Philippines to have a better life for our family, seek professional challenges, and search for a better job. Our stories share all these sacrifices because of the dream, and sometimes we encounter a life-changing decision to choose death or dream, like what I have to choose if I can attend my father's funeral in the Philippines or stay in the US to continue my American dream.

Invisibility of Asian American Teachers

Some of our experiences were featured in local and national news outlets, detailing the cruelties of our recruiter and the disingenuous and exploitative actions of the school system. However, our experiences remained mostly invisible in our community. Even the actions of the school district remain invisible while in plain sight. When you ask around the city of Baton Rouge or even outside of the state of Louisiana, people still do not have any idea that this happened to us. Our experience is also the same as mine as nobody from my school checked on me about it. It felt like a white elephant that is lingering at schools that nobody is talking about. Looking into AsianCrit's model minority paradigm (Museus, 2009; Suzuki, 2002) explains why we experience this at schools. We are invisible in the eyes of the school district and considered a silent race. They 'think' we are okay because they 'think' we *figure it out.* Our experience is a prime example of this theoretical intersection because our hardships, oppressions, and harassment were covered by us being Asian teachers. In addition to the model minority stereotype, we are also considered as the *quiet minority* in which we do not usually say anything back to our oppressors. We usually say, 'Yes sir' or 'Yes, mam'. Chang's (1993) warning on the danger of model minority made sense as we are denied the existence of present-day discrimination (p. 1260).

When we try to decipher teaching, we are invisible in the eyes of the school administrators and other employees of the school district. This is explained in the vignette on Dayuhang Guro – deciphering overseas teaching. As most of us arrived in the US for the first time, we had to learn the culture – Baton Rouge culture, the US South, the accent, race, community, language. These are some of the challenges we must undergo as we figure out how to handle classroom management – student behavior and classroom policies and procedures. Is it

different from what we have in the Philippines? Yes! Our stories share how difficult it is to adjust to the new culture of schooling from our perspective.

Our invisibility prevents us from having a proper onboarding program that would have helped our teaching. This research illustrates the consequences that classroom management and language barrier are the two highlighted challenges we have in our first year. The school district thinks that even though we are experienced teachers from the Philippines and speak English, we could not be on the best practices of managing classrooms in a US setting and also understanding everyday language phrases that are used in the southern states. We ignored these onboarding topics because 'we might know it' and 'we figure it out.' I do not forget how I had to teach Middle School Social Studies and learn it in one week. I was given the Louisiana history textbook and teaching guide – and I figured it out. Mind you, I specialized in special education, specifically in elementary education. I do not know how to pronounce Louisiana explorers and some capital cities. It was a heartbreaking incident professionally, as I had to start from scratch. This example is just my story, and I am sure many Filipino teachers have the same experience as me.

Related to Los Angeles, Thai garment workers Su (1998), who worked from 7 a.m. to 1 a.m., sewed pockets into garments for 2 to 4 cents each. Together with 71 other Thai immigrants, most women inside worked in a place where every window was covered by boards so that people from the outside did not see them. The local authority did not know this, for Los Angelinos know their struggles because they are invisible in people's eyes. The characteristics of the Thai garment workers can somewhat compare to our experience in Louisiana on the racism we experience as Asian American migrant workers. As the majority of Filipino teachers are women, they are being silenced by the system. We are also invisible. Our stories collectively of curricular forces can

emerge to be visible in the eyes of the world. However, we can still be invisible even after our lawsuit and media articles and interviews. Why? Su mentioned that the legal system is built on it. I argue that AsianCrit's commitment to social justice (Iftikar & Museus, 2018) intersects with this force as they mentioned that AsianCrit is dedicated to advocating to end all forms of oppression and exploitation (p. 941). The invisibility of Asian Americans significantly affects our lives in reporting hardships, oppression, and illegalities.

AsianCrit's tenet of (re)constructive history (Iftikar & Museus, 2018) also shares the importance of our story to become visible in writing the history of Asian Americans in the US. As we are racially excluded in US history, we advocate transcending our invisibility to construct a collective Asian American narrative that includes our voice and contributions as Asian Americans in the US. As we know, there is a severe teacher shortage across the nation. Filipino migrant teachers fill the gap and work in schools that are underrepresented and underserved. We were there to help students (and families) who were victims of Hurricane Katrina (2005) and filled the educator gaps around Louisiana. I hope that our presence becomes visible in historical mediums that we have contributed to the US society at this time of need.

In the next chapter, I explore this research work regarding intent, impact, and implications.

CHAPTER V

INTENT, IMPACT, AND IMPLICATION

This chapter discusses different scales categorized into three levels: macro, meso, and macro. These interrelated scales help me organize the intent, impact, and implications of my research to the readers of this study. “Intent” refers to the goals that I have in mind and the actions that I would like to perform in pursuit of them. “Impact” refers to the results of these actions, though not necessarily the desired results. “Implication”, similar to impact, is laying out the findings and how it impacts the world in its significance to policymakers, researchers, teachers, and education leadership. The purpose of this study and my research problem constitute my intent. However, due to the creative process of autoethnography, there are some results that I would like to share and weave into the different scales. These three descriptors (intent, impact, and implication) are weaved into each level, meaning that there is intent, impact, and implication on each level. Additionally, this chapter discusses how these scales relate to the existing literature. To conclude this chapter, I offer some personal reflections on my research.

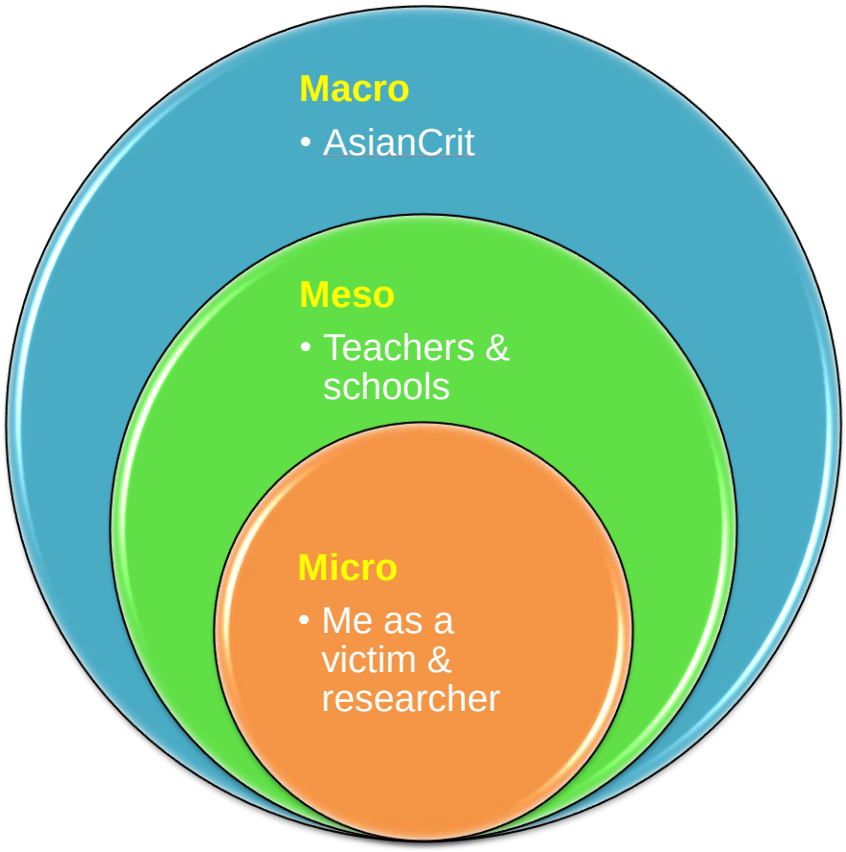

Figure 10: Categorization levels of this research

The stacked diagram in Figure 10 depicts overlapping relationships, emphasizing the gradation of the impact of my experiences in the larger pattern—the macro level. "Macro," in this context, can be considered the intent and impact of this research on a larger scale through AsianCrit and its impact on institutions behind human trafficking and human exploitation. "Meso" here refers to the impact of this research on teachers and school leaders, such as principals, superintendents, and curriculum directors. It is important for them to understand at this level, as my hope is that they understand our experiences and can learn from them. In other words, this level refers to the impact of my research on schooling. Lastly, "micro" here refers to the messy worlds of individuals; through this study, I share my personal experiences as a

researcher, teacher, and survivor of human trafficking. This approach brings out the lived curriculum, which is not visible on the meso or macro levels.

Macro Level

I begin my discussion of intent at the macro level, which houses the impact of this research via AsianCrit on large-scale institutions, be they trafficking institutions or educational institutions. This level helps me in my intent to tie AsianCrit into our lived curriculum and intersect it into a higher level. This means analyzing our lived curriculum through the lens of AsianCrit into the higher (macro) level of examination. It also helps me make sense of our stories, enabling me to resist the larger and systematic forces silencing us. I am listing and explaining reasons on how this research impacted and implied under the macro level.

First, this study elevates the voices of Filipino immigrants, which is critical given the dearth of research on Filipino migrant teachers' experiences in the literature. The invisibility of Filipinos in the American experience shuts our voices down and results in most people perceiving us as "illegals." Our stories explored the contradictions through which immigrants' hopes and beliefs can be emphasized and exposed. Similar stories of injustices faced by Asian Americans, such as the killing of Vincent Chin in Detroit in 1982 (Chang, 1993) and the garment workers who were enslaved in El Monte, California (Su, 1998), are furthered by our stories as Filipino migrant workers, which provide them with more exposure and, hopefully, an audience willing to understand our struggles. Our stories can now be embedded alongside those of other Asian Americans—not just East Asian Americans (Chinese, Korean, Japanese), but Southeast Asian Americans as well. Asian Americans, especially Filipino teachers, have largely been left out of mainstream educational research (Museus, 2009; An, 2016; Kim-Bossard, 2022), despite the fact that Filipino migrant teachers have long contributed to the US education system; our

absence in the literature clearly demonstrates that we are not visible in the academic community. Through critical race theory, we were able to explore our narrative as Filipino teachers and uncover potential race epistemologies in education research. Future research could look at other Asian American communities who likely had similar experiences.

Second, the pursuit of the American Dream suggests that the roots of migration are as follows: a better family life, a professional challenge, and a search for overseas work. The vignette on roots shares a new finding regarding professional challenge that is missing from the literature. Seeking a better family life or a more stable financial status overseas are common roots that many migrants share. Of course, there may be more reasons behind workers', especially teachers', choice to work in other countries. Exploring the root causes behind their decision to sacrifice so much can help us to understand them and, in turn, prepare them for the future.

Third, this research strengthens AsianCrit's framework (Iftikar & Muses, 2018) by hitting every one of its facets. I was able to use AsianCrit as a lens through which to analyze our stories and experiences and to explain the causes of our experiences. My use of AsianCrit centered our experiences as Filipino Asian Americans and facilitated my interpretation of them along epistemological boundaries while challenging historicism (Ladson & Tate, 1995). It enabled me to work toward (re)constructing history, uncovering the truth through our lived curriculum, and showing that we are still foreigners in the eyes of Americans.

Fourth, I call for an end to human trafficking, hate, and exploitation. Our findings detail the way in which we were severely exploited throughout the migration and employment processes. This finding adds to the literature on the exploitation of Filipino labor. Notably, Stop AAPI Hate (2023) indicates that the vast majority of incidents of anti-Asian violence occur at the

workplace. This research extends the report of the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services on the prevalence of human trafficking. This research adds to the work of Dunn (2016), who highlights the experiences of Filipino for-profit teacher recruiters. We contributed our experiences as Filipinos to the literature. Of course, it is important for us to acknowledge that the population of Asian Americans comprises many distinct ethnic communities, not just East Asian countries (China, Japan, and Korea).

Lastly, AsianCrit helped me to make sense of and illustrate the largest issues for Filipino migrant teachers. Using the tenets of AsianCrit as outlined by Iftikar and Muses (2018), I was able to center our experience as Filipinos through race studies. Three tenets of AsianCrit that will strengthen the literature following the publication of this research are transnational context, (re)constructive history, and commitment to social justice: transnational context because this research highlighted the importance of how the process of immigrating to the US affects teachers' decisions; (re)constructive history for reasons that I explain in the next section, as it fits more with meso-level factors; and commitment to social justice because this study outlined how, in response to the human rights violations that we suffered, we sought justice with the help of non-profit organizations.

Sharing these elements of macro-level analysis should impact current national and state policies on immigration, labor, and education by helping policymakers and the public at large understand our experiences and the way they intersect with AsianCrit in a large-scale sense. In the next section, I bring the discussion down to the meso level, meaning schooling.

Meso Level

The meso level covers the intent behind and impact of this research on schooling in general as well as teachers and school leaders, including principals, superintendents, and curriculum directors. It is important for them to understand Filipino migrant teachers' experience in order for them to improve the way in which they are treated in the future.

First, this research implies that migrant teachers need to be prepared to overcome adversity at schools. Cruickshank (2004) explores what constitutes teacher-education pathways in foreign training and demonstrates that it can be modeled in the US to prepare and properly equip international teachers. As migrant teachers only get "survival English" during their first year (p. 239), it is a challenge for them to learn how the new place (school) works while simultaneously in the process of learning how to listen, speak, and write in the local language. This information emerged in my vignette on deciphering teaching, specifically with regard to language barriers. As we did not have time to study or get prepared due to family and work commitments, we simply proceeded through the process and learned along the way. This had ramifications for our instruction, as simply communicating with students constituted a challenge, resulting in serious classroom-management issues during the first year. Our school's regular onboarding process for teachers was insufficient. Having a meaningful onboarding process and an ongoing professional development program for foreign-trained teachers would make a tremendous difference for new migrant teachers in the future. Our findings on this point align with those of Sharplin (2009), who argues that migrant teachers require cultural competence training to support them as they are confronted with a new cultural and social context in order to serve as effective teachers. Migrant teachers are always ready to learn and become better teachers. They understand that they need to make adjustments to their teaching strategies and

learn more about the local culture and processes—they just need some help in determining what adjustments to make. As shown in our vignette—*Ugat* "Roots of Migration"—they are generally seeking a professional challenge, meaning that they are willing to put the time in to learn. It is vital for local teachers and school leaders to help prepare migrant teachers in order to ensure that they are supported and successful. Understanding the sacrifices that they have gone through and providing them with ongoing support and mentorship is key to ensuring their success and, in turn, the success of their students.

Second, the school district's affiliation with the illegal employment agency demonstrates that there is no solid screening process in place to identify properly licensed human resources agencies in the Philippines. The school district must be careful and thorough in identifying partner employment agencies, as an improper choice can destroy lives. One way to check the legality of the agency is by contacting the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and verifying the agency's license and history. School districts must go through this process carefully and thoroughly to ensure that they are not complicit in human trafficking. This necessity presented itself in my vignette on Biktima, as their illegal activities at the behest of the school district severely harmed hundreds of vulnerable migrants sent to Baton Rouge. We are the victims of the school district's illegal recruitment activities. We were invisible in the community and did outwardly exhibit our suffering as we experienced it. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) needs to run thorough background checks on employers and recruitment agencies bringing workers to the US. They must strictly enforce policy to ensure that these agencies do not violate US immigration or human rights regulations.

Third, I call for Asian American history to be a required part of US history curricula to boost the visibility of Asian Americans. In this assertion, I align with An (2016) and Muses

(2014), who uncover the presence of Asian Americans in US history curriculum standards from basic to higher education. This is important for Asian American teachers, as it would undoubtedly increase the visibility of Asian Americans in the US. This proposition is also plausible, as there is already momentum behind requirements for Asian American and Pacific Islander history in K–12 curricula nationwide (Najarro, 2023). This momentum has risen in response to the wave of anti-Asian violence that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. In line with AsianCrit's tenet on (re)constructive history, we can reconstruct Asian American history by ensuring the visibility of Asian Americans—both past and present—in schools. As shown by the Asian American Foundation's (TAFF, 2003) STAATUS Index, Americans are largely incapable of naming prominent Asian American individuals and historical events. In fact, three out of every ten Americans cannot recall a single significant event in the history of Asian Americans. They can only cite Hollywood stars like Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee. The degree to which our history has been erased from school curricula and state social studies standards is tremendously sad. Hopefully, the incorporation of Asian American history into US history curricula will give Asian Americans a larger presence and greater visibility in American society.

Fourth, this study continues the fight to retain critical race theory in US curricula. The integration of anti-racist topics in curricula is vital in the fight against a nationwide white-centric curriculum. Our story must be shared in schools, especially teacher-education institutions, so that future teachers can understand our struggles. This is made clear by Berry and Stovall (2013), who discuss ways in which both teachers and curricula can improve the lived experiences of Black men like Professor Bell and Trayvon Martin. It is important for both students and teachers to understand and address racism in the classroom early on in their lives.

Fifth, Asian American teachers continue to be affected by the model minority myth (Chang, 1993), which portrays us as hardworking, intelligent, and successful. This research reflects the truth of how this stereotype resulted in us being forced to teach math and science regardless of our individual skills and certifications. The findings in the vignette on deciphering teaching—Dayuhang Guro—reveal how Asian Americans have struggled on account of this myth. It only serves to deepen the invisibility of individual Asian Americans and, more specifically, of Filipino teachers . I call on school districts that are actively conscious of potential biases toward Asian Americans and adamant about hiring and assigning Asian American teachers based on their merit and individual assets.

My intent on this level is to amplify what I would like teachers and school leaders to know when they have Asian American migrant teachers working in their schools—specific strategies for how to take care of these migrant teachers and prepare them for success. They are already motivated and ready to learn; school leaders can take that motivation and help them to excel in an American classroom.

Micro Level

At the micro level, I am sharing the impact of this research as a researcher, as a teacher, and as a survivor. Our case Nunag-Tanedo et al. v. East Baton Rouge Parish School Board et al. (2012) exemplified the general experiences of Filipino teachers, but my research shared what was not heard in the court case. This research outlined what I learned from our experiences as Asian Americans intersecting with AsianCrit theory to advance the epistemological understanding of race and the Filipino background. Through the use of AsianCrit as a lens through which to analyze our stories, I exposed many areas of suffering and struggle that most

people do not know or understand. Similar to Jewett's (2008) autoethnographic work on curricula, teaching multicultural education and semblance of intimacy, I was able to embody—first-hand—storytelling as an educator and a researcher. I was able to situate myself in the center of our experiences and identify vignettes to better understand the lived curriculum and, in turn, give meaning to AsianCrit. My story, together with those of my participants—Dakila, Pedro, and Dalisay—enabled me to explore and interweave our stories in order to form a living curriculum through autoethnography. We were able to expose our exploitation and suffering by facing our own vulnerability, emotions, and stories in a way that can affect the reality of social sciences and literature. What we achieved is exactly what Reed and Dahanay (1997) had in mind in their work on autoethnography.

As a marginalized community, autoethnography created an alternative venue (Hayano, 1979) in which we could critically relay our story of coming to the US. A positivist research design would not have facilitated the proper telling of our stories, so I am grateful that I was able to use autoethnography to share my personal world, my positioning, and my experiences in the US (Muncey, 2010, p. 23). By sharing my personal experience as a Filipino migrant teacher and positioning myself as an invisible teacher, I hope to fill the gaps in the literature regarding our experiences in the field of education. Going through the process of autoethnography, I had to process my grief surrounding my dad's death. As Matthews (2019) explains:

> academic research with personal experience allows us to explore and examine difficult issues such as death, grief, and traumatic loss […] and autoethnography makes use of therapeutic writing and allows us to learn more about how people process significant trauma without infringing on the grief of others. (p. 8)

The vignettes on death or dreams largely revealed this impact. As I wrote my personal experience of immigration, it helped me to cope with the trauma that I had experienced. I had never really internally addressed the death of my father in terms of how it affected me emotionally and mentally, but I was forced to over the course of this research. I had to stop and truly process my feelings to be able to think, move forward, and take action. I am glad that I employed autoethnography in my research and hope that this study encourages future researchers to make greater use of it. It advances the stories of Asian Americans in the process of (re)constructing our history (Iftikar & Museus, 2018) and making ourselves visible.

Having covered the macro level and the meso level, I now must end this section by looking inward at myself—at the micro level—as an invisible Filipino migrant teacher. This description is a narrative based on the data, vignettes, and personal experiences uncovered throughout this research process, a narrative that I hope effectively describes who we are in this world.

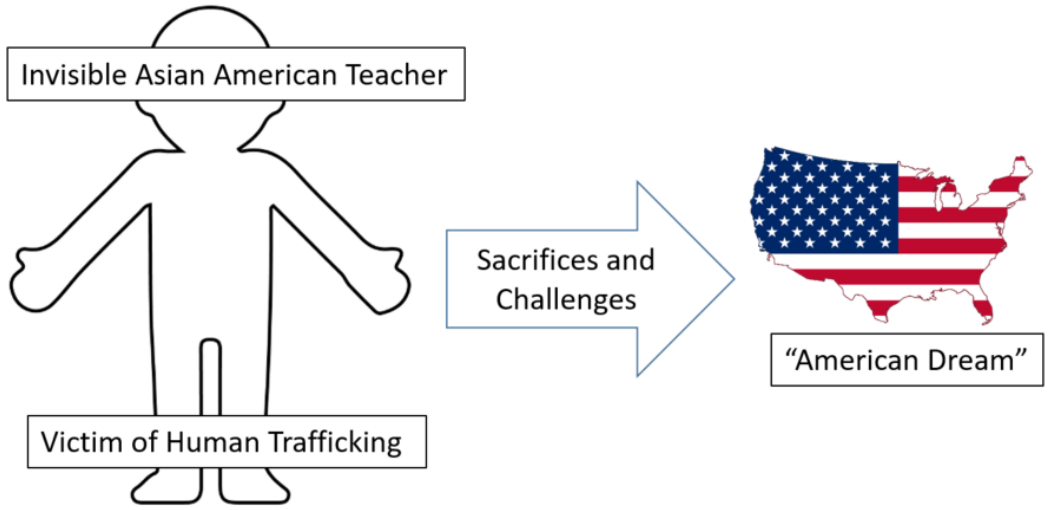

Figure 11: Conceptualization of an invisible Asian American teacher

Figure 11 showcases how Filipino teachers migrating to the US are, by default, invisible in the eyes of the people in the country. The findings of this study parallel those of the Asian

American Foundation (TAAF, 2023), which asserts that Asian Americans remain largely invisible within American society and that we often still feel unsafe due to our race.

Invisible teachers have to make sacrifices and face many challenges to grow accustomed to the US education system. In our experience, we became victims of human trafficking and had to choose between life and death, but our overall goal remained the same: Reach the American Dream through a green card (permanent residency) or citizenship. Is the dream worth what we went through? Maybe. But that is a question for another paper. My hope is that our stories become visible and reach other Asian teachers who are thinking of pursuing the American Dream.

As Asian American migrant teacher, we are invisible by default. But this research constitutes just one factor bolstering our voices and our visibility in both research and practice. This study explored the juxtaposition between hope in the American Dream and the suffering that immigrants in the US so frequently encounter. It allowed us, as teachers, to "move beyond facts, and understand our cultural world" (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 24). Our hopes, dreams, and suffering coexist within the lived curriculum that is, in essence, our lived curriculum as Filipino migrant teachers.

This understanding of who we are highlights our existence in the US education workforce. It exposes the stereotype of the model minority and highlights our struggles and suffering. My hope is that this study encourages school leaders and policymakers to provide guidance through proper onboarding processes and other policies aimed at helping us succeed in the classroom.

Personal Reflections on this Project

This story—the composite of several migrant teachers' stories—is important to all Filipino migrant teachers in the United States. It is important for AsianCrit to pave the way for people to gain access to previously unheard stories from the Asian American community. We constitute an integral part of the US education workforce, meaning that our stories expose the lived curricula within schools and communities.

Using AsianCrit as a lens through which to expose our unheard stories is vital to sharing our pain with the world. I was able to use the AsianCrit framework (Chang, 1993; Museus, 2013; Teranishi, 2010) to center Filipino teachers as victims of human trafficking. The framework guided me in writing, analyzing, and illustrating my story regarding the struggles I encountered after deciding to teach overseas. People have no idea what we went through during our journey. When I tell my story to other people, it is faith-shaking to them. They felt sorry for not previously knowing about it. I needed and used this critical framework to properly dig deep into *why* we experienced such horror.

Autoethnographic studies that use AsianCrit as a framework have emerged in the past. Teo (2022) shares his account as a migrant Asian Australian high school teacher needing to engage in racial performativity and attempting to find solidarity and address race within his white Australian high school. He shares his experiences as a voice of Asian migrant pre-service and early-career teachers in Australia and uses AsianCrit to present his quest to deal with racial injustices across white Australian classrooms. In another autoethnographic study, Kim-Bossard (2022) uses AsianCrit to examine her role as an Asian migrant teacher in the United States through art. She uses collage as her first step in storytelling to explore deeper meanings within narratives about her lived experiences (p. 359). Their autoethnographic experiences use

AsianCrit as an investigative tool in education research to provide evidence of oppression and injustice.

AsianCrit values our stories as Asian Americans, establishing a connection between theory and practice with the aim of effecting positive change (Museus & Iftikar, 2014). Our unheard voices as Asian Americans are heard through the use of AsianCrit as a research framework. It facilitates dialogue and facilitates the critical analysis of Asian Americans in educational settings.

Concluding my story as a Filipino teacher in the US, it is clear that the journey of a migrant teacher poses many challenges and hardships. The exploitation of Asians through labor still runs rampant in the modern world. The system is designed to be deaf to the cries of injustice; the fear of immigration and the "pragmatic" idea that all immigrants need to lie low dominate contemporary discourse. This intersects with AsianCrit's concept of Asianization (Museus & Iftikar, 2014), through which Asian Americans are effectively silenced by being known as nothing more than a model minority. The realities of this system are not seen in US schools, where migrant teachers suffer severe struggles and injustices.

I hope that our story properly reflects the voices of all Filipino teachers who have been subjected to exploitation in the field of education. Additionally, I hope this research broadens the tenets of AsianCrit, enabling it to scrutinize the experiences of the Filipino diaspora in American schools.

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