Ensinando em Escolas Desfavorecidas: Uma Exploração Intercultural de Professores Americanos e Filipinos da "Geração Milênio"

Teaching in Disadvantaged Schools: A Cross-Cultural Exploration of Millennial American and Filipino Teachers

Enseñando en Escuelas Desventajadas: Una Exploración Transcultural de Maestros Milenarios Estadounidenses y Filipinos

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Resumo

Usando uma análise temática interpretativa de pastas de vídeos de TED e TEDx online de dois professores americanos e dois professores filipinos da "Geração Milênio", esse trabalho visa a exploração de valores, crenças e visão mundial de sua decisão aparente contracultural a ensinar em escolas públicas desvantajadas em áreas de altos índices de pobreza. Através de uma lente contextualista e usando o modelo da cultura de Lloyd Kwast, uma comparação intercultural dos componentes culturales de suas decisões revelou através de seus discursos similaridades e diferenças intragrupo sutis porém fundamentais. Análise revelou que os valores de professores americanos mais novos giram em torno de igualdade e justiça enquanto a dos filipinos priorizavam as crianças e o bem estar da comunidade. As crenças dos americanos é centralizada na a potência das oportunidades sócioeconômicas e atitude enquanto a dos filipinos acredita-se na capacidade da contribuição sincera e enfatiza aspectos positivos para concretizarem seus objetivos. Apesar disso, parece haver indícios das

similaridades entre esses dois grupos até esse ponto. Contanto, a diferença fundamental foi revelada somente na seu visãos mundiais. A visão mundial dos americanos era baseada na ideia e visão das noções do Iluminismo que fundaram a sua nação. A visão mundial dos filipinos eram baseadas em vivendo com e consequentemente encontrando-se em outros. Debaixo de sua decisão contracultura a ensinar em escolas desavantajadas, encontra-se a diferença cultural fundamental que consiste da rede latente rica e motivações único para a sociedade e o contexto onde eles prosperam.

Palavras-chave: professores milenares, escolas desfavorecidas, contracultura.

Abstract

Using an interpretive thematic analysis of two American and two Filipino Millennial teachers' TED Talk and TEDx Talks online video files, this paper aimed to explore the values, beliefs, and worldviews underlying their apparently counter-culture decision to teach in disadvantaged public schools in high poverty rate areas. Through a contextualist lens and using Lloyd Kwast's model of culture, a cross-cultural comparison of the cultural components of their decisions revealed through their speeches revealed subtle yet fundamental intra-group similarities and differences. Analysis revealed that young American teachers' values revolve around equity and justice while the Filipinos' were on children and community welfare. The Americans beliefs centered on the potency of socio-economic opportunities and attitude while the Filipinos believed in the capacity sincere contribution and the highlighting of positive aspects to get things done. Despite these, there appears to be hints of similarities between these two groups until this point. The fundamental difference was revealed in their worldviews. The American worldview was based on the idea and vision of the Enlightenment notions that founded their nation. The Filipinos' worldviews were based on living with and consequently finding themselves in others. Underneath the counter-culture decision to teach in disadvantaged schools, lies the fundamental cultural differences consisting of rich latent networks and motivations unique to the society and context where they thrive.

Keywords: millennial teachers, disadvantaged schools, counter-culture.

Resumen

Usando un análisis temático interpretativo de los archivos de video en línea de las charlas TED y TEDx de dos maestros milenarios estadounidenses y dos maestros milenarios filipinos, este artículo aspira explorar los valores, las creencias y las cosmovisiones subyaciendo su aparentemente decisión contracultura a enseñar en las escuelas públicas desventajadas en las

áreas de alta tasa de pobreza. A través de una lente contextualista y usando el modelo de la cultura de Lloyd Kwast, una comparación transcultural de los componentes culturales de sus decisiones reveló a través de sus discursos similitudes y diferencias intragrupo sutiles pero fundamentales. El análisis reveló que los valores de los maestros jóvenes estadounidenses giran alrededor de la equidad y la justicia mientras estos de los filipinos giran de los niños y el bienestar comunitario. Las creencias de los estadounidenses se centraron en la potencia de las oportunidades socio-económicas y la actitud, mientras que los filipinos creen en la capacidad para la contribución sincera y la destacación de los aspectos positivos para lograr cosas. A pesar de estos, parece haber pistas de las similitudes entre estos dos grupos hasta este punto. La diferencia fundamental fue revelada en sus cosmovisiones. La cosmovisión estadounidense fue basada en la idea y la visión de las nociones de La Ilustración que fundaron su nación. Las cosmovisiones de los filipinos fueron basadas en viviendo con y consecuentemente encontrándose mismos en otros. Debajo de la decisión contracultura a enseñar en las escuelas desventajadas, recaen las diferencias culturales fundamentales consistiendo de las redes latentes ricas y las motivaciones exclusiva de la sociedad y el contexto donde ellos prosperan.

Palabras clave: los maestros milenarios, las escuelas desventajadas, contracultura.

Introduction

This article aims to explore the cultural elements underneath young millennial teachers' decision to teach in poor or disadvantaged schools. This work investigates the contents of culture in an attempt to add to the understanding of a seemingly counter-intuitive move of young, relatively well-educated professionals to pursue teaching in poor schools. They do this despite the meager pay and low social prestige when they could have sought lucrative careers elsewhere. This seems to defy the general expectations of upward social mobility expected among the young and educated (Abowitz, 2005; Kelly, 2014; Lyons, Schweitzer, Ng & Kuron, 2012; Zhou, Lee, Vallejo, Tafoya-Estrada & Xiong, 2008).

Beyond the issue of these young teachers' income, another context worth acknowledging is the socio-economic state of the communities they choose and persist to teach in. Thus, it is also important to explore the cultural roots of these decisions, and actions, to understand the elements they share and diverge from. In this paper, this counter-culture decision and action is explored from two separate contexts, taking purposively selected samples from the Philippines and from the United States of America.

There is increasing number of Millennials joining the teaching workforce. In the United States, one in five millennials become a teacher (Seppanen & Gualteiri, 2012). In the Philippines, graduates of education and teacher training ranks second among the greatest number of college graduates, just behind business and business-related fields (Commission on Higher Education, 2017). These younger teachers bring with them a certain set of values, beliefs, and worldviews as they join the work force which contrast with those of the earlier generations (Lyons et al., 2012).

In the Philippines and in the U.S., teachers comprise a significant sector of the workforce. Ingersool and Merrill (2010) noted a ballooning population of teachers in the K-12 teaching sector. They also noted that although the teaching force is becoming old, it is also countered by an influx of younger teachers. Also, the group is becoming more female-dominated with an alarming rate of turnovers because of those who choose to leave.

However, the so-called "best and the brightest" do not opt for this career (Ingersool & Merrill, 2010). In the Philippines, teaching is generally not the career of choice of the top students. Well-meaning non-government organizations have to devise programs to entice young and talented Filipinos to venture into teaching especially, among schools in disadvantaged communities (see Philippine Business for Education, 2018; STEPUP, 2018; Teach for the Philippines, 2018).

Early and Shagoury (2010) observed that schools in the United States had been experiencing a dearth of "well-prepared, committed teachers" (par.1). They also cited a previous study (Bolich, 2001) that described new teachers as mostly given assignments in very poor schools that do not do well in various measurements of academic achievement.

Guarino, Santibañez and Daley's (2006) observed that neophyte teachers transfer to more prosperous schools or altogether leave teaching.

Millennial Teachers in Schools

Who chooses a teaching career? Richardson and Watt's (2006) study conducted among first year pre-service teacher education candidates in three Australian universities revealed that those who pursue careers in teaching are usually females of relatively younger age. Ingersool and Merrill in (2010) noticed the same trend in the US. Aspiring teachers also tended to come from families with modest incomes.

A study in the Philippines (Escarlos & Tan, 2017) had a similar observation about the socio-economic background of pre-service teachers. Interestingly a sizeable number of

them were "career switchers". This means that they considered a different career before they decided to pursue teaching. The reason why they pursued teaching was their "…perceived teaching abilities, the intrinsic value of teaching, and the desire to make a social contribution, shape the future, and work with children/adolescents" (Escarlos & Tan, 2017, p. 44). Teaching as a "fall back" career was the least chosen reason. Reasons such as "desire to enhance social equity, having experienced positive prior teaching and learning experiences, job security, job transferability, and time for family" (Escarlos & Tan, 2017, p. 44) did not rate as high but was still of note. These teachers tended to perceive teaching as an in-demand and demanding careering. This means that they are aware of the expectations to acquire technical and specialized knowledge and skills. However, they also see teaching as a career of relatively lower social status and of modest pay. The findings of this study also reveal that despite dissuasions and un-encouraging views about teaching, they still feel a high degree of satisfaction towards this career.

The United States National Chamber Foundation released a study in 2012 that paints a picture of teaching as a challenging, often thankless career especially for young teachers. The same report also reveals that the young teachers are practically voiceless, overworked, undervalued, and struggle with structural, socio-cultural and economic problems within the school system. There is a general notion of teaching being a career that is intrinsically and emotionally-rewarding yet non-prestigious and underrated.

An earlier study by Hanushek and Pace (1995) revealed that for those who choose to teach and remain in teaching, income is not a significant factor. This means that those who choose to stay may find the income relatively low as compared to others but still are motivated by other factors beyond compensation. They also noted that those who choose a teaching career did not do relatively well academically as compared to those who chose other academic career paths. This same pattern was noted in a decade afterward in another study (Ingersool & Merrill, 2010). This fuels the common notion that the best and the brightest of any cohort of students do not pursue teaching. However, those who eventually gain teaching qualifications are those who did well in their pre-service teaching preparations.

Citing previous studies, Richardson and Watts (2006) noted that although teaching is a socially respectable job in many developing countries, this career does not attract quality careers seekers nor encourage them to stay. They noted that this is also due to the fact that teaching is not a lucrative career economically. Data from educational anthropological studies in the Philippines have noted a similar observation. That is, teachers are not only paid poorly, they also have to endure additional enormous bureaucratic and instructional burdens such as

other tasks unrelated to teaching (Bautista, Bernardo, & Ocampo, 2009). Philippine education has created an alternative image of a teacher as an over-worked and underpaid clerk. An analysis by Durban and Catalan (2012) on the persistent issues in Philippine education likewise feature the less than ideal conditions of teacher qualification, teaching support, and an overall institutional and bureaucratic culture that does not support the teachers' attainment of optimal professional efficacy and dignified status. These observations, among others, does not make the profession look appealing to many ambitious young students and workers.

However, there appears to be a general sense of optimism towards members of the younger demographic groups who choose to pursue and take take-up a teaching career in the United States. Coggshall, Behrstock-Sherrat, Drill, Menon and Cushing (2011) observed that:

> Taken together, the Gen Y teachers surveyed and interviewed for this study demonstrate that members of the next generation of teachers have the drive to make education their career, the eagerness to learn from their colleagues from earlier generations, and the impulse to keep a skeptical eye on the policies that affect their practice. In short, they have the necessary qualities to capably take stewardship of the changing teaching profession... Generation Y teachers want to stay in the profession and make a difference. Building humane, high-performing workplaces today will ensure that this next generation of teachers and their colleagues evoke extraordinary levels of learning among all their students and build a stronger teaching profession tomorrow (p. 31).

This group of young teachers require a different set of support from the schools and their supervisors. This group would need regular feedback on their effectiveness, a supportive learning community, recognition of quality work, a rational evaluation system, and access to technology to improve performance.

Although, young professionals around the world may grow up in contexts different from each other. However, social psychologist Jeffrey Jensen Arnett (2005) argued that there seems to be a lot more in common culturally among the younger generations who grew up and went to school in urban areas. This has been attributed to the exposure to more or less the same globalized culture. Additionally, he also pointed towards the emerging phenomenon of "emerging adulthood" that is, an intermediate phase between adolescence and formal adulthood characterized by ambiguity and value-belief systems contrariwise to the stability and consistency expected in adulthood. Interestingly, there is more cultural difference

between youths from urban and rural areas in the same country, than youths from the urban areas of different countries (Arnett, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

American anthropologist Ward Goodenough's definition of culture is utilized for this work. His definition clearly hints of a cognitivist perspective of culture when he defined it as "… a complex of ideas and attitudes that inhibit impulses, establish shared meanings and goals, and enable people to live in a social system" (Wren, 2012, p. 73). In his own words, he viewed culture "…as something learned, culture was like a language, which is not what its speakers say but what they need to know to communicate acceptably with one another, including constructing utterances never made before yet immediately intelligible to others" (Goodenough, 2003, p.6).
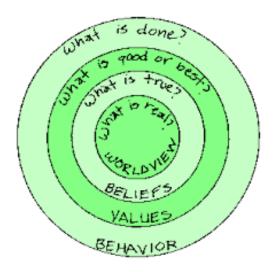
In an autobiographical account noting his views on culture, Goodenough (2003), referring to an earlier work, explained that it consisted of "…(*i*) criteria for categorizing phenomena as meaningful stimuli, (*ii*) criteria for deciding what can be, (*iii*) criteria for deciding how one feels about things (preferences and values), (*iv*) criteria for deciding what to do about things, (*v*) criteria for deciding how to go about doing things, and (*vi*) the skills needed to perform acceptably" (p.6). One crucial unit of analysis that must be considered in any attempts at looking into the "contents" of culture are the activities or traditions of the society or group.

As they, evolve through small or sizeable mutations overtime, the underlying contents and motivations of these cultural elements also change. These are manifestations of sub-cultures and counter cultures. Barker (2004) defined counter-cultures as "…the values, beliefs and attitudes, that is, the culture, of a minority group that is in opposition to the mainstream or ascendant culture" (p.36). These underlying structures inform the subsequent beliefs, values, and activities.

In search of a practical model to operationalize Goodenough's concept of culture, Lloyd Kwast's (1992) model of culture was used in an attempt to explore the cultural structures that underlie the cultural experience. The figure below shows the diagram of Kwast's model of culture.

Figure 1.

Lloyd Kwast's Model of Culture (1992)

Kwast' (1992) model posits that underneath any action of humans within a culture is a subsequent set of values (What is good or best?), beliefs (What is true?), and worldviews (What is real?). These intangible cultural elements serve as the underlying foundations upon which any human actions and behaviors are founded. That is, human behavior does not occur in isolation of these invisible structures. Goodenough (2003) and Kwast (1992) provided the theoretical and practical directions on understanding the core of an fascinating cultural phenomenon, the counter-culture, and how it figures in the lives of people as they navigate the re-shaping and re-construction of institutions and activities that enable them and the society to live in that very same social system. The behavior under question in this paper are the young teachers' decisions to

What counter-culture manifestations could be studied in the school setting? This question may be addressed by acknowledging that part of the current multicultural education agenda should be the analysis of how poverty in communities and school link to the disproportionality of school success and opportunities among certain sectors (Banks, 2012; Bennet, 2007; Gay, 2000).

Poverty in schools and how this affects other aspects of education and schooling such as well-being, academic achievement, employment, and higher education opportunities are common issues in both the United States and in the Philippines (Ballantine & Spade, 2011; Banks & Banks, 2002; Bernardo, 2008; Maligalig & Albert, 2008; Provenzo, 2002).

Resources and opportunities are not equally provided and there are merely oases of success amidst the predominantly dismal landscape. Education and schooling are seen as a vehicle to overcome the predicament of poverty and gain social and economic mobility (Renzetti & Curran, 2004). Thus, the commonly expected cultural movement and attitude would be to get away from these poor communities and prefer the more affluent ones instead. This is a form of counter-culture (Henslin, 2005; Renzetti & Curran, 2004) and within it lies a certain set of values, beliefs, and worldviews that may have grown or weakened overtime.

In a Third World country like the Philippines, upward social mobility is a general aspiration. Families generally invest a sizeable amount of money on their children's education with the hopes of them acquiring better incomes and social prestige (Medina, 2005). Consequently, parents, especially those with upward mobility aspirations, expect their children to gain better socio-economic status. Thus, the expected pattern should be to acquire better forms of *capitals* (Ballantine & Spade, 2011; Provenzo, 2002; Sullivan, 2001) which could serve to allow them more advantage for themselves, and by extension, their respective families.

Teachers who could have opted to work in more lucrative careers or in better schools but still stayed to serve in disadvantaged schools may well fit into the phenomenon of counter-culture. Experiences from the Philippines and the United States of America are presented and analyzed in this paper.

Purpose and Methodology

This paper is guided by Ward Goodenough's (2003) views on how to understand culture, focusing on the structures underneath cultural phenomena. It aims to answer this specific question: *What values, beliefs, and worldviews underlie the millennial American and Filipino teachers' decisions to teach and stay in disadvantaged schools?*

The data sources for this paper from the transcribed Ted Talk by Kandice Sumner (2015) from the United States of America and TEDx Talks (independently-organized talks using the TED Talk format) by Elijah Miles (2014), also from the US, and by Sabrina Ongkiko (2013) and Delfin Villafuerte (2015) from the Philippines. Almost all of Ongkiko's talk and half of Villafuerte's are in Filipino peppered with occasional English sentences, words, and phrases.

In this paper, Ongkiko's and Villafuerte's translated English vignettes from their talks were used although the analysis was done using the original transcripts. Miles, from

Baltimore, Maryland and Sumner from Boston, Massachusetts, are Black Americans from urban backgrounds. Ongkiko and Villafuerte, from Metropolitan Manila, are Filipinos of the Tagalog ethno-linguistic group of Luzon Island. They shared their experience using the TED Talks and TEDx Talks platforms. These two groups represent two different societies although all of them hail from the same demographical generation, Millennials. All of them teach in schools in disadvantaged communities. Coming from different societies, the underlying values, beliefs, and worldviews informing their choice to stay and teach in poor schools were the subject of analysis. These teachers defied the dominant socio-economic conventions of pursuing careers typically geared towards upward socially mobility.

It would be interesting to explore and understand the cultural structures of such decisions from the context not only of Western and Eastern experience and perspective but also from a First World and Third World lens of experience as well.

The paper assumed a *contextualist* perspective in terms of epistemology. This means that the view and approach used is

> "…sitting between the two poles of essentialism and constructionism, and characterized by theories, such as critical realism…which acknowledge the ways individuals make meaning of their experience, and, in turn, the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings, while retaining focus on the material and other limits of 'reality' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81).

This study also takes up an interpretivist stance (Gray, 2004). This was done to be "…sensitive to context, that get inside the ways others see the world, and that are more concerned with achieving an empathic understanding than with testing laws such as theories of human behavior" (Neuman, 2014, p.109).

Braun and Clarke's (2006, p. 87) thematic analysis protocol was used as a data analysis strategy to facilitate the distillation and elucidation of the meaning units and their respective components from the data set. This particular data analysis strategy is flexible to use for several epistemological traditions and approaches in qualitative research (Willig, 2013). After their video files were transcribed it was subjected to a theoretical coding scheme based on Kwast's (1992) framework. Table 1 below presents the phases of Braun and Clarke's (2006) analysis protocol which was used to explore the main underlying cultural themes underneath the decisions and experiences of the four young teachers in teaching in disadvantaged schools.

Table 1

Phases of thematic analysis adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87).

Phase	Description of the Process
1. Familiarizing yourself with the data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing the themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming the themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating cl ear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report.	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

However, as a caveat, this paper could not claim to have the same depth and detailed insight as that of a full ethnography would be able to generate. The main data units used for analysis are the speeches of the teachers. Taking a cue from Goodenough (2003), this paper admits that it would take much more than an analysis of the speeches to have a convincing account of the cultural complexities where these teachers find themselves in thought and action.

This paper also assumes that being part of a group for a considerable amount of time, and consciously choosing to be part of it, enables one to possess a set of "…attitudes that inhibit impulses, establish shared meanings and goals" (Goodenough in Wren, 2012, p. 73) that would enable to thrive within that society, the teachers, though speaking for themselves, are nevertheless viable sources of cultural insights.

In addition, as Goodenough (2003) explained, "As long as the variation in their individual knowledge and understandings does not interfere with their ability to interact

readily with one another, they have the sense that they share their knowledge and understandings and therefore have a common culture" (p.6).

The subsequent section of the paper that presents the results and discussions, is consistent with the notions and assertions by Goodenough (2003) on the nature of culture as the structures that ultimately provide a sense of meaning to the everyday experiences and decisions of people who live, participate, and thrive in it. Also, these discussions portray a contextualist reality where the one's personal experience and construction of a social phenomenon is also tempered by the external realities and pre-existing meanings that have shaped both individual and collective worldviews.

Results and Discussions

The subsequent section presents and discusses the values, beliefs, and worldviews that underlie the decisions of American and Filipino millennial teachers to teach and stay in disadvantaged schools.

A cursory reading of the details on their talks on the websites featuring their respective video files and their very own narratives, seem to be consistent with the counter-culture notion discussed in the theoretical framework section of this paper. They all went to good schools and could have opted for lucrative careers. Statements like this support this observation:

> During my first year as a public school teacher, ahhh, there are three reactions that I always get: surprise, amazement, dismay. It's like, 'What? Why are you teaching there?' 'Oh you come from a prestigious university but you're a public teacher? What a waste'. It's always that (Ongkiko, 2013).

The prevailing cultural scripts in their communities is that of upward social mobility through schooling. Public school teachers are at the bottom of the pecking order in the Philippine education bureaucracy and are saddled with heavy workload despite the relatively unattractive pay (Bautista et al., 2009). Teaching in the Philippines is considered to be a morally noble yet economically un-prestigious profession. They both defied this script.

Delfin Villafuerte (2015) also chose to teach in a public school located in a poor urban community. He finished an honors degree in mathematics and business and as class valedictorian in the same prestigious private university a few years after Sabrina Ongkiko.

In the Philippines, their private university is known as an elite higher education institution that admits well-off and intelligent students, although some disadvantaged students could enroll with the help of scholarships. Their university has a reputation of being a university for the rich. This reputation is further bolstered by having the country's important personalities in politics and business as some of their alumni. With their university's credentials, the general cultural script expected them to take up profitable careers or to have moved towards attaining higher degrees to even further their cultural and other capitals.

The same could equally be said of Elijah Miles (2014) and Kandice Sumner (2015). In the United States, higher education is typically seen as a pathway towards economic gains, and therefore, an upward route in terms of social mobility (Ballantine & Spade, 2011; Provenzo, 2002). The US also has a reputation for having an expensive price tag for higher education.

During and after the Reagan years, higher education has been gradually considered as a private good rather than as public good. This steadily pulled out public spending on higher education rendering it costlier. Thus, it would have generally been considered counter-intuitive to "waste" such an investment by ending up not only in a relatively low paying job, but also in a school located in an area with high levels of poverty.

Teachers' Values

This section discusses the values of American and Filipino teachers based on the thematic analysis of their speeches. It is divided into two sections: *Equity and Justice* for the American teachers; and *Children and Community Welfare* for the Filipino teachers

Equity and Justice. An analysis of the transcript of the talks of the American teachers revealed that their statements are embedded with the values of justice, equity, equality, self-sacrifice, and courage. Both Miles' (2014) and Sumner's (2015) speeches speak of justice, equity, and equality but with slightly different manifestations.

Miles talks about how people in his neighborhood were keen on the prospect of a better life which lies beyond their city. The way Miles described his neighborhood painted a community that has been neglected and have been in a state of decay and degeneration. Indeed, there are sectors of urban spaces which have been ignored while others have been given priorities. He felt that his community deserved better and more than what it is getting now. He could not have been clearer when he declared,

> I was born and raised here in Baltimore city. The "city of no hope", is what
> I've always been told. Growing up, the people in my block would always say

"Elijah, that boy, he got potential. He's going to make it far away from Baltimore." My teachers would say that the reason we should get good grades and stay in school is so we can go to college, get a good job, and be able to lead a neighborhood. My friends, when they tell me about their goals, they would always say that "my goal is to, you know, work hard in school, go to a four-year college, get a good job, and be able to move my family out of this neighborhood." These goals, on the surface, seem harmless or wonderful. We think to ourselves, "Isn't that great? An ambitious kid, who is going to make something of himself no matter what." We love these rags to riches dreams. They seem like something straight off a movie. Kids walking around, thinking that success in their neighborhood is not compatible, thinking that success is literally whether or not they can leave the hood or not (Miles, 2014).

It was, however, in Sumner's (2015) account where more tangible images that illustrate the values of justice, equity, and equality were presented. She did not mince her words when she asserted that

School funding should not be decided by property taxes or some funky economic equation where rich kids continue to benefit from state aid, while poor kids are continuously having food and resources taken from their mouths. Governors, senators, mayors, city council members -- if we're going to call public education public education, then it should be just that. Otherwise, we should call it what it really is: poverty insurance. "Public education: keeping poor kids poor since 1954." If we really, as a country, believe that education is the "great equalizer," then it should be just that: equal and equitable. Until then, there's no democracy in our democratic education (Sumner, 2015)

Sumner had her own share of audacity in forging on her teaching despite the resource constraints, and even going so far as sourcing materials for her students. In that she demonstrated courage. Her everyday work also showed the value of self-sacrifice for a cause bigger than herself. Miles also expressed this both through his narrative and challenge of staying in the community to help it grow, improve, and regenerate. He issued a simple yet profound message to illustrate self-sacrifice and courage:

You know before I made this TED talk, there was a bunch of people telling me "Dang, Elijah, you're making a TED talk. You're going big time, eh?!" But you got to understand I'm not about going big time. I'm not doing this for the sake of Elijah Miles and my future. I don't care if this takes me to the next level. It's not about me, it's bigger than me. I will live in Baltimore city, in the hood, for the rest of my life, until I can transform my hood back into a neighborhood. Working with them, fighting with them, struggling with them, because that is the only way we will make progress, and that's the only way we will make change (Miles, 2014),

Children and Community Welfare. Analysis of the transcripts of the talks of Filipino teachers seem to point towards the values of child-centeredness, sense of purpose in the community, idealism, effort, and efficacy. These values could also figure and were not entirely absent in Miles's (2014) and Sumner's (2015) talks but it is in the Filipino teachers' talks where they get a huge emphasis with detailed anecdotal recollections of succinct encounters with their learners. Both Ongkiko (2013) and Villafuerte's (2015) narratives heavily highlighted the centrality of children's welfare, on not giving up on them, and establishing close relationships with them as vital aspects of their decision to teach and stay in their respective schools. Ongkiko, for instance opened her talk with an emotional letter to elementary pupils. The following is an excerpt of that opening which illustrates how she puts premium on, for her, the most important people in the school – the students:

You are smart…you can do it…you can do it…You can be whatever you want to be…doctor, engineer, lawyer, astronaut, hero. I will help you…As long as you help yourself. Hold on to your dreams. Don't give up. Don't let go. Don't slack. Dreaming doesn't start…reaching the dream when you're old. It starts now...it starts now. I have never known anyone who just woke up and became a doctor. You have to struggle for it. We have to struggle for it. Tomorrow may be uncertain but do your best today and we could get to where we want to go. Perhaps you are angry with your family or with the world. But please…even with just one year in my classroom, you have felt that there was a safe space for you to go to; that there is a person who cares for you, who could accept and love you. Don't grow up angry because believe me: though life may be hard and heavy it is still rich in love and it is made lighter with

hope. Thanks…thanks to that person who came into my life. Because…even if I am your teacher, I have learned so much from you. I did not just become a better teacher; I became a better person. You are the reason why I am here. You have meaning to my teaching. Thank you. (Ongkiko, 2013)

Villafuerte (2015), on his part also deployed an anecdote about one encounter with his learners and their dreams of one day being able to attend the same prestigious university where he got his degree. He shared an incident when he had a personal talk with one of his students who showed potential but was floundering academically. He wanted to convince his student that they are capable, that they are not dumb. He advised to his student:

KC…listen to what I will say to you and don't ever forget what I will say to you…that you are a smart kid. Don't listen to other people when they say that you are not smart because you are smart. I believe in you, and you should also believe that you are a smart kid (Villafuerte, 2015)

A strong value for the community also resonated as a strong value among the Filipino teachers that runs along the emotional and personal dimensions. It is almost similar to that sense of community that Miles has when he talked about his hope for Baltimore. His, however, was mostly framed using the social justice gaze which would be clarified later in the portion of this paper that discusses the deeper cultural components. Ongkiko and Villafuerte expressed a strong affiliation to their respective school communities because of the people whom they teach and work with.

I purposely wore our uniform. This is our national uniform in the Department of Education, and we wear this on Mondays. Because I want the image of a public school to be recognized. So, when you see someone in this uniform, greet them because they are most probably a public school teacher or someone working in the Department of Education (Ongkiko, 2013)

Ongkiko closely identified with the community that she has chosen and felt that she has, like the rest of her peers, have crucial tasks to fulfill. Lamenting the pervasive negative image of a public school teacher who are publicly thought of as inefficient and ineffective in their work, she narrated the experience of a fellow public school teacher

But I hope…I hope, you also meet Mr. Edmund. He is here today. He has eighty students in Payatas B Elementary School. Even when it rains, he still continues to teach despite his wet socks and shoes because of a mini waterfall in his cramped classroom. And you know, even if he has so much to do, he still teaches out-of-school youths as part of the alternative learning system (Ongkiko, 2013)

Both Ongkiko and Villafuerte share that despite the many doubts and misgivings that people or even their families have about their career choice, they value their idealism. Their idealism is centered on the notion of the importance of their learners' welfare beyond anything else. Villafuerte emphasized on this when he recalled his first weeks as a teacher:

I'm not even sure if after two years, will my students be better after. Then I realized that really one thing that matters is that we try…and that in trying we already succeed. So, try because you know that there are many things that need to be changed of what you have done about it. This my school, it's GES…GRES.. General Roxas Elementary School and we're five fellows in my school. And first week of class was pretty crazy. Just like in swimming, when you have to jump on the pool to learn how to swim. Teaching is the same thing. You don't sit down on the class and think about strategies of how to teach. You don't just sit in the class and plans. You have to jump on the classroom with sixty kids running around trying to kill each other and learn how to teach. And we were all sick to the point that some fellows were even brought to the hospital after the first week of class. And you realize that teaching is a job that is not just something that you can do if you just wanted to do (Villafuerte, 2015)

Across the two societies, there are some apparent similarities in terms of values, but their subtle differences could be noted based on the context of where and why these values are held in importance. Keith (2011), and Shiraev and Levy (2013) observed that that Western cultures tend to gravitate towards individualist values while Eastern cultures tend to be more collectivist. However, it could be observed that both societies share individualist and collectivist values. Both of these value systems also appear to converge on the plain of action

or the importance of doing something. At this point, it might still be quite challenging to understand the elusive differences between these two sets until one has a substantial understanding of the subsequent levels towards the core of a cultural experience or phenomenon.

Teachers' Beliefs

This section discusses the beliefs of American and Filipino teachers based on the thematic analysis of their speeches. It is divided into two sections: *Socio-economic Opportunities* for the American teachers; and *Contribution and Highlighting the Positive* for the Filipino teachers.

Socio-economic Opportunities and Attitude. Miles' (2014) and Sumner's (2015) speeches revealed two main beliefs: (a) the potency of resource allocation and socio-economic opportunities in bringing about quality results and dignity to students, teachers, schools, and community; and (b) how a change in attitudes and outlooks of people could create effective individual and collective actions towards a desired change. Their beliefs stem from their experiences and insights in living in disadvantaged communities. Their experiences, however, in better schools open their consciousness to the widespread inequity, inequality, and oppression that cuts across racial and income lines in many highly urbanized areas of the United States. Sociologists of education have pointed out that poor urban communities have often been left out in terms of resources and this exacerbates their already dismal condition (Ballantine & Spade, 2011).

In the case of Miles, this has brought about a particular belief system in his community that the best way to succeed is to escape the community and start a better life elsewhere. He was empathic on his belief of nurturing local heroes who would stay to revitalize the community when he declared:

> This is because our leaders of tomorrow don't want to stay here and make it better, instead, they are in a constant pursuit of this wonderful place that is not here. And when they are all gone, who have our kids left to look up to? No one. The absence of role models to point to is what leaves the city hopeless. Instead of raising kids in pursuit of a better future for themselves and their families, let's raise heroes, saviors even. But you can't raise a hero who fears its own environment. Heroes are courageous. You tell 'em "it's like this right now, little man. Sure, there is drugs, there is violence, sure there are gangs. But if

you stay in school and you work hard, maybe you can come back and do something about this." (Miles, 2014)

Sumner's (2013) talk highlighted the disparity that some racial and economic sectors experience in terms of resources and opportunity and how this contributes to the aggravation of their already deplorable state. His belief is based on the institutional powers and the consequences of using those powers to either promote positive changes for everyone or to disparage some sectors. She asserted that,

> Institutionally speaking, our public school system has never done right by the black and brown child. We keep focusing on the end results or test results and getting frustrated. We get to a catastrophe and we wonder, "How did it get so bad? How did we get here?" Really? If you neglect a child long enough, you no longer have the right to be surprised when things don't turn out well (Sumner, 2013)

Contribution and Highlighting the Positive. On the other hand, Filipino teachers, Ongkiko (2013) and Villafuerte's (2015) believed that (a) making a sincere contribution of ones' competencies could lead to the attainment of community goals, and that (b) highlighting the positive aspects of the situation could boost collective image and morale. The Filipino teachers believe that there is something beyond the structural and institutional disadvantage of most urban public schools such as low resource allocations, meager space and facilities, and an overall sense of acquiescence to poverty. They still believe that with the right attitude, effort, and community movement, these places could still become places of development for teaching professionals who are committed to their practice and vocation, and of hope and refuge for the students in an otherwise harsh and unforgiving world of the city. Both teachers would employ anecdotes and reiterate them into cause-effect belief statements like in this excerpt

> 'I want to be a soldier. I want to be a ballerina. I want to be an engineer. I want to be a lawyer, I want to be a doctor.' Teacher, I want to be a McDonalds' delivery man. Then I thought to myself, 'I entered the public school system thinking I want my student dream bigger. I want to tell him that, 'Hey, you're dreaming wrong. There are bigger things out there.' When this kid told me that

I want to be a McDonalds' delivery man, I thought to myself, 'Maybe that is not my role as a teacher. Who am I to tell you that you are dreaming small? Who am I to tell that you are dreaming the wrong dreams?' I told him, "Then become a McDonalds' delivery man but I want you to be really good in being a McDonalds' delivery man, the kind that when I call McDonalds', I want you to do the delivery you are so good in what you do.' Our jobs as teachers is not to tell children to dream bigger really but to make this dream more real for them that they can do it. So, aspire…because we all have our own ambitions and we our own ambitions should fuel us to reach whatever we want to. Because ultimately, it is your idea, this dream that will change the world. And when you talk about the word 'change', what is there to change? (Villafuerte, 2015)

With this statement, he underscored a key truth that many teachers of his similar persuasion embrace as a guiding model of conduct with respect to the learners and the profession they have chosen to embrace. They saw their work primarily within the classroom and schools, and in the academic and personal success of their learners. Their speeches were riddled with truth statements that the use as explicit guides and even in these, the communal nature of their subscribed truths became more apparent. A belief system anchored on a strong sense of community towards reaching a goal and dispelling a negative image was illustrated in this sharing,

Oftentimes, passionate teachers are those who work quietly and most of the images of the teachers that appear in the media and the stories that get passed a round are the unpleasant actions that we teachers do. And this does not help in our image…Take Ma'am Rodriguez, who would jokingly ask me, 'Oh, aren't you giving up yet? Because I am sure am ready to up!" But you still see her teaching non-readers every day until they learn to read. Some of my co-teachers are here who should be recognized for their passion and dedication. What my friend and I did was to gather these quiet and passionate teachers and we formed a support group because we realized that we need each other's support; that if we want to continue changing our classrooms for our students, we need to help each other. We called it (Kape't Guro) "Coffee and Teacher" –

coffee and teacher sessions but it is also (Kapit Guro) "Hold on Teacher" as a statement that we need to hold on to each other (Ongkiko, 2013).

The beliefs that Ongkiko (2013) and Villafuerte (2015) held works best within the context of an organization or group. Notice that these belief statements, although ultimately geared towards improving meaningful student learning actually calls upon a community effort towards this goal. Given the cumbersome bureaucratic culture and the myriad of problems that teachers, students, and schools face (Bautista, et al., 2009; Durban & Catalan, 2012), a support system of like-minded professionals would be welcome relief. Even when expressing a belief statement that could otherwise be seen as entirely individualist, Villafuerte (2015) still alluded to the communitarian rather than a segmented outlook. His elucidation on the competencies that he believes a teacher should possess manifested this:

> It's a vocation in a sense that there are three things you have to intersect. First is that, it has to be your skills. You have to be good at it. Second is that, it has to be a world need. Does the world need your job? And the third to the most important for me, it has to be something that you love. When you intersect these three things, you will find your vocation. Something that you're good at. Something the world needs. And something you love doing. So pursue something that you enjoy. Because really, you only have one life to live and don't waste your life by not doing something you enjoy (Villafuerte, 2015)

Teachers' Worldviews

This section discusses the worldviews of American and Filipino teachers based on the thematic analysis of their speeches. It is divided into two sections: *Turning Ideas into Realities* for the American teachers; and *Finding the Self in Others* for the Filipino teachers. The subsequent discussions appear to support the prevailing notions of Western and Eastern thinking (Keith, 2011; Laungani, 2006; Shiraev & Levy, 2013).

Turning Ideas into Reality. At this point in the paper, the underlying cultural components are gradually starting to gain some notable distinctions in terms of their collectivist and individualist character. This becomes more pronounced in the analysis of the core cultural component; their worldviews. The American teachers paint a reality fraught with images and structures of injustice existing along racial and economic lines that need to be challenged and overturned. Miles (2014) alludes to the troubled neighborhood that that

created the option of flight rather than flight as the best way to avoid rather than solve what should have otherwise in the first place a common community problem. Educational scholars like Provenzo (2002), McLaren (2005), and Giroux (1997) suggested a Marxist reading on the realities of failing neighborhoods that thereafter produce failing schools.

The prevalent neoliberal culture of unbridled capitalism has created asymmetrical power and resource allocations in society where the politically and economically powerful could afford to isolate themselves from the conditions of the destitute majority and be oblivious of their plight (Gulson, 2009; Provenzo, 2002). Gentrification and its effects on educational policy and opportunities play are key elements in recognizing the structural and cultural scale of this complex issue (DeSena, 2006). Miles (2013) described and lamented on the injustice and apathy of his current underlying cultural reality when he unequivocally made this assertion for action to challenge the status quo:

> We can't raise our heroes to chase after these money, cars and dream homes, because we all know that materials don't bring true satisfaction and they surely don't bring change. We can't raise our heroes by telling them to work hard, so you don't end up like the man on the corner. We raise them by constantly telling them to work hard, stay in school, your community needs you. And when you come back, be able to offer opportunity, that might just take that brother off the corner. We need to begin to raise the Supermen and Wonder Women that these neighborhoods need. We say we want to raise the leaders of tomorrow, but we teach them to hate where they come from and work hard to get to some artificial Utopia. It seems to me like we're trying to bake a cake with the wrong ingredients (Miles, 2014)

Similarly, Sumner (2015) also subscribes to a very similar worldview and one that is borne out of her Black socio-historical legacy and her previous experience of being one of those "lucky ones" who got the rare chance of going to a quality school because of an affirmative action program that bused black students from poor urban neighborhoods of mostly black or immigrant background to predominantly white well-supported sub-urban schools. She presented her worldview of American public life and education as such:

> The public school system of this country was built, bought and paid for using commerce generated from the slave trade and slave labor. While African-

Americans were enslaved and prohibited from schooling, their labor established the very institution from which they were excluded. Ever since then, every court case, educational policy, reform, has been an attempt to retrofit the design, rather than just stopping and acknowledging: we've had it all wrong from the beginning. (Sumner, 2013).

Both Miles and Sumner saw that their current socio-cultural reality is built to hyper-separate people and make it look normal when it is actually dehumanizing. They saw status quo marginalizing and disenfranchising people based on race and income. This same reality created an escapist and selfish attitude that gained some degree of regularity and acceptance among many who have grown frustrated with the system. They saw a reality that they need to change through sustained collective action. It was apparent, though, that in their talks, they espoused on what a person could do. Although they would analyze at socio-cultural structures, the challenges that their statements have are posed to the individual, and also alluding to what an individual can and could do in the face of such prevailing odds.

They were able to see a system that has disenfranchised people of color and the poor because their society was built on the vision and idea of reality that has been the foundation of American social life embedded in their *Declaration of Independence*; that all men are born free and equal. Their worldview is still much rooted from the classical worldview of the Age of Enlightenment, the same principles and assumptions that founded the early United States of America as a political nation and an *imagined community* (Anderson, 1983) and the subsequent thought movements that sprang out from it in a bid to co-construct and reconstruct what the "concept" of an American nation and society was about. This entails a more deliberate notion of how ideal notions and future desired realities could be reconciled.

Finding the Self in Others. The Filipino teachers' saw a dysfunctional status quo that has disadvantaged the marginalized a large sector of the population, especially the poor. Education in the Philippines did not have a satisfactory efficacy in contributing to poverty alleviation as only a small sector continues to reap its benefits (Maligalig & Albert, 2008). Both teachers, however, believe that all is not yet lost as long as there are people who tirelessly and unselfishly work hard to still make it work. The system may be inefficient, but it is not yet beyond repair and definitely worth saving for the sake of the poor children and families whose hopes are at stake. Their sense of reality is built on the hopes of the people in their community. They also saw their active and willing participation in the education of the children from underprivileged backgrounds as a vote of confidence on the capacity of the

system to reform itself and as a proof that they are still hopeful that it would eventually improve and finally deliver on its promises. They were also able to use more tangible metaphors to justify the worldview they held whilst remaining and teaching in disadvantaged schools. Ongkiko's (2013) recollection of a time when she brought one of her public school students to the university where she obtained her bachelor's degree provides a rich and poignant expression of this hopeful worldview:

> When I first brought him here in this university, he saw the vast field, the Bellarmine Field. There's no field in Culiat. So, Darwin ran, round and round the field. Panting and sweating, he came to me and said, "Ma'am, I will study here." Do you know where he is now? He is already in second year high school student at the Ateneo High School, and also an honor student. The first student from Culiat Elementary School admitted to Ateneo High School. I told my father, "Dad, that's your return of investment". (Audience clapping hands.) Dad (She locks sights with her father seated with the rest of the audience.). Someone like Darwin is rare in the life of a teacher. But our dream and I know this is also Darwin's dream is this: that it won't be long that our public schools would be as wonderful as the private schools. It would be a time when someone like Darwin need not dream to study at the Ateneo because our public schools would be as esteemed as Ateneo. It may take long for that to happen but as a teacher, I could see that gradual change is possible; through the simple changes of perspective that I have for my students (Ongkiko, 2013)

Ongkiko used "return of investment" as a metaphor to describe not only her father's investment in her education in fruition but also her vote of confidence in the system to produce even just small yet desirable changes despite the odds. For her, the current reality may be dismal, but to give her best would be worth it. Her views pointed towards a collectivist worldview. In connection, her fellow Ateneo alumni, Villafuerte (2015) used a metaphor close to his mathematics background to illustrate his faith in and willingness to sacrifice to improve the state of the current dysfunctional and deficient reality he has chosen to embrace. Again, these illustrations hint of a collectivistic worldview. Drawing from his Mathematics undergraduate background, he used $f(x)$ or function as a metaphor. He explained this metaphor after launching into an almost similar deployment of emotion-inducing anecdote about one of his students:

And if you think KC's story is very inspiring, wait until you hear the stories of all the other fellows and of the other hundreds of thousands of public school teachers in this country. So hope. Because now is the best time to be a Filipino. And in everything we do for our country is worth it. In Math, we often talk about f of (x). What a damper, right? And we were very, very obsessed with finding that (x). What is the (x) that would give me that answer. When you think about it, the word 'function' makes sense. What (x) will make us function? And if we try to find that answer, we will actually not end up with an answer. But we actually end up with another question, 'Why?' (Audience clapping.) Thank you. Why? Why do we do things? If you ask me two years ago, why do I teach for the Philippines, I'd say, I teach because I love my country. But if you ask me again now, why I teach in the Philippines, I teach because of students like KC. I found my f of (x). And that (x) was to teach. And hopefully before I end, I want all of you to teach as well. Not necessarily join the public school system although that it be great, and you can apply. But to teach in the sense that…you will also try, enjoy, aspire, choose and hope for the Philippines. Because you only have a one beautiful country to love. So, let us all teach for the Philippines (Villafuerte, 2015)

Both Filipino teachers see an enormous, cumbersome, confusing, and at times, frustrating machinery of Philippine public education. They find their individual purpose with reference to their identification with the group. German-born cultural psychologist, Katrin de Guia (2005) called this generally Eastern, and particularly Filipino notion of worldview as *kapwa*. This entails finding oneself – meaning, purpose, structure, essence – through living and growing with others. Reality is built by finding ones' notion of the self by living, working, struggling, hoping, and overcoming in the company of others. This entails a more spiritual and emotive perspective of reality and making sense of it.

Why did these cultural elements emergence among the Millennials and the younger generations? Even if they all made the same decisions to teach and stay in disadvantaged schools, in disadvantaged communities, there are underlying cultural elements beneath that. Arnett (2005) argued that as the world becomes more and more wrapped up by the culture and manifestations of globalization and its neoliberal hegemonic influence on consumption and lifestyle, there are those who find meaning and purpose away from these. They are those who

embrace a *self-selected culture*. This runs counter to the generally expected cultural norms of globalization. He explained this phenomenon like so:

> However, this dire forecast is unlikely to come completely to pass, and not just because most youth are likely to develop a bicultural identity that includes a local identity alongside their global identity, as described above. The other way that cultural diversity will continue to exist is that some youth will choose to become part of a self-selected culture that provides more meaning and structure than the global culture. Most youth jump with enthusiasm onto the global bandwagon, but there will always be those who will seek deliberately to mark themselves off as different, as people who refuse to join the herd. Some do this by joining a self-selected culture of fellow dissenters (Arnett, 2005, p. 26).

Choosing to teach in a disadvantaged school when one could have chosen a more profitable career would indeed look counter-intuitive if not palpably ludicrous to societies that have embraced the culture of globalization and the consumerist mindset that comes with it. This decision could be seen as a counter-culture, and specifically, a self-selected culture, whose assumptions, truths, and centralities differ from the rest.

Conclusion

This paper is a modest exercise in illustrating that underneath the seemingly similar cultural practices such as counter-culture decisions of these young teachers to teach in disadvantaged schools, lie the fundamental cultural differences consisting of rich latent networks and motivations unique to the society and context where they thrive.

The American and Filipino teachers who chose to teach and remain teaching in disadvantaged schools made their respective decisions, but their decisions were informed by values, beliefs, and worldviews unique and familiar to their respective cultural circumstances. Indeed, cultures and contexts matter, as both active causes and spaces for the drama of culture to play up and its layers to unravel.

These latent assumptions inform how cultural scripts are either fulfilled, challenged, or gradually mutated. Thus, it appears that young American teachers' counter-cultures are founded, organized by ideas and the reconciliation of current realities with an imagined ideal.

The young Filipinos, on the other hand, engaged in counter-culture actions based on group reference identity and a cosmological search for personal meaning. Thus, when people make decisions, there is a need to look deeper into the underlying structures, not only for clarity and accuracy, but more importantly to recognize the rich diversity of human insights and constructions.

Since the aim of these studies is to inform teacher training programs and make them more responsive to the context of their pre-service teachers, it is hoped that the insights from this paper could be of use to teacher recruitment and training programs, particularly on having a more culturally-nuanced understanding of who chooses to become a teacher, and why they choose to be teachers and persist despite the odds. This grounded understanding is particularly useful in creating policies and programs that would encourage the "best and the brightest" students to pursue a career in teaching or in allied fields.

Future researchers could explore similarities and differences in the values, beliefs, worldviews of teachers coming from from different age groups, different ethnicities from the same country, and even the compare the same attributes across generations of teachers coming from the same traditions using the same framework used in this study. This could provide more cases where such comparisons could yield valuable insights into such complex and cultural nuances. Ultimately, such prospective studies, must like this current one, should also be able contribute to the growing challenge posed by the teacher education scholars writing from the context and experience of the "Global South" against the pervading hegemony of the Western discourse and constructions of contemporary education and school life.

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