

*Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis*  
2017, Vol. 6, No. 2, 84-94

**“Lovely to Me”:  
An Immigrant’s Daughter’s Critical Self-Reflexivity Research Journey**

Nga-Wing Anjela Wong\*  
University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

*This paper chronicles my reflections as a child of immigrants of color and activist scholar when working with and for (immigrant) communities of color. I examine the importance of humility and to engage in critical self-reflexivity in research. Later, I illustrate how I incorporated my own community cultural wealth through my mother’s assistance and support in building rapport with immigrant parents in the research.*

**Keywords:** Critical Self-Reflexivity | Activist Scholar | Collaborative Research | Community-Based Research.

I gained two insights while growing up in an immigrant family: Race, class, and gender shape the immigrant experience and cultural adjustment is a difficult and often painful experience. Similar to many immigrants that come to the U.S., my parents underwent a process of racialization as they interacted with the dominant society (Lee, 2005; Olsen, 1997; Waters, 2001). My mother immigrated from Hong Kong to the U.S. with only her husband and two infant children by her side. As part of the post-1965 wave of immigrants<sup>1</sup>, my parents packed up their entire life into a couple of boxes and said farewell to their families, friends, and homeland as they left for the U.S. Once the plane departed, my mother would not return to visit her homeland until more than 17 years later.

My mother did not fulfill her dream of an education. Instead, along with caring for two young children, she started out working in garment factories and co-ethnic restaurants while enrolled in English and job development classes. After a long week of work and classes, my mother, like many working-class immigrants, became “something like a fighter” as she carried “loads of groceries” home (Na, 2008). While my mother did not have the opportunity to obtain much of a classroom education, she has always held a deep passion for learning that she passed down to my siblings and me at a very young age. Her resilience and constant expressions of encouragement, like “try your best,” “reach for your dreams,” and “I will always support you,” offered me a place and space to pursue my dreams. I am sharing lyrics from New York based artist and educator Taiyo Na’s (2008) “Lovely to me (immigrant mother)” to highlight the strengths and struggles of immigrants, like my own mother.

\* Correspondence can be directed to Nga-Wing Anjela Wong at [wongnwa@gmail.com](mailto:wongnwa@gmail.com)

<sup>1</sup> The passage of the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act (also known as the Hart-Celler Act of 1965) had a significant impact on Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) immigration to the U.S. The Act eliminated the 1924 National Origins Quota System and ended various racist laws that affected AAPIs, along with other communities.

# Anjela Wong

Associate Professor  
Education Studies



## “Lovely to Me”: An Immigrant’s Daughter’s Critical Self-Reflexivity Research Journey

*Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis*

This paper chronicles my reflections as a child of immigrants of color and activist scholar when working with and for (immigrant) communities of color. I examine the importance of humility and engagement in critical self-reflexivity in research. Later I illustrate how I incorporated my own community cultural wealth through my mother’s assistance and support in building rapport with immigrant parents in the research.