

UC Davis

Norma J. Lang Prize for Undergraduate Information Research

Title

Obligations and Opportunities: A Qualitative Analysis of Filipinx Americans' Aspirations for Higher Education and Mobility

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/09c1q9xz>

Author

Herrera, Rianna

Publication Date

2026-05-13

2025 - 2026 Undergraduate Sociology Honors Thesis

**Obligations and Opportunities: A Qualitative Analysis of Filipinx Americans' Aspirations
for Higher Education and Mobility**

Author: Rianna M. Lejano Herrera

Faculty Advisor(s): Kimberlee Shauman, Ph.D., & Erin Hamilton, Ph.D.

University of California, Davis

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my gratitude to the following groups and individuals who have supported me through this arduous yet rewarding journey:

Dr. Kimberlee Shauman, for her irreplaceable guidance, mentorship, and intellect. Your trust and patience in me, as well as your supportive feedback, have helped push this research project forward.

UC Davis Department of Sociology and the *SOC 194H 2025-2026 Cohort*, for their feedback, resources, and research assistance, as well as enriching my undergraduate experience.

Dr. Joss Greene, Joshua Mason, and *Cristina Zito*, for giving me my first foray into undergraduate research and pushing me to explore the world in creative and critical ways.

UC Davis BRIDGE and *Filipinx kammunity* for believing in this project and supporting me during the recruitment process—I'm forever indebted to you all and am constantly inspired by your dedication to serve the university's Filipinx student population.

Mom, Dad, Jacob, and the rest of my family for showering me with endless love, support, and encouragement. I would not have been able to navigate my undergraduate journey without having such a vital support system at home.

My *Lola Meding (May)*, whose sacrifices brought our family to where we are today, and to whom this paper is dedicated to. I share my passion for learning new knowledge with her, and carry her aspirations with me each and every day.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	1
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	2
ABSTRACT.....	3
INTRODUCTION.....	4
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	12
RESEARCH METHODS.....	14
RESULTS & ANALYSIS.....	18
Growing Up ‘Filipinx American’: Familial Obligations and Limited Spatial Mobility.....	19
Navigating and Negotiating Family Educational and Occupational Expectations.....	23
College as a Space for Realizing Aspirations for Spatial Mobility.....	36
Utilizing the Campus to Redefine Gender and Ethnic Identities.....	40
DISCUSSION.....	42
CONCLUSION.....	48
REFERENCES.....	51

ABSTRACT

To challenge the assumptions of the model minority myth, the experiences of Asian Americans in higher education need to be studied by ethnic groups rather than as a homogenized racial group. In particular, research centering Filipinx Americans is rare despite being the third-largest Asian origin population in the United States. This study bridges this gap in the literature by examining how college-going Filipina and gender-non-conforming (GNC) Filipinx Americans' aspirations are informed by gendered family expectations. Applying intersectional feminist and critical race theories, and a transpacific feminist framework to analyze 21 interviews with undergraduate students, I find that Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans view obtaining a college degree as a way to "give back" to their families. During the college-decision process, they prioritize commonalities between their personal aspirations and their family's expectations, which help them pursue other aspirations that did not align with their family's. Moving away for college allows Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans to experience newfound independence, as well as explore their gender and ethnic identities. This study contributes to the sociology of family and higher education by detailing how Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans apply meaning to college and mobility within the context of their gendered familial obligations. As more Filipinx Americans continue to pursue higher education and enter professional careers, these findings have important implications for their educational trajectories and future participation in the state and national economy.

INTRODUCTION

Discourses regarding Asian Americans' experiences in higher education often fall back on the "model minority" myth (MMM), which assumes that all Asian Americans experience 'universal' success in their educational and professional outcomes. The MMM attributes this success to shared cultural values of hard work and familism, while also obscuring various structural factors and disparities across different Asian groups (Chung 2001; Endo 1980; Libarios et al. 2018; Ngo and Lee 2007; Park 2008; Walton and Truong 2023). Contrary to the MMM's cultural essentialist rhetoric, however, much research has underscored the importance of both sociocultural and structural factors in shaping youth's educational trajectories. In particular, family background and expectations play a crucial role in informing children's educational aspirations and outcomes (Blau and Duncan 1967; Sewell, Haller, and Portes 1969), with an evolving focus on the importance of (im)migration and race/ethnicity as well (Kao and Tienda 1998; Fuligni 1997; Sue and Okazaki 1990). Gender and sexuality have been found to also significantly inform young people's desires for socioeconomic and spatial mobility within the context of higher education (Garvey et al. 2019; Gomez Parra and Garcia 2023). As these factors vary across different groups, studying Asian Americans' experiences by ethnic group will help further contextualize and understand young people's aspirations for both education and mobility.

Though research on Asian American ethnic groups in higher education has grown in recent years, studies which focus specifically on Filipinx Americans¹ continue to remain scarce despite being the third-largest Asian origin population in the United States (Pew Research Center 2025). This study seeks to examine the experiences of Filipina and gender-non-conforming (GNC) Filipinx Americans, who are understudied in intersectional feminist research on both

¹ To be both inclusive and sensitive to the various identities and positionalities individuals may possess, I have elected to use the term "Filipinx" to refer to Filipino/a/x in my analysis of college-going Filipinx Americans. For further discussion, see: Bolton 2022.

education and mobility (Buenavista 2010; Cruz 2022). While Maramba (2008) found that Filipina Americans often navigate their college experiences amidst their gendered familial obligations, there still remains the question of how these obligations may inform Filipinx Americans' college aspirations. Studying their aspirations is essential as research has found that youth who possess high educational aspirations are strongly motivated to perform well in school, which can shape their educational trajectories (Kao and Tienda 1998; Sewell, Haller, and Portes 1969). Additionally, assessing their aspirations for mobility in the context of higher education is crucial "given that college is generally perceived as a route for securing upward mobility and, for some students, involves spatial mobility when moving out of their parents' home to attend a residential university" (Gomez Parra and Garcia 2023:269).

In order to address this gap in the literature, this study focuses on two primary research questions: (a) *How do gendered family expectations inform college-going Filipina and gender-non-conforming Filipinx Americans' aspirations for higher education and mobility?* and (b) *How do they navigate and negotiate these expectations with their individual ambitions?* The following question will also be addressed: (c) *What meanings do Filipinx Americans apply to college in relation to their gender and ethnic identities?*

To answer these questions, I analyze twenty-one interviews from undergraduate students attending four-year colleges in California, the majority of whom were attending the same R1 university when the study was conducted. The majority also identified as 2nd generation Filipinx Americans and grew up in predominantly white and East Asian suburban neighborhoods. While most had at least one parent who obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher, the majority of their parents received an education in the Philippines, which would greatly inform the parents' expectations regarding their child's education in the U.S. (Fuligni 1997).

Drawing upon intersectional feminist theory (Allen 2016; Crenshaw 1989) and critical race theory (Solórzano and Yosso 2002; Shih, Chang, and Chen 2019), as well as a transpacific feminist framework (Cruz 2022), I examine how sociocultural and structural factors intersect and interact in the narratives of college-going Filipinx Americans. The interviews reveal how Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans' educational aspirations are significantly informed by their families' expectations for them to obtain a 'financially stable' career and take on caregiving responsibilities in the future. As a result, they choose labor market-linked majors which are perceived as financially stable in order to "give back" to their families. They also prioritize fulfilling commonalities between their family's expectations and their individual aspirations, which allows them to pursue other personal goals which may not align with their family's. Though most attend a college close to home as per their parents' wishes, Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans utilize moving out of home to live closer to campus as a way of obtaining independence and spatial mobility, while also using the campus as a space for exploring their gender and ethnic identities. Overall, their narratives illustrate the ways in which gender, family background, (im)migration status, etc., inform Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans' aspirations for higher education and mobility. As Filipinx Americans continue to obtain college degrees and seek professional jobs, understanding what factors contribute to their college decisions and anticipated career has important implications for their educational trajectories and labor force participation in the state and national economy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Familial Obligations and Gender Roles

In the Filipinx community, familism is a predominant cultural norm and expectation, where the needs and expectations of the family are often prioritized above the individual. Familial obligations are not only contained within the immediate family but operate within a broader network of extended family and kin, which for many can become both a source of great support and a source of potential conflict. Though Western societies often emphasize individualism over collectivism, a strong dedication to familism still persists among 2nd generation Filipinx Americans who demonstrate high levels of acculturation to Western society (Choi et al. 2021).

Among the cultural traits associated with Filipinx familism, *utang na loob* is the most important for understanding the dynamics at play between the child and their family. Literally translated as “internal debt,” *utang na loob* encapsulates “a debt of gratitude which is not only found in the family and kin group but in all levels of Filipino contact and interaction” (Almirol 1982:301). While this sense of indebtedness is often used to strengthen social bonds and interconnectedness within the family and broader community, its cyclical and unquantifiable nature can lead to “relationships [becoming] more transactional, which brings with it feelings of obligation and reluctance” (Casiño, Serrano, and Granada 2025:311). Such feelings are coupled with the fact that failure to fulfill one’s indebtedness can cause them to be perceived as *walang hiya* (“without shame/dignity”) by others in the community, underscoring the pressure one may feel even when the favor has long-since been repaid for. Thus, the cultural trait of *utang na loob* is critical in understanding college-going Filipinx Americans as it places their aspirations within

the context of broader familial and kin networks, informing goals which are not only individual but also carry an unmeasurable weight of indebtedness to them.

For Filipina Americans in particular, their sense of internal debt is closely tied to their gender identity. Research has highlighted the tensions migrating families face as they attempt to uphold traditional values while simultaneously redefining and renegotiating gendered family roles in new national-cultural settings (Chung 2001; Hanson and Gilbert 2012; Hickey 1996). Due to Western stereotypes of Filipinas as sexually promiscuous, constructions of Filipina American identity are closely linked to female chastity, where girls and women represent the ‘boundaries’ of morality, culture, and tradition (Amirol 1982; Bonifacio 2018; Espiritu 2001). Because of this, Filipina Americans often experience more parental strictness regarding their personal decisions and mobility in comparison with their male relatives. While these restrictions can lead to moments of contention between daughters and their parents, Filipina Americans often abide by their familial expectations as parents often use their conformity to validate their ethnic identity and community ties (Espiritu 2001). In addition to remaining at home, Filipina Americans are also expected to become caregivers for their aging parents and family members. While parents often perceive this switch in the caregiver-recipient relationship as part of their child’s indebtedness towards them, this responsibility primarily falls upon daughters even when sons are also available to become a caregiver (Bermas, Baltazar, and Rungduin 2024).

Gendered familial obligations and parental strictness have also informed Filipina Americans’ aspirations for spatial mobility in the context of pursuing higher education. Women from marginalized, immigrant backgrounds often report being expected by their families to attend college close to home, partially in order to continue fulfilling their household responsibilities (Espiritu 2001; Gomez Parra and Garcia 2023; Lee 2006; Maramba 2008).

Because of this, such women must navigate their family's expectations with their own desire for discretion over their mobility and social activities. Taken together, these findings on the intersection of familism, gender (particularly constructions of femininity), and mobility are crucial for my analysis of how Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans navigate and negotiate their aspirations in conjunction with gendered familial obligations and expectations.

Family Influences on Children's Educational Aspirations

Over the decades, scholars have underscored the important role of family background in shaping children's educational aspirations and attainment. Blau and Duncan's (1967) Status Attainment Model found that the influence of family socioeconomic status (SES) on an individual's occupational attainment was mediated by the individual's educational attainment. Building upon this model, the Wisconsin Model of Status Attainment found that the presence of significant others helped inform youth's educational aspirations, which also mediated the interactions between family SES (i.e., parental educational attainment, occupation, and earnings) and the individual's educational attainment (Sewell, Haller, and Portes 1969).

Further literature has expanded to include other influential factors such as (im)migration, race/ethnicity, and gender. This is especially in response to changing demographics regarding families of immigrant-origin; from 1990 to 2023, the percentage of children living with at least one immigrant parent in the United States doubled from 13% to 26% (Batalova 2025). As 47% of the Filipinx population in the U.S. were immigrants as of 2023, understanding the impact of (im)migration specifically on 2nd generation Filipinx Americans' aspirations is crucial for this study (Pew Research Center 2025). Research has found that Asian immigrant parents who come from countries with limited educational opportunities often encourage their children to prioritize

education as a means of obtaining upward social mobility, especially in anticipation of potential racial-ethnic prejudice in the workforce (Xie and Goyette 2003; Sue and Okazaki 1990).

Additionally, access to ethnic community resources and networks can help mediate the effects of immigrant parents' low SES on youth's educational aspirations by offering important knowledge on how to navigate U.S. institutions (Amirol 1982; Feliciano 2006; Hickey 1996; Nadal 2004; Ngo and Lee 2007; Portes and Zhou 1993; Tran 2016; Zhou and Lee 2017).

Taken together, the existing literature sheds light on how immigrant families can shape and influence the 2nd generation's educational and occupational aspirations. Such findings point to the ways in which Filipinx Americans' aspirations may not only be informed by their parents' pre-migration narratives and subsequent expectations, but access to extended networks as well. As a result, this study also considers the influence of extended family as opposed to solely focusing on parents or immediate family in order to capture the potential nuances of Filipinx Americans' perceptions of 'familial' expectations.

The Gender Paradox

One concept that is of particular interest is the "gender paradox" observed amongst immigrant families. As discussed before, immigrant families often reinforce traditional gender roles in an attempt to safeguard their ethnic-cultural identity from mainstream society, resulting in women's restricted spatial mobility. However, these same women are also expected by their families to transgress gendered labor patterns by pursuing "educational and occupational ambitions that are non-traditionally gendered" (Feliciano and Rumbaut 2005:1092). Though scarce, the existing literature on Filipina Americans' educational and occupational expectations appear to align with the aforementioned gender paradox. Second generation Filipina Americans are expected to not

only attain higher education and “gainful” employment in addition to their domestic responsibilities (Del-Mundo and Quek 2017:73), but are also expected to “prioritize nonacademic familial obligations over their college endeavors” (Ocampo 2013:300). Given that all of the participants in the present study were attending four-year colleges when interviewed, the concept of the gender paradox is especially important for understanding how they experience and respond to their families’ educational and occupational expectations. Thus, this study considers how Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans experience the gender paradox in the context of their familial obligations, and how this might inform their personal aspirations.

Queer(ing) Discourse

There is an evolving literature on the experiences of queer Filipinxs, many of whom face great difficulty in “coming out” to their families due to negative stances on queerness rooted in both Spanish Catholicism and different cultural understandings of queer labels (Diaz 2015; Fajardo 2022). These interactions between identity, family, and cultural orientations often have negative effects for queer Filipinx Americans, who must contend with multifaceted modes of oppression both within and outside their ethnic community. According to data from The Trevor Project’s 2021 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health, Filipinx Americans who identify as LGBTQIA+ reported high rates (greater than 55%) of generalized anxiety disorder, major depressive disorder, and self-harm (Price, Green, DeChants, and Davis 2021). The fact that more than 80% of queer Filipinx Americans in the study were not out to their families may be a significant indicator of the difficulty many face in coming out. Additional research has highlighted how racialized minorities utilize new geographical settings such as college campuses as a means of redefining their gender and sexual identities without their family’s surveillance

(Garvey et al. 2019; Gomez Parra and Garcia 2023). Such findings can be useful in understanding how GNC Filipinx Americans in particular navigate and negotiate their aspirations amidst their family's expectations and their unique gendered experiences.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Intersectional feminist theory, coined by Crenshaw's foundational (1989) study on the marginalization of Black women in the workplace, has been used extensively by sociologists to analyze how factors such as gender, race, class, etc., interact with each other and with larger systems of power to inform different groups' and individuals' unique social experiences. Family scholars in particular have posited a greater "need to study families from multiple vantage points, incorporating intersectional and international perspectives of how race, class, sexual orientation, nation, and other structures of social hierarchy differentially stratify and challenge gendered experiences in families" (Allen 2016:208). I use intersectional feminist theory to investigate how factors such as gender, race/ethnicity, (im)migration, etc., intersect to inform Filipinx Americans' gendered experiences in their family/home environment. In doing so, we can begin to analyze the meanings they apply to higher education and mobility in the context of such experiences.

In conjunction with intersectional feminist theory, *critical race theory* (CRT) postulates racism as both commonplace and integrated into social institutions via federal and state policies. Education scholars have employed frameworks and methodologies of CRT in order "to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom" (Solórzano and Yosso 2002:25). Such methodologies have been particularly vital in understanding "how race intersects with other structured inequalities (gender, social class, and/or age) to shape the differential

experiences of Asian American subgroups” (Shih, Chang, and Chen 2019:423), especially in regards to the obscuring effects of the model minority myth (MMM). Asian Americans have historically and persistently been excluded from minority status by policymakers due to the MMM, which simultaneously overlooks and contributes to racial discriminatory practices that ‘other’ Asian Americans across social institutions (Endo 1980; Walton and Truong 2023). The MMM has also contributed to racial and ethnic disparities in the educational attainment of Filipinx American students as many lack access to both academic and mental health services because of assumptions regarding their ‘high’ academic achievements (Libarios et al. 2018).

While this study does not focus specifically on examining the impact of the MMM on Filipinx American’s experiences, recognizing its obscuring effects is crucial in both deconstructing assumptions of academic ‘excellence’ and highlighting the lived experiences of the students in question. Both intersectional feminist scholars and critical race scholars have pushed forth the need to utilize storytelling and counter-narratives as a way of challenging dominant constructions of marginalized groups’ experiences in higher education (Gomez Parra and Garcia 2023; Maramba 2008, 2022; Solórzano and Yosso 2002). Thus, this study spotlights the narratives of college-going Filipinx Americans to counter obscuring assumptions associated with the MMM and analyze the nuanced and personal meanings such students apply to higher education and mobility.

Additionally, this study utilizes a *transpacific feminist framework* to analyze how “historically inflected and culturally specific constructions” of Filipinx femininity and masculinity circulate between nations in the Pacific in the modern era (Cruz 2022:193). This framework critically engages with the ways in which Filipinx gender constructions have been shaped and informed by historical and contemporary interactions across the Pacific Ocean. As

Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans navigate higher education amidst their family's expectations, they must also contend with how the West interacts with and contributes to constructions of Filipinx femininity, as well as gendered and racialized migration and labor patterns. This study employs a transpacific feminist framework to enrich its analysis of how college-going Filipinx Americans' aspirations are informed by gendered familial obligations, migration and generational status, histories of Western imperialism, etc.

RESEARCH METHODS

Participants

As California has the most Filipinx American residents of any state as of 2022 (Pew Research Center 2024), this study focused on participants from universities across the state. Participants who self-identify as Filipina or gender-non-conforming Filipinx American, and are currently enrolled in a four-year university, were recruited during October and November 2025 using a combination of convenience and snowball sampling. This involved leveraging existing networks, posting flyers across one campus in Northern California, and collaborating with a Filipinx-centered organization in the aforementioned campus to promote the study. Because of the targeted nature of the recruitment process, these findings should not be viewed as generalizable to the entire population of Filipinx Americans college students.

The sample consisted of 21 participants, 16 of whom were recruited via convenience sampling and the remaining 5 recruited via snowball sampling. Seventeen participants self-identified as a cisgender woman and 4 self-identified as a queer gender identity (including transgender woman, nonbinary, genderfluid, etc.). Though participants attended different campuses across California, the majority (71%, $n = 15$) came from the same university in

Northern California. The distribution by college year was: 3 first year students, 3 second year students, 6 third year students, and 9 fourth year students, with 5 having transferred to university from community college. Twelve participants were currently in STEM majors, 7 participants were currently in Social Science majors, and 5 participants were currently in Arts & Humanities majors. Three participants were double majoring in more than one field.

The majority of participants (76%, $n = 16$) identified as 2nd generation Filipinx Americans (born in the United States to at least one immigrant parent). Four participants identified as 3rd generation (both the participant and their parents were born in the United States), and one participant identified as 1.5 generation (immigrated to the United States in their youth). Additionally, participants were asked to identify their parents' highest level of educational attainment, as well as the country where this education was obtained. The majority of participants (71%, $n = 15$) had at least one parent who obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher. Among the 21 parents who had a Bachelor's degree or higher, the majority (57%, $n = 12$) obtained their degree in the Philippines, while the rest obtained their degree in the United States (43%, $n = 9$). While participants were not asked to self-identify their family's social class, around 52% ($n = 11$) of participants reported living in suburban neighborhoods with a majority white and (East) Asian population, 29% ($n = 6$) of participants lived in diverse suburban neighborhoods, and 19% ($n = 4$) lived in diverse urban neighborhoods. Across all the different neighborhoods, 52% of participants ($n = 11$) reported having access to a broader Filipinx community growing up.

Qualitative Methods and Data Collection

Interviews were conducted over Zoom in English², and each participant was interviewed only once. To maintain the anonymity of the respondents, I refer to them using pseudonyms and mask the location and institution names mentioned. I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews on the following topics: family dynamic & gender roles, educational expectations & aspirations, spatial mobility, navigating/negotiating expectations, and college experience. After reading through the consent form, participants gave verbal consent for the interview to be recorded and transcribed. During the interview, participants were first asked to describe their upbringing, their expected “role” in their family and what this may have entailed (ex. An older sister who helped tutor her younger sibling). They then discussed how they navigated their family’s expectations before and after the college application process. Finally, participants described their current experience in college. The shortest interview was 34 minutes and the longest was 70 minutes, with an average of 51 minutes per interview. Each participant received a \$20 virtual gift card following completion of the interview to compensate them for their time.

Interviews were transcribed using Sonix.AI, after which I reviewed the transcriptions to ensure they aligned with the interview audio. I then utilized “flexible coding,” which draws upon both a deductive and inductive approach to coding (Deterding and Waters 2021). Coding was done in multiple iterations on the platform Dedoose, which allowed me to efficiently organize my transcripts and analyze the excerpts by the specific codes applied to them. During the first round of coding, I initially began with a set of deductive codes based on the existing literature, such as “Emotional & Care Labor” and “Family Encouraged College Close to Home.” New concepts which emerged from the data itself were captured by inductive codes, such as

² Though all interviews were conducted in English with participants who were fluent in the language, some phrases and terms that were spoken in a Filipino dialect have been retained as a way of demonstrating how participants situate their experiences within their cultural upbringing. English translations have been provided by the researcher.

“Expected to be a Role Model.” After the first round of coding, both in-depth comparisons of the participants’ experiences and memo writing helped refine the categories and analyze the relationship between overlapping codes. This led to the emergence of new codes such as “Fear of Disappointing Family” and “Future Role as Caregiver,” which were then implemented during the second round of coding to capture any additional nuances and complexities.

Once the coding process was completed, I compiled and analyzed the excerpts using an “abductive analysis” approach, which also utilizes a theoretically or empirically-informed approach that is open to new and unexpected findings (Timmermans and Tavory 2012). I drew upon the existing literature on immigrant families, gender, and higher education to inform my analysis, as well as underscoring new concepts and themes which have not been previously identified. Additionally, in alignment with intersectional feminist theories and critical race theories, I focused on the depth of responses to uncover rich insights on how sociocultural and structural factors influence and inform college-going Filipinx Americans’ experiences. Focusing on depth allows researchers to access new “experiences or views of participants [which can] help us understand participants’ subjective realities” (Knott, Rao, Summers, and Teeger 2022:15). I analyzed the participants’ complex narratives to not only expand on previous findings, but to create new ones as well. In doing so, participants were invited into discourse they have previously been excluded from regarding Asian Americans’ experiences in higher education.

While I conducted this study with as much objectivity as possible, I utilized my experiences as a 2nd generation Filipina American from a middle-class background, as well as an undergraduate student at a California university, to drive forward a nuanced and in-depth analysis of the interviews. My shared commonalities with the participants could have facilitated trust and a willingness to discuss certain topics, but could also have informed what details they

were willing to share based on the perception that the researcher would have a more in-depth understanding of their experiences compared to a non-Filipinx American (Dwyer and Buckle 2009). I employed reflexivity during the interview and analytical process to account for my potential biases and blindspots. Follow-up and clarifying questions were utilized to capture the unique meanings participants applied to their experiences. Additionally, contrasting patterns (ex. ‘Parents expected participants to pursue a specific career’ vs. ‘Parents encouraged participants to “pursue what you want”’) were intentionally identified and analyzed to ensure my own assumptions and experiences did not emphasize certain themes over others.

RESULTS & ANALYSIS

Interviews with 21 college-going Filipina and gender-non-conforming (GNC) Filipinx Americans revealed how their family’s expectations informed their educational and occupational aspirations, as well as their desire for spatial mobility and discretion over their social activities. Four primary themes emerged from the findings: (a) Familial Obligations and Limited Spatial Mobility, (b) Navigating and Negotiating Family Educational and Occupational Expectations, (c) College as a Space for Realizing Aspirations for Spatial Mobility, and (d) Utilizing the Campus to Redefine Gender and Ethnic Identities. The coding process which led to the formulation of each theme is outlined in Table 1 (read from left to right).

Table 1. Codes and Themes Identified From College-Going Filipinx Americans

1st Round of Coding	2nd Round of Coding	Themes
“Gender(ed) Family Dynamic” “Household Chores” “Emotional & Care Labor” “(Childhood) Spatial Mobility”	“Future Role as Caregiver” “Limited Spatial Mobility” “Gender Differentiation” “Safety Concerns”	Growing Up ‘Filipinx American’: Familial Obligations and Limited Spatial Mobility

“Parents’ Educational & Occupational Attainment” “Family’s Educational/Occupational Expectations” “Personal Aspirations” “Negotiating with Family”	“Awareness of Family’s Sacrifices” “Giving Back in the Future” “Fulfilling Parents’ Dreams” “STEM/Medical Field” “Pursue What You Want to Do” “Nursing Stereotype” “Leveraging Broader Network” “Vocalizing Plans for the Future” “Fear of Disappointing Family” “‘Male-Dominated’ Careers” “Balancing Family’s Expectations with Personal Aspirations”	Navigating and Negotiating Family Educational and Occupational Expectations
“Distance Between Home and College” “Family Encouraged College Close to Home” “Family Supported College Far From Home” “Family Discouraged College Far From Home”	“Close Relationship with Family” “Desiring and Obtaining ‘Freedom’ via College” “Balancing Closeness to Home with Freedom in College”	College as a Space for Realizing Aspirations for Spatial Mobility
“Current College Experiences” “Campus Resources & Support” “Sense of Belonging”	“Freedom for Queer Expression” “Negotiating Ethnic Identity Through College”	Utilizing the Campus to Redefine Gender and Ethnic Identities

Growing Up ‘Filipinx American’: Familial Obligations and Limited Spatial Mobility

Both Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans shared how their household responsibilities and spatial mobility were characterized by gendered double standards. That is, while participants were responsible for domestic labor and were often not allowed to leave their homes without parental supervision, their brothers and/or male cousins were not expected to take on the same labor and had more discretion over their movement. Later sections will explore how the participants’ domestic responsibilities inform their educational and occupational aspirations, and how college became a space for gaining newfound spatial mobility in adulthood.

When discussing their family/home environment, Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans detailed how their families expected them to act and behave in a “feminine” manner. This

included respecting one's elders and to not "talk back" to adults, dressing "appropriately" (modestly) and "ladylike," not being with romantic partners without parental supervision, or not being allowed to date at all until during or after college. Many also shared how they were expected to be a "good influence" on their younger siblings and/or cousins. Their responsibilities were informed by their birth order and family structure relative to not only their immediate family but extended family as well. For example, Brenda (junior), who grew up as the eldest child in a multigenerational household, explained how her parents expected her to be "a caretaker [for my grandmother], a role model [for my younger sibling], and then there's the general ... knowing how to cook and clean and having all those roles instilled in me from a very young age." Similarly, Teresa (junior), who was an only child, helped care for her younger cousins throughout their childhood. On the matter, she stated, "Well, on both sides [of my family], I'm the oldest girl, if you consider cousins. ... There is that pressure of [wanting] to be a good influence."

Additionally, many shared how there were distinct gender differences regarding their household chores and caregiving responsibilities. For those who grew up with brothers and/or male cousins, this was often a source of frustration or confusion. Such was the case for Althea (junior), who grew up in a single, multigenerational household which included both her immediate and extended family. On the topic, Althea recalled:

In our family, we only had one male cousin and ... he had less responsibility than I did. And I remember asking, "How come he can't do it? Why do I have to do it?" And then sometimes their simple answer would just be, "Oh, he's a boy." I'm like, "That doesn't make any sense!" ... I grew up living with my cousins, so we would be expected to clean up after ourselves or cook or anything to help my grandma. And although my male cousin would offer to help, he wasn't expected to offer help.

Here, Althea demonstrated a keen awareness of how her household responsibilities were informed by her family's construction of femininity and what that entailed. The women in her

family were not only expected to take on traditionally gendered chores such as cooking and cleaning, but were also expected to fulfill a caregiver role for their grandmother—responsibilities which appeared to be outside of the realm of men’s responsibilities.

While participants were expected by their families to take on various responsibilities *inside* the home, they were simultaneously limited in when and where they could leave the house. Many discussed how they were not allowed to hang out with friends outside of school time or attend sleepovers without parental permission and supervision, which often continued up until the end of high school or beginning of college. As was the case with household responsibilities, participants also shared how their brothers and/or male cousins were allowed more “freedom” to go out. Many expressed frustration at this gendered double standard, characterizing it as ‘unfair.’ For example, Marisol (junior), shared how her parents had established a curfew for her despite her being an upperclassman in high school, while her brother was not given a curfew or parental supervision when he was around the same age: “I was just like, ‘Okay, well, I’m a girl, I guess.’ But as I got older, I was like, ‘This isn’t right. Why should it be [based] on my gender whether I should stay out longer or if I can go out this day, that day, wear this and that?’” Bea (senior), the youngest in her family, discussed how her mobility was also very limited during her childhood:

I would ask [my dad] if I could go hang out or set up a play date or just a sleepover with any of my friends back then. He would have this typical, like, Filipino saying, “Bahala ka, sa buhay mo!” Like, basically “Do whatever you want with your life,” but that really translates to, “You don’t actually get to do whatever you want.”

Though Bea expressed disappointment in having her mobility restricted during childhood, she felt that she was “still stuck by this rule” even attending college: “It gets really frustrating sometimes that I just stay quiet because I don’t want to, you know, be rude or I don’t want to

sound like I'm being disrespectful in any way." Like Bea, many participants also elected not to speak out on their limited spatial mobility as to not be "rude" or "disrespectful" to their parents.

Though this study was limited to just college students' experiences and did not collect responses from their parents, the majority of participants attributed their parents' strictness to safety concerns. Althea explained, "My parents are immigrants, so they have very little trust in ... not necessarily the people I'm around, but just people in general. They just want to make sure I'm safe. ... That was probably the best way that they can do it, just making sure I don't go outside." Althea's experience captured how immigrant families often limit their daughters' spatial mobility as a means of protecting them from potential gendered and sexual violence in a different environment than the ones they themselves grew up in (Espiritu 2001; Gomez Parra and Garcia 2023; Maramba 2008). Families must not only navigate living in a setting where immigrants of color are often overlooked and/or marginalized by the institutions meant to serve them, but they must also navigate raising their daughters in the country which originated the stereotype of Filipinas as "promiscuous" and "mail-order brides." Thus, limiting Filipina Americans' spatial mobility was a strategy immigrant families employed in order to protect them from becoming sexually vulnerable by mainstream society.

Some participants were also keenly aware that their particular upbringing differed from what was understood to be 'mainstream' society, a sentiment which also persisted up to college. Though many expressed gratitude for their parents' concerns, some also expressed dismay as such restrictions directly impacted how they perceived themselves in comparison with their peers. One participant, Reina (senior), stated, "Growing up, I didn't feel normal because ... all my friends get to go out and stay out late." The perception of their parents' strictness as 'unusual' or 'atypical' was often concurrent with the notion that participants' non-Filipinx

friends had a “normal” childhood *because* they were allowed to go out without parental supervision. Ivy (senior) shared how such restrictions during her childhood deeply affected her sense of self in college, “Going to university, I felt I was hindered essentially ... also just inadequate in a way where I didn't know how to relate and socialize with people. That very much affected my perception of self and how I can contribute to society as a person because I felt very incapable.” Though participants were aware their parents’ restrictions were meant to protect them, some also felt that their social skills were “hindered” as a result. This not only informed their childhood self-perception, but also negatively impacted how they perceived themselves as they navigated new geographical settings such as college.

Taken together, Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans’ accounts of their home/family environment influenced their later aspirations regarding both higher education and mobility. While the participants’ gendered familial obligations later shaped their educational and occupational aspirations, their limited movement also helped inform their perception of college as not only a space for educational growth but a way to gain greater spatial mobility outside of their home.

Navigating and Negotiating Family Educational and Occupational Expectations

“Financial Stability and All That”: Family Influence on Major and Career Decisions

Participants discussed how their immediate and extended family’s expectations helped inform their aspirations by motivating them to pursue certain professions, particularly in healthcare, in order to make their families proud. However, this often came with the added pressure to succeed and a fear of disappointing families if they could not meet their expectations. Healthcare was

heavily emphasized due to its perceived financial stability and prestige, though participants also described being encouraged by families to pursue careers that could be ‘personally fulfilling.’

Echoed across all interviews was the notion that parents held “high” expectations for the participants’ academic performance. This often translated into obtaining “good grades” (i.e., a high GPA) in high school as a means of getting into a “good” college and then entering a professional job. While parents made their expectations explicit, participants also described feeling an unspoken “pressure” to perform well in school *because* they were aware their parents and/or grandparents had very different opportunities in the Philippines. Bea, whose family came from “a very poor neighborhood in the Philippines,” shared:

Growing up, my parents always were strict about education because my parents didn't really have a good education or didn't fully finish schooling back in the Philippines. So they were very strict about fully going through the entire process of high school and then fulfilling the college requirement and making sure that we have a stable income.

For participants like Bea, the limited educational and occupational opportunities in the Philippines not only informed their parents’ high expectations for them to be successful, but also motivated participants to try and take the most advantage of the opportunities available in the U.S. Participants perceived obtaining a college degree as not only a necessity (“requirement”) for upward mobility (“stable income”), but the ‘minimum’ familial expectation they had to achieve in order to repay their ‘internal debt’ to their family for allowing them to have these opportunities in the first place. Because of this, many feared disappointing their families—one participant even described wanting to attend a University of California so as to not be viewed as the “black sheep” of the family for not “making good” on the opportunities offered in the U.S..

Across the majority of interviews, participants shared how their family’s positive perception of the healthcare profession informed their aspirations to pursue careers in that field. Given that many Filipinx immigrants arrive in the U.S. to fill healthcare employment shortages

(Paik, Choe, and Witenstein 2016), as well as the fact that two-thirds ($n = 14$) of the participants' mothers had worked or were currently working in healthcare, their families' focus on that field specifically is perhaps unsurprising. Families characterized the healthcare profession as both financially stable and prestigious, which informed participants' decisions to study labor market-linked majors (ex. Microbiology, Kinesiology, Chemical Engineering, etc.). For example, Marisol discussed how she decided to pursue a healthcare career as she "was interested in having a comfortable, steady-paying job" and because she also wanted to make her mother "feel good about what her kid had a career in." Similarly, Iris (sophomore) stated that her extended family suggested careers such as "doctors or nurses ... because to them those are things to be proud of. You're either helping people or you're making a good amount of money, and then you can give back to the rest of your family." Thus, families' positive perceptions of healthcare informed many of the participants' aspirations to study and pursue careers in the profession.

Notably, many participants shared how though they were expected to carry out gendered household responsibilities, families also encouraged (and pressured) them to pursue careers traditionally male-dominated. Becoming a doctor was the most cited career, appearing in eleven participants' accounts. For example, Celine (freshman) shared, "My grandma and my aunts are like, 'Oh, you should be a doctor. You should become a lawyer. You should be a dentist as well.'" Similarly, Ivy, a pre-med student, explained that while her father saw becoming a doctor as a "financially stable" career, she primarily wanted to attend medical school because of her mother's experiences: "My mom is a nurse and she wanted to go to medical school, but didn't get the opportunity because she had kids. I felt like there was a responsibility for me to be able to fulfill that for her." For many participants, their family's expectation to pursue a "non-traditionally gendered" career because of its perceived financial stability aligns with the

‘gender paradox’ previously identified amongst Asian immigrant families (Feliciano and Rumbaut 2005:1092; Hanson and Gilbert 2012; Museus 2013; Sue and Okazaki 1990).

The importance of having extended *female* family members as available role models was especially salient for those planning to pursue professional careers characterized as ‘male-dominated.’ On the topic, Noelle (junior) described their aunts as “setting that pavement for me” in regards to their plans to pursue a Ph.D in STEM: “I think I was also pretty lucky because on my dad's side all of my aunts were in some sort of STEM field. ... Most people think, ‘Oh, if you're going into STEM, then that's a male thing.’” Similarly, Celine shared how her aunt and grandmother’s careers in dentistry informed the types of careers she considered pursuing: “That kind of influenced me a bit, like, ‘Oh, maybe I should try harder in school. Maybe I should be a trailblazer like them.’ ... And also just the expectation of, ‘We want you to be better than us’ type mentality.” Here, Celine’s response embodied the specific sentiment regarding family’s high expectations and the participants’ gendered realities. While some participants were keenly aware of the potential obstacles in their academic and career development due to both a gendered and racialized glass ceiling, the ability to leverage both their family’s high aspirations (“be better than us”) and the accomplishments of female family members (“trailblazers”) helped inform participants’ own aspirations to accomplish just as much if not more during their academic journey.

Though the presence of extended family helped to positively inform participants’ aspirations, some shared how they felt additional pressure to succeed *because* of their extended family’s own success in higher education. Such was the case for Tala (senior). The eldest daughter in her immediate family, Tala’s parents expected her to be a “role model” for her younger sibling, attend “prestigious universities” straight after high school, and obtain a “good

job” with her degree. However, her family’s expectations were also shaped by the fact that she was one of the youngest members of her extended family as well:

When I'm compared to my cousins, [my parents] tell me to look at my *manangs*³ (older sister) and my *manongs* (older brother) as role models and to be like, “Oh, if your *manang* can get a PhD, then that means that you can, too.” ... My dad did not go to college, and my mom only got a college degree in the Philippines. So they never actually attended college in the US. And so they see my other cousins who have achieved so much, and they also expect me to achieve the same, I guess, accolades so that I'm not disappointing our family last name, if that makes sense.

For parents who either did not have a college education or did not obtain their degree in the U.S., accessing their extended family’s educational attainment helped them to situate their expectations beyond their own educational background. As a result, the participants’ educational aspirations, such as attending graduate school, were not only informed by their parents’ expectations but also their extended family’s experiences as well.

Though families overall expected their child to focus on healthcare in order to obtain a stable income, many parents were also described as wanting their children to find careers they would ultimately be “happy” with. While prior research has underscored how Filipinx parents often expect their children to prioritize familial obligations over their own individual ambitions (Almirol 1982; Del-Mundo and Quek 2017; Salazar-Clemeña 2002), many participants in the present study shared how their parents encouraged them to prioritize both as opposed to solely focusing on their family’s expectations. For example, Iris stated, “At the end of the day, [my parents] just wanted me to choose something that I wanted to do as long as I would dedicate myself to doing well in it, and could make a career out of it.” Similarly, Reina shared, “My mom just wanted us to be happy, honestly. And of course, my dad wants us to be happy, too. But in terms of the big careers, you know, the harder to break into careers were doctor and lawyer.”

³ In the Filipinx community, terms such as “older sister” and “older brother” are not always limited to siblings but can also be applied to older cousins, relatives, friends, etc. as both a term of endearment and as a sign of respect.

While participants such as Iris and Reina were encouraged to find fulfilling careers they would enjoy, they were also expected by their parents to aim for careers that could help them obtain financial stability. As a result, many participants viewed their family's expectations and their personal aspirations as neither mutually exclusive nor contradictory to each other, but instead compatible.

While participants who chose to pursue a healthcare career cited their family's encouragement to seek financial stability as a major influence on their college decisions, their accounts also reveal how their family's expectations proved to be a double-edged sword. While they aspired to pursue such careers because they wanted to make their families proud, this came with the added pressure to succeed and a fear of disappointing their families if they didn't. This subtheme also underscores the significance of not only parents' expectations but the expectations and experiences of extended family as well, especially for participants who were either first-generation college students or the first in their immediate family to attend a college in the U.S.. Notable is the finding that families also encouraged participants to pursue careers that they could be "happy" in, as long as it provided financial stability.

Navigating the Nursing Niche and Expectation

While this study did not specifically ask about experiences and attitudes towards nursing, many participants situated their family's occupational expectations towards healthcare within the prevailing "Filipina nurse" stereotype and ethnic niching. Two primary patterns emerged as a result of their families' positive perceptions of nursing: a) this helped inform participants' own positive perceptions of the healthcare profession overall and encouraged them to pursue nursing

or a similar career, and b) the pressure to pursue nursing specifically inadvertently informed some participants' negative associations with the profession.

Across interviews, participants discussed how nursing was characterized as an 'ideal' career because of its perceived financial stability, job longevity, and "easier" accessibility. For example, Penelope (sophomore) stated, "[My parents] were like, 'You should definitely try nursing because it's less schooling and it's an easier field to get into,' even though it's pretty impacted." Many also characterized the nursing expectation as not only specific to their ethnicity but also distinctly gendered. Later on in her interview, Penelope also shared, "I think it was more for female relatives because whenever I would hear my male relatives talk about careers, I would hear more of like, 'Oh, you should pursue the masters in this, or become a doctor or something.'" On the topic, Teresa said, "Especially for the girls, it has to be a nurse, you know. That's the Filipino mindset." Such gendered differentiation could, in part, be attributed to the persistent gendered and racialized migration patterns of Filipina nurses which directly resulted from U.S. imperialism (for a detailed account, see Choy 2010). Given that many of the participants had mothers and/or female relatives who worked as nurses or certified nursing assistants, the gendered expectation that they would also become a nurse was especially prominent.

Participants' accounts of their families' positive attitudes towards nursing also suggested that a sense of pride was associated with the occupation, which informed their aspirations to pursue a career in nursing or a similar profession. Piper (sophomore), a nursing student, attributed her parents' encouragement of the occupation to their own experiences working in non-healthcare related fields and their overall "belief" that "the medical field was one of their top jobs." She further explained, "Since they didn't want me to have to work hard and work the jobs that they have, they were like, 'We want you to get a high-paying job. Do something that you

actually like.” Piper’s account demonstrated how families not only understood nursing to be a “high-paying job,” but also associated nursing with a perceived prestige (“top jobs”). This, coupled with Iris’s earlier account that nursing was an occupation “to be proud of,” is suggestive of the ways in which Filipinx families may understand nursing as a source of both financial stability and pride and therefore encourage their children, especially daughters, to pursue that career (Gambol, Karam, and Kim 2025).

However, not all participants shared their families’ positive attitudes towards nursing. For some, this expectation became a point of contention with their families. While not explicitly stated, it can be inferred from some participants’ accounts that they felt ‘pressured’ to pursue nursing because it was constructed as the ‘only’ occupation available to them. One participant even described feeling “brainwashed” by her mother into prioritizing nursing as she felt she was not allowed to “explore any other healthcare options or any other jobs.” Teresa, who decided not to pursue nursing, shared how though she was happy with her current major, her family’s expectations still shaped how she perceived herself in college: “It still messes with my mental health a lot ... a lot of self doubt comes with it. It just makes me question, ‘Am I doing the right thing? Should I really have listened to them?’” Though participants were aware that their families wanted to ensure they could be financially stable in the future, the nursing expectation was perceived by some to be more hindering than helpful.

Across many of the interviews, participants shared how their families’ emphasized nursing as an ideal option. Families encouraged participants to pursue nursing because of its perceived financial stability and prestige. However, some participants shared how they felt ‘pressured’ to pursue nursing as it was constructed as the only option for them, leading some to question or experience guilt over pursuing their personal aspirations.

“Giving Back” to Family in the Future

While participants’ aspirations were, in part, informed by their parents’ own limited opportunities in the Philippines, their specific major and career goals were also partially attributed to their desire to “give back” to their parents. Whether implicitly or explicitly expected of them, participants aspired towards careers perceived as financially stable in order to support themselves and their aging parents. While many expressed a strong desire to take on this role, some shared how they felt limited due to this gendered expectation.

For many participants, obtaining a college degree would not only help facilitate upward social mobility, but would also allow them to ‘reciprocate’ their parents’ sacrifices for raising them in a new country with vast opportunities (Hanson and Gilbert 2012; Maramba 2008; Museus 2013). Many participants characterized their time in higher education as a “privilege,” especially as their parents helped financially support their college journey. As Penelope shared, “Because [my parents] provided so much for me growing up, I feel like I owe them at least graduating and getting my degree ... This is a privilege that they didn’t have coming here.” First-generation college students such as Reina also expressed a similar sentiment: “Attending college for me definitely means ... achieving my parents’ dreams and showing that their sacrifices meant so much.” Thus, participants from different types of familial educational backgrounds viewed obtaining a college degree itself as a way of ‘giving back’ to their parents.

Participants also saw completing college as a way to fulfill their internal debt to their parents as it would help them pursue careers which could financially support themselves and their families in the future. As participants began to enter college (and adulthood in general) and pursue professional careers, parents expected them to provide social support in the form of

financial assistance, emotional and physical care, or a combination of both. Eliana (senior) stated, “My main concern right now is post-college and making sure I make money, because if I make money, then I won't struggle. And if I'm not struggling, then I can make sure my parents aren't struggling, and they've always struggled financially.” Similarly, Carmen (senior) shared, “My mom would say things like, ‘Oh, I’m caring for you right now. I expect you to take care of me when I’m older.’” For some, this expectation to become a future caregiver was not only explicitly stated by parents, but was also focused primarily on daughters, even when sons were also available. Ivy shared the following:

I always grew up with the idea [that] I'm going to be in healthcare. And in part it was kind of backed by the discourse from my parents. It'd be like, “You gotta be in healthcare so you can take care of us one day” kind of thing. ... It's just I feel like I have more responsibility to take care of my parents, because I'd want my younger brother to be able to excel and do well and not have to worry about our family. Because as an *Ate* (older sister), I feel like I have that responsibility.

For Ivy and many other participants, the types of careers they were aspiring towards were informed by the expectation that they would care for their aging parents in the future. Obtaining a “high-paying” career would not only benefit the participant individually, but would also help them facilitate any particular support their parents might need as well.

Notably, other participants highlighted how though their parents did not explicitly hold such expectations for them, they still wanted to take on this caregiving role in the future in order to pay their internal debt to them. Participants primarily attributed this desire to their awareness of their family’s aforementioned sacrifices. For example, though their father explicitly stated he didn’t want his children to become caregivers for him as he grew older, Noelle shared, “My sister and I sort of self-assumed that role anyways because we feel that our parents gave us so much anyways.” Even for those whose parents did not explicitly expect them to care for them in the

future, an awareness of their parents' sacrifices and support was still an important influence on their educational and occupational aspirations.

While many participants wanted to help care for their aging families, some also expressed how they felt "limited" due to such gendered expectations. Willow (senior), the eldest daughter in her family, shared the following:

I know with my mom, I've kind of had this conversation about, "Oh, when you're older, you're going to be the one [to take care of us]." And then I would ask, "Okay, like, what if I had my own career? What if I moved away? Would my brother be expected to take on that role instead?" But that was kind of like, "No, like it's going to be you when we grow older." ... Since I was so supervised and so protected in my teenage years, I kind of really want to go out and explore and move out and try to see things for myself. But I think, having that family obligation, I was just kind of feeling trapped in the moment.

As discussed in the next theme, many participants sought and were able to exercise independence for the first time while in college. However, as exemplified by Willow's account, some also anticipated that they would continue to experience limited mobility during their post-college careers. This awareness of what was expected of them in the future not only resulted in participants' conflicted feelings regarding their caregiving role, but also appeared to deepen the participants' appreciation for the independence gained by attending college, however temporary it appeared to be.

The expectation to become a future caregiver for their families was a significant factor in informing the participants' educational and occupational aspirations. Participants sought to obtain careers deemed 'financially stable' to help support themselves and their families, especially their aging parents. Regardless of whether such expectations were made explicit by parents or were self-assumed, many participants described taking on this role as not only a familial obligation, but a personal desire as well. Though some felt limited in their spatial mobility due to their parents' expectations, their desire to repay their family for their sacrifices helped many Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans to view this role in a positive light amidst the

pressure to succeed. Thus, completing college was perceived by many as a way to “give back” to families by opening opportunities to careers which could facilitate participants’ financial support and caregiving responsibilities for their parents.

Compromising Between Family’s Expectations and Personal Aspirations

Participants prioritized similarities between their family’s expectations and their own personal aspirations regarding their educational and occupational goals. This often meant pursuing careers that would be financially stable, while also ensuring that participants would be personally happy and fulfilled by them. Those whose families did not positively receive their chosen majors and careers often communicated their specific goals and future plans with their families in order to negotiate for personal aspirations which may not have aligned with their family’s expectations.

The notion of finding “middle ground” between their family’s expectations and their own goals was the primary strategy participants employed as a means of ‘satisfying everyone.’ While participants wanted to choose majors and careers that would be fulfilling for themselves, they also prioritized their family’s expectations and attempted to strike a balance between the two. The most common sentiment was typified by Iris’s statement: “I try to find the middle ground because while our aspirations don't always exactly align, there are some that do. I try to focus on those while also giving myself the freedom to do some of the things I want.” Amber (senior) shared, “If I am expected to, say, go to uni, get a good degree and get a good job, at least get it in something that, you know, I can enjoy and they can be proud of.” These accounts not only echo the common notion of finding a career that their families would “be proud of,” but also demonstrate how participants wanted to find a career that would also guarantee personal satisfaction.

While the definition of “middle ground” varied by participant, the general notion was to work hard in their anticipated career as a means of obtaining financial stability, even if the career was not in healthcare. This was especially salient for participants such as Chloe (freshman), whose parents were hesitant on allowing her to pursue a degree in Arts & Humanities. Though there was initial disagreement over her college choices, Chloe’s plan to make the most out of her present opportunities helped her parents get “on board” with her decisions: “[My parents] want me to be who I am, and to have a full stomach ... So I'm just trying to get as much experience as possible so I can turn around and be like, ‘Look at how much I’ve done. I’m getting somewhere. I’m going places.’” Similarly, Tala, who decided not to follow in her older cousins’ exact footsteps, explained, “Yes, I want to have a job that's very purposeful and where I'm serving the community, but I'm also much more concerned with making a lot of money ... Because there's that common factor between my aspirations and my family's wishes, it kind of makes combining the two easier.” Though Tala’s career plans did not exactly align with her family’s expectations, she was able to negotiate with her family about the specific career she aspired towards by assuring them that she would be able to “mak[e] a lot of money” from her chosen field. For participants like Chloe and Tala, whose desired majors and careers did not exactly conform to their families' expectations, the promise of fulfilling their families’ primary expectation (i.e., financial stability) allowed them to negotiate for some personal educational and occupational aspirations.

Overall, participants prioritized commonalities between their family’s expectations and their individual aspirations regarding their chosen major and anticipated career. For many, this translated to pursuing careers that would be both financially stable and personally fulfilling. For those whose chosen majors and careers received mixed responses from family, being able to

communicate their goals and plans for obtaining financial stability allowed them to negotiate for decisions that may not have initially aligned with their family's expectations.

College as a Space for Realizing Aspirations for Spatial Mobility

As per their family's encouragement, the majority of participants selected a college close to home, while also electing to move out in order to live closer to campus. This allowed them to have newfound discretion over their spatial mobility and social lives. Moving out for college was also viewed as an opportunity to 'prove' to their parents that they could live independently and continue having discretion over their spatial mobility post-college.

With the exception of a few, the majority of participants ($n = 18$) were attending a college relatively close to their family home (less than or equal to a two hours drive). Only two participants reported commuting from home to campus—the remaining nineteen participants lived close to or on campus. Most shared how their parents encouraged them to choose colleges which were close to home (i.e., participants from Northern California were encouraged to remain in the region as opposed to attending a school in Southern California), though a common exception to this would be schools which parents deemed “prestigious” or schools in areas where extended family also lived. A little more than half of the participants shared how their parents discouraged the possibility of attending college far from home, which was often attributed to the aforementioned “safety concerns” regarding gendered and sexual violence. While the majority of participants cited their close relationship with their family as the reason for why they chose to remain close to home, for others, parental pressure led most to apply to colleges which were already in close proximity to home. Carmen, whose parents wanted her to attend a college within commuting distance from home, explained: “My mom had wanted me to go to [a closer school]

because she was like, ‘You can stay [at home]’ ... For a Filipina’s parents, having their eldest daughter want to leave home is their biggest fear.” Willow, who was from Northern California, also expressed a similar sentiment: “I didn’t even apply [to schools in Southern California] just because my parents believed that’s just way too far for them and that they couldn’t reach me by airplane in an hour, and that I shouldn’t apply or shouldn’t try going there.”

Some participants experienced resistance from their parents regarding their decision to attend a school deemed “far” from home. Because of this, they intentionally excluded their parents from the college selection process regarding the specific location. For example, while Gia (junior) was expected by her father to attend a more local college, she instead chose a school farther away in order to get away from her ‘tense’ home environment: “When I was applying for college, I didn’t tell my parents where I was applying to. ... I don’t have to interact with that whole [family] dynamic as often ... And so that’s definitely why I applied to be far away.” For some participants, excluding their families’ input from specific decisions in the college application process was a strategy employed in order to obtain the spatial mobility they sought and anticipated while attending college.

Though the majority of participants ultimately selected colleges relatively close to their family homes, many emphasized the importance of moving out of home as a way of obtaining newfound control over their spatial mobility outside of their parents’ strictness. As captured by Marisol’s response: “I didn’t want to be really far from home because I knew I would get homesick really easily, but I also wanted that sense of freedom.” Indeed, for many participants, moving out of home for college was a balancing act: while most did not want to be too far from their families, moving out of their home also allowed them the spatial mobility they desired throughout their childhood. The physical distance also allowed them to be, at least for a time,

relieved from the weight of their family's expectations. When reflecting on leaving home for college, Amber stated, "At home there's so many expectations for who you are based on who you were. ... You get to prove that you're capable of surviving without, you know, Mama Bird regurgitating the worms." Thus, moving out of their home allowed many the opportunity to develop a sense of newfound independence and "freedom" without their parents' expectations and limitations looming over them.

Participants also discussed how moving out from home not only allowed them to momentarily leave their parents' strictness for the first time, but also allowed them to further develop their social life outside the home environment. Such was the case for Carmen, who reflected positively on her newfound mobility while living away for college: "I really enjoy my freedom. During the summer ... I would take random trips or just hang out at a friend's apartment. ... Those are things that my parents would never let me do. They would scrutinize me like crazy if I just said I wanted to hang out." The fact that Carmen was restricted from engaging in these activities during her childhood made them all the more significant for her once she began attending college. This was especially the case for participants who anticipated continued restrictions on their mobility had they chosen to remain home during college, which motivated them to choose a school where moving away was a practical choice.

This newfound mobility while in college also helped shape participants' sense of self in regards to their social life, something many had looked forward to when they first moved away. During her interview, Penelope shared how not having a curfew or any particular boundary on her mobility in college "enhanced" her social life: "It definitely made me feel a lot more confident in myself and just happy being able to connect with so many people and hang out with so many people." As discussed before, some participants shared how their family's strictness

directly affected their sense of self as they felt they were ‘behind’ their peers regarding their social skills. Because of this, college became a space for participants to develop their connections and social life, which contributed to their overall self-confidence.

While many participants enjoyed the freedom afforded them, they also recognized this as an opportunity to showcase to their parents that they were capable of being independent and making their own choices. Because the majority of the participants experienced much parental strictness prior to attending college, they anticipated that their parents’ strictness would persist even after they graduated from college and began working full-time. Moving away for college, then, became a way for participants to ‘prove’ themselves to their parents. This sentiment was especially captured in Bea’s narrative, who explained how moving away for college would ultimately help her future goals: “I won’t see any change unless I move out of my parents house ... There was no way I could prove to them that I could handle myself and be able to show them I was more than capable of living by myself if I didn’t go here.” Though Bea hoped that moving out for college could help facilitate her permanently moving out of her parents’ home post-college, the general desire to be viewed as an independent adult was a common sentiment echoed across interviews, especially for those who anticipated or planned to continue living with their parents post-college graduation.

While the majority of participants adhered to their parents’ encouragements on selecting a college relatively close to home, they were still able to obtain newfound mobility and social activity by moving out of their homes to live closer to campus. This facilitated their ability to envision themselves moving beyond their family/home environment, and even gave them the chance to demonstrate their capabilities and independence to their parents. College students overall can and often experience newfound independence outside of their homes. For the

participants interviewed, however, such opportunities were especially profound as their “freedom” was restricted throughout their youth. Though some participants anticipated that such restrictions would persist when they returned to live with their parents during their post-college careers, many expressed hope that their newfound mobility would continue long after their time in college was complete.

Utilizing the Campus to Redefine Gender and Ethnic Identities

Moving into a new geographical setting allowed participants new opportunities to redefine their gender and ethnic identities. Some participants were able to explore their gender expression in a new geographical setting away from their homes. Many also shared how access to new discourses via F/Pilipinx American clubs and organizations helped them to expand upon their understanding of their ethnic and cultural identities in ways they hadn’t been able to before.

Two participants who identified as transgender and/or gender-non-conforming shared how moving out of their homes and entering new spaces via college aided them in fulfilling their desired gender expression. For example, Amber, a transwoman, discussed how moving away for college not only allowed her newfound spatial mobility but a chance to express herself in a way that aligned with her gender identity: “My mother definitely does not like me being a woman. Or, well, she is quietly compliant, but she is not happy ... I can definitely express more femininely without as much home worries.” A similar sentiment was also shared by Noelle, who also began to express their non-binary identity while being on campus:

I feel like I had always played it pretty safe around my family where it's like, okay, I'll only really present as feminine. ... And so, like, I think in those instances where I'm being very, I guess, more masc-presenting, I'll kind of hide those parts of myself. [At college,] I dress the same anyways, but I think I became more comfortable with cutting my hair short and keeping it this way and maybe dressing in a more masculine-presenting way just because, like, my family is not here, so it's more comfortable to me.

Because this sample was limited in its recruitment process, this finding should not be taken as representative of all queer-identifying Filipinx Americans. The other participants who identified as such did not go into as much detail regarding how they expressed their gender identity in college. This could be attributed to the fact that for one participant, the discovery of their identity was relatively recent when the interview was conducted, while the other was already “out” and supported by their parents. Nevertheless, such findings align with prior research demonstrating how college became a safe space for people of color to redefine and renegotiate their gender and sexual identities without the pressure of their family’s surveillance (Garvey et al. 2019; Gomez Parra and Garcia 2023).

Coupled with this newfound freedom for gender expression was, for many, a profound shift in their understanding of their ethnic identity, which also informed their sense of belonging on campus. This was primarily facilitated through engagement with F/Pilipinx-American clubs and organizations on campus.⁴ Joining such groups allowed participants to explore themselves culturally in ways they hadn’t been able to before. Such was the case for Brenda, who described herself as initially “passive” when it came to learning more about her cultural heritage. After joining a F/Pilipinx American organization on campus, she explained, “Now I would consider my perspective on it to be ... a lot stronger and wanting to develop my understanding of my cultural identity.” A similar sentiment was shared by Ivy, who described her parents as “Americanized” and who did not grow up speaking her parents’ native language:

I didn't feel Filipino enough, even though both my parents are Filipino. ... And so having these resources on campus really helped me solidify ... not only do I belong in these academic spaces, but also I can be proud of who I am because I *am* that identity and I can tap into that identity however much I want to.

⁴ “Some F/Pilipinos will use Pilipino as a political statement because there is no ‘F’ in the Tagalog/Pilipino language. However, some F/Pilipinos will identify with Filipino because it is the term that has been most commonly used for centuries.” (Nadal 2004:46)

For participants like Ivy, finding community through F/Pilipinx American organizations not only helped contribute to their sense of belonging as college students, but also helped to affirm their ethnic identity and what being Filipinx American personally meant to them.

Overall, moving away for college allowed some participants to explore their gender expression in a new geographical setting away from the surveillance of their family/home environment. It also facilitated for many a profound shift in the way they understood their ethnic identity as Filipinx Americans. By accessing new discourses via F/Pilipinx American clubs and organizations, participants were able to redefine and explore their ethnic identities in ways which they hadn't been able to before.

DISCUSSION

A qualitative analysis of 21 interviews with college-going Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans reveals distinct patterns on how gendered family expectations help to inform their aspirations for higher education and mobility. Four primary themes emerged from the findings: (a) Familial Obligations and Limited Spatial Mobility, (b) Navigating and Negotiating Family Educational and Occupational Expectations, (c) College as a Space for Realizing Aspirations for Spatial Mobility, and (d) Utilizing the Campus to Redefine Gender and Ethnic Identities.

Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans share how their familial obligations are distinctly gendered and often characterized by double standards, especially as brothers and male cousins are perceived as having more “freedom” regarding their mobility and household responsibilities. Many attribute their parents’ strictness to the desire to protect their children from gender and sexual violence in a setting different than the one they grew up in, which is supported by the existing literature on the mobility of women of color from immigrant families (Amirol 1982;

Bonifacio 2018; Espiritu 2001; Gomez-Parra and Garcia 2023; Maramba 2008). Families' high expectations for their children's educational and occupational attainment are a major influence on the students' own aspirations, especially as the latter view obtaining a college degree as a way to repay their *utang na loob* (internal debt) to their immigrant family. Additionally, Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans' familial obligations align with prior findings regarding the "gender paradox," where women from immigrant households are expected to fulfill their household responsibilities while also pursuing higher education and occupations "non-traditionally gendered" (Feliciano and Rumbaut 2005:1092).

Another important finding is the significant role of extended family in influencing both parents' expectations and students' aspirations. For first-generation college students or those who are the first in their family to attend an American college/university, their extended family's expectations and educational attainment help mediate the effects of their parents' own educational background as they interact with the participants' aspirations. Additionally, some Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans model their aspirations after their female relatives' educational and occupational accomplishments in the healthcare field, particularly those whose careers are deemed 'male-dominated.' Being able to leverage the experiences of extended family members, especially female relatives, underscores the importance of broader kin networks as a vital resource for 2nd generation children in immigrant families (Amirol 1982; Feliciano 2005; Feliciano 2006; Ngo and Lee 2007; Tran 2016; Zhou and Lee 2017). By having access to such resources, Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans are further inspired to not only obtain college degrees, but to also pursue 'non-traditionally' gendered careers as well.

With few exceptions, most Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans feel they are expected to pursue a healthcare profession because of the perception that these fields could secure

financial stability for themselves and their families. However, they also share how their parents encourage them to pursue careers which make them “happy” as long as they are able to “make money” from it. As a result, Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans select majors and careers they perceive as financially stable, while also not feeling pressured to choose one specific career.

While the families’ emphasis on financial stability may be attributed to factors such as the high cost of living in California⁵ and the broader narrative that Filipinxs primarily immigrate in order to obtain social mobility (Paik, Choe, and Witenstein 2016), the encouragement to find a “fulfilling” career is of particular interest. A study on the experiences of college students in the Philippines found that, overall, families often selected their child’s specific major career and future career, with the general sentiment being: “What college education can we afford that can make you [the child] finish quickly, get a job, and start helping with family finances?” (Salazar-Clemeña 2011:251). Comparing this notion to the present study’s findings, this then raises the question, *What factors could be contributing to these observed differences in parental attitudes between the Philippines and the U.S.?*

One reason could be that college-going Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans are able to leverage the upward mobility their family experienced after immigrating. Participants were not asked about their family’s socioeconomic (SES) background prior to and after immigrating. However, many described their own upbringing in the U.S. as “very different” from their parents’ upbringing in the Philippines due to having a “higher” quality of educational and occupational opportunities in comparison with their parents. It is possible that migration and access to new work opportunities in the country of settlement can help facilitate upward SES mobility for the parents’ generation, who are then integrated into the American middle class. As

⁵ Cost of Living in California, last modified December 24, 2025, <https://www.salary.com/research/cost-of-living/ca>.

a result, 2nd generation Filipinx Americans, while still highly expected to pursue a financially stable career, are also encouraged to find jobs which would be personally fulfilling.

A second reason could be that migration to a new cultural setting may facilitate acculturation, which subsequently promotes a shift in how immigrant families navigate decisions traditionally regarded as a ‘family matter.’ Further analysis on the effects of acculturation is pivotal considering that parents’ attitudes towards their children’s self-determination have a significant impact on the latter’s well-being (Chao and Tseng 2002; Chung 2001), as well as their academic goals and major satisfaction (Nerona 2020). Therefore, future research which examines the extent to which acculturation may inform parental support for Filipinx Americans’ college decisions is crucial.

The results of the study also reveal that college-going Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans’ aspirations are influenced by the explicit or implicit gendered expectation that they would help support their families, particularly their aging parents, post-college. This includes providing their families with financial support, as well as taking on a caregiving role for them in the future. While Maramba’s (2008) study also found that college-going Filipina Americans are expected to become caregivers for their parents in the future, the participants of that study also discussed how they “felt the need to finish school quickly to help [their] parents with family expenses and obligations” (341). On the contrary, the present study finds that the obligation to financially support and/or provide caregiving for families significantly informs many Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans’ aspirations to pursue high-paying, graduate-level careers, which would require additional years in school. Because of this contradiction, future research should continue to investigate how familial obligations inform Filipinx Americans’ aspirations regarding their level of educational attainment and future career.

Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans perceive staying near home and moving away for college as a balancing act. Though most attend a college relatively close to home as per their parents' expectations, moving away to live closer to or on campus allows them to carry out their desires for spatial mobility and independence. Moving away from home also facilitates the exploration and redefinition of their gender and ethnic identities. Some GNC Filipinx Americans are able to comfortably express themselves in ways that align with their true gender identity while on campus, a notion which is supported by prior research (Garvey et al. 2019; Gomez Parra and Garcia 2023). Additionally, Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans are introduced to new discourses on their ethnic and cultural identity through F/Filipinx American clubs and organizations on campus. Being able to engage with these groups helps to strengthen their sense of belonging on campus, while also bolstering their sense of pride in their ethnicity and community. These findings are especially important as they affirm the significance of ethnic-cultural clubs in supporting Filipinx American college students' access to campus resources, retention rates, and overall academic success (Deleon 2022; Libarios et al. 2018).

Though the findings in this study underscore the ways in which familial expectations and obligations can affect college-going Filipinx Americans' aspirations, a few limitations must be considered. First, the majority of participants were already attending the same competitive R1 university by the time they were interviewed. It is possible that individuals who report their family's "high" expectations and individual "high" aspirations would more likely than not be in attendance at such an institution, especially if they plan to pursue professional, graduate-level careers in the future. Additionally, most participants were 2nd generation Filipinx Americans, and were born and raised in Northern California in majority white and East Asian suburban neighborhoods. As a result, these findings are limited in their generalizability. Future researchers

should inquire into the experiences of college-going Filipinx Americans from different regions, SES backgrounds, generational statuses, types of colleges/universities, grade-level, campus student populations, etc., to further capture the nuanced narratives of those across the nation.

Because the participants were attending college at the time they were interviewed, this study would benefit from a longitudinal design where Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans are interviewed post-college. This could help further understand how their families' expectations inform their educational and occupational *attainment* in addition to their aspirations. A dyadic or triadic approach where parents and/or other relevant family members are interviewed would also be helpful given that the present study only draws from the college students' *perceptions* of their families' expectations. Measuring the family's SES before and after immigrating, as well as their level of acculturation, may also help to uncover new insights on how factors such as migration and upward social mobility inform familial expectations and individual aspirations.

Because of the limited scope of the recruitment process for college-going GNC Filipinx Americans specifically, future research should examine how they negotiate their queer and ethnic identities as it relates to their family's expectations and personal aspirations. Additionally, because some participants were recruited via my collaboration with a F/Filipinx American organization at one university, the findings regarding ethnic-cultural clubs and organizations could potentially be biased. It is possible that those who already engage in discourses and conversations about their ethnic identity would also be more open to discussing their experiences for a study such as this one. Thus, future research should also analyze the experiences of college-going Filipinx Americans whose engagement with such groups might be limited or not possible given the college/university they are attending.

While not necessarily a limitation, it is worth noting that there is a distinct lack of discussion regarding religion in this study. Given the prevalence of Spanish Catholicism in the Philippines and its strong influence on Filipinx gender roles (Bonifacio 2018), I was surprised to find that only two participants discussed briefly how Catholicism may have informed their family's gender dynamics. This is most likely due to the fact that I did not ask about religion specifically as I wanted participants to construct their own narratives as much as possible. Thus, investigating the role of religion in shaping Filipinx Americans' gendered experiences may help to further understand how their family's expectations inform their personal aspirations.

CONCLUSION

Using intersectional feminist theory and critical race theory, as well as a transpacific feminist framework, this study sought to examine how gendered family expectations shape college-going Filipina and gender-non-conforming (GNC) Filipinx Americans' aspirations for higher education and mobility. A qualitative analysis of 21 interviews from participants attending four-year universities in California reveals how Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans navigate their family's educational expectations for financial stability and future caregiving by selecting labor market-linked majors. They also balance their family's expectations and their personal aspirations by prioritizing financial stability in their decision-making, while also pursuing degrees and careers they can find personal fulfillment in. While many feel "pressured" to succeed in college, they are also strongly motivated by the desire to "give back" to their families for their sacrifices as immigrants. Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans navigate their family's expectations for them to remain near home during college and their personal desire for spatial mobility by selecting colleges close to home while also moving out to live closer to campus. As a

result, they are able to obtain newfound independence, as well as a space to explore their gender and ethnic identities.

These research findings illustrate how factors such as gender, family background and extended networks, ethnicity, (im)migration and generational status, etc., intersect to inform the experiences of Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans, who are understudied in sociological and intersectional feminist literature on higher education and mobility. As more Filipinx Americans continue to pursue higher education, understanding what factors may contribute to their aspirations and college decisions has important implications for their educational trajectories and future participation in the workforce. Programs and initiatives which aim to help these students navigate college decision-making must ensure that families can also take part in any available resource or workshop, specifically those which teach about different careers that are available. These resources are especially important for parents who did not attend college in the U.S. or in general, and who may not fully understand what their child is going through while attending American colleges and universities. By familiarizing them with the American college system, some parents may become more attuned to their child's experiences, which can help alleviate the stress and pressure some college students may face. Additionally, given the importance of F/Pilipinx American organizations in affirming Filipinx Americans' sense of belonging on their campus, colleges and universities should continue to support their activities and assist in any necessary funding, promotion, outreach, etc. Because of the present study's limitations, future research should analyze how other factors such as region, family's socioeconomic status pre- and post-migration, college/university type and setting, religion, and access to F/Pilipinx American organizations may shape the aspirations of Filipinx Americans across the nation.

This study demonstrates how a myriad of sociocultural and structural factors work to inform Filipina and GNC Filipinx Americans' educational and occupational aspirations, as well as their desire for mobility and independence. They not only perceive college as a place for academic growth, but also as a space for self-exploration and negotiation of personal aspirations. While the pervasiveness of the model minority myth continues to distort and obscure the lived experiences of Filipinx Americans, continuing to spotlight their narratives will help drive forth nuanced discourse regarding the meanings they apply to higher education and mobility.

REFERENCES

- Allen, Katherine R. 2016. "Feminist Theory in Family Studies: History, Reflection, and Critique." *Journal of Family Theory and Review* 8(2): 207–24. doi: 10.1111/jftr.12133.
- Almirol, Edwin B. 1982. "Rights and Obligations in Filipino American Families." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 13(3):291–306.
- Batalova, Jeanne. 2025. "Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States." *Migration Policy Institute*. Retrieved January 26, 2026 (<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states>).
- Bermas, Mary Joy, Aira Juliana Baltazar, and Teresita Rungduin. 2024. "Parent-Child Relationship: Life Narratives of Elderly Parents as Care Receiver." *International Journal of Care Scholars* 7(2):38–55. doi: 10.31436/ijcs.v7i2.363.
- Blau, Peter M., and Otis Dudley Duncan. 1967. "The Process of Stratification." Pp. 35–46 in *The American Occupational Structure*. New York: Free Press.
- Bolton, Sony Coráñez. 2022. "A Tale of Two 'X's: Queer Filipinx and Latinx Linguistic Intimacies." Pp. 284–290 in *Filipinx American Studies: Reckoning, Reclamation, Transformation*, edited by R. Bonus and A. T. Tiongson. New York: Fordham University Press. doi: 10.2307/j.ctv2gmhh8s.28.
- Bonifacio, Glenda Tibe. 2018. "Religion and Gender Equality in Catholic Philippines: Discourses and Practices in the 21st Century." Pp. 41–58 in *Women and Religion: Contemporary and Future Challenges in the Global Era*, edited by Elisabetta Ruspini, Glenda Tibe Bonifacio, and Consuelo Corradi. Bristol University Press: Policy Press. doi: 10.2307/j.ctv301d7f.7.

- Buenavista, Tracy Lachica. 2010. "Issues Affecting U.S. Filipino Student Access to Postsecondary Education: A Critical Race Theory Perspective." *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* 15:114–126. doi: 10.1080/10824661003635093.
- Casiño, Rey Marco Z., Liandro L. Serrano, and Maria Isabel D. Granada. 2025. "Revisiting the Filipino Value Utang Na Loob: Contextual Perceptions, Implications and Inputs to Sustaining the Filipino Psychology Discussions." *International Journal of Education and Humanities* 5(2):309–324. doi: 10.58557/(ijeh).v5i2.311.
- Chao, Ruth, and Vivian Tseng. 2002. "Parenting of Asians." Pp. 59–93 in *Handbook of Parenting*, edited by Marc H. Bornstein. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Choi, Yoonsun, Tae Yeun Kim, Jeanette Park Lee, Kevin Poh Hiong Tan, Samuel Noh, and David Takeuchi. 2021. "Upholding Familism Among Asian American Youth: Measures of Familism among Filipino and Korean American Youth." *Adolescent Research Review* 6(4):437–455. doi: 10.1007/s40894-020-00148-9.
- Chung, Ruth H. Gim. 2001. "Gender, Ethnicity, and Acculturation in Intergenerational Conflict of Asian American College Students." *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 7(4):376–386. doi: 10.1037//1099-9809.7.4.376.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 139–167.
- Cruz, Denise. 2022. "Gender: A Transpacific Feminist Approach to Filipinx Studies." Pp. 192–200 in *Filipinx American Studies: Reckoning, Reclamation, Transformation*, edited by Rick Bonus and Antonio T. Tiongson, 192–200. New York: Fordham University Press. doi: 10.2307/j.ctv2gmhh8s.19.

- Deleon, Reuben B. 2022. "Filipinx American College Student Identities: A Critique of Models." Pp. 221–228 in *Filipinx American Studies: Reckoning, Reclamation, Transformation*, edited by Rick Bonus and Antonio T. Tiongson. New York: Fordham University Press. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2gmhh8s.22>.
- Del-Mundo, Jennifer L., and Karen Mui-Teng Quek. 2017. "Balancing the Old and the New: The Case of Second-Generation Filipino American Women." Pp. 67–77 in *Transition and Change in Collectivist Family Life: Strategies for Clinical Practice with Asian Americans*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing. doi: [10.1007/978-3-319-50679-1_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50679-1_7).
- Deterding, Nicole M., and Marcy C. Waters. 2021. "Flexible Coding of In-Depth Interviews: A Twenty-first-century Approach." *Sociological Methods & Research* 50(2):708–739. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124118799377>.
- Diaz, Robert. 2015. "The Limits of *Bakla* and Gay: Feminist Readings of *My Husband's Lover*, Vice Ganda, and Charice Pempengco." *Signs* 40(3):721–745.
- Dwyer, Sonya Corbin, and Jennifer L. Buckle. 2009. "The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8(1):55–63. doi: [10.1177/160940690900800105](https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800105).
- Endo, Russell. 1980. "Asian Americans and Higher Education." *Phylon* 41(4):367–378. doi: [10.2307/274861](https://doi.org/10.2307/274861).
- Espiritu, Yen. 2001. "'We Don't Sleep around like White Girls Do': Family, Culture, and Gender in Filipina American Lives." *Signs* 26(2):415–40.
- Fajardo, Kale B. 2022. "In an Archipelago and Sea of Complexities: Contemporary Intersectional/Transpacific/Decolonial Queer and/or Trans Filipinx American Studies."

- Pp. 174–184 in *Filipinx American Studies: Reckoning, Reclamation, Transformation*, edited by Rick Bonus and Antonio T. Tiongson. New York: Fordham University Press. doi: 10.2307/j.ctv2gmhh8s.17.
- Feliciano, Cynthia. 2006. “Beyond the Family: The Influence of Premigration Group Status on the Educational Expectations of Immigrants’ Children.” *Sociology of Education* 79:281–303. doi: 10.1177/003804070607900401.
- Feliciano, Cynthia, and Ruben G. Rumbaut. 2005. “Gendered Paths: Educational and Occupational Expectations and Outcomes Among Adult Children of Immigrants.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28(6):1087–1118. doi: 10.1080/01419870500224406.
- Fuligni, Andrew J. 1997. “The Academic Achievement of Adolescents from Immigrant Families: The Roles of Family Background, Attitudes and Behavior.” *Child Development* 68(2):351–363.
- Gambol, Brenda, Rebecca Karam, and Andrew Taeho Kim. 2025. “Nursing as Ethnic Capital: Perceptions of Intergenerational Niching Among Filipino Americans.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 1–25. doi: 10.1080/1369183X.2025.2584342.
- Garvey, Jason C., Steve D. Mobley, Kiara S. Summerville, and Gretchen T. Moore. 2019. “Queer and Trans* Students of Color: Navigating Identity Disclosure and College Contexts.” *The Journal of Higher Education* 90(1):150–178. doi: 10.1080/00221546.2018.1449081.
- Gomez Parra, Michelle, and Lorena Garcia. 2023. “‘I Have Tasted Freedom’: An Intersectional Analysis of College-Going Latinas’ Desire for and Meanings of Mobility.” *Gender & Society* 37(2):268–91. doi: 10.1177/08912432231156374.
- Hanson, Sandra L. and Emily Gilbert. 2012. “Family, Gender, and Science Experiences: The Perspective of Young Asian Americans.” *Race, Gender & Class* 19(3/4):326–347.

- Hickey, M. Gail. 1996. "'Go to College, Get a Job, and Don't Leave the House Without Your Brother.' Oral Histories with Immigrant Women and Their Daughters." *Oral History Review* 23(2):63–92. doi: 10.1093/ohr/23.2.63.
- Kao, Grace and Marta Tienda. 1998. "Educational Aspirations of Minority Youth." *American Journal of Education* 106(3):349–384.
- Knott, Eleanor, Aliya Rao, Kate Summers, and Chana Teegeer. 2022. "Interviews in the Social Sciences." *Nature Reviews Methods Primers* 2(1):1–36.
- Lee, Stacey J. 2006. "Additional Complexities: Social Class, Ethnicity, Generation, and Gender in Asian American Student Experiences." *Race Ethnicity and Education* 9(1):17–28. doi: 10.1080/13613320500490630.
- Libarios, Ernest, Melissa Arriba, Chris M. Lucas, Kawehionalani Goto, and Roderick N. Labrador. 2018. "Engaging Filipinx Americans in Higher Education to Foster Student Success." *Journal Committed to Social Change on Race and Ethnicity* 4(2):1–37. doi: 10.15763/issn.2642-2387.2018.4.2.1-37.
- Maramba, Dina C. 2008. "Immigrant Families and the College Experience: Perspectives of Filipina Americans." *Journal of College Student Development* 49(4):336–350. doi: 10.1353/csd.0.0012.
- Museus, Samuel D. 2013. "Unpacking the Complex and Multi-Faceted Nature of Parental Influences on Southeast Asian American College Students' Educational Trajectories." *The Journal of Higher Education* 84(5):708–38.
- Nadal, Kevin L. 2004. "Pilipino American Identity Development Model." *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* 32(1):45–62. doi: 10.1002/j.2161-1912.2004.tb00360.x.

- Nerona, Randolph R. 2020. "Parenting, Major Choice Motivation, and Academic Major Satisfaction Among Filipino College Students: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective." *Journal of Career Assessment* 29(2):205–220. doi: 10.1177/1069072720941269.
- Ngo, Bic, and Stacey J. Lee. 2007. "Complicating the Image of Model Minority Success: A Review of Southeast Asian American Education." *Review of Educational Research* 77(4):415–53. doi: 10.3102/0034654307309918.
- Ocampo, Anthony C. 2013. "'Am I Really Asian?': Educational Experiences and Panethnic Identification among Second-Generation Filipino Americans." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 16(3):295–324. doi: 10.1353/jaas.2013.0032.
- Paik, Susan J., Shirly Mae Mamaril Choe, and Matthew A. Witenstein. 2016. "Filipinos in the U.S.: Historical, Social, and Educational Experiences." *Social and Education History* 5(2):134–160. doi: 10.17583/hse.2016.2062.
- Park, Jerry Z. 2008. "Second-Generation Asian American Pan-Ethnic Identity: Pluralized Meanings of a Racial Label." *Sociological Perspectives* 51(3):541–61. Doi: 10.1525/sop.2008.51.3.541.
- Pew Research Center. 2024. "Filipino Americans: A Survey Data Snapshot." Pew Research Center. Retrieved February 9, 2026 (<https://www.pewresearch.org/race-and-ethnicity/2024/08/06/filipino-americans-a-survey-data-snapshot/>).
- Pew Research Center. 2025. "Facts about Filipinos in the U.S." *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved January 26, 2026

- (<https://www.pewresearch.org/race-and-ethnicity/fact-sheet/asian-americans-filipinos-in-the-u-s>).
- Portes, Alejandro, and Min Zhou. 1993. "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530:74–96.
- Price, Myeshia N., Amy E. Green, Jonah P. DeChants, and Carrie K. Davis. 2021. "The Mental Health and Well-being of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) LGBTQ Youth." *The Trevor Project* 1–30. Retrieved March 10, 2026
(<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/AAPI-LGBTQ-Youth-Mental-Health-Report.pdf>).
- Salazar-Clemeña, Rose Marie. 2002. "Family Ties and Peso Signs: Challenges for Career Counseling in the Philippines." *The Career Development Quarterly* 50(3):246–56. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.2002.tb00900.x.
- Sewell, William H., Archibald O. Haller, and Alejandro Portes. 1969. "The Educational and Early Occupational Attainment Process." *American Sociological Review* 34:553–566.
- Shih, Kristy Y., Tsu-Fen Chang, and Szu-Yu Chen. 2019. "Impacts of the Model Minority Myth on Asian American Individuals and Families: Social Justice and Critical Race Feminist Perspectives." *Journal of Family Theory and Review* 11:412–428. doi:10.1111/jftr.12342.
- Solórzano, Daniel G., and Tara J. Yosso. 2002. "Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 8(1):23–44. doi:10.1177/107780040200800103.

- Sue, Stanley, and Sumie Okazaki. 1990. "Asian-American Educational Achievements: A Phenomenon in Search of an Explanation." *American Psychologist* 45(8):913–920. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.45.8.913.
- Timmermans, Stefan, and Iddo Tavory. 2012. "Theory Construction in Qualitative Research: From Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis." *Sociological Theory* 30(3):167–86. doi: 10.1177/0735275112457914.
- Tran, Van C. 2016. "Ethnic Culture and Social Mobility Among Second-Generation Asian Americans." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39(13):2398–2403. doi: 10.1080/01419870.2016.1200740.
- Walton, Jessica, and Mandy Truong. 2023. "A Review of the Model Minority Myth: Understanding the Social, Educational, and Health Impacts." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 46(3):391–419. doi: 10.1080/01419870.2022.2121170.
- Xie, Yu, and Kimberly Goyette. 2003. "Social Mobility and the Educational Choices of Asian Americans." *Social Science Research* 32:467–498. doi: 10.1016/S0049-089X(03)00018-8.
- Zhou, Min and Jennifer Lee. 2017. "Hyper-Selectivity and the Remaking of Culture: Understanding the Asian American Achievement Paradox." *Asian American Journal of Psychology* 8(1):7–15. doi: 10.1037/aap0000069.