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Challenging the Stigmas: A Critical Race Theory Analysis of Filipino American Community College Students

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in Asian American Studies

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Challenging the Stigmas: A Critical Race Theory
Analysis of Filipino American Community College Students

by

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Professor Victor Bascara, Chair

This thesis focuses on the experiences of Filipino American students who attend community college in Southern California, and it asserts that the educational trajectories of Filipino American community college students are adversely affected by racial ideologies perpetuated at the interpersonal and institutional levels. Drawing from Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education and using racial microaggressions as an analytic framework, this thesis deconstructs racial microaggressions against Filipino Americans community college students, and links issues of access to higher education for students of color to U.S. colonialism and white supremacy. This thesis also contextualizes the ethnic and academic identity development of Filipino American students who attend community college. By focusing on these marginalized student experiences across intersectional identities, it explicates the racialization of education.

The thesis of Emilie Santos Tumale is approved.

Lucy M. Burns

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This thesis is dedicated to my siblings, Precious and Raul, as well as other Filipino American community college students and transfer students.

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Ten years ago, I never imagined that I would have the opportunity to write a thesis that speaks to my educational experiences as well as those of my peers who attend or have attended community college. I have always wanted to write about these complicated thoughts I had about identifying as Filipino while growing up and navigating different racial climates, especially because others questioned my ethnic identity based on my phenotypic appearance and my relative inability to speak Tagalog. In turn, I would like to thank those who have made this moment possible.

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PROLOGUE

I was never raised to believe that I would attend UCLA, much less earn both my bachelor's and master's degrees at this university. I attended a primary and secondary schools in the San Gabriel Valley, which is known as a modern Asian ethnoburb (Zhou et al., 2008), but the community I grew up in specifically has a substantial Filipino and Latino population as well. Because my family was lower-middle class and because I was seen as an intellectually "regular" student, I was never enrolled in the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Program. I simply did what was asked of me to my best ability, and I assumed that I would attend the local community college after high school. However, once my academic trajectory changed, I suddenly gained rapport with my teachers who then had higher aspirations for me. They made me think it was possible to excel in Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) classes, and they instilled a college-going culture within the specific classes I took. More importantly, even though I knew that community college would be more affordable to attend after high school, one of my teachers from ninth grade told me that I was "better than that." This message has instilled the stigma that many first-generation college students face.

Although I am aware of the structural factors that contributed to my matriculation of the educational pipeline from elementary school to graduate school, I still wanted to make sense of the experiences of my friends and loved ones who have attended or are currently attending community college. I have a love for reflecting on education, and I especially find it powerful to contribute to scholarship that can serve as 'relevant education' for my *kababayan*. In turn, I embarked on this thesis journey in order to better understand the educational experiences of my peers who have inspired me to continue my own education over the past couple of years as a UCLA student. I hope that my thesis, which centralizes the lived experiences of my Filipino

Americans who attend community college, will serve as inspiration to other Asian Americans who wish to see themselves understood and represented in Asian American studies and education studies scholarship.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

> It's been an integral part of who we are, until we realize there are people beyond ourselves. I remember in the first grade, I was repeating some simple Filipino words that I thought everybody knew, but this was not the case.
>
> — "Gabe,"[1] research participant, on realizing his ethnic identity during primary education

> Oh, Gabe. You got into SRU; you know what that means now: you're like the best of all of us.
>
> — "Gabe" recounting his friend's response upon hearing that "Gabe" was accepted to transfer to SRU

Firstly, it is important for me to acknowledge my positionality as a person of color who never had the experience of attending community college and transferring to a university. During my undergraduate education, I sought out community and affirmation by joining several student organizations such as Pilipino Transfer Student Partnership (PTSP) as a result of feeling like an impostor in engineering school. I also worked as a peer mentor for Center for Community College Partnerships (CCCP), where I mentored community college students who aspired to transfer to four-year universities and earn degrees in STEM. Within these spaces, transfer students and community college students inspired me to pursue graduate studies, despite my role as being their peer mentor with more experience as a UCLA student. While working for CCCP, not only was I able to talk to my students about my experience as a woman of color taking engineering classes, but also I particularly gained rapport with other Filipino American and Asian American students who participated in CCCP summer programs. While several of the CCCP scholars were inspired by Critical Race Theory to persist in higher education, the way that

[1] Names and identifying features (such as names of towns and schools) have been changed to protect the confidentiality of research participants.

CRT was taught to the students not only marginalized Asian American student experiences but also perpetuated the Model Minority Myth, as the same data set used for displaying low rates of educational attainment for Latinas/os, American Indians, and African Americans showed relatively high rates of educational attainment for Asian American students. My fellow Asian American mentees and coworkers, however, knew that this story did not reflect our experiences.

A Quick Note on the Model Minority Myth

By definition, the Model Minority Myth portrays Asian Americans as a monolithic racial group that is successful as a result of their culture. In context of Asian American educational experiences, Benji Chang and Wayne Au (2008) explain that:

> The Myth of the Model Minority asserts that, due to their adherence to traditional, Asian cultural values, Asian-American students are supposed to be devoted, obedient to authority, respectful of teachers, smart, good at math and science, diligent, hard workers, cooperative, well-behaved, docile, college-bound, quiet, and opportunistic. (p. 1)

This stereotype emerged during the Cold War as a 'divide-and-conquer' tactic against communities of color at the height of the Black Power and Civil Rights movements. For instance, a *New York Times* article by William Petersen (1966) affirmed Japanese Americans for assimilating to mainstream American culture after being incarcerated during World War II, while chastising African Americans fighting for their civil liberties a century after the end of institutionalized slavery. Over the years, mainstream media and statistics would perpetuate this

stereotype by type-casting Asian Americans as nerds, and by using quantitative data to demonstrate that Asian Americans have higher rates of educational attainment, higher test scores, and higher family incomes than other racial groups.

Model Minority Expectations vs. Reality

However, such statistics and microaggressions that perpetuate the Model Minority Myth obscure the varied experiences of Filipino American and other Asian American students, especially those of failure. For instance, even though I am the first to attend university in my family and will be the first in my lineage to pursue a doctorate degree, I was pushed out of my first major in aerospace engineering several years ago. Despite being the middle child, I am also the first in my family to receive a bachelor's degree, because my older sister only attended a semester of community college before being forced to attend adult school instead to become a licensed vocational nurse (LVN). In addition, my younger brother has been in-and-out of community college for the past five years, and my best friend from high school currently attends a for-profit institution in efforts to become an LVN. The educational experiences of my siblings and myself have caused me to dedicate my activism towards supporting marginalized Filipino American students, including those who identify as transfer students and undocumented immigrants. This thesis, in turn, is dedicated to giving a voice to students who follow such nontraditional educational trajectories.

Currently, there is a dearth of research on community college students, especially those of Filipino descent. The majority of research on community college students of color focuses on the experiences of Latino and African American students. In a sense, this serves as evidence of the pervasiveness of the Model Minority Myth: the lack of research on Asian American students

implies the success of Asian American students, which obscures the reality that more Asian American college students attend community colleges than elite universities (CARE, 2011, p. 9). On the other hand, Asian American studies as a discipline often also marginalizes research from social science disciplines such as higher education. The few bodies of research that do exist within this subcategory typically focus on pathways to higher education or on the model minority myth affecting Asian American college graduates who have reached the glass ceiling in their workplaces.

Furthermore, out of the literature on the educational experiences of Filipino American students (see Maramba & Bonus, 2013), there has yet to be a research study that centralizes Filipino American students who attend community college. Existing research on Filipino Americans either focus on K-12 schooling (Teranishi, 2002; 2010) or on four-year institutions (Buenavista et al., 2009; Buenavista, 2013; Maramba, 2008; Maramba & Bonus, 2013). Scholarly works that attempt to reflect the varied educational experiences of Filipino Americans by having research samples of students in UCs, CSUs, and community colleges continue to centralize the experiences of traditional students (Ocampo, 2013). In turn, my thesis addresses this research gap by centralizing nontraditional student experiences of Filipino Americans. I specifically draw my analysis from qualitative interviews with Filipino American students who have taken classes in both two-year and four-year institutions to assert that the educational trajectories of Filipino American community college students are adversely affected by racial ideologies perpetuated at the interpersonal level. Drawing from Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education, Asian Critical Race Theory, and Pinayism, and using racial microaggressions as an analytic framework, this paper addresses the following research questions: What are the ideologies that inform the educational experiences, mainly the ethnic and academic identity

developments, of Filipino American community college students? What types of microaggressions do Filipino American community college students experience? The next section will explain the theoretical frameworks of this research.

Theoretical Frameworks

Critical Race Theory in Education (Solórzano et al., 2000), Asian Critical Race Theory (Museus, 2013), and Pinayism (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005) help address the sociohistorical context of Filipino Americans in U.S. higher education. Mari Matsuda (1991) has conceptualized the following definition for Critical Race Theory:

> The work of progressive legal scholars of color who are attempting to develop a jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism in American law and that works toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination. (p. 1331)

In turn, CRT in Education diverges from Critical Race Theory's origins in legal studies and ethnic studies by focusing on the educational contexts of students of color. Daniel Solórzano (1998) elaborates: "A critical race theory in education challenges the dominant discourse on race and racism as they relate to education by examining how educational theory, policy, and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups" (p. 122). My work draws from CRT in terms of its tenets: the centrality of race and racism in one's educational trajectory, the challenge to dominant ideology, the commitment to social justice, the centrality of experiential knowledge, and the interdisciplinary perspective (Solórzano, 1998; 2000). By focusing my research on

Filipino American students in terms of their ethnic identity development as well as the racial microaggressions they face, I centralize race in their educational trajectory. My research also challenges the dominant ideology that portrays Filipino American students as delinquents versus 'model minorities,' and it makes a commitment towards social justice by addressing the injustice that emerges in the Filipino American community and within the community college setting. It centralizes experiential knowledge by putting the lived experiences of my interviewees at the forefront of my analysis of Filipino American community college students. Lastly, I utilize an interdisciplinary perspective in my research by drawing from scholarship in sociology, history, and Asian American studies to supplement my primary data.

My educational background in Asian American studies also causes me to be intentional in using Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) as part of my theoretical framework. While the field of ethnic studies is a significant aspect of CRT's intellectual genealogy, recent CRT subcategories have emerged in order to challenge the black-and-white binary that is implicit in traditional CRT scholarship. AsianCrit diverges from CRT in order to specifically address the Asian American population. Samuel Museus (2013) identifies seven different tenets for Asian Critical Race Theory: Asianization, Transnational Contexts, Reconstructive History, Strategic Anti-Essentialism, Commitment to Social Justice, and Story, Theory, and Praxis (pp. 23–27). Out of these seven tenets, Asianization, Reconstructive History, and Strategic Anti-essentialism are notable contributions of AsianCrit that not only complement CRT but also are significant for situating my research in education scholarship. Asianization refers to racialization that is specific to Asian Americans through problematic stereotypes such as the Model Minority Myth, and the tenet of Reconstructive History aims to address the exclusion of Asian Americans from American history. Meanwhile, strategic anti-essentialism consists of the acknowledgement of

dominant oppressive forces that racialize APIs and the belief that APIs can counter them. According to Museus and Griffin (2011), "Asian American researchers and activists construct coalitions and collective voice to engage in anti-essentialist activities and reveal the diversity, inequity, struggle, and voices within their communities" (as cited in Museus, 2013, p. 26). While Filipino Americans are likely to join panethnic coalitions to address their specific needs, strategic anti-essentialism nevertheless acknowledges the diversity of the Asian American community. In turn, I use Pinayism to further address this diversity.

Originally conceptualized by Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales (2005), Pinayism (Filipino Feminist Critical Theory) diverges from feminist theory in order to address the experiences of Filipino Americans in that it "aims to look at the complexity of the intersections where race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, spirituality/ religion, educational status, age, place of birth, Diasporic migration, citizenship, and love cross" (p. 122). This framework particularly supplements AsianCrit and CRT by addressing tradition, sexism, and negative stereotypes imposed on Pinay Americans, while also accounting for transnationalism and class structure as important aspects of how Filipino Americans are racialized and gendered. Similar to women of color feminism, Pinayism addresses intersectionality and forming coalitions across difference. It is also significant for addressing transnationalism and U.S. colonialism as racial projects unique to the Filipino American experience (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005). Using these frameworks, and as inspired by preexisting CRT in education scholarship, this research intends to discuss microaggressions that affect Filipino American community college students and their ethnic identity development.

Advancing Critical Filipino Studies

Ultimately, by using these theoretical frameworks simultaneously, I intend for this thesis to contribute to the advancement of Critical Filipino Studies. CRT in Education, AsianCrit, and Pinayism have transformed over the years to serve different purposes for scholars in different disciplines. For instance, CRT in Education has contributed to the rise of specialized scholarship in Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) and Chicana Feminism. Meanwhile, Samuel Museus (2013) applies AsiancCrit to helping student affairs staff in higher education address the needs of Asian American students, and Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales has developed Pinayism in terms of praxis by conceptualizing a Pinayist Pedagogy (Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009). I am intentional in using combining these theoretical frameworks for my thesis, because there is a relative lack of scholarship on Filipino Americans in higher education.

Moreover, these frameworks complement each other in my research. For instance, AsianCrit accounts for the specific ways in which educational institutions racialize Asian Americans, whereas Pinayism specifically addresses the intersectional identities of Filipino American students. For instance, my research shows how Filipino American experiences might challenge the concept of community cultural wealth—namely the concept of linguistic capital that affirms students of color who are bilingual (Yosso, 2005)—because of later generations of Filipino Americans who are raised by and/or descended from immigrants who were subject to English-only education in the Philippines. These frameworks also allow me to articulate some of the ways in which Filipino Americans are racialized differently than other Asian ethnic groups (see Gotanda, 1996; Buenavista, 2010). In turn, the next chapter will contextualize the historical events relevant to Filipino Americans and community college: namely Spanish colonialism, U.S. colonialism, and globalization.

CHAPTER 2:

CONTEXTUALIZING A HISTORY OF EXCLUSION AND COLONIZATION

In order to understand the ethnic and academic identity development of Filipino American community college students, it is important to understand the historical and colonial context of the Philippines, which ultimately led to the immigration and education of Filipinos in the United States. The formation of Filipino identity has a long history of exclusion and pluralism, which originates from Western colonization of the Philippines. While the formation of a national identity during the late 1800s brought various ethnolinguistic groups together within the archipelago, differences in language, culture, and oftentimes religion have persisted since then. This led to the diverse appearances and lifestyles for Filipinos and the Filipino diaspora. A popular saying that succinctly describes the colonization of the Philippines is articulated by Conrado de Quiros in a 2006 article from *The Philippine Daily Inquirer*: "This country has lived for 300 years in a convent and 50 years in Hollywood" (as cited in Vargas, 2009). This chapter consequently emphasizes the various colonial tactics that manifested in the church, the school, and the body. By addressing the historical amnesia of Western colonization in the Philippines and challenging the neutrality of U.S. education, I assert the connection and parallels between Philippine colonial subjectivity and the schooling of Filipino Americans who attend community college.

Spanish Colonial Rule: "300 Years in a Convent"

> If I said my last name, a lot of people pick up on that and they go, "Oh, are you Mexican?" or, "Are you of some kind of Spanish descent?"….[They're] partially right with the Spanish descent, because I am of Spanish descent…
>
> — "Sarah," research participant, on how others often racialize her

> My grandparents actually taught me to be the hardcore religious, Catholic person; also, the customs, like the *manos* (the hand thingy).
>
> — "Kayla," research participant, reflecting on who taught her the most about Philippine culture

As a result of the implementation of Spanish friars into Philippine society, an overwhelming majority of the citizens of the former Spanish colony to this day practice Catholicism. The Spanish-ordained friars enforced religious rule by demanding tribute from the colonial subjects and distributed indulgences to them. As a result, the practice of Catholicism became a way of life. Spanish colonization of the Philippines through religious rule has become associated with the success of the spread of this religion—and since the Spaniards imposed the idea of religious differences as a means for differentiating indigenous groups, people who were not subject to Spanish rule through the friars came to be perceived as "less Filipino" as they built up cultural minorities in an archipelago that historically represented a variety of religions, including Animism and Islam. This matters to Filipino American community college students because of the ways that religion has an impact on their perception of ethnic identity. Moreover, Spanish colonization affects the ways that Filipino Americans are racialized comparing to other Asian ethnic groups.

Localism and Kinship

Prior to Spanish colonization over the Philippines, the archipelago had different values over kinship. Indigenous Filipinos particularly valued bilateral kinships rather than unilateral kinships. Bilateral kinship entails generation linkages through both the paternal and the maternal

lineage, whereas unilateral kinship acknowledges the general linkage of one parent such as matrilineal kinship structures. In addition, the indigenous people valued lateral kinship (sibling and cousin relations) over vertical kinship (across generations), regardless of the specificity of their relationship. In other words, one could view his or her relative as significant regardless of whether they were connected through a patrilineal or matrilineal kinship. Since Filipinos valued localism in that communication was only done face-to-face contact rather than long-distance correspondence, the largest social units they had were called *barangays*, which essentially consisted of people with common economic interests and rituals in addition to their connections through kinship or marriage. In turn, Filipino communities were generally created and maintained at a relatively small scale.

While Filipino communities were still small in scale by the time of the Philippine revolution, the Spaniards imposed values that altered how they formed communities and how different communities interacted with each other. In a sense, the Spaniards utilized a "divide and conquer" method to subjugate the Filipinos. Initially, they broke lateral kinships by turning relatives against each other. Eventually, communities engaged in battle in order to pacify geographically isolated rebellions. Moreover, Filipinos started to value vertical kinships, as vertical and patrilineal kinships were influential in one's self-identification and life pathway (Rizal & Augenbraum, 2006). At the same time, localism persisted in that the different, socially constructed ethnolinguistic groups would have little contact with each other. In other words, Spanish colonization significantly altered the structuring of kinship networks from being matrilineal and/or lateral to patrilineal and vertical. While localism persisted in the Philippines, the manner in which the Spaniards altered the makeup of Philippine communities was a significant obstacle for cross-community building. Nevertheless, localism points to the

contentious ways that Filipino Americans, including those who attend community college, may identify with Philippine culture.

Filipino National Identity

It is important to note that the Filipino ethnicity has been socially constructed by Spaniards and then by *ilustrados*. The emergence of a Filipino national identity is a legacy of Spanish colonial rule. Philippine communities were initially small in scale; only neighboring communities interacted with one another. In other words, colonial subjects from distant islands lacked a sense of connection or common identity (Salman, 2012). This explains how the Spaniards were able to regulate the archipelago: they kept their colonial subjects segmented through the creation of racial hierarchies and provinces based upon their language and ethnicity. Even if the Spaniards did not construct modern-day provinces as neighboring enemies, each of the provinces encompassed different religions, economies, and lifestyles depending on their degree of contact with the rest of Southeast Asia.

Furthermore, the term "Filipino" was constructed by the colonizing nation as soon as López de Villalobos decided to name a portion of the islands in modern-day Cebu "Las Islas Filipinas" after Prince Philip II of Spain (Esteria, 2011). While constructing a racial hierarchy in the Philippines such that Spanish settlers were privileged in comparison to the indigenous population or *indios*, the term *Filipino* initially was a term for labeling the *criollos*—people of Spanish descent who were born in the Philippines (Salman, 2012). Although José Rizal (2006) and other *ilustrados* would redefine the term and claim it as a unifying nationality for all non-Spanish people in the Philippines, the sense of a national identity would never have existed had the Spaniards not subjugated the land albeit to different degrees in each island or province.

Furthermore, several aspects of the indigenous culture still resonate, despite Spanish colonization of what people now call the Philippines. For instance, while most Filipinos identify as Catholics, the ways in which they express their faith has traces of Animist customs. Nevertheless, this matters to Filipino American community college students, as this notion of Filipino national identity persists in influencing their ethnic identity development in the United States.

Situating Mindanao

> I came from the Philippines, but my first language was a dialect from the Philippines, which is Zamboangeño. It's like Spanish, but Tagalog was not my first dialect.
> — "Kayla," on her relative lack of familiarity with the Tagalog dialect

Spanish colonization of the Philippines also differs in different provinces. In turn, despite the formation of a national identity in the Philippines, there are still regional differences particularly in the southernmost region of the country, which is where a few of my interviewees and/or their ancestors hail from. Generally, the Mindanaoan region of the Philippines is marginalized from the rest of the archipelago in terms of nationalism, religion, and governance. Patricio Abinales' introductory chapter in his monograph *Mindanao, Nation, and Region: The Joys of Dislocation* (2008) offers a revisionist history of Mindanao in context to the Philippines' fight for independence from Spain in 1898. By examining narratives regarding the Philippine Revolution, Abinales notes the marginalization of Mindanao, despite the common narrative that the entire archipelago was united in seceding from Spanish colonial rule. After all, the dominant history of the Philippine revolution is penned by members of the Filipino elite in Luzon, the northernmost region of the archipelago.

In fact, Abinales makes a provocative argument that Mindanaoans were against gaining full independence as a Philippine nation. He states: "despite the brutal engagements that

occurred against the colonizers, the Muslims [in Mindanao] really found themselves more comfortable with Americans. American-Muslim relations were reinforced by their dislike of Filipinos" (Abinales, 2008, p. 13). This text also demonstrates the animosity between "Filipinos" and Muslims of Mindanao. It challenges notions of a united Philippine nation as well as the reach of Spanish colonial rule on the entire archipelago. This currently manifests in the diversity of immigrants who come from the Philippines, and specifically the marginalization of immigrants who are from regions outside of Luzon. Ultimately, this is significant in the identity development of Filipino American community college students, because some of these students are immigrants or are children of immigrants who hail from other regions such as Mindanao. While this section discusses the legacy of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines (namely religion), the next section will focus on the legacy of U.S. colonialism in the archipelago.

U.S. Colonial Rule: "50 Years in Hollywood"

> My mom didn't stay long after she was born in the Philippines. They moved to Guam: she lived in Guam the majority of her life before coming over to California, and my dad lived in the Philippines for about 13 years [before] he moved over to Guam as well. There, they got their citizenship because they were petitioned for Guam, since it's a U.S. territory. Following that, my parents came here to the States.
> — "Sarah," research participant, on the migration of her relatively Americanized parents

"Kayla": I get mad when people call me "*Pilipina*."
Interviewer: Right?! Me too!
"Kayla": I was like, "No. I'm not '*Pilipina*.' I'm *Filipino*."
Interviewer: Yeah! Or they say "Filipina," and that's not even a word in Tagalog…
"Kayla": Yeah, because there's something that's tied with it.
— My dialogue with "Kayla" on being called "Filipina," emphasis mine

In contrast to the Spaniards colonizing the Philippines through *mestizaje*, religion, and economic exploitation, the United States primarily exerted colonial rule through language, education, labor exploitation, and militarism. Propaganda of the American Dream also spread in

the Philippines through the entertainment industry, hence the use of the word 'Hollywood' in describing the U.S. occupation of the Philippines. As a result, despite the U.S. colonial presence in the Philippines occurring for a shorter duration than Spanish colonial rule, the legacy of U.S. colonialism in the Philippines is prominent in various aspects, including migration and education (Rodriguez 2010; Choy, 2003). As Americans such as President McKinley asserted the need to 'Christianize' the Philippines by showcasing the 'savage' aspect of Filipino indigenous tribes, the United States colonized the recently liberated nation through warfare and education (Sit, 2008; Vergara, 1995). Schools were increasingly accessible to all Filipinos rather than just the elite, but the implemented educational institutions for America's "little brown brother" utilized a Eurocentric curriculum and solely used the English language (Wolfe, 1991; Constantino, 1982).

Renato Constantino (1982) comments about this colonial educational context in *The Miseducation of the Filipino*. He critiques the institutionalized use of the English language in Philippine schooling, but he also brings awareness to intra-ethnic tension between tribes and provinces. While the official language of the Philippines is based on the Tagalog dialect, as there is conflict that arises from deciding on a language or dialect in which to educate Filipino students. Moreover, Constantino's concept of miseducation entails the subjugation of colonies by means of education, and perhaps the spread of a certain ideology from the colonizer. In other words, miseducation is a notable legacy of colonialism in that it validates the positive intentions of the colonizer—at least in the colonizer's perspective. His work asserts that Filipinos still associate the English language with intelligence and prospects of immigrating to the United States. Even decades after U.S. colonial rule, the educational institutions in the Philippines continue to implement American ideals into their society.

Other U.S. colonial legacies that continue to affect Philippine society include the continued presence of military bases. U.S. militarism has not only affected the foodways and economy of the Philippines, but it has also contributed to the hypersexualization of Filipino women as well (Balce, 2006). For instance, entering the word "Filipina" in Internet search engines primarily yields search results relating to pen pals, mail-order brides, and pornography involving Filipino women (Gonzales & Rodriguez, 2003, p. 223). This ideology adds on to the preexisting oppression of Filipino women through patriarchy, as it has informed the cultural practices of regulating and policing female sexuality within the diaspora (Espiritu, 2001, p. 415). This matters to Filipino American community college students in that their access to higher education in the United States is akin to the Philippines' exposure yet lack of inclusion in the United States citizenry and culture. This also affects the ways that Filipino Americans are not only racialized, but gendered as well. After having discussed the sociohistorical context of the Philippines following colonial rule, the next section will elaborate on the racialization of Filipinos and Filipino Americans within this colonial context.

Filipino Racialization

> Growing up, when people would try to racialize me or ask me what my ethnic identity was, they would ask me if I'm Thai, if I'm Burmese, if I'm Cambodian… Some would ask me if I was mixed; it really depends on what color my skin is at the time, cause I can be really light skinned or really dark skinned, and I guess that also informs that experience; how people would project their own ideas of what I may be…. I also got Mexican, and…they asked me if I'm [Pacific Islander] when I was younger…and Vietnamese. It was very rare, the people that would guess that I'm Filipino first. I always got these other ethnic identities first before I got Filipino, so I thought that was interesting growing up. [*laughs*] Even as an adult too.
>
> — "Nora," research participant, on being racialized as anything but Filipino

In a testimony taken from the hearings on affairs in the Philippines before the Senate Committee on the Philippines in 1902, Governor William Howard Taft defines terrorism as a criminal way of obtaining independence. Henry Graff (1969) quotes Taft:

> In the very province of Batangas itself the great majority desire peace and are only held there because of the system of *terrorism* of which I speak. Now, I say that warfare which depends upon *terrorism* and murder is crime…. [Those who are fighting for independence] are guilty of a crime in the method which they seek to attain it. (as cited in Bascara, 2015; emphasis mine).

By characterizing terrorism in the following manner, American imperialists make the link between terrorism and revolutionaries. In this case, they assert that Philippine insurgents are terrorists to the other subjects of U.S. Empire. Moreover, the year 1902 also marks the end of the Philippine-American War, which ultimately rendered the Philippines as a U.S. colony not long after the Philippines gained independence from Spain. Meanwhile, the U.S. war against the Moros in Mindanao persisted until 1913—in fact, there is the possibility that this war is still occurring, hence the hostile political climate in the region. In a way, the racialization of Filipinos as terrorists is akin to the ways that Filipino American students are often racialized as deviant students in the classroom, often leading to their differential experiences matriculating the educational pipeline.

Corporeal Colonization

The criminalization of Filipino revolutionaries as terrorists also connects to the their racialization as 'savage' in order to facilitate the beginning of U.S. Empire by 1898. Much of Catherine Ceniza Choy's research addresses the historical amnesia that Filipinos have regarding the history of the U.S. colonial rule over the Philippines. In her article "Salvaging the Savage: On Representing Filipinos and Remembering American Empire," Choy (2013) introduces the notion of corporeal colonization, which she defines as "the use of the Filipino body to illustrate U.S. colonial narratives of diseased, and thus racially inferior, Filipino savages" (p. 40). She notes how this corporeal colonization occurs in the forms of deficit representations of indigenous Filipinos through anthropological research and showcasing nearly 1200 Filipino indigenous peoples—including *Igorots*, *Bagobos*, *Negritos*, and *Moros*—at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair (p. 40). In combination with the criminalization of Filipino revolutionaries as terrorists, the fixation on and spectacle of Filipino brown bodies contributes to the racialization of Filipinos as 'savages.' By using specific tribal groups to represent the United States' image of Filipinos—in other words as 'savages'—it is then possible to bridge the connection between the treatment of indigenous Filipinos and the portrayal of Filipinos as 'terrorists.' Adding onto the previous section, this is significant in the experiences of Filipino American community college students in that the concept of corporeal colonization persists as educators continue to racialize Filipino Americans differently from other Asian ethnic groups who phenotypically 'pass' as East Asian. Ultimately, having an understanding of the historical and colonial context of the Philippines in conversation with concepts of sovereignty and terrorism allows us to contextualize the racialization of Filipino Americans amidst their context of reception in the United States.

Context of Reception

The formation of the Filipino diaspora is linked to the economic exploitation of the Philippines. Even pre-dating the United States' formation as a country, the first individuals of Filipino descent to set foot in the modern-day United States were *indios* from Luzon who escaped the Acapulco Trade Route and settled in modern-day Louisiana (Lee, 2015). This speaks to the historical legacy of Filipino migration associated with labor. Centuries later, the majority of Filipinos who migrated to the United States in the early twentieth century would be laborers who contributed to Hawaii's plantation economy.

'Old-timer' Filipino migrant workers—also known as *manongs*—helped address the labor shortage in the Western region of the United States following the restriction of migration from Asia due to the implementation of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Gentlemen's Agreement between the United States and Japan, the Immigration Act of 1924, and other legislation against Asian ethnic groups (Gotanda, 1996). Filipinos who did not migrate as laborers were *pensionados* who received their education at American universities, but were intended to return to the Philippines. The racial climate of the United States prevented *pensionados* from practicing their degrees in this country, so they either became laborers or they returned to the Philippines. Furthermore, the scarcity of female Filipino migrants and the implementation of anti-miscegenation laws in the United States resulted in *manongs* primarily existing as bachelor societies. In terms of gender composition, family structure, class, and racialization, this early generation of Filipino migrants significantly differs from Filipinos who have immigrated to the United States after 1965.

Nevertheless, post-1965 migration from the Philippines to the United States is also a legacy of labor exploitation. The main difference is that by 1965, the Philippines functions as a post-colony (or neocolony) of the United States. In turn, Filipino migrants that arrive to the

United States after 1965 are either immigrants who can be naturalized or as migrant workers—often termed as "Overseas Filipino Workers" (OFWs)—who can potentially lose their immigration status if they are unable to maintain their workers' visa. These immigrants are labeled as *tago nang tago* (Tagalog for "always hiding"; refers to undocumented immigrants), whereas Filipinos who came to the United States in the early twentieth century were U.S. nationals during U.S. colonial rule.

Filipino immigrants who became naturalized U.S. citizens often arrived to the U.S. following the Hart-Celler Act of 1965, which replaced the quota system with immigration policy based on family reunification and skilled labor. Those who arrived via family reunification often were part of military families, whereas skilled laborers included Filipinos in the nursing profession. In other words, the colonial and immigration context of Filipinos in America points to the diversity of the Filipino American community—which includes undocumented immigrants, "military brats" (Suarez, 2015), mixed race Filipinos, *manongs*, nurses, and American-born Filipinos. These various identities play an important role for Filipino Americans who attend community college. For instance, in terms of immigration status, they range from being American-born to first-generation naturalized citizens or undocumented immigrants. Those who are a product of post-1965 migration are likely to have a relative associated with migrant workers, nurses, or part of the U.S. Navy (Guevarra, 2009; Choy, 2003; Suarez, 2015). Ultimately, this is relevant to the current generation of Filipino Americans who are in higher education and attending community college. The next section will focus on the schooling experiences of Filipino Americans in higher education and how American schools function as colonial projects against students of color.

K–12 Education as a Neocolonial Project

Contrary to popular notions of K-12 schools being the "great equalizer" in American society in that they allow young children to work towards achieving the American Dream, schooling has in fact exasperated social inequity in the United States. Public schools serving students of color are subject to high-stakes testing and strict (if not scripted) teaching pedagogies. Students who do not possess cultural capital are often perceived as cultural deficits and at-risk of failing (Yosso, 2005). At the institutional level, the zoning of school districts and student tracking have had detrimental effects on how resources are distributed to students of different ethnicities and socioeconomic statuses (Oakes, 1982). Within the classroom, students are exposed to Eurocentric curricula and are stripped of their community cultural wealth—non-celebrated types of cultural capital possessed by communities of color such as navigational capital, aspirational capital, and linguistic capital (Valenzuela, 1998, p. 3; Yosso, 2005, pp. 77–80). Moreover, teachers and classmates perpetuate the racial hierarchy through cultural mismatch and expressing racial microaggressions against students of non-normative identities (Howard, 2015; Solórzano et al., 2000, p. 60). Further research, however, should focus on schooling experiences of Filipino Americans. The next section discusses the history behind the racialization of Filipino Americans in the classroom.

National and Campus Racial Climates for Filipino American Students

As emphasized earlier, the historical context of Filipinos in education is deeply tied to U.S. colonialism. As part of this colonial project, few Filipinos were encouraged to receive their university education in the United States with the intention of becoming part of the ruling class in the Philippines. Known as *pensionados*, they often stayed in the United States (regardless of

whether they completed their education or not) and became laborers because they were unable to use their college degrees in the United States. Moreover, during the first half of the twentieth century, Americans known as "Thomasites" settled in the Philippines in order to serve as teachers as the United States implemented its public education system (Roma-Sianturi, 2009). Not only have they promoted English language education (Constantino, 1982), but they have also contributed to the rise of the nursing labor sector among Filipinos (Choy, 2003). To this day, the healthcare sector within the Philippines is associated with out-migration; in Filipino American communities, it is viewed with prestige and notions of job security.

The second half of the twentieth century encompassed significant changes in U.S. demographics, particularly in their educational institutions. While the Hart-Celler Act of 1965 brought more immigrants from Asia to the United States through family reunification and visas for working professionals, the California Master Plan made universities less accessible for students of color by establishing a three-tiered system out of community colleges, California State Universities, and the University of California (Umemoto, 1989). Along with the Black Power movement of the late 1960s, the California Master Plan influenced the Black Student Union and Third World Liberation Front in leading the 1968 strike at San Francisco State University, which is the longest campus strike in U.S. history (Springer, 2008). The objective of this strike was to make higher education more relevant and accessible for students, but the main legacy of this strike was its establishment of the College of Ethnic Studies at the university.

Higher education would continue being less accessible for Filipino American students with the dismantling of affirmative action. While Filipino Americans were the only Asian ethnic group to benefit from affirmative action in the 1990s (Bose, 2009), they were also the first to be excluded from it. The enactment of Proposition 209 in California soon ended affirmative action

altogether throughout the UC system. This led to the creation of student-led outreach and retention programs in several of the UCs by the early 2000s (Okamura, 2013). Examples of such programs include PASS (Pilipino Academic Student Services) at UC Berkeley and SPACE (Samahang Pilipino Advancing Community Empowerment) at UCLA.

Conclusion

Overall, this historical context speaks to the legacy of exclusion within the Philippines and the Filipino diaspora. While Spanish colonization brought Roman Catholicism to the archipelago and initially controlled the archipelago through means of divide-and-conquer, it also helped create a monolithic national identity that marginalized certain ethnolinguistic groups that escaped the colonial reach. At the turn of the twentieth century, U.S. colonization brought public education to the Philippines, but it also continued to view Filipinos as intellectually inferior. They implemented English-only education in the Philippines, and they called the Philippines its "little brown brother" in need for "benevolent assimilation" (Lee, 2015). They allowed Filipinos to work and pursue higher education in the United States, but only as U.S. nationals in order to lack the benefits of U.S. citizenship. Through the U.S. Navy and the Marcos Regime, The Cold War would spark post-1965 migration to the United States, but the racial climate would continue to make higher education and the American Dream less accessible for Filipino Americans. Similar to how the Philippines underwent decades of colonization in becoming an autonomous nation, Filipino American students today face various obstacles accessing higher education.

CHAPTER 3:

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research on Filipino American community college students is notable in that it centralizes the experiences of a frequently mentioned but hardly researched student population, and also addresses a gap in literature regarding Filipino Americans in education. In general, Asian American educational experiences are understudied, and research that does focus on Filipinos usually centralizes experiences of Filipino American students in four-year institutions. Moreover, this research addresses the interesting ways in which people discuss race and particularly how they racialize Filipino Americans and Asian Americans. For instance, some of Robert Teranishi's research demystifies the Model Minority Myth through data disaggregation between Filipinos and Southeast Asians in comparison to East Asians (Teranishi, 2002, 2010, 2012). Another example includes Anthony Ocampo's research, which asserts that Filipinos "violate" rules of race by being the so-called "Latinos of Asia" (Ocampo, 2011, 2013). While this research centralizes the experiences of Filipino American community college students, it specifically examines how they are affected by these divergent racial ideologies, namely the Model Minority Myth and the inclusion (or exclusion) of Filipinos in the Asian and Pacific Islander community, as they attend community college.

Current research on the educational experiences Filipino American students and Asian American students in general notably serve different purposes. For instance, scholarship on Filipino American students in higher education focuses either on relative lack of access to universities or on the identity development of Filipino American students in four-year universities (Buenavista, 2010; Nadal, 2011). Either way, the existing scholarship on Asian

American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community college students emphasizes their racialization as model minorities, but presents findings that may not apply to Filipino American students in community college. The main objective of such research is to address the research gap on Asian Americans in community college, due to the fact that scholarship on community college students and transfer students tends to marginalize AAPI students and only focus on other students of color. By examining the current research trends on Filipino American, Asian American, and community college students, this literature review asserts that further research should delve into Filipino American community college students. In turn, this research aims to contribute to this specific research gap.

While this literature review was originally intended to organize the existing scholarship into separate categories for Filipino American students, community colleges, Asian Americans students, and university students, there is surprisingly a large amount of overlap between some of these topics. For instance, there is a rise in scholarship on Filipino American students in postsecondary education, particularly in four-year universities. There is also a substantial amount of research that focuses on Asian American community college students. In turn, the next sections focus on Filipino American college students, community college students, and Asian American community college students respectively.

Filipino American College Students

There is a growing amount of research pertaining to the educational experiences of Filipino Americans, thanks to Filipino American and other Asian American scholars in the feld of higher education. Some notable scholars include Ed Bonus, Dina Maramba, Samuel Museus, and Tracy Buenavista. Bonus and Maramba compiled an anthology called *The 'Other' Students*

(2013), which is an attempt to address the lack of research relevant to educational experiences of Filipino Americans. Overall, this book asserts the importance of understanding historical and colonial contexts, migration, racialization, and community building in the Filipino American community in order to effectively understand the experiences of Filipino Americans in education. The articles are particularly relevant to discussing the colonial context of the Philippines and the educational pipeline of Filipino Americans. However, the vast majority of the existing research on Filipino Americans in higher education centralizes students in four-year institutions (Buenavista et al., 2009; Maramba, 2008; Maramba & Bonus, 2013). Moreover, scholarly works that attempt to reflect the varied educational experiences of Filipino Americans by having research samples of students in UCs, CSUs, and community colleges unfortunately emphasize the experiences of students in elite institutions (Bailon, 2012; Ocampo, 2013). In turn, while several of the existing research on Filipino Americans in higher education offer valuable insight on the Filipino American college experience, further research should centralize Filipino American students in community college as the majority of the existing literature instead focuses on Filipino Americans in four-year institutions. The remaining sections discuss findings from existing scholarship on community college students as well as Asian American community college students in particular.

Community College Students

Current scholarship on community college students offers insight on the historical and sociopolitical context of the California community college system, namely through explaining the legacies of the California Master Plan (Douglass, 2010), asserting the significance of various community college mission statements (Orsuwan & Cole, 2007), and conceptualizing the need

for implementing a "transfer receptive culture" at the administrative level (Jain et al., 2007; Herrera & Jain, 2011). However, these works offer little insight on Asian American students in community college. Most scholarship centralizing students of color, especially those in community college, only focus on the experiences of Latino and African American students. Again, this speaks to the pervasiveness of the Model Minority Myth (CARE, 2011, p. 9). Meanwhile, the next section identifies examples of burgeoning scholarship on Asian American community college students.

Asian American Students Also Attend Community College

The majority of the burgeoning scholarship on Asian American students in community college has the main objective of bringing visibility to this student demographic in order to address the Model Minority Myth—namely the misconception that Asian Americans 'overpopulate' Ivy League schools and other elite institutions such as the University of California system. They contribute to scholarship on this student population, as the 2011 National Commission on AAPI Research in Education (CARE) Report states: "While AAPIs made up less than 5 percent of the national population in 2007, they represented nearly 7 percent of all community college students" (p. 9). At the same time, these articles, reports, and dissertations are notable for not only discussing the educational conditions for Asian American community college students as a whole, but they also offer disaggregated data by ethnicity. For instance, the CARE report shows that only 5% of Asian Indians who attended college have an associate's degree in comparison to 20.7% of Cambodians and 20.6% of Guamanians (p. 11). Moreover, Orsuwan and Cole's (2007) research on community college students in Hawaii found that Japanese American and Chinese American students were reported to be the least satisfied

with their education, Filipino American students were satisfied with their education, and Native Hawaiians were less satisfied with their experience as community college students. This quantitative study ascribed these findings to variables such as socioeconomic status, population size, and being first-generation college students. Moreover, Daniel Soodjinda's (2009) doctoral dissertation also points out the significance of conducting further research on Asian American community college students, particularly in different ethnic groups.

While the Model Minority Myth broadly affects Asian American students at the institutional level, the existing literature demonstrates that further research should centralize different Asian ethnic groups at specific community colleges. These works are significant in that they centralize a marginalized student population at the community college level and challenge the model minority myth. At the same time, it is still important to conduct further research on Filipino American community college students as there are differences between these ethnic groups within the Asian American community, as shown by scholars such as Robert Teranishi and Anthony Ocampo (Teranishi, 2002; Teranishi, 2010; Ocampo, 2013).

CHAPTER 4:

RESEARCH METHODS

My research draws from semi-structured, qualitative interviews I conducted with 7 individuals ages 21–25. With the approval of the Institutional Review Boards at the local university and at a community college in Los Angeles County, this data sample comprised of 3 male and 4 female students, 1 first generation and 6 second generation Filipino Americans, and 5 transfer students. In order to reflect the diversity of community college student experiences, two of my interviewees attended community college after receiving their bachelor's degrees. I also did purposeful sampling in order to interview community college and transfer students along various stages of the educational pipeline: 1 is a current community college student, 1 is an undergraduate transfer student, 3 are college graduates, and 2 of my interviewees are working towards their master's degrees. The duration of the interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 80 minutes. I then transcribed each interview, and used Dedoose in order to code the interview transcriptions. I used over 40 codes, but for my analysis, I specifically coded for microaggressions in order to use a racial microaggressions analytic framework in my analysis (Perez Huber & Solórzano, 2015).

Some strengths of this study are that the relationships between the interviewees and the author were already established (for the most part), and that the study's small sample size facilitates in-depth analysis and speaks to CRT's centralizing of experiential knowledge among the interviewees. At the same time, possible weaknesses of the author's analysis might result from their different experiences in terms of class, gender, education level, and academic discipline. Nevertheless, the learning opportunities that stem from this research include

increased perspective on the experiences of Filipino American students in higher education, further insight on being a transfer student, a glimpse of the racial campus climate in community college, and the chance to learn from marginalized experiences based on education, gender, (dis)ability.

The findings for this research will be discussed in the next chapter. They are not only informed by the previously discussed methodology and literature, but also by excerpts within the interviews that had the following frequently used codes:

- **deficit framing:** the portrayal of one's ethnic group or educational attainment in a negative manner
- **negative community college experience:** attributed to academic and/or social obstacles during community college
- **microaggressions:** an assault (verbal or non-verbal) that is a form of everyday racism or oppression against members of a marginalized group (Solórzano et al., 2000). I then used racial microaggressions as an analytical framework (Perez Huber & Solórzano, 2015) in order to code for the following details relevant to these microaggressions:
    - **type:** verbal or non-verbal
    - **context:** the setting in which this microaggression took place; the perpetrator of the microaggression
    - **responses:** how the student responded (or did not respond) to the perpetrator
    - **effects:** the lasting effects on the individual long after the microaggression occurred

In conceptualizing the findings for this research, the coded excerpts were then reorganized in order to contextualize different types of microaggressions that emerged in the interviews:

- **racial** – microaggressions pertaining to one's racial identity
- **intersectional** – microaggressions pertaining to other aspects of one's identity, such as gender, immigration status, or disability
- **schooling** – microaggressions pertaining to one's educational attainment (in this case, microaggressions that emerged as a result of being a community college student)

Profile of Research Participants

"Gabe" was born in 1990 to Filipino immigrant parents. He grew up in a Filipino ethnic enclave in the San Gabriel Valley, and his K–12 schooling history includes attending private elementary, a public middle school, and a public high school. His middle school and high school were in different cities and school districts. After high school, he attended Local Community College (LCC), where he took on a leadership role in a community service organization while also being part of the honors program. He transferred to Sunny Research University (SRU) after two years with the intention of going to law school in the future. After earning his bachelor's degree, he returned to LCC to attain his certificate in Paralegal Studies.

"James" was also born in 1990 to Filipino immigrant parents and grew up in the same area as "Gabe." He attended a private school from kindergarten to eighth grade that had a majority Filipino population. Afterwards, he attended the same high school as "Gabe," which was in a different city. However, "James" and "Gabe" did not become friends until they attended LCC together. "James" was also heavily involved in student organizations, and he took advantage of the honors program (despite not being an honors student) and the resource center for students with disabilities. After three years, he transferred to a UC and earned his bachelor's degree in political science. He hopes to apply to graduate school someday.

"Sarah" has experience attending LCC as well as other colleges in the California community college system, the CSU system, and the UC system. Her parents emigrated from the Philippines to Guam, and then to the United States in the early 1980s; she was born in 1991. Her K–12 education was within the same school district. After high school, she earned her bachelor's degree at a UC. However, she decided to pursue a career as a clinical lab scientist and so she has taken post-baccalaureate classes in colleges such as LCC in order to be a strong applicant for CLS certificate programs.

"Kayla" was born in the southern part of the Philippines in 1991, and she immigrated to the United States in the early 2000s. She attended the same high school as "Sarah" for two years before transferring to different high school in the San Gabriel Valley. At her new school, she was one of the few Filipino American students. After high school, she went to LCC for three years. She spent her time babysitting her cousins, but she eventually found community through a program at SRU that offers mentorship and recourses for community college students. Despite being forced to study nursing for a while, she transferred to SRU to pursue a bachelor's degree in ethnic studies and a minor in public health. Currently, she is in the Teach for America program and is pursuing a master's degree in public health.

The parents and the eldest brother of "Nora" immigrated to the United States during the 1980s. "Nora" was born in 1992 and grew up in a Filipino ethnic enclave in Orange County. She attended parochial schools for her K–12 education, including an all-girls high school where everyone knew each other. After not being admitted to four-year universities directly after high school, she made the decision to attend Far Community College (FCC), which has a good reputation for students who want to transfer. She spent her time commuting, working full-time, and taking classes full-time. Thanks to being in the honors program, she transferred to SRU in

two years and pursued a bachelor's degree in ethnic studies. After transferring, she finally had the chance to be involved in student activism. Currently, she is attending SRU for graduate school, where she is pursuing a joint MA and MSW degree.

"Rafael" was born the youngest child to immigrant parents in 1993 and grew up within a Filipino ethnic enclave in the San Gabriel Valley. He has a disability that his family was unaware of until his adult life, even though he has a mother who works as a nurse. For K–12, "Rafael" attended schools in the same district. He was sometimes tracked into honors courses, but he would end up taking 'regular' classes because he never did his homework. During his senior year, he got expelled and so he graduated at the local community day school. After high school, he attended community college in Fullerton, but he ended up eventually attending LCC because of the commute. He has since been taking classes on-and-off. He was momentarily involved in the honors program and a club that he initiated. After attending community college for more than three years, "Rafael" wants to end his education and find work.

Lastly, "Jessica" was born in 1994 to immigrant parents. However, she spent a significant amount of her childhood in the Philippines, so her first language was Tagalog. She grew up in a Filipino ethnic enclave in the San Fernando Valley, but she also spent a significant amount of her time with relatives in the Los Angeles South Bay area. After high school, she attended Far Community College because of their honors program. After completing her course requirements for the honors program within a year, she then attended the community college that was local to her. She transferred to SRU after taking classes in community college and working part-time for two years. She will be graduating from SRU this year with a degree in history and a minor in ethnic studies.

CHAPTER 5:

EARLY CONCEPTIONS OF BEING FILIPINO AMERICAN

This chapter will discuss the ethnic and academic identity development of Filipino Americans who attend community college by closely examining their recollections of their educational experiences before community college. At a glance, the ethnic identity development of my interviewees is most prominent during their childhood and adolescent years. However, their thoughts and aspirations in terms of academics vary. This chapter will elaborate on how my interviewees came to see themselves as Filipino Americans and not necessarily as students destined for community college. In turn, I assert that 'cultural mismatch' (Howard, 2015)—behavioral discrepancies between what is learned at home and at school—has adverse yet significant effects on Filipino American student development. Specifically, their ethnic and academic identities become in direct opposition to each other in their primary and secondary schooling.

Conceptualizing Filipino America and Forming Difference

This section identifies the various places and people that have been pivotal in the ethnic identity development of my interviewees. Their exposure to Philippine culture through their relatives and places with relatively high concentrations of Filipinos serve as a baseline for what they consider to be quintessentially Filipino. Unlike the later phases of their educational trajectory, childhood and adolescence proved to be significant phases in the ethnic identity development of my interviewees.

Family members

In response to the question, "When did you first realize that you were Filipino American?" the majority of my interviewees who were American-born told me that their ethnic identity came unconsciously to them. At the same time, they attributed their knowledge on being culturally Filipino to their immigrant parents or grandparents who raised them. For example, "Nora" reflected on how her parents taught her the most about being Filipino:

> Just in terms of them talking about…their own experiences growing up, living in the Philippines, they ingrained in myself and my siblings at a very, very early age where they come from, and this is who I am as a product of where they are from. (personal communication, February 4, 2016)

Notably, when discussing who taught them the most about being Filipino, my interviewees talked about the historical memory of living in the Philippines that their parents or other family members had. In addition, they talked about being immersed in the culture through religion, family gatherings, and foodways. They would come to associate Filipino identity with being an immigrant, a native Tagalog-speaker, and "the hardcore religious Catholic person" ("Kayla," personal communication, January 23, 2016). Ultimately, they learned the most about their ethnic identity through their parents and relatives who not only emigrated from the Philippines, but also were Catholic and spoke Tagalog.

Filipino Ethnoburbs

Not only did my interviewees learn about being Filipino through their relatives, but also through the cities in which they grew up. For instance, "Gabe" talked about growing up in an ethnic enclave when identifying how he first realized he was Filipino:

> I grew up in a Filipino enclave, and that's a cultural little concentration of Filipinos. I think you can recognize them anywhere in California, whether it's Carson or Cerritos or wherever. There's a Jollibee, …there's a Seafood City, there's a Chowking, …[and] there's a Red Ribbon [Bakeshop]! Those things are really good indicators, but I think the purpose of that is because developers recognize the enclave, and the people need a cultural center, and that sort of serves as that. I remember my grandma…she doesn't really get out all that much, and she's a completely different person when she's at Seafood City. She's cracking jokes with people she's never met before, but it's because she feels more at home there.... I've had the same guy cut my hair since I was three years old, and it's gotten to the point where I'm afraid that if I don't go to this guy, the hair salon's going to run out of business.... I always knew that because there were people around me in the cultural enclave, that there was an identity to be had. (personal communication, January 24, 2016)

This excerpt is an example of community asset mapping, which Kerka (2003) defines as "documenting the tangible and intangible resources of a community, viewing it as a place with assets to be preserved and enhanced, not deficits to be remedied" (p. 1). "Gabe" identifies businesses in his hometown that are run by and for Filipinos. While he identifies certain

business chains that are likely to exist in other Filipino ethnoburbs, "Gabe" also discusses how his family and these assets influence each other. He specifically identifies how Seafood City, a Filipino supermarket, is a safe space for his immigrant grandmother who is otherwise isolated from other native Tagalog-speakers. As for himself, "Gabe" identifies the monetary influence he has in the ethnoburb by devoting himself to that local barbershop. By unintentionally narrating a community asset map of his hometown, "Gabe" explains how his cultural identity was something that came to him naturally. Within his hometown—particularly in these spaces—being Filipino was the norm.

"Jessica" also identifies Filipino ethnoburbs as significant in informing her ethnic identity. She elaborates:

> My dad used to take…me, my mom, and my sister every weekend or every other weekend to Carson, because that's where all his family members are. We're in [the San Fernando Valley], so we would always hang out there… I had the language exposed to me, and I had the culture exposed to me, so not once did I not think I was Filipino. (personal communication, January 27, 2016)

Whereas "Gabe" talks about Filipino ethnoburbs in terms of the businesses that were important for him and his family members, "Jessica" instead discusses these spaces in that these cities are where her direct family and her relatives live. After all, the presence of Filipino businesses influences and is influenced by the clientele. In other words, while ethnoburbs are influential in the migration patterns of immigrant communities, so are family members who might have settled

at an earlier period. As a result, the exposure of multiple family members living in these ethnoburbs for "Jessica" was particularly influential on her self-concept as a Filipino American.

The Motherland

Aside from Filipino ethnoburbs, another place that was significant in Filipino ethnic identity formation is the Philippines itself. For example, in addition to visiting ethnic enclaves, "Jessica" reflected on how visiting the Philippines informed her cultural identity. She states: "throughout my life, I didn't ever think that I was not Filipino, just because…when I was three, my mom took me to the Philippines, so my first language was Tagalog" (personal communication, January 27, 2016). While "Jessica" also learned about Filipino culture through her relatives in the United States, being raised in the Philippines during her childhood particularly exposed her to the Filipino language. Similar to how "Gabe" asserts that he "always knew" he was Filipino, "Jessica" notes her presence in the Philippines as significant in making her ethnic identity occur naturally for her.

In contrast, having less of a connection to the Philippines has caused one of my interviewees to have a less salient ethnic identity. "Sarah" states:

> My mom, she didn't stay long after she was born in the Philippines—they moved to Guam. So she lived in Guam the majority of her life before coming over here, to California, and my dad lived in the Philippines for about 13 years. Then he moved over to Guam as well. There, they got their citizenship because they were petitioned for Guam, since it's a U.S. territory. Following that, my parents came here to the States…and then they have been living here since, actually....We

> haven't moved anywhere else. We do keep in contact with some family members, but [it's] kind of hard when a lot of them are either in Guam or in the Philippines. (personal communication, January 24, 2016)

Like several of my other interlocutors, "Sarah" learned the most about Philippine culture through her father who was in the Philippines longer than her mother. However, her parents' upbringing in Guam has made it difficult for her family to maintain a historical or social connection to their relatives who have stayed in the Philippines. While "Jessica" spent a portion of her childhood in Manila, the fact that her parents considered themselves to be Americanized has prevented "Sarah" from having a deeper connection to the Philippines and her relatives living there. Nevertheless, despite the significance of Filipino ethnoburbs and the Philippines in informing the 'intrinsic' cultural identity for several of my interlocutors, their experiences in primary and secondary schooling caused them to recognize their racialization as Filipino Americans.

Primary and Secondary Schooling

For each of my interviewees, their experiences in K-12 schools also proved to be significant for their ethnic identity development. Whereas their family environment made their ethnic identity occur naturally for them, their schooling environment was often the first place where they understood that they were different and that not everyone in their surroundings is Filipino. "Gabe" talks about this in trying to pinpoint when he was first aware of his ethnic identity:

> It's been an integral part of who we are, until we realize there are people beyond ourselves. I remember in the first grade, I was repeating some Filipino words—just simple Filipino words that I thought everybody knew—but this was not the case. (personal communication, January 24, 2016)

Despite being brought up in an environment where Filipino immigrants such as his grandmother felt comfortable to be themselves, "Gabe" eventually realized that he was different from his classmates, or rather, that not everyone in his school was Filipino. More importantly, he identifies this sense of difference in terms of the Filipino words that he expected his peers to know. Instead of realizing that not everyone was the same based on their phenotypic appearance, "Gabe" became cognizant of ethnic differences based on language. He later talks about language upon asking him if he ever thought about race during his schooling experience. His reply was the following:

> I did have to think about race a lot, because Filipinos [are] never a majority in any sense. Even in a majority Hispanic school, I would have to think about different cultures at the same time, especially when I got into third grade. I got into a school where they just started teaching you Spanish. And it was natural for a lot of people, but not so much for me. (personal communication, January 24, 2016)

In reflecting on a later part of his elementary schooling, "Gabe" has come to the realization that Filipinos are not the majority in the schooling context. This is a direct contrast to the prevalence of businesses catering to Filipino Americans within his hometown. By the time he enters this

new school as a third grader, “Gabe” has become aware that there are ethnic differences, once again, based on the language that was understood. Whereas the earlier quote mentioned his knowledge of “simple Filipino words that [he] thought everyone knew,” “Gabe” was then brought into an environment were Spanish ‘came naturally’ for several of his classmates and not for himself. As a result, he came to identify that the school was predominantly Latino, and that culturally relevant education for Filipino Americans could not exist because they were not the majority student population in his school.

Similar to “Gabe,” “Nora” also found that Filipinos were not the majority within her elementary school. However, unlike the rest of my interviewees, “Nora” attended parochial schools. In the following excerpt, she discusses the racial campus climate of her elementary school:

> Going to Catholic school most of my life…we had this sense of self, of wanting to be good citizens, good neighbors, but at the same time, nobody ever talks about race or ethnicity. So being in a Catholic school setting and being in an elementary school setting, you know that you’re different. I was just very lucky that there were a good amount of Filipino kids within these classes that we kind of bonded together and waited through what it meant to be Filipino in a historically white city, but the Catholic school was occupied by a lot of students of color. (“Nora,” personal communication, February 4, 2016)

Despite differences in socioeconomic status between “Nora” and my other interviewees, “Nora” is nevertheless well aware of her ‘innate’ sense of difference from several of her peers based on

race. More importantly, she identifies her hometown as a "historically white city," despite its possible categorization as an ethnoburb, given the various immigrant communities that live there. Her critical reflection also notably discusses the intersection of the religious, racial, and geographical contexts of her elementary education. In doing so, "Nora" identifies her feelings of difference as a Filipino American, the inability to have adequate discussions on race within the parochial school, but also her ability to find camaraderie with other co-ethnics and other students of color at her school.

Whereas "Nora" and "Gabe" became aware of their Filipino identity as being outside the norm through language and through realizing the relatively diverse racial contexts of their schools, "Rafael" instead became aware of race through the logistics of standardized testing. In response to my question on when he first became aware of his ethnic identity, "Rafael" commented:

> I don't remember when I first realized that I was Filipino. I think it was towards the California standardized testing period in elementary school when they had you fill out the little bubbles and they ask you what ethnicity you are. I would raise my hand and ask, "What is this?" I just put in Asian or Filipino if the answers [choices] were there. (personal communication, October 4, 2015)

It was interesting to find that, although each of my interviewees grew up in similar neighborhoods and family environments, this notion of Filipino identity did not occur as naturally for "Rafael." By associating his first memory of racialization with standardized testing and having to choose a box to check (or in this case, a bubble to fill in), "Rafael" speaks to the

social construction of race. Although each of my interviewees reflect on Filipino identity being something that is innate to themselves, this sense of confusion for "Rafael" from having to choose a racial or ethnic category encapsulates how our racialization from outsiders (our classmates, our teachers, and the curriculum) disrupts our early notions of Filipino culture and identity.

Overall, this section brings awareness to the magnitude of education's influence on how Filipino Americans come to understand their ethnic identity, which works in direct contrast to their home environment within their families, the ethnoburbs and the Philippines. Whereas Kevin Nadal (2011) conceptualizes a model for Filipino identity development based on students' interethnic and interracial relations—namely with whites, other Asian Americans, and other people of color—my interviewees instead reveal how they came to understand themselves as Filipino Americans based on other Filipinos first. Upon their exposure to the elementary school setting, however, they come to recognize the existence of other racial groups. Because my interviewees grew up in cities that predominantly consisted of people of color, they do not mention conceptualizing their ethnic identity in juxtaposition to whiteness. Rather, they recognize that they are different from other communities of color—notably Latinos and other Asian Americans, and that their culture is not reflected in their school curricula. As a result, their primary understandings of Filipino identity emerge inside the home where, again, their parents and other immigrant relatives set the standard on what it means to be Filipino.

Tagalog as a Gatekeeper to Being Filipino

As mentioned earlier, each of my interviewees learned about Filipino culture from their surrounding environment outside of school. Particularly, they came to understand Filipino

identity in context to their family members who were immigrants from the Philippines and native Tagalog-speakers. In turn, their conceptualization of the 'quintessential Filipino' was one who was an immigrant and therefore spoke the language. Each of my interviewees commented on their lack of competency in understanding or speaking Tagalog when explaining how they identify themselves ethnically. For instance, upon asking "Jessica" how she identified, she said that she was Filipino American. The following was her rationale: "I wouldn't say that I'm super Filipino, just because I can't speak [Tagalog] very well" ("Jessica," personal communication, January 27, 2016). Although she mentioned always understanding herself to be culturally Filipino, particularly through being exposed to extended family members and visiting the Philippines, she also mentioned how she knew how to speak Tagalog during her early childhood. This particular quote, however, shows her direct association between identifying as "super Filipino" with language competency in Tagalog. Another notable fact is that she links her time living in the Philippines with her acquisition of Tagalog as her first language, as noted in a previous section on learning about Philippine culture from living in the Philippines. Meanwhile, "Sarah" said the following disclaimer at the start of her interview: "I don't generally know much about my culture…I'm very Americanized, born and raised here in California…I don't even speak the language; I don't understand it, let alone know much…" (personal communication, January 24, 2016). Again, whereas "Jessica" had the experience of being exposed to the language in the Philippines, "Sarah" was raised by parents who emigrated from the Philippines to Guam relatively early in their lives. While it is interesting to note that "Sarah" never mentions her parents adopting a Guamanian identity, she nevertheless feels a lack of connection to the culture because of her upbringing in the United States and her lack of exposure to Philippine culture and the Tagalog language.

While “Jessica” associates the ability to speak Tagalog with being “super Filipino” and growing up in the Philippines, “Nora” instead associates language with her own pedagogies of the home. In answering my question on who taught her the most about being Filipino, “Nora” talked about her parents:

> Culturally, they would be sure it’s very important we knew where they came from; that the language that they speak is not English—they speak Tagalog. But even then, they also have their own dialects coming from different parts of the Philippines. (personal communication, February 4, 2016)

This excerpt is particularly notable in that one can identify a sense of difference with regards to being Filipino versus not being Filipino—in other words, speaking English versus speaking Tagalog. Moreover, her parents assert a sense of difference between speaking Tagalog and also speaking a different dialect, which then separates “Nora” and her family from other Filipinos whose ancestors are native to the Tagalog region of the Philippines. This excerpt also makes note of her family’s migration history by asserting the significance of the parents’ home country and the provinces they lived in. Ultimately, the understanding of culture for “Nora” emerges from her parents’ story of struggle in terms of migration and comprehension of Tagalog and other Philippine dialects. However, “Nora” is not a native speaker of the Tagalog language. Even though her parents instill in her the importance of their native country and language, “Nora” has yearned to gain competency in speaking Tagalog despite her busy schedule as a graduate student.

On the other hand, some of my interviewees admitted that they did not identify as Filipino or 'Filipino American.' In fact, one of them expressed a sense of confusion or discomfort at my use of the term "Filipino American" in my interview questions, so I used the term "Filipino" for the rest of the interview instead. Although "Rafael" mentioned marking that he identified as Asian or Filipino on his standardized tests, he told me at the end of his interview that he did not actually identify as Filipino. Specifically, "Rafael" remarked: "I just can't answer [questions about Filipino identity] personally because I'm not Filipino....I'm Filipino but I don't act like it. I don't eat Filipino food, I don't speak Tagalog…" (personal communication, October 4, 2015). Despite upbringing of "Rafael" in a Filipino ethnoburb and his exposure to Philippine culture through his family, his self-concept as culturally un-Filipino can be attributed to additional factors aside from what my research has mentioned thus far. For instance, he has other identity markers—he does not phenotypically pass as Filipino, he has a disability, and he considers himself to be Asian. However, these identity markers are outside of his conceptualization of Filipino identity: being religious, eating Filipino food, and speaking Tagalog. Similar to my other interviewees, however, these elements of being Filipino are descriptors that are relevant to his immigrant parents.

While the elementary school setting was instrumental in informing my interviewees' perception of their Filipino identity as 'the other' rather than a normal phenomenon, it also influenced several of my interviewees to compare themselves to other co-ethnics in order to determine group membership to the Filipino American community. For instance, according to my Filipino classmates in elementary school, we were expected to have visited the Philippines. Because I never had the chance to visit the Philippines until the age of 16, I personally felt excluded from my co-ethnics as a result of our differences in socioeconomic status. In the case

of my interviewees, one's competency in the Tagalog language was a purported marker of Filipino or Filipino American identity. For example, "Gabe" states:

> I was very envious of a lot of Filipinos in my generation, because they all at least understood Tagalog, but I didn't. I could pick up a few words here and there, but partially it wasn't taught to me, and when it was used, it was from adult to adult or to say things that the kids weren't supposed to know about. (personal communication, January 24, 2016)

Unlike other youth from immigrant families who become bilingual as a means for survival, second-generation Filipino Americans like "Gabe" are likely to not learn how to speak or understand Tagalog. In his experience (as well as my own), Tagalog seemed like a secret language that Filipino adults would use if they did not want the children to understand them. Because Filipino immigrants are likely to have fluency in the English language, it would not be as necessary for their children to serve as translators. In turn, this linguistic capital in the Filipino American community is a relatively rare occurrence.

Meanwhile, "James" had a different experience with the language and was probably one of the peers that "Gabe" envied. When discussing how "James" first became aware of his Filipino identity, we had the following dialogue:

> "James": "You were born here, right?"
>
> Interviewer: "Yes."

> "James": "Can you speak [Tagalog]? No, right?" (personal communication, Feburary 3, 2016)

After confirming that I did not speak Tagalog and explaining why I was unable to, "James" then remarked, "I think most people born here can't speak it, but they understand it. It's so strange that my Chinese friends can speak Canto, and my Japanese friends can speak their language, but it doesn't work that way for us here" (personal communication, February 3, 2016). Similar to "Gabe," "James" makes the assumption that all American-born Filipinos are unable to speak Tagalog, yet they can understand the language. As an interviewer who has never interacted with him previously, I personally felt apprehensive in response to his follow-up question. I felt like I was re-living my high school interactions with other 1.5-generation Filipino immigrants who would gossip about me in a different language. At the same time, it was important to build rapport with each other, so I did my best to explain to him why I was not as competent in the language. Nevertheless, it proved his own assumption that second-generation Filipino Americans can understand but not speak Tagalog (I personally never understood Tagalog until college, but he was unaware of this). This moment is significant in my research, because it is the only time when I had an interviewee ask me a question during the middle of an interview.

Overall, this section emphasizes the significance of language in the identity politics of being Filipino. Although speaking Tagalog instead of English may be an act of resistance in the Philippines, a previous U.S. colony, Filipino immigrants have to be intentional in preserving the language within their family in the United States. The fact my interviewees do not explicitly explain why their family members do not teach them how to speak Tagalog speaks to the prevalence of this phenomenon. Inspired by Dolores Delgado Bernal (1998), my 'cultural

intuition' as a Filipino American allows me to understand this as a legacy of U.S. colonialism, but also as a means for survival for immigrant families.

Conclusion

Overall, this chapter shows that the ethnic identity development of 1.5- and second-generation Filipino Americans is a multifaceted process that exposes youth to different ways of understanding their culture, from their interactions with their immigrant family members, their ethnic enclave, and their schoolmates. By closely analyzing my interviewees' critical reflection on their identity as Filipino Americans as well as their schooling experiences prior to college, this chapter demonstrates that childhood and primary education are significant in my interviewees' conceptualization of Filipino identity. They receive opposing messages inside and outside of the school setting about their culture. Following moments of cultural mismatch in their K–12 education, my research shows that young Filipino American students begin to establish Filipino identity politics based on their lived experiences. Conceptualizing Filipino ethnic identity based on language contributes to how Filipino American students navigate the racial campus climate of their secondary education, which is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6:

MOMENTS OF RACIALIZATION IN SCHOOL

The previous chapter demonstrates ways in which Filipino Americans have come to understand their ethnic identity in context to their family (other Filipinos) and their peers (mainly non-Filipinos) during early stages of their educational attainment. During later stages, such as high school, students also establish varying academic identities depending on the way they are tracked, the people they befriend, and the ways they are racialized. This section therefore further examines the academic identity of my interviewees (mainly during their secondary education) in context to their ethnic identity development from earlier stages in their education.

Tracking

Tracking refers to the grouping of students based on academic ability. While this might occur informally through the enrollment of students in English Language Learner (ELL) classes or the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program, students in the high school setting are more likely to be placed into different curriculum tracks through their required classes. Jeannie Oakes (1987) elaborates: "Students are classified as one or another track, and are expected to complete sequences of courses designed for college-preparatory students, vocational students, or general track students. Some schools do not have all three of these tracks, and others have more" (p. 3). The separation of students into different tracks makes it possible for students to be exposed to only a certain set of students and curriculum. In the case of my interviewees who attended community college after high school, they either were tracked into remedial classes or they took a few college preparatory courses.

"Nora" and "Jessica," who transferred from Far Community College (FCC), took a few of these college-track courses during high school. It was particularly interesting to hear "Nora" respond to my question on what type of classes she took in high school, for her initial response consisted of the general subjects she learned. At the same time, "Nora" attended a small private school, so it is possible that there was no need to place students in different tracks; each student would get to know one another regardless of what specific classes they took. Meanwhile, "Jessica" states: "In high school, I took honors, AP, and just everything else I that had to take, but if I had an option to take honors or AP, I would do it. And then math is my weakest subject, so… [*laughs*]" (personal communication, January 27, 2016). Notably, this shows that "Jessica" had a sense of agency in choosing what classes to take during high school, which prevented her from having to take classes that did not address her needs and strengths. More specifically, by laughing at the fact that mathematics is her weakest subject, it can be implied that she did not take advanced courses in mathematics such as AP Calculus AB and AP Statistics, which other students who are immersed in the college-bound track would take.

Meanwhile, several of my other interviewees were not enrolled in honors or AP courses. Notably, these students also formulated their academic identity based on the classes they are taking. For instance, "James" laments:

> I was just a terrible student. I know that it's kind of bad to say, but I didn't really value my education…so I just took regular courses. My math was terrible. The highest math I went up to was geometry, and I took business math. Typically…you're supposed to go up to Spanish II or Spanish III; I just went up

> to Spanish I. I kind of don't know how I graduated. (personal communication, February 3, 2016)

One can have various interpretations for why "it's bad to say" that he claimed to have not valued his education, but this excerpt shows the linkage between his academic identity as a "terrible" student with the courses he was taking. He identifies his classes as "regular" rather than as college-preparatory or honors. Most importantly, he evaluates his performance as a student based on his knowledge of the types of classes he was taking in comparison to what other students in his high school were expected to take. By taking such courses and not completing the course sequences available to him, he expressed astonishment over the fact that he graduated high school nevertheless.

In turn, this section demonstrates the diversity of student experiences for Filipino Americans. Contrary to the model minority myth portraying Asian Americans as academic high achievers and to the racialization of Filipino American students as troublemakers (Teranishi, 2002), Filipino American students who undergo the community college system are likely to have different educational experiences before attending community college. My interviewees either took a few classes in the honors or advanced placement track, while others were consistently taking 'remedial' classes. None of these students were fully immersed in the honors and advanced placement track, which makes attending a four-year university directly after high school more difficult. This also influences the types of students they befriended, which will be the subject of the next section.

Peer Groups

Given the relatively high population of Filipinos and other students of color at the schools that my interviewees attended, there was no need for them to befriend their coethnic classmates. For instance, "Rafael" mentioned how in high school, he "put some effort into socializing with them" (personal communication, October 4, 2015). At the same time, my interviewees who attended a high school with a significantly high AAPI student population made conscious decisions about whom they should associate with. For instance, "James" reflected on how he was "stupidly proud" of his ethnic identity:

> I grew up with the same 50 students from kinder to eighth grade. I went to a small private school, and three-fourths of us [were] Filipino.... In high school, our whole clique, they were just Filipino, so I used to have this 'proud to be Filipino' [feeling], but then, as I got older, I felt like I was very narrow-minded. (personal communication, February 3, 2016)

Comparing to my other interviewees, the primary education of "James" is rather unique in that he attended a school with a majority Filipino student population. While this might explain his need to continue socializing with his coethnic peers during high school, he later saw his ethnic pride as terrible and being 'narrow-minded.' "Gabe" has similar ideas of wanting to have ethnically diverse friends, but he does so for different reasons. Namely, he cognitively associates being Filipino with being unintelligent:

> I remember being with all my Filipino peers in high school, and noticing that…[there] were some smart kids, but I didn't see any outstandingly smart kids,

> but we were talented. I think a lot of Filipinos are talented…. This is a really incorrect and sad thought, but I figured if you're Filipino in this school, it means you're great at a lot of things, but not the master of anything. ("Gabe," personal communication, January 24, 2016)

It is possible that this sentiment likely roots from the racial campus climate of his high school. With the relatively high AAPI student population, it is easier for students such as "Gabe" to identify differences between ethnic groups. In his case, he was unable to identify a substantial amount of Filipinos who were intelligent rather than 'talented.' Because he wanted to be one of the 'smart kids,' he made the conscious decision to disassociate with the Filipino clique that "James" was a part of.

Whereas the previous section is an example of how Filipino Americans are racialized by their educators through their academic track, this section on peer groups shows the various ways in which Filipino American students make the conscious decision to associate themselves with their co-ethnic peers. While forming ethnic cliques might be a means for survival in a school with a hostile racial climate, this is not as necessary in schools that are within ethnic enclaves. As a result, being part of a Filipino group of friends in this setting requires a conscious effort, yet is also associated with being unintelligent for displaying ethnic pride. Lastly, this section makes explicit the racialization of Filipino Americans as unintelligent and therefore relatively immune to the model minority myth.

Racial Microaggressions

Filipino Americans also come to understand their ethnic identity in context to racial microaggressions. Examples of microaggressions that are most common during their primary and secondary education are relevant to language, foodways, and racialization.

Language and Foodways

While the majority of my interviewees discussed the importance of language and birthplace in identifying as Filipino, the only person who did not talk about language was born in the Philippines and was therefore familiar with Tagalog and her specific dialect. In turn, she became aware of her ethnic identity as a result of how her peers racialized her in high school through racial microaggressions. Specifically, she talked about how others portrayed her as strange due to language and food. "Kayla" reflects:

> That was when I started realizing, *Oh, okay, do they just see me as that low, Filipino person that they can just make fun [off] and fool around with, asking, "Do you know the meaning of this? Do you eat* balut *in a regular basis?"* Filipino life is not just about that. (personal communication, January 23, 2016)

This realization was resultant of frequently being exposed to verbal microaggressions that emerged only a few years after she immigrated to the United States. She was often asked if she ate *balut* (boiled duck embryos) and if she was familiar with Filipino curse words. In response to being asked to translate Tagalog words, she would say that she could not because Tagalog was not her first language and she noted how inappropriate it was to discuss vulgar language in the school setting. Adding on to the previous section on how Filipino American students perceive

each other, “Kayla” also came to realize that being Filipino was a negative trait, based on how others would tease her and simplify ‘Filipino life.’ These types of microaggressions, while detrimental, are nevertheless significant for one’s ethnic identity development, particularly for Filipino Americans who make the link between the Tagalog language and being able to claim Filipino identity.

Misrecognition as Filipino Americans

One type of racial microaggression that was most common for my interviewees entails being racialized as non-Filipino. As articulated by “Nora,” this is a response to the following:

> Because [the Philippines has] been colonized so many times, no Filipino really ever looks the same. Some of us look more Chinese more than others, some look more Spanish more than others, some are darker, some are lighter, [and] some are in-between. (personal communication, February 4, 2016)

These racial microaggressions tend to be verbal in nature and from interactions with other people. As explained by “Nora,” my interviewees were often racialized as Latino, mixed race, Pacific Islander, Southeast Asian, or East Asian. Notably, “Nora” and “James” recalled how they are never perceived to be Filipino at first. Factors that influenced the extent to which they “passed” as Filipino included names and skin tone. “Nora” elaborates:

> It really depends on what color my skin is at the time, because I can be really light-skinned or really dark-skinned. I guess that also informs that experience;

> how people would project their own ideas of what I may be. (personal communication, February 4, 2016)

Meanwhile, "Sarah" spoke more about names and phenotype: "Not only am I very dark (tanned skinned), but if I said my last name, a lot of people pick up on that and they go, 'Oh, are you Mexican?' or, 'Are you of some kind of Spanish descent?'" (personal communication, January 24, 2015). Even in the midst of today's "color-blind" racial context, Filipino Americans not being seen as ethnically Filipino can contribute to rather dire consequences.

While some students responded assertively or using humor, being seen as not Filipino often resulted in self-policing, anger, and disidentification. For instance, the name and appearance of "Rafael" caused him to hang out with primarily Latino students during high school. He explained, "I think I look Mexican, and my name sounds Mexican" (personal communication, October 4, 2015). Out of all my interviewees, "Sarah" was the only one to assert that she was "full Filipino" as a result of her being perceived as part Mexican. These microaggressions speak to the policing of Filipino American students in feeling a sense of belonging within ethnically or racially relevant spaces. They also point out the further diversity of student experiences, as the various ways in which Filipino Americans are racialized influence their academic trajectory (through tracking) and their support systems in navigating secondary education. Combined with the lack of culturally relevant education, these factors contribute to how Filipino American students undergo the development of their ethnic and academic identities separately.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter shows some of the ways in which Filipino American students develop their academic identities. It begins with the ways that their educators perceive them. The ways that Filipino American students are racialized—either as "model minorities" or as delinquents—influence the ways that they are tracked. In turn, the tracks that the students take have a significant impact on their peer groups as well as how they perceive their academic strengths and weaknesses. Most importantly, this chapter identifies how students have begun to identify the connection (or lack thereof) between their academic and ethnic identity. While my interviewees do not explicitly link their educational experiences to their ethnic identities, a few of them did make a connection between academic tracks and other Filipino Americans. Ultimately, these moments of racialization, in combination with other racial microaggressions have an influence on how they approach their community college experience, which is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7:

MICROAGGRESSIONS AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

Regarding the schooling experience of Filipino American community college students, themes that have emerged from the author's interviews for this research revolved around retention issues, community college experiences, and deficit frameworks. The main point of contention between my interviewees was with regards to how they reflected on community college. Some were empowered in the community college setting; others felt thankful to have been able to transfer out of community college. While there were several excerpts that speak to this trend, I will focus my analysis on three of my interviewees who had these divergent experiences and critically reflected on the microaggressions they faced as community college students.

Becoming or Staying "Better" Than the Rest

When I asked "Gabe" about the least favorite aspect of being a community college student for him, he spoke at great length about community college stigmas. Although his experience in community college was filled with community building and maintaining a 4.0 grade point average, he talked to me about the various microaggressions he faced from friends, professionals, and even faculty members at his community college. One microaggression he particularly ruminated on was from his friend who did not attend community college. They were part of the same group of friends during high school and with the exception of "Gabe," they all attended four-year universities that were not flagship schools. When "Gabe" and his friends reunited not long after "Gabe" found that he would be transferring to Sunny Research University

(SRU), his friend said to him, "Oh, Gabe. You got into SRU; you know what that means now: you're like the best of all of us" (personal communication, January 24, 2016). In reflecting on this, he identifies the pervasiveness of deficit thinking on community college students. "Gabe" states:

> I knew that must have meant that besides that, I must have been the worst of all.…When you make that shift from [community college] to… a very well recognized school, then people think if you differently. People go from expecting nothing from you to thinking you're someone who can actually accomplish something. (personal communication, January 24, 2016)

Even with his accomplishments and his affirming experiences as a community college student, "Gabe" identifies that the perpetrators of these microaggressions only see him as "better" upon being accepted to a four-year university and they view community college as a barrier to success.

In response to these types of microaggressions, "Gabe" is explicit in identifying the community cultural wealth of community college. Although others view him in a different way after transferring to Sunny Research University, he reclaims his community college experience as an important part of his education. He states:

> The fact of the matter is I wasn't that different when I went from LCC [Local Community College] to SRU. The way that I conducted myself, the way that I saw people, it didn't change…. In that sense, I have a lot of pride when it comes to LCC, because I think it's a place where if you put yourself to the test, you can

> really accomplish a lot of things, and you can discover things about yourself you didn't know before. (personal communication, January 24, 2016)

While he notes that others perceived him differently on becoming an SRU student, "Gabe" asserts that the university he attended did not define his intellectual ability. Instead, he identifies community college as a significant part of his student development. Given the sense of community and empowerment he was able to obtain in community college, his interview serves as a counternarrative to the idea that community college is a barrier to educational attainment or that community college students are of a lesser caliber than students who begin their higher education at a four-year university. The way he makes meaning in his identity development allows him to embrace his experience in community college, despite the frequent microaggressions he endures with regards to his education. Meanwhile, the next section will discuss the traumatic experience of another student.

Navigating the Structural and Ideological System

Whereas "Gabe" reflected on his community college experience as a sociable and empowering portion of his education, "Kayla" admitted to me that her experience was rather traumatizing. Unlike "Gabe," "Kayla" was not involved in student organizations, nor was she part of the honors program at LCC. Because of the way she was tracked in her secondary education, "Kayla" was placed in remedial classes, which caused her to take more time to transfer. Not having access to adequate resources also caused her to have less access to good counselors at LCC. During her meeting with a white, male community college counselor, "Kayla" states: "He [talked about how] his friend married a Filipina…they met online, she

needed a green card, …and he was staring at me as if I was on the same page" (personal communication, January 23, 2016). This verbal and non-verbal microaggression caused her to abruptly end her meeting.

While "Kayla" was able to respond to the counselor by walking out on him, this microaggression ultimately caused her to avoid seeking further guidance at her community college. Within our conversation, she talked about how this caused her to "have bad sight of the counselors" and also to "get mad when people call [her] 'Pilipina'…because there's something tied to it" ("Kayla," personal communication, January 23, 2016). That 'something,' I assert, is the hypersexualization of Filipino women. Drawing from Kevin Nadal's categorization of racial microaggressions that affect the Filipino American community, the counselor's comment can also be categorized in terms of foreigner racialization and the misunderstanding of Philippine culture. However, even the word "Pilipina" evokes a visceral reaction for "Kayla" (and also myself), because it brings attention to gender. In Tagalog, words are gender-neutral, even if they are borrowed from Spanish and end with the letters "a" or "o." For instance, the word *dentista* applies to both female and male dentists. Even the Tagalog word for "he" and "she" are the same. In turn, using the words "Pilipina" or "Filipina" assume that Tagalog words are gendered in the same manner as Spanish words, and they highlight gender in a way that is counterintuitive for both Tagalog and English speakers. No other ethnic group is ever labeled with an "a," unless if female-identified Latin Americans wanted to label themselves in Spanish.

In turn, while reflection of "Gabe" speaks to the existence of schooling microaggressions, the experience of "Kayla" reminds us of the layered microaggressions that Pinays face within the community college setting. Rooted in U.S. colonization and militarism in the Philippines, the counselor's comment speaks to the hypersexualization of Pinays and the savior mentality of

white American men. Moreover, the macroaggression that overlays this institutional racism encompasses white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and nativism. The college counselor's seemingly innocuous comment to those outside the Filipino American community is a layered assault to "Kayla" (the primary target) and myself (a secondary target), because he implicitly makes the assumption that all Pinays are mail-order brides who need the assistance of white men in order to gain U.S. citizenship. Fortunately, "Kayla" was able to find a sense of belonging in other spaces than the institutionalized resources at LCC. By transferring to SRU and majoring in ethnic studies, she eventually found the vocabulary to understand the discrimination she faced in community college. In turn, this demonstrates the navigational capital that Filipino American students have by attending a community college without having access to resources such as the honors program.

Internalizing Deficit Frameworks

On the other end of the spectrum of community college experiences is the story of "Rafael" who has been attending community college on-and-off certain semesters over the past five years. While he has been exposed to resources external to his community college and within the program for students with disabilities, he has come to internalize deficit frameworks on community colleges. Because "Rafael" sees the strengths of being at a university, he ultimately sees himself as someone who "should have been better at high school and that…[could have] done a better job of getting to a four-year school" (personal communication, October 4, 2015). Also, "Rafael" has come to internalize deficit frameworks based on his disability, for these are factors that separate him from other students that he identifies has been able to transfer out of community college. Even as he identifies this identity dissonance within the school setting, he

does not acknowledge that the school is not providing adequate resources to retain him in school and help him transfer to a four-year university.

Conclusion

In addition to structural barriers, these ideologies reinforce the lack of access to higher education for students of color. Upholding and perpetuating these deficit frameworks, particularly for Filipino American students who are racialized as unintelligent, has a detrimental effect on these students' well-being and retention. While the students talked about in this paper successfully transferred and graduated from college, there continue to be students who eventually internalize these deficit frameworks as they struggle to retain themselves and transfer out of community college. By analyzing these microaggressions, this research reveals some of the deficit frameworks that inform the experiences of Filipino American community college students. While this research contributes to the existing educational research on community college students by discussion microaggressions relevant to community college stigmas, it also discusses how racial microaggressions can also be layered assaults against one's intersectional identities as Filipino, female, and 1.5-generation immigrants. It speaks to the racialization of education and the various types of obstacles faced by Filipino American community college students.

Ultimately, upholding and perpetuating these deficit frameworks over considering one's community cultural wealth, particularly for Filipino American students who are racialized as unintelligent, has a detrimental effect on these students' well-being and retention. While some of the students discussed in this paper successfully transferred and graduated from college, there continue to be students who eventually internalize these deficit frameworks as they struggle to

retain themselves and transfer out of community college. Even with the existence of a transfer sending culture within a community college setting, it is significant for student affairs staff to address the identity development for community college students in terms of identity dissonance, community cultural wealth, and deficit frameworks.

CHAPTER 8:

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The objective of this thesis was to understand the educational experiences of Filipino American community college and transfer students as a counernarrative to the Model Minority Myth. This thesis is notable for centralizing the perspectives of Filipino American students who attend community college, whereas preexisting scholarship either focuses on Filipino American students in four-year universities or on students of color in community college aside from Asian Americans. The study also aimed to conceptualize the Filipino American community college experience in terms of student development and racial microaggressions. Specifically, the thesis sought to answer two questions:

1. What are the ideologies that inform the educational experiences of Filipino American community college students in terms of their ethnic and academic identity developments?
2. What types of microaggressions do Filipino American community college students experience?

Findings

Drawing from my qualitative interviews with Filipino Americans who had the experience of attending both community college and university, I argued that racial ideologies such as U.S. colonialism and white supremacy were instrumental factors in the adverse educational trajectories for Filipino American community college students. Even though the majority of my interviewees were able to complete their undergraduate education, each of them either expressed or internalized the existence of stigmas about being a community college student. Effects of

these racial ideologies include tracking, the criminalization of students, and internalized colonization. The enacting of the California Master Plan also contributed to this stigma as it made the UC system less accessible for students of color, just as more students were able to go to college.

To be specific, their ethnic identity development began within their family and community. Their elders and surroundings taught them to link Filipino culture with the language, foodways, and religion of immigrants from the Philippines. In other words, these relatives were instrumental in establishing the ethnic identity politics for Filipino Americans based on space, language, and religion. At the same time, relatively high exposures to Philippine culture have taught most of my interviewees who are American-born to feel culturally Filipino for as long as they could remember. This, in turn, challenges previous preexisting models of student development for Filipino Americans.

Meanwhile, the following factors were instrumental in shaping my interviewees' academic identities: their schooling environments, the curricula they were tracked into, and the racial campus climate of their classrooms. By subconsciously identifying the linkage between their race and education, some of my interviewees began to understand their academic identity in terms of the classes they enrolled in or in terms of their time commitments. Students either identified themselves as hard-working individuals who aspired to attend a prestigious university directly after high school. Some of my other interviewees, on the other hand, were well aware that they would be enrolling in community college after graduating from high school. Each of my interviewees was subject to racial microaggressions such as being racialized as any race or ethnicity other Filipino.

In addition to racial microaggressions, my interviewees were also subject to microaggressions based on their identities pertaining to gender or (dis)ability. The microaggressions that occurred in the school setting notably had traumatizing effects on these students in how they navigate and remember their community college experiences. Lastly, my research identified the pervasiveness of schooling microaggressions—verbal or nonverbal assaults against students who are not enrolled in four-year universities. They conceptualized this as the community college stigma, though these backhanded comments can also be analyzed using a racial microaggressions analytic framework.

Theoretical Implications

As mentioned previously, this thesis contributes to existing scholarship that uses Critical Race Theory in Education, Asian Critical Theory, or Pinayism. Unlike most CRT in education scholarship, this thesis also used AsianCrit and Pinayism in order to address Filipino American subjectivity that is a legacy of U.S. colonialism. By stressing the legacy of U.S. colonialism, my thesis challenges the notion of ahistoricism and instead asserts that the Filipino American experience cannot solely be expressed adequately in terms of developed branches of CRT such as Chicana feminism and Asian American jurisprudence. Moreover, my thesis used AsianCrit and Pinayism in order to bring visibility to issues prevalent to Asian American students, a relatively underrepresented group in education scholarship. Lastly, this thesis contributes to critical Filipino studies by centralizing the experiences of Filipino Americans and being thorough in asserting the link between Filipino American subjectivity and the exclusion of Filipinos almost a century before.

Policy Implications

In terms of policy recommendations, this thesis asserts the need for more awareness about Asian American issues, for peer mentors who will advocate for Asian Americans, and for ethnic studies courses that are relevant to the Filipino American experience at the community college level. By enacting such change, in addition to following my interviewees' recommendations for their community college to have better counselors and to build more parking lots, community colleges can then show their commitment to the needs for their students. These changes would also address the racial campus climate and promote a transfer sending culture for Asian American community college students. It is especially important for AANAPISIs to enact institutional change in addressing their AAPI students.

Recommendations for Future Research and Research Limitations

Although my research focused on the community college experiences for Filipino American students, there is still a need to do more research on other Filipino American community college students. It is especially important centralize current community college students in order to promote effective change to help future students pursue higher education. I also assert the importance of doing further research on racial microaggressions, community cultural wealth, transformational resistance, and ableist microaggressions. Further research can be relevant to the diversity of race, class, and age for these students.

Limitations of this study were mainly logistical. I had to complete multiple IRB applications because I wanted to interview current community college students. However, it was difficult to complete my IRB application for one of the institutions in a timely manner. This also factored into why I purposefully sampled interviewees who already transferred to a university.

Moreover, although I had a relatively small data sample, I actually had a significant amount of data, as I was looking for excerpts relevant to microaggressions and community cultural wealth. My research found that it was difficult to have all types of community cultural wealth represented, especially when it came to affirming the bilingualism for some communities of color. Lastly, my positionality as a student who never attended community college was likely an obstacle for receiving meaningful data on linking institutional racism with the schooling experiences for community college students.

Conclusion

This research has juxtaposed different concepts across disciplines. By focusing on Filipino American community college students, I engaged with topics ranging from the Model Minority Myth and U.S. colonization to subtractive schooling and racial microaggressions. I also linked the concept of tracking to the complicated racialization of Filipino Americans. While this thesis has emphasized the significance of American and Philippine history on understanding contemporary education issues for Filipino Americans, it nevertheless centralized the voices of transfer students, a student population that is usually underrepresented in higher education research. It also expands the possibilities for advancing critical Filipino studies by connecting Critical Race Theory in education to Asian American studies.

APPENDIX A:

Initial Recruitment Letter to Potential Interview Subjects

Email/message subject, if applicable:
Recruiting Interviewees for Research Project on Filipino American Community College Students

Body of message:
Hi [name],

My name is Emilie S. Tumale, and I'm a graduate student in Asian American Studies at UCLA. I have been in touch with [name of referrer] about my research on Filipina/o Americans and education. Thank you for contacting me after receiving information about the study from [name of referrer]. I would like to tell you a little bit more about my qualitative research project, and I want confirm if you or anyone you know might be interested in participating as an interviewee.

The research I'm conducting is on the race-related experiences of Filipina/o Americans in community college. I'm looking for Mt. SAC students who identify as Filipina/o and are willing to reflect back on their early educational experiences as Filipinas/os, their educational trajectory, and their recent experiences as community college students.

I will be conducting my interviews at Mt. SAC from **January 15 – Feburary 15**. Please consider this a brief description of the study—I did not want to overwhelm you with too many details initially. If you think you are interested in participating, finding out more, or helping me recruit other Filipinas/os in your networks into the study, please email me back to notify me of your interest. Feel free to include any questions at all. As I move through the process of finding interviewees and setting up interviews, I will definitely be providing folks with more details of the project and keeping them informed of any changes along the way.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration. I hope to hear from you soon!

Sincerely,
Emilie

APPENDIX B:

Interview Questions

Background Information (Indicators)

First, I am going to ask you some basic questions related to your identity. I am expecting that the answers to each of these will be fairly brief, so you don't need to go into much explanation about your answers unless you want to. The reason I am asking these identity questions is so that I can be clearer about the particular perspective you are bringing to your experiences brought up in this interview. There are certain things I might think I can assume about your identity, but I do not want to assume anything and I would rather give you the opportunity to state how you identify. So I am going to ask you the following questions, but know that if answering any of them makes you uncomfortable or you would rather not answer it, you can decline to answer. Okay?

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Is there a certain generation of Filipino (1st, 1.5, 2nd, 3rd, etc.) you consider yourself?
3. Tell me about your family.
4. What socioeconomic class would you say you grew up in?

Ethnic Identity

Now I'd like to ask you questions about your identity.

5. When did you first realize that you were Filipina/o American?
6. Who has taught you the most about being Filipina/o?
7. Did you give much thought to race and being Filipino American when you were growing up? Why or why not? What did you think about?
8. What race or ethnicity do other people at Mt. SAC think you are?

Community College Experience

Now, I'd like to ask you questions about your educational experience; mainly your experience in community college.

9. Tell me about your academic trajectory. What kind of classes did you take during high school?
10. What were factors that contributed to your decision to attend this specific community college?
11. What were the racial/ class demographics at your previous schools? What are the racial/ class demographics at your community college?
12. What did you study at in community college? What is your major at the moment?
13. What are your aspirations after attending community college? [If interested in transferring] What schools are you interested in attending?
14. What are your thoughts on your community college? How have your thoughts changed since attending your first class at this college?

15. How do you get to school?
16. What do you do outside of school?
17. How and where do you generally spend your time on campus outside of class?
18. What resources do you use at your community college? Which ones do you find most useful? Which ones do you find least useful/ accessible?
19. Do you feel that your experience(s) are different from students at other colleges (private schools, UCs, or CSUs)? If so, how do you feel your experience is different?
20. How have you interactions with other students been? What about with professors and other people on campus?
21. What are your favorite and least favorite things about being a community college student?
22. In what ways, if any, has your family influenced your academic experience? What are their thoughts about you attending community college?
23. How have your peers influenced your academic experience? What are their thoughts about you attending community college?
24. How do you think race, class, gender, age, and other parts of your identity have affected your academic life? Do you think these variables have made your experience different from other college students?

Wrapping Up

25. Is there anything you would like to add to this discussion that can help me understand your experiences better?
26. If you could go back to past, what advice would you give yourself?
27. What is the most pressing thing you would like your community college to do to make this a better place for you?

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