KUWENTO/STORIES: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF FILIPINO AMERICAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

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by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this body of work to my family, ancestors, friends, colleagues, dissertation committee, Filipino American community, and my future self. I am deeply thankful for all the support each person has given me through the years in the doctoral program. This is a journey I will never, ever forget.

ABSTRACT

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The core of this narrative inquiry is the *kuwento*, story, of eight Filipino American community college students (FACCS) in the southern part of the United States. Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimension inquiry space—inwards, outwards, backwards, and forwards—provided a space for the characters, Bunny, Geralt, Jay, Justin, Ramona, Rosalinda, Steve, and Vivienne, to reflect upon their educational, career, and life experiences as a Filipino American. The character's stories are delivered in a long, uninterrupted *kuwento,* encouraging critical discourse around their Filipino American identity development and educational struggles as a minoritized student in higher education. Educators, administrators, and researchers have an opportunity to listen to their voices and address their needs so that they no longer exist as the "forgotten Asian American" (Cordova, 1983).

KEY WORDS: Filipino, Filipino American, Community College, Kuwento, Stories, Identity

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Asian American Pacific Islanders (AAPI) stereotypically are considered to be ideal college students when compared to other traditionally minoritized groups in the United States. This preconception is referred to as the *Model Minority Myth* (MMM), or the belief that AAPI are academically exceptional by nature. Some scholars and educational leaders have begun to problematize this myth as harmful to college students. Higher education researchers argue that the MMM myth further homogenizes the diverse AAPI population. Moreover, the MMM marginalizes AAPI students from both dominant and other minoritized ethnic and racial groups, thwarting attention to the needs and experiences of the AAPI student population (Museus & Kiang, 2009; Poon et al., 2016; Teranishi, Lok, & Nguyen, 2013).

Additionally, the AAPI community in the United States is growing and a large number of students are enrolling in postsecondary institutions. Furthermore, Teranishi et al. (2011) state that 47.3 percent of AAPI students attend community colleges. The United States White House Initiative on Asian American and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI) asserted that the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community was one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States. Accordingly, the AAPI population is expected to double to 47 million people by 2060 (White House Initiative on Asian American and Pacific Islander, 2016). Therefore, this tremendous growth creates an impetus to examine AAPI experiences in higher education.

So—who and what is the AAPI community? Because the AAPI community is large, some people might assume the entire AAPI population is homogenous. Contrary to

the belief, the livelihood, experiences, and stories of the AAPI community are diverse and complex. Yet, quality research and disaggregated data regarding AAPI in higher education is limited in comparison to other emerging research (Teranishi et al., 2013). With the AAPI community exponentially growing in the United States, educational research is needed to bring forth the experiences and needs of this traditionally marginalized population (Museus & Kiang, 2009; Suzuki, 2002; Teranishi, 2010a; Teranishi et al., 2013). Filipinos comprise 19% of the 20.4 million AAPI community in the United States, making Filipino Americans the third largest ethnic group and the focus of this study (Pew Research Center, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

As mentioned above, Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) students are stereotyped as the ideal pupil among minoritized groups in the United States, contributing to the Model Minority Myth (MMM). For example, on a *Time Magazine* cover page in August 1987, an intergenerational group of Asian students—who looked Chinese, Japanese, and Korean—were posed with books, a computer, a basketball, and a bag pack in hand. The magazine's cover issue was entitled, "Those Asian-American Whiz Kids" (Thai, 1987).

The MMM continues to be a sociopolitical divider among people of color, that is the AAPI community are set up to rival against other minority communities (Poon et al., 2016). Stereotypes that might be considered "positive" include being: (a) good at math, (b) obedient students, (c) economically wealthy, (d) from educated households, (e) enrolled primarily in 4-year universities, and (f) working in high-paying careers (Poon et al., 2016). These supposedly positive stereotypes can prove harmful to AAPI students,

disregarding the academic support and mental and emotional resources for low performing AAPI students.

Another stereotype of AAPI students assumes that everyone is from East Asian descent and they are expected to pursue top tier education and career goals. In reality, the AAPI community is far from being a monolithic group and comprises of over 50 different ethnicities that represent a diaspora of countries, cultural backgrounds, and various levels of socioeconomic status and educational attainment (Kim & Gasman, 2011). To suggest that all AAPI are the same ethnicity negates the distinctive stories, struggles, and needs of each ethnic group.

A modern day example is seen in this excerpt from Andrew Sullivan's (2017) *New York Magazine* online article:

> Asian-Americans, like Jews, are indeed a problem for the "social-justice" brigade….How have bigoted white people allowed these minorities to do so well—even to the point of earning more, on average, than whites?...Yet, today, Asian-Americans are among the most prosperous, well-educated, and successful ethnic groups in America. What gives? It couldn't possibly be that they maintained solid two-parent family structures, had social networks that looked after one another, placed enormous emphasis on education and hard work, and thereby turned false, negative stereotypes into true, positive ones, could it?

The MMM continues to perpetuate after 30 years since the *Time Magazine* publication. Sullivan's perception reflects the current day sentiments of the image of Asian Americans and the article is laced with multiple stereotypes. For instance, the homogenization presumes all AAPI are model citizens, smart, and academically high-

achieving (Pak, Maramba, & Hernandez, 2014). Although these seemingly positive stereotypes may appear to benefit AAPI, they pose as a dangerous threat to other marginalized communities of color because AAPI are often pitted against African Americans and Hispanics. The MMM perpetuates AAPI as the most successful race in education and career development (Poon et al., 2016). Therefore, MMM can create disparities and tensions with other minority groups. Scholars have suggested when marginalized cultural minorities work together, they will be more effective fighting, challenging, and problematizing systemic racism and oppression against communities of color (Poon et al., 2016,). Diminishing the MMM would not only benefit AAPI, but all minoritized people.

Poon et al. (2016) have suggested that the notion of the MMM operates out of the need to sustain the notion of White dominance. By focusing on defining the AAPI experiences, rather than defending what AAPI are not, new research can help move beyond the model minority concept and build upon a new discourse. Poon et al. (2016) encouraged the exploration of AAPI ethnic identities to understand the nuances and needs of the specific culture.

Purpose of the Study

Although research on AAPI is emerging, Poon et al. (2016) suggests stories about specific AAPI communities are inadequate. The experiences of Filipino Americans in higher education are one of those areas worth exploring. The stories and experiences of Filipino Americans in higher education are layered with decades of historical oppression, racism, and invisibility, yet when does a Filipino American student learn about this (David, 2013)? False stereotypes are further perpetuated by the MMM and pressure

AAPI and Filipino American students to live up to high expectations, but often without adequate educational support. For example, Teranishi (2010b) associated AAPI and Filipino American students with attendance at 4-year institutions, while other researchers have focused on the large number of Asian Americans and Filipinos attending community colleges (Orsuwan & Cole, 2007; Wang, Chang, & Lew, 2009).

Thus, the purpose of this narrative inquiry is to explore the stories of Filipino American community college students (FACCS) from the southern United States. To date, the majority of the research on Asian Americans and Filipino Americans are situated in the West Coast (Buenavista, Jayakumar, & Misa-Escalante, 2009; Maramba & Museus, 2011; Wang et al., 2009). Studying FACCS in the South may reveal different or similar stories and struggles, providing a more comprehensive overview of FACCS experience in the United States.

From my own experience as an educator, Filipino American students are balancing the expectations from their family, American culture, and themselves. The balancing act becomes a tug of war for their identity and belief system, influencing their decision-making process when it comes to college, major, and career choices. Therefore, I am interested in discovering how students develop their Filipino American identity, the experiences they encounter in college, and the influential decision factors for higher education and career development. I want to hear student's stories and understand the formation of their Filipino American identity, and where they see themselves in the future.

For colleges that have FACCS in their enrollment population, are the needs of these students identified? Higher education leaders should take a closer look at AAPI

student's experiences on a granular level, such as FACCS, because this special population has circumstantial nuances and needs that are not being addressed. Researching more about FACCS would help raise the visibility of AAPI presence in American higher education. Educators who acknowledge issues concerning AAPI issues can become advocates for new policies that help improve the experiences of all minoritized groups.

Significance of the Study

This study on FACCS research can contribute to scholarship around Asian Americans in higher education. When researching for dissertations on Filipino American identity development in community colleges, 44 dissertations yielded results between 1995 to 2016. Only one thesis was focused on Filipino American community college students in the West Coast, and no dissertation was to be found in the South. Based on this search, studying the stories of FACCS is an emerging research topic because it places a spotlight on Filipino Americans in higher education, enlightens educators about improving their institutional policies, and informs college's student affairs practices and counseling practices around the needs of Filipino American students specifically located in the South.

Just like the MMM, studying FACCS has not been treated as a priority in higher education because the Filipino American college experience has been described by some scholars as elusive, unidentifiable, and untold (Museus & Kiang, 2009). Discussions around ethnic identity and race are sensitive because identity tends to be discussed dichotomously White or Black (Wu, 2002). In fact, in reviewing different literature for

this study, I was left to ask: Where do AAPI and Filipinos fit in higher education's discussion of racism, ethnic identity, and struggles?

The racial category of *Asian Americans and Pacific Islander* students is wide-ranging, making specific stories, such as the stories of FACCS, difficult to identify (Poon et al., 2016). Not one AAPI ethnic group has the same history, struggle, language, or culture—showing the diversity of the AAPI community. The multilayered process of unpacking problems for each ethnic group is tedious and inconvenient because the process takes time to actualize. Recognizing the issues of the AAPI community means resolving problems, investing tremendous time to research each group, gaining buy-in from leaders, and finding the right people to champion the cause through the end. The lack of research on the AAPI community is not new; researchers have recognized the limited scholarship and lack of attention paid to the AAPI community (Teranishi et al. 2013).

The findings from this study will provide administrators, educators, counselors, and community leaders with an opportunity to understand the challenges facing FACCS and help advocate for their needs at the campus and community level. Educators and administrators might gain an understanding of practices for helping Filipino American students in regards to major selection and career counseling, by learning about contemporary issues affecting Asian American students, especially Filipino American students (Museus & Kiang, 2009).

Secondly, educators and administrators might be encouraged to evaluate student services supporting cognitive development and to help students explore non-stereotypical degrees and career pathways. Lastly, information from the study may help current and

future Filipino American students navigate, persist, and plan their careers after college. Research from this study may help lay the foundations for creating a college and career mentoring program between Filipino American professionals, students and parents in the South.

Research Questions

The following research questions were created to understand the stories of FACCS: (a) How do FACCS define their Filipino American identity development?; (b) How do FACCS portray their college experiences?; and (c) How do FACCS determine their educational and career goals?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on four frameworks (See Figure 1). The first framework, Nadal's (2004) Filipino American identity development (FAID) model, delineates six statuses of Filipino ethnic identity. The second frame work is Perna's (2006) student college choice model. This theory discusses how a student makes their decision to go to college based on four contextual layers. The third framework is Lent, Brown, and Hackett's (1994) social cognitive career theory (SCCT), stating how a person's choices and goals are influenced by how an individual defines and acts upon their beliefs. Lastly, Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimension inquiry space—inwards, outwards, backwards, and forward—will help frame the interviewee's narrative stories. These frameworks will be the foundational basis for the method and interview protocol of this study. Details of each framework will be discussed in detail in chapter II.

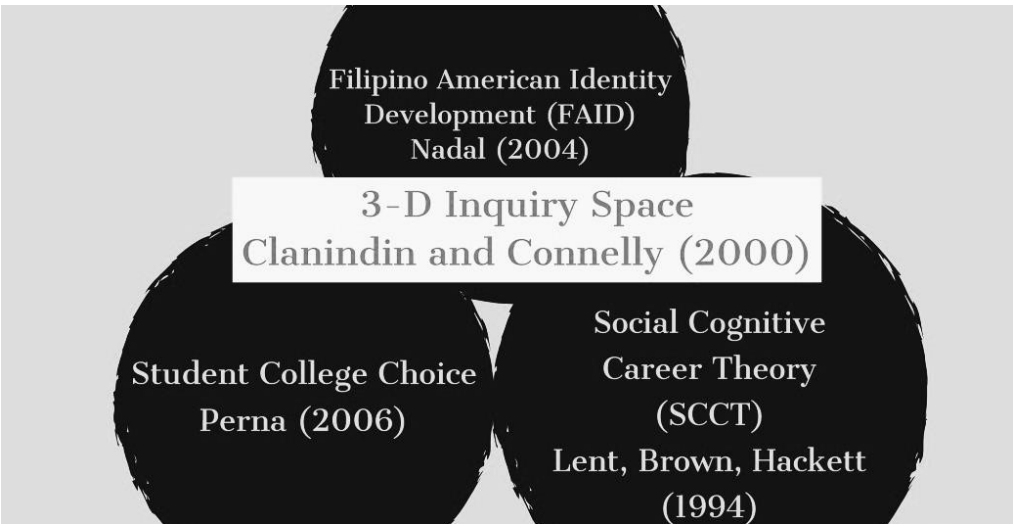

Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

Definition of Terms

Filipina/o American. The term used to describe a person who is of Filipino descent and is either born in America or has become a naturalized American citizen. Other interchangeable terms include Pilipino/a, Pilipino/a, pinoy, pinay, Fil-Am, Pilipinx. This study will utilize Filipino American as the term for describing Filipinos in America.

First-generation immigrant. A Filipino who is born in the Philippines or another country, and is one of the first people in their family to immigrate to the United States.

Second-generation immigrant. A Filipino American who is a descendent of a first- generation immigrant and is born in America.

First-generation college student. A term to define a student who is the first person to in their family to attend college in the United States.

1.5 generation college student. Filipino Americans whose parents attended college in the Philippines and is the first in their family to attend American higher education. Although 1.5 generation college students are from college educated families,

students are not necessarily familiar with navigating American higher education system. This term was coined by Buenavista (2009).

Second-generation college student. A term associated to define a student who is the second generation in their family to attend college in the United States.

Kuwento. Tagalog word for story. Jocson (2008) utilized *kuwento* as a storytelling technique to shed light on culture, ethnicity, and Filipino American history among grade school students. *Kuwento* has not been utilized in higher education research yet.

Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI). Also interchangeable with Asian Pacific American (APA) and Asian Pacific Islander (API). AAPI is used to describe a population of Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander groups from and surrounding the geographical areas of Asia and the Pacific Islands, including Hawaii. Table 1 illustrates the various groups that comprise the AAPI ethnic identities. This table was modeled upon a similar table created by Pak et al. (2014).

Table 1

Asian American and Pacific Islander Ethnic Identities

AAPI Ethnic Groups	Specific Sub-Ethnic Groups
Central Asians	Afghani, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Georgians, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Mongolian, Tajik, Turkmen, and Uzbek.
East Asians	Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Okinawan, Taiwanese, and Tibetan
Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (in the United States Jurisdictions and Territories)	Carolinian, Chamorro, Chuukese, Fijian, Guamanian, Hawaiian, Kosraean, Marshallese, Native Hawaiian, Niuean, Palauan, Pohnpeian, Samoan, Tokelauan, Tongan, and Yapese.
Southeast Asians	Bruneian, Burmese, Cambodian, Filipino, Hmong, Indonesian, Laotian, Malaysian, Mien, Papua New Guinean, Singaporean, Timorese, Thai, and Vietnamese.
South Asians	Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Indian, Maldivians, Nepali, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan
West Asians	Bahraini, Iranians, Iraqi, Israeli, Jordanians, Kuwaiti, Lebanon, Omanis, Palestinians, Qatari, Saudi Arabians, Syrian, Turkish, Emirati, and Yemeni. The term West Asian does not necessarily describe the sub-ethnic groups in this category. The term denotes the geographical location of countries west of Asia.

Note. This table was modeled upon a similar table created by Pak et al. (2014).

Delimitations

Delimitations bind the study to certain restrictions. My study will be delimited to the experiences of eight Filipino American students in southeast Texas. The students will be from a multi-campus community college within the Houston, Texas area, providing

geographical boundaries on the number of eligible Filipino students. The criterion age range is between 18 to 30 years old, because community colleges have a spectrum of traditional and nontraditional aged students.

In addition, a diverse group of Filipino American students with individual educational histories will exhibit a variety of stories and experiences who may have: (a) just started community college, (b) been in and out of community college for several years, (c) just graduated from community college, (d) transferred from community college to the university, and (e) graduated from either a community college and a university, and have started working.

The common thread among all participants will be the experience of attending a community college. Each student participant must have attended a community college in Texas over the course of their educational career. I am interested in finding out how community college experiences have influenced their ethnic identities and career pathways.

Limitations

Inherent limitations are a part of any study. Because I was a student club advisor for an Asian student organization, I had access to Filipino American students. I was able to utilize my network to recruit participants. This may have been a limitation because potential participants may be hesitant to be honest when telling their stories. Students may be selective when sharing information because they may divulge certain stories they think I want to hear, because of my authoritative role as college administrator and club advisor. On the contrary, students might be more comfortable in conversing with me

because I was their club advisor, but may leave out certain details because they may have already assumed I knew specific information about them.

Additionally, my connections to the student makes me more vulnerable to research bias, "resulting from selective observation and selective recording of information….allowing one's personal views and perspectives to affect how data are interpreted and how the research is conducted" (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 298). I am cognizant of research bias because of my identity as a Filipina American in higher education. Throughout the dissertation writing process, I wrote down my observations in my reflexive journal to maintain my objectivity and awareness of my role in the research.

Lastly, "reactivity" is another problem I anticipated as a threat to the credibility of the study. Maxwell (2012) defines reactivity as "the influence of the researcher on the setting or individuals studied," meaning my presence during interviews will influence the participant's opinions (p. 124). Maxwell (2012) claims reactivity is inevitable and "eliminating the actual influence in the research is impossible" (p.124).

Assumptions

Several assumptions are established in order to lay a basic foundation of my research. I assumed participants: (a) would not leave the study, (b) would be forthright and honest in sharing their stories and experiences, (c) would be genuinely interested in being part of the study and did not have an ulterior motive to obtaining any academic or personal gain, and (d) would be able to recount their stories surrounding their Filipino American identity, education, and career goals.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I provided an overview of the study. Chapter II focuses on a review of literature on Filipino American's: (a) historical overview, (b) cultural and ethnic identity, and (c) education and career. Chapter III details the method of the research design, role of the research, instrumentation, and selection of participants, data collection, and analysis. Chapter IV reveals the experiences of the participants in a full-length *kuwento*. Chapter V concludes the study, which includes a summary of discoveries, suggested practices, and ideas for future research.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Ang hindi lumingon sa pinanggalingan ay hindi makarating sa paroroonan.

Any person who does not look back to where they came from will not be able to reach their destination.

– Dr. Jose P. Rizal, Filipino national hero

The purpose of the literature review is to examine three key areas related to Filipino American community college students (FACCS): (a) historical overview, (b) cultural and ethnic identity, and (c) education and career. Each section comprises several subsections. The history of Filipinos includes: the pre-colonial era, Spanish colonization, American colonization, Filipinos in America, Filipino American experience post-1965 Immigration Act and Filipino Americans in the South. The section on cultural and ethnic identity focuses on language, values, and ethnic identity development. Under education and career, literature related to Filipinos in higher education, the Filipino college student population, college preparation, college choice, college attendance, reasons for attending college, Model Minority Myth (MMM), career choice, campus climate, campus resources, experiences in the classroom, family, parents, and gender roles will be discussed. Lastly, the four conceptual frameworks applied in this study will be examined in more detail, including: Nadal's (2004) Filipino American identity development Model, Perna's (2006) student college choice model, Lent et al. (1994) social cognitive career theory (SCCT), and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimension inquiry space.

Historical Overview

Dr. Jose P. Rizal was an activist during Spanish colonization in the Philippines and he was executed for writing and speaking up against the Spanish government. Even after hundreds of years, Dr. Rizal's proverb continues to resonate in the hearts of Filipinos, calling to action for inner reflection and awareness of one's own ethnic roots. Understanding cultural history can help develop pride, sense of belonging, and identity as a Filipino (David, 2013).

Hendry (2011) defines history as a "relationship between the past and the present" (p. 3). Thus, cultural history is a relationship between one's past and present, which can shape the future of a person's identity. Learning about one's identity, history, and heritage starts in the home, becoming the first form of schooling and learning (Hendry, 2011). Stories from families are exchanged by way of oral history, pictures, videos, and family tree documents from elders. Learning about family history is part of the domestic realm and is not a devoted topic educational curriculum for students. Understanding personal history supports the development of Filipino identity, but education on Filipino history is not part of an institution's curriculum. Perhaps American history has a dysfunctional relationship between the past and present for Filipinos because dominant narratives in institutional curriculum supersede Filipino American history. American social studies and history classes focus on snippets of Philippines history and Filipino American experiences, creating a disconnected relationship between the past and present for FACCS.

Hendry (2011) posits the importance of "recapturing spaces that have been marginalized in educational history because they do not fit neatly in the grand narrative

of curriculum history as progress and progression from 'unenlightened' to 'enlightened'" (p.134). The history learned at home and the history taught at school are two separate spaces that do not intersect. American teachers do not dive into the topic of Filipino American history or ethnic studies in the formal classroom, unless teachers trained on multicultural practices and curriculum that address the history of AAPI and Filipino students. Filipino history does not fit into the "grand narrative" of American social studies. Yet Filipino American curriculum resources are available for all grade levels and are already being taught in the West Coast, but not widely utilized on a national platform in the P-16 setting (Halagao, 2004b; Halagao, Tintiangco-Cubales, & Cordova, 2009; Tintiangco-Cubales 2007, 2009, 2013). Consequently, a student may not understand the intersection and connection of family history as part of curriculum history. This close examination of Filipino history might elucidate the present circumstances of the Filipino American community. Therefore providing a historical overview is essential to the context of Filipino American community college students.

Pre-colonial era before 1500s. The Philippines has an indigenous history and the people were called the *Tao* (David, 2013). Because of the *Tao's* ingenuity and abundance of natural resources from the land and sea, they were able to self-sustain themselves amongst different indigenous tribes. The *Tao* had several systems in place before Europeans came to the islands. These included: commerce between tribes and neighboring countries, language, tribal leadership governance, gender equality, literature and folklore, arts, music, dance, and societal hierarchy (David, 2013). The *Tao* were interdependent and self-sustaining groups of people. The *Tao* had shamanistic and animistic faith, believing in the healing power of indigenous faith healers (Root, 1997).

Different regions had different types of faith healers, such as *babylan* from Visayans, *catalonan* from Central Luzonones, and *baglan* from northern Luzonones (Root, 1997).

Spanish colonization between late 1500s to 1889. In the late 1500's, Spaniards on galleons traversed to the Philippine islands on four expeditions as part of economic trade with Asian countries. Much of the trade was motivated by *Hidalguismo,* which meant gaining prominence and reputation in order to increase Spain's political power (Rimonte, p. 42, 1997). Spaniards needed a safe passage to China and Japan because they wanted more spices to expand international trade. The Philippines became an ideal location to settle because the Spaniards could plunder the rich natural resources. Spaniards felt entitled to superiority because they believed in their noble ancestry, allowing them to exercise their power by colonizing many parts of the world. The *Tao* were seen as primitive savages who were uneducated, wild, and "uncultivated." The Spaniards were glorified heroes who were destined to tame the evil *Tao*.

Spanish colonization was not immediately embraced by the *Tao.* The *Tao* fought for 50 years to defend their people, livelihood, and cultural beliefs (David, 2013). A famous tribal chief, Lapu-lapu, killed the Portuguese explorer for Spain, Ferdinand Magellan, stopping him from circumnavigating the world. The death of Magellan did not stop Spain from continued attacks. Unfortunately, the constant barrage of advanced weaponry combined with strong military attacks by the Spaniards ultimately defeated the *Tao*.

The *Tao* had to submit to Spanish oppression and were coerced to change their culture. The *Tao's* indigenous culture deteriorated significantly when the Spanish instituted systemic changes over the next 300 years, transforming the future of the

country to colonialism. The *Tao's* history and culture dissipated as they were forced to adopt and assimilate to the Spanish culture out of survival (Rimonte, 1997). The *Tao's* "cultural memories" were erased and forcibly replaced with the new Spanish culture, fully immersing Filipinos in colonialism (Rimonte, 1997). No longer able to practice their *Tao* roots, the Filipino people developed colonial mentality. Colonial mentality is an oppressive mental state, in which the colonized people accept, promote, and behave in the manner of the colonizer's culture, forsaking their original beliefs (David, 201; Rimonte, 1997). Filipinos started to believe that being a colonized people was their fault for being insubordinate human beings towards the Spanish. Even after submitting to Spanish culture, Filipinos were never treated as equal to the Spaniards.

The product of colonialism was seen in many forms, including: (a) naming the country *Las Islas Filipinas,* or The Philippine Islands, after the Spanish King Philip II; (b) speaking Spanish as the official language; (c) renaming the *Tao* as "Filipino"; and (d) instituting Catholic conversion as the main religion to maintain the oppression of the *Tao.* For several years, Spanish culture, beliefs, and values reigned, eradicating any ounce of indigenous culture. The *Tao* were known as "safe victims," because they did not pose a threat to the Spanish, but rather, were submissive to the Spanish's superiority and insubordination (Rimonte, 1997, p. 44).

American colonization. The Treaty of Paris of 1898 marked the end of the 300 year Spanish regime and America purchased Cuba, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines for 20 million dollars. The Americans saw the Philippines as a child who was uncivilized and incapable of defending and caring for itself (David, 2013; Lee & Yung,

2010). On the contrary, the Philippines had stabilized under the Spanish rule and was highly developed as a self-governing country.

The Filipinos contested the colonization of the new conqueror, the United States of America. With the passing of the torch from one oppressor to the next, the Philippines lost the war and became an American colony. Between 1899 to 1965, the Philippines underwent another sea of change in culture and systems, as evident in: (a) the establishment of American public education for all Filipinos, (b) the expectation of English as the main language, and (c) an immigration influx to the United States due to the imposition of immigration laws.

Mass public education was promulgated by American teachers, known as Thomasites. Filipinos were forced to stop learning Spanish and forced to learn English and Western culture in school. On August 26, 1903, the *Pensionados* Act allowed Filipinos to study in the United States under the pensions or financial assistance of the Philippines and American government (Teodoro, 1999). The majority of *pensionados* were sons and daughters of the upper-class Filipinos and they would complete their college studies in American universities, then return back home to the Philippines. Subsequent to living and studying in America, the *pensionados* returned to the Philippines to lead the country's government, politics, education, and businesses (Bascara, 2014; David, 2013; Pak et al., 2014). A growing, socio-economic divide between rich businessmen and poor Filipino farmers started to become evident (Pido, 1997). The *pensionados* helped the Thomasites perpetuate American culture by promoting the American lifestyle and spreading propaganda over Filipino culture.

Even though Filipinos were expected to follow American rules and were considered United States citizens, Filipinos were treated as foreigners, rather than native citizens when they immigrated to the United States. Americans exerted their dominance over the Filipinos by flaunting the Philippines as a newly acquired territory. Most notably, over 1,000 Filipinos were recruited and coerced into working and performing at the 1904 St. Louis World Trade Fair, where Filipinos were treated as live stock (David, 2013).

The 1904 St. Louis World Trade Fair was a major entertainment event in the history of the United States. The fair had large sections dedicated to several countries, cultures, customs, and exhibitions of real people. The Filipinos were the main attraction of the fair, and they lived inside the grounds in the section call The Philippine Reservation. The trade fair resembled a zoo, but instead of caged animals, the fair displayed Filipinos in primitive conditions who were forced to live in straw huts, wear indigenous outfits as costumes, perform sacred rites, and eat dogs as part of the fair's main attraction.

Although Americans sought to perpetuate the image of the lowly, uneducated, and savage-like Filipinos, the American government had also imposed public education in the Philippines through the Thomasites (David 2013; Pido, 1997). The ironic juxtaposition of creating the *pensionado* program with the treatment of Filipinos as entertainment slaves in the St. Louis World Trade Fair presents a contradictory and confusing image of Filipinos in America. Similar to Spanish colonization, American culture became the superior authority for Filipinos. Another phase of colonial mentality was embedded upon the Filipinos, during and after American colonization.

Filipinos viewed the American way of life as a positive change in history, causing the people to further disconnect from their *Tao* origins. The younger Filipino generation wanted to immigrate and leave the provincial farm life to seek new opportunities (Pido, 1997). Painting America as the land of opportunities, known as the Golden Legend, influenced Filipinos to immigrate to the United States not only for education, but also for labor and settlement opportunities (David, 2013).

Filipinos in America. The first Filipinos to arrive in America occurred years before the 1900s, and even earlier than the first Pilgrims who arrived on the Mayflower (Pido, 1997). In 1587, four Filipinos known as *Indios Luzones* (indigenous people from the Luzon region in the Philippines), landed in Morro Bay, California by way of a Spanish galleon from Manila. Two Filipinos had been killed by Indians and the other two Filipinos sailed back to Manila.

In 1765, the first Filipino male settlement, known as the Manila Men, was established in a small community in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana. The Manila Men were known for fishing and shrimping, creating the first technique of drying shrimp. After a major hurricane, the settlement was destroyed and the area was never rebuilt again (Bankston, 2006; Cordova, 1983; Ocampo, Danico, & Association for Asian American Studies, 2014; Pido, 1997).

The late 1800's and early 1900's marked a time of immigration flow, restriction, and labor movement for all Asians. As the *pensionados* immigrated to America for education, a large number of Filipinos found opportunity working in the American labor industry, working as unskilled laborers. Some were recruited to Alaska to work in the salmon canneries, and were known as the *Alaskeros*. Over 28,000 Filipinos, known as

sakadas, were recruited to go to Hawaii and work as sugar plantation farmers (Fong, 2002). The high racial tension and discrimination against Asian labor workers by White Americans led to the government's purposeful reduction of Chinese and Japanese immigration. Significant anti-Asian laws were passed, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Gentlemen's Agreement of 1908, 1913 Alien Land Law, and Immigration Act in 1917 and 1924. The laws restricted all Asians to property rights or entry into America (Fong, 2002; Pido, 1997). The reduction of Chinese and Japanese over the span of 40 years left a wide shortage of farming and service laborers in the United States.

Under the American government, Filipinos were considered "United States nationals" who pledged their loyalty to their colonizer. Filipinos were the only Asians excluded from the anti-Asian laws and they did not need formal immigration documents to travel into or out of the country. Active labor recruitment for the United States was prevalent in the Philippines, encouraging Filipinos to go to America for better economic opportunities. Thousands of Filipinos immigrated to different parts of America—Hawaii, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Alaska—to replace the gaping labor industry.

In the 1920's, the population of Filipinos in the West Coast increased. The majority of the demographics were young, single, Filipino men who worked on the farm, were household help, in manufacturing, or in the railroad industry (Fong, 2002). There were few Filipina women who immigrated. In the 1940's, there were "less than 7 percent" Filipina women in America, creating a gender ratio divide between Filipino men and Filipina women (Lee & Yung, 2010). The men would work hard during the day, and relax on the weekends by dressing up and socializing at the local taxi dance halls. The

men would pay ten cents a dance with hired dancers, who were typically European White women, some Mexican women, and a few Filipinas (Pandika, 2014).

With tension surrounding Filipinos dominating labor work from Americans, the interracial mixing of Filipinos and White women in the taxi dance halls offended White men. Filipinos were challenging white supremacy and created fear among white Americans who saw Filipinos as a growing problem for the country (Lee & Yung, 2010). Many acts of racism, discrimination, and violence transpired due to this racial tension. Violent raids were widespread in the country, hunting down Filipino migrant farmers. The infamous 1930's Watsonville, California riots ignited 400 vigilante White men to punish and kill Filipino farmers because of a published picture of a "Filipino man and white girl [who were] embracing" in a taxi dance hall (David, 2013; Lee & Yung, 2010).

Hotels and businesses in California during the 1920's and 1930's had signs saying, "Positively no Filipinos allowed (Hotel stairway sign: Positively No Filipinos Allowed, (n.d.)). Contrary to the Thomasite's persuasion and the overall propaganda of America being the "land of milk and honey," the true experience of Filipinos living in America was the clear opposite of the Golden Legend. Filipinos were treated as second-class citizens who were seen as a threat to the country's economy and society.

Because Filipinos were perceived as being a problem and burden to the country's socio-economic stability, the rise of nationwide racism and discrimination against Filipinos culminated to political action. Former President Theodore Roosevelt enacted the Tydings–McDuffie Act on March 24, 1934 turning the Philippines into a commonwealth territory, ensuring the country a road to independency within 10 years. The act also meant that Filipinos were no longer considered "United States nationals,"

and were reclassified as aliens who did not have the benefits of being protected under the United States.

Benefits that were seized included opportunities for citizenship, property ownership, and government-sponsored financial assistance (Lee & Yung, 2010). The new alien status required Filipinos to abide by early immigration laws in 1919 and 1924, deportation laws, interrogation rounds, and a quota of 50 Filipinos entering into the United States per year. Similarly to the Chinese and Japanese, labor by Filipinos were no longer necessary because Americans found another minority group, Mexicans, to fill in the labor force (Tapia, 2006). The Tydings-McDuffie Act was a critical turning point in Filipino American history because the purpose of the law was to reduce the Filipino population in the United States and reduce the racial tensions for Americans. Giving the Philippine's independency was a deceptive cover up. The act caused a lot of confusion for Filipino American citizens and Filipino immigrants who were enroute to America during the enactment of the law.

After the Tydings-McDuffie Act, the Angel Island Immigration Station in San Francisco, California, became a detention center for deporting immigrants, like Filipinos. Filipinos who arrived at Angel Island during the enactment were suddenly told that they were no longer United States nationalist. To further speed the removal of Filipinos, the Filipino Repatriation Act in 1935 was passed to encourage Filipinos living in America to go back to the Philippines voluntarily at no cost. Some Filipinos took the seemingly-benevolent offer, but many other Filipinos were skeptical because there was a hidden caveat that was not advertised—they could never return back to America if they volunteered to leave. Filipinos were detained on Angel Island for weeks and months,

bearing unsanitary conditions. The campaign was a failure, because out of 108,260 Filipinos in America at that time, only 2,190 Filipinos left under the Repatriation Act (Lee & Young, 2010).

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the Japanese also bombed the Clark and Iba Airbase in the Philippines. The United States declared war with Japan, and World War II began. The United States once again needed the help of Filipinos who were living in the Philippines and America, to join the military and fight against Japan. Filipinos immediately drafted into the war for a promise of automatic naturalized citizenship and military benefits, such as salary, and disability support.

The Japanese invaded and occupied the Philippines, killing innocent people, raping women, and destroying the country. Most notably, the United States lost to the Battle of Bataan, where thousands of Filipino and American soldiers surrendered to the Japanese. The soldiers became prisoners of war and they endured the infamous Bataan Death March. Soldiers walked excruciating miles of extremely hot conditions, abuse, starvation, disease, and execution because of the Japanese. Over 70 years had passed, and it was not until October 2017 that the Congressional Gold Medal for World War II Filipino American Veterans was enacted, and medals were presented to the living veterans and next of kin.

American soldiers overseas during the war would marry women in different countries, such as Filipina women in the Philippines. Because many young Filipino men were off to war, there was a surplus of single Filipinas. When American soldiers would marry the Filipinas, the women and their children were left behind in the Philippines. Despite the strict immigration laws against Filipinos and anti-miscegenation laws for

people of color, the 1945 War Brides Act granted citizenship and immigration of Filipina wives and children to the United States. The growing presence of Filipina war bride was critical to the development and rapid growth of Filipino American communities in the United States.

Meanwhile, the perception of the problematic Filipino was put aside, because Filipinos were eager to fight and show loyalty to America and the Philippines. Although thousands of Filipinos joined the war and died in battle, President Roosevelt passed the Recession Act of 1946, which rescinded any military benefits or citizenship to Filipinos serving in the war (Ocampo et al., 2014). Instead of providing each living veteran their benefits, the United States paid the Philippines government 2 million dollars of foreign aid. Perhaps out of guilt, the Luce-Cellar Act of 1946, allowed Filipinos and Indians to become naturalized citizens. The act also increased the quota of Filipino and Indian immigrants from 50 people to 100 people per year.

Filipino American experience post 1965. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was a turning point for Filipino American immigration. The act allowed an increased immigration quota for each country in the eastern hemisphere to 20,000 people per country (Fong, 2002). Although the main goal of the act was to reunify families, the immigration reform bolstered the American economy and opened the doors to Filipino professionals who were skilled and unskilled workers.

The *pensionados* of the early 1900's were of selected elite to travel to America, but after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, a huge number of Filipino immigrants started arriving in America. The majority of post 1965 Filipino immigrants were no longer uneducated male farmers of the 1920's, but an influx of educated, female,

professionals (Lott, 1997). There were many "over-educated" Filipino professionals and the United States needed them to fill low wage jobs and highly skilled professions, such as nursing (Pido, 1997).

Pido (1997) highlighted two types of Filipino immigrants. The Filipino "sojourner" would come to America to make money and then send money back to their family, or obtain an education and then return back to the Philippines (Pido, 1997, p. 32). Filipino sojourners were not concerned with the socio-political climate or human rights, but were most concerned with returning back to the motherland.

The other type of Filipino was a "settler" and these Filipinos had the intention to stay and settle in America (Pido, 1997, p. 34). Many arrived with different types of visa, but Pido (1997) also acknowledged the undocumented immigrant, calling them "TNT" *tago ng tago*, meaning playing hide-and-seek (p. 34). The Filipino settlers' goal was to blend into the society and embrace the American culture, even if blending in meant accepting hierarchical stratifications and oppressive systems, such as discrimination against other minorities. Pido (1997) calls the "Americanization" the act of blending and invisibility of Filipino immigrants.

Paik, Choe, and Witsenstein (2016) studied the history and experience of immigration for Filipinos in the United States. The purpose of their study was to investigate social and political circumstances that influenced the outcome of education for Filipino Americans. The researchers gathered historical information on Filipino Americans between pre and post-1965. Paik et al. (2016) based the framework on the Modes of Incorporation, which included: government policy, societal reception, co-ethnic communities, other barriers and opportunities. Filipinos faced hostile experiences due to

government policies and were not welcomed in the United States before the Immigration Act of 1965. After the enactment of the Immigration Act of 1965, Filipinos were neutrally received and were able to live and work across America because Filipinos were able to speak English and had some form of educational or professional skills.

Lastly, Paik et al. (2016) said the majority of the Filipino Americans population lived on the West Coast, specifically California. Over 100,000 Filipino Americans lived in other states such as, Hawaii, Illinois, Texas, Washington, New Jersey, New York, Nevada, and Florida. Filipinos are the third largest Asian American group in the United States, with 3.9 million people (Pew Research Center, 2017).

Filipino Americans in the South. Documentation on the existence of Filipinos in the South is beginning to grow, but more research is needed for critical mass awareness (Brady, 2004; Cherry, 2014; Poisot & Maravilla, 2017; Tang, 2007; Texans One and All: The Filipino Texan, 2018). Although the written history of Filipinos in the South for mass consumption is growing, Filipinos have been in the South for over a century. The first documented Filipino in Texas, Francisco Flores, immigrated on a merchant ship from the Philippines in 1822 during the Spanish-Manila Galleon trade (Tang, 2007). After the success of the 1904 St. Louis World Trade Fair, other city's also exploited Filipino indigenous culture in their premiere exhibitions. In both Dallas'1905 State Fair of Texas and Houston's 1908 No-Tsu-Oh Carnival (Houston spelled backwards), the exhibitions touted Igorrote Village of headhunting, dog-eating Filipinos who were dressed in traditional outfits and living in straw huts (Igorrote Village, 2010; Wiley, 1985). The exhibit was supposed to replicate the Igorot's lifestyle back in the

Philippines, perpetuating Filipinos as uncivilized natives before being colonized by America (See Figure 2).

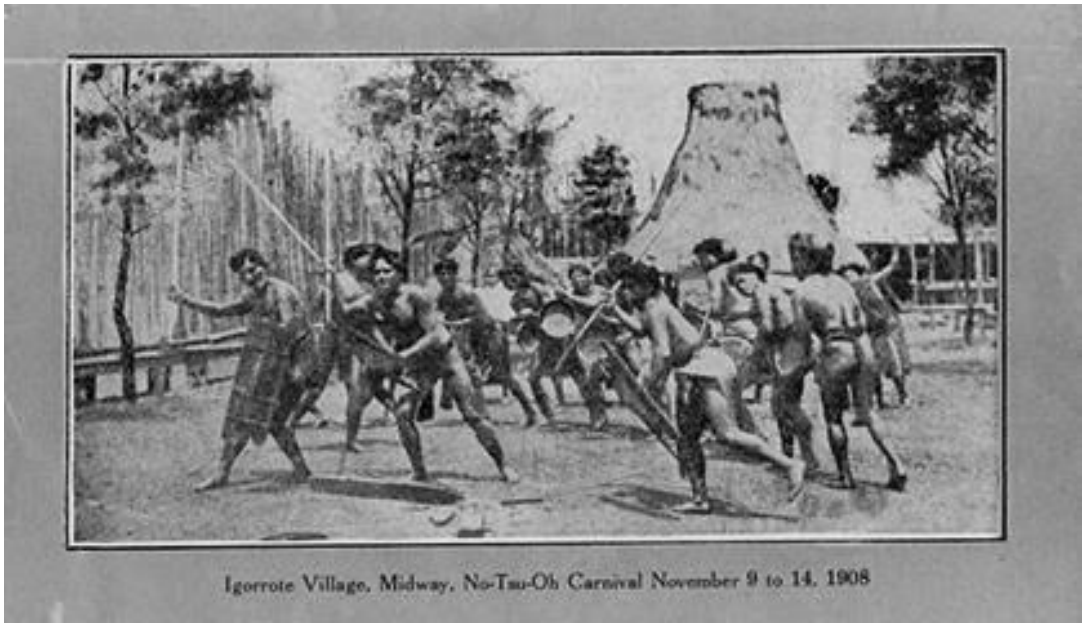

Figure 2. Igorrote Village, Midway, No-Tsu-Oh Carnival November 9 to 14, 1908.

In the opposite spectrum of the wild, savaged Filipino, the first Asian American to graduate from Rice University was the Filipino American, Rudolfo Hulen Fernandez. He was part of the first class during the inception of the university in 1912 and he graduated in 1917. Interestingly, Fernandez' adopted white American father, General John Alexander Hulen, was a part of the No-Tsu-Oh Carnival planning committee of 1908 (City Federation of Women's Clubs, H.,1908). Perhaps General Hulen's connection to fighting in Spanish-American war, having an adopted Filipino son, and the era's popularity of state fairs featuring America's prized territory—led to the exploitation of the Igorrote Village exhibit in Houston (City Federation of Women's Clubs, H.,1908). The connections seem all too timely.

Not much activity around Filipinos in Texas, and specifically Houston, were documented after this time period. After the Immigration Act of 1965, the immigration of

Filipino professionals to Houston skyrocketed. Filipino professionals, such as doctors, nurses, accountants, and engineers, immigrated to the South looking for job opportunities, settlement, and warm weather. In Houston, the presence of one of the world's largest medical center drove the rise of Filipina nurses and other medical workers to settle in Greater Houston. In addition, the prominent oil and gas industry became an attractive choice for Filipino engineers and accountants to work for these booming industries (Poisot & Maravilla, 2017).

In present day, the Houston Filipino American community is large and strong. There are over 50 Filipino organizations for both younger and older Filipino generations, with organizations starting in the early 1960's and into the following years (Poisot & Maravilla, 2017). For the older Filipino generation, the majority of organizations are categorized based on: (a) specific regions in the Philippines, like the Pangasinan Women's Club or the Ikalinga of the Southern United States, Inc.; (b) religious or social justice organizations, such as Couples for Christ (CFC) or *Gawad Kalinga* (give care); and (c) economic and workforce related, like the Philippine-American Chamber of Commerce of Texas or the Philippine Nurses Association of Metropolitan Houston (PNAHM). Many of these organizations focus is on fellowship, fundraising, empowerment, and cultural awareness. Poisot and Maravilla (2017) provide a chronological pictorial of Filipino Americans settling, living, celebrating, and thriving in Houston. The manifestation of the first Filipino history book in the city is a victory in itself.

There is a newer generation of Filipino American organizations, not based on a specific region or industry. In more recent years, newer organizations are connecting the

younger generation of Filipino Americans. Filipino Young Professional of Houston (FYP) aims to connect Filipino Americans and non-Filipino American professionals and to create spaces for networking and cultural awareness. The organization hosts social networking events, organizes community services, has a Dragon Boat team, and has a cultural dance troupe. They have created an outstanding membership in the last ten years, engaging the whole Houston community. Their most prominent contribution to the community is the annual Filipino Street Festival in the city, donning over 15,000.

Filipino American National Historical Society Region 7 (FANHS) is another powerful force in the community that has a mission of preserving and sharing the history of Filipino Americans. Despite being under five years in existence, the organization has been able to generate significant social and political progress in the community. Accomplishments include: (a) lobbying and passing the Congressional Gold Medal for Filipino World War II veterans through Filipino Veterans Recognition and Education Program (FilVetRep); (b) hosting Filipino American History month in Houston through events such as Day and Night of Storytelling; (c) presenting at national Filipino conferences; (d) archiving Filipino American history with Rice University's Houston Asian American Archives for Chao Center for Asian Studies and Woodson Research Center; (e) and creating the book *Filipinos in Houston*.

Pilipino American Unity for Progress, Inc. known as UNIPRO Houston, is the newest ethnocentric organization. The non-profit is operated by a young generation of Filipino American college graduates, who are also active in FANHS. The leaders are emboldened to raise awareness about Filipino American identity and issues among college students. Some of their activities include a mentorship program, voter registration

drives, book club, and *Usapan* dialogue workshops (talking). One of their main goals is to help advance the Filipino American college student leaders towards activism and social political awareness. Not only do the Filipino organizations collaborate with each other, FANHS and UNIPRO gain support from pan-ethnic Asian American organizations, such as Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) for funding.

The resurgence of new and old Filipino American engagement has influenced the reopening of the Philippine Consulate after being defunct for 25 years in the South. For many years, Filipinos from the South had to travel to the West coast and East coast to deal with passport issues. The growing population of Filipinos Texas's largest city is a prime indicator for the need to continue studying, researching, and documenting Filipino American visibility.

Cultural and Ethnic Identity

Pe Pua and Protacio-Marcelino (2000) studied *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino psychology) out of the need to understand the experiences, thought processes, and behaviors of Filipinos. *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* was developed by the Filipino psychologist, Virgilio G. Enriquez in the 1970's. At that time, Filipino psychology was defined by non-Filipino theorists and was focused on a Westernized perspective. The biased interpretations distorted the Filipino identity and culture. *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* sought to reclaim and redefine the meaning of being Filipino.

Pe Pua and Protacio-Marcelino (2000) summarized key values that are detrimental to understanding the Filipino psychology. The core Filipino value, *kapwa*, means fellow human being. The emphasis of *kapwa* is rooted in community solidarity, treating other people as a human beings and not as *ibang tao*, meaning "the other

person”. Other important values are described in Table 2 below and are part of the kuwento in chapter IV.

Table 2

Filipino Values

Types of Values	Filipino Values and Translations
Colonial/accommodative surface values	Hiya "propriety/dignity" Utang na loob "gratitude/solidarity" Pakikisama "companionship/esteem"
Confrontive surface values	Bahala na "determination" Sama/lakas ng loob "resentment/guts" Pakikibaka "resistance"
Interpersonal value (Core Value)	Kapwa "shared identity" Ibang Tao “outsider” or “not one of us” Hindi ibang tao “one of us”
Socio-personal value	Pakikiramdam "shared inner perception"
Societal values	Karangalan "dignity" Katarungan "justice" Kalayaan "freedom"

Note. Enriquez' top values for Pilipino psychology. Pat Lindsay C. Catalla created table.

Language. The use of “Pilipino” versus “Filipino” to describe the national language of the Philippines has been a point of contention, and a reflection of cultural identity. The use of 'p' symbolized neocolonialism and division because 'p' equated to Tagalog language, the most dominant Philippine dialect among the indigenous languages (Tupas, 2015). Tagalog was chosen over the other major languages, such as Bisaya and Cebuano, because the Philippine government in the 1930’s had a majority of Tagalog speaking politicians from Manila and the language was most prevalent. The politicians

decided Tagalog was going to be the national language of the Philippines. Several years later, the official language of the Philippines would change as a reflection of political and cultural influence. Tagalog language was renamed Pilipino in 1959. In 1973, the government abolished Pilipino, and designated Filipino as the official language to represent all indigenous languages (Tupas, 2015). In 1974, Philippine education instituted the verbal and written English language for all core subjects and Pilipino in some selected classes. Finally in 1987, the language was changed back to being Filipino as a Tagalog-based Pilipino language.

The letter's "p" and "f" are part of nation-building and nation-identity. Furthermore, Tupas (2015) says determining the use of "p" and "f" should not be the ultimate characteristic of building the identity and culture of a country. Tupas (2015) elicits the need for embracing multiplicity and inclusivity of all other languages and regional cultures in the Philippines. In contrast to Tupas (2015), a participant in Wong's (2013) qualitative study identified strongly to being Pinay American rather than identifying as Filipino. To the participant, the term Filipino connected to the legacy of colonialism in Philippines history. The participant identified herself through the emphasis of her gender as being a Filipina when using the word "*pinay*" to describe herself.

Race and Ethnic Identity Development. Johnston-Guerrero and Pizzolato (2016) completed a study on ethnoracialism and problematized the construct of race and ethnicity among Asian American college students. The researchers discovered that students associated ethnicity with their cultural background and upbringing, such as being Filipino. Race was used as an identity marker without any deeper connections, such as being grouped as Asian. Some of the study's participants believed there were no

differences between race and ethnicity, and would use the term synonymously. Other participants recognized that race and ethnicity are called upon at different times, such as filling out forms that ask for a person's race, but feels more salient to their ethnicity. Other participants out rightly did not want to identify by race due to the historical implications associated with racism, slavery, and other negative perceptions. Johnston-Guerrero and Pizzolato (2016) posit that Asian American college students do not identity with being labelled as Asian as much as they do with their ethnic background, such as being Filipino. Lastly, the researchers suggest that educators need re-examine the way race and ethnicity are taught and presented in higher education.

Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, and Renn (2010) have defined ethnic identity as the characteristics of a group of people. It includes language, custom, religion, traditions, beliefs, ancestry, and nationality. The ethnic identity of Filipinos is contingent upon the temporal circumstances. In the 1500s through the 1800s, Filipino ethnic identity was heavily influenced by Spanish language, customs, and religion, with Catholicism being the most evident artifact left behind by the Spaniards (Rimonte, 1997).

From 1900's to current day, American culture and values have promulgated in Filipino culture through public education, language, and politics. Integrating Filipino values and American values often clashed and contradicted each other. Revilla (1997) discussed how historical past, present, and future implications influenced shaping of Filipino American identity. The researcher claimed Filipino American identity is in crisis because Filipino Americans are still defining who they are; meantime, others are shaping, controlling, and defining Filipino identity instead. Revilla (1997) described how being Filipino American was a source of pain, shame, and embarrassment. Feeling like a whole

person is difficult to accomplish when a Filipino's ethnic identity is not reconciled. To combat the inferiority complex, Revilla (1997) discussed two significant Filipino scholars, Virgilio Enriquez's *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino psychology) and Leny Strobel's indigenization (returning back to indigenous roots).

Through the lens of Enriquez and Strobel, Revilla (1997) asserts the importance of understanding one's own history and background, to create the present identity of a Filipino American. Learning traditions, languages, culture, and performing these ethnic markers are a way to understand and transmit culture into being. The Filipino identity crisis comes from the lack of self-respect and lack of self-love, then ultimately, a lack of pride to be Filipino. Other identity intersections Revilla (1997) considers important are: sexual orientation; learning or not learning a Filipino language, and whether this make you more or less Filipino; phenotype of looking Filipino, and how mixed-heritage influences Filipino identity.

Revilla (1997) advocated a diverse concept of being Filipino, but he advocates that the definition of identity be defined by Filipinos rather than other people. Revilla (1997) exclaimed the importance for Filipinos to speak up and be heard, most especially when the media has the ability to define and vilify Filipino Americans. Learning about history and culture would help develop a love and pride for being Filipino. Revilla (1997) discussed learning about one's Filipino culture starts with educating oneself through formal education, in which school curriculum includes learning about personal history and ethnic background.

Similarly, Tuason, Taylor, Harris, and Martin (2007) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the ethnic identity and experiences of Philippine born-Filipino

Americans and American-born Filipinos in a higher education setting. The researchers conducted 45 to 90 minute face-to-face interviews and phone interviews with 30 participants from a university in the southeastern area. The majority of the participants were college aged students, and the others were older Filipino American adults. Tuason et al. (2007) found Filipino Americans who were born in the United States felt American lifestyle was rapid, technology driven, and abundant in resources. On the contrary, Philippine born-Filipino Americans experienced language barriers, issues with cultural environment, and a different way of living. Filipino-based values, such as being close to family, being hospitable, polite, and respectful, were valued by Filipino immigrants and Filipino Americans. American-based values, such as being prompt, productive, and transparent in emotions were also valued as well.

Four ethnic identity themes for Filipino Americans emerged from Tuason et al.'s (2007) study: (a) the concept of being Filipino no matter where one is born or raised; (b) seeing oneself as Filipino in identity, and being American by happenstance due to immigration or born into the culture; (c) Filipino Americans did not have an identity crisis, contrasting Revilla's (1997) claims, and (d) Filipino Americans straddled and negotiated between two cultures, Filipino and American.

Del Prado and Church (2010) conducted a mixed-method study to explore the Enculturation Scale for Filipino Americans (EFSA) and showcased the validity of the scale in two sample populations. In the first sample, a total of 281 Filipino Americans and 82 non-Filipino Americans participated, 172 Filipinas, 108 Filipinos, and 1 unreported participant. The average age was 39 years old. Many of the participants were from California, Washington, New York, and Texas. The majority (82%) had a bachelor's

degree, and 60 people were second-generation Filipino American. The second sample had a total of 269 Filipino Americans, 158 women and 111 men. The average age was 37 years old, with the majority (54.3%) being first-generation Filipino American. Although there were participants from Texas, Hawaii, Washington, Nevada, Connecticut, Arizona, Colorado, and Oregon, most of the participants (85.5%) came from California.

Del Prado and Church (2010) utilized six different enculturation surveys to obtain data on Filipino values and identity behaviors. Enculturation is the process of maintaining one's ethnic or indigenous identity and cultural values. Participants who were more enculturated to Filipino culture were more likely to observe Asian values and least likely to observe American culture. Participants who practiced traditional Filipino values experienced acculturative stress. The majority of first-generation Filipinos who kept strong association with traditional customs and ties to the homeland, seemed to have eased acclimation of the American culture. A stronger affiliation to practicing traditional Filipino values and behaviors such as "personal dignity, shame, reciprocity, and indirect communication" were associated with "lower life satisfaction" most probably due to acculturative stress (del Prado & Church, 2010, p. 481). Having a strong ethnic Filipino identity also helped to overcome adjusting to American culture and value. Even though second-generation Filipino Americans were born in America, participants still observed Filipino values such as "*hiya, amor propio* (self-love), and reciprocal obligations" (del Prado, 2010, p. 480). Whether Filipino Americans were strongly or not strongly connected to traditional Filipino culture and values, Filipinos had to adjust to American culture.

David and Nadal (2013) conducted a two-part study to explore colonial mentality among Filipino American immigrants and the impact on mental health. In the first study, there were six interviewees, which included two women and four men. The average age was 29.67; one-third of the participants immigrated as an adult and two-thirds immigrated to American as older children or adolescents. Three of the participants self-reported their socioeconomic status as middle class; two considered themselves lower class; and one stated they were upper class. David and Nadal (2013) conducted five one-on-one interviews, using an interview protocol the incorporated Nadal's Filipino American identity development model.

The second study's purpose was to explore several topics: the impact and relationship of colonial mentality in the Philippines, Filipino American's experiences as an immigrant, and Filipino's mental health. Participants had to be 18 years and older, identify themselves as Filipino, and be proficient in the English language. The study involved 605 Filipino Americans, which were 133 females and 86 males born in the Philippines. The average age of the participants was 33.74, with the majority residing in the West coast as highly educated and single people. Although the majority of the participants were young professionals, only 47.2% of the participants made more than $40,000 a year.

David and Nadal's (2013) second study was quantitative and required participants to complete an online web survey focused on understanding racism, colonial mentality, and depression. The researchers discovered how more acculturative stress for Filipinos meant more symptoms of depression and poor mental health (David & Nadal, 2013). In order to fully explore the identity, lives, and experiences of Filipino Americans, the

researchers stated the importance of understanding colonial mentality and colonialism. David & Nadal (2013) asserted that the "Filipino American immigration experience [needed] to be understood within the context of colonialism and its legacies, as well as their psychological and mental health consequences" (David & Nadal, 2013, p. 307). David and Nadal (2013) recommended having intervention programs that help decolonize Filipino Americans, referring to Leny Strobel's indigenization and Patricia Halagao's decolonization techniques.

Ocampo (2013) utilized a mixed-method study to analyze several databases relative to the patterns of pan-ethnic identity among Filipinos. The researcher utilized a data sourced that had interviews of 50 second-generation Filipino Americans between 21 and 30 years old, from two cities in California, Eagle Rock, California and Carson, California—that are predominantly inhabited by a Filipino American community. The second data source used was the Immigrant and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles (IIMMLA), which is a cross-sectional survey that consisted of a 35-minute interview via phone by Latino and Asian adults who were children of immigrant parents. Ocampo (2013) only analyzed the top four Asian groups—Filipino, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean. The third data source was the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), focusing on 921 respondents who were Filipino, Vietnamese, Laotian, Hmong, and Cambodian.

Overall, the research found that "Filipinos' identity options depended largely on the availability and meaning of categories within their local context" (Ocampo, 2013, p. 440). Meaning, Filipinos would fill in the "gap" of either being Asian, Pacific Islander, Filipino, or Latino-like, depending where they are situated. Ocampo (2013) also revealed

that Filipinos did not identify as being Asian because of the difference in assimilation process to the dominant culture. While other Asian groups may face barriers to language and culture, the Filipino experience is not the same because Spanish and American values were heavily integrated in the Filipino identity. Ocampo (2013) concluded that Filipinos are considered "Asian" based on the United States Census, but individual Filipinos may not always follow the prescribed pan-ethnic markers and choose to negotiate and navigate their identity away from the Asian label.

Ocampo (2013) states Filipino narratives reveal a "cultural hybridity" for the makeup of the ethnic identity of Filipinos, stemming from a history of colonization. Filipino Americans feel more closely aligned with Latinos than Asians because of the similarities with appearance—Filipinos looking like Latinos—Spanish words in the language and names, Catholic religion, traditions like Filipina's 18th birthday debut and a Latinx's 15th birthday quinceñera, and interracial dating. In contrast, there was less of a connection on educational attainment between Latinos and Filipinos, because the MMM stereotype assumed Filipinos as high achieving and intellectual.

Education and Career

Although AAPI in higher education have diverse experiences, research on this topic is limited and not keeping pace with growing enrollments of AAPI (Teranishi, Behringer, Grey, & Parker, 2009). Moreover, the subject of AAPI students enrolled in community college is sparse; more research on AAPI community college students necessitates the importance of learning how to support AAPI college students before, during, and after community college (Lew, Chang, & Wang, 2005).

Stories and perception of AAPI college students typically are clumped together in the education literature as a monolithic experience. Kim and Gasman (2011) recommend expanding higher education research on AAPI to include various 2-year and 4-year colleges, and to also include student's demographics from lower socioeconomic statuses to compare the different experiences. Disaggregating the monolithic AAPI narrative will expose differences and nuances for each AAPI ethnic group.

In this study, the focus is on one specific AAPI ethnic group—FACCS's experience. The benefit of researching FACCS's experience will be to add new information to research, influence policies to advocate for FACCS, and improve higher education practice when serving a specific group. FACCS are at a disadvantage to succeed in college because they do not receive the educational support necessary to navigate college (Buenavista et al., 2009). Therefore, learning about the needs of FACCS in this narrative inquiry will help uncover ways educators can provide educational support to FACCS and AAPI students.

Filipino American students in higher education. In the research literature, Filipino Americans are identified as Southeast Asians (Pak et al., 2014). Many researchers describe Filipinos as the second largest Asian ethnic group in America (Buenavista, 2010; Lew et al., 2005; Pak et al., 2014; Pang & Cheng, 1998; Tuason, et al., 2007), but new data from the Pew Research Center (2017) state Filipinos are now the third largest Asian ethnic group in America, at 3.9 million in total.

The majority of post-1965 Immigration Act Filipino parents received college degrees in the Philippines, marking a large influx of Filipino professionals into America (Okamura & Agbayani, 1997). As a result, Filipino American students are the largest

APA ethnic group (62%) to have parents who graduated with a college degree (Wang et al., 2009). Filipino Americans are not perceived as a group who is in need of educational support because of the moderately high percentage of college degree holders by Filipino immigrants (Chang, Heckhausen, Greenberger, & Chen, 2010; Okamura & Agbayani, 1997).

Pak et al. (2014) stated 36.7% more Filipinos have a college degree, more than other Asian groups. The Pew Research Center (2017) report on Filipino Americans stated that Filipino immigrants over 25 years old have an educational attainment of 40% with a bachelor's degree. For graduate degrees, Filipinos had an educational attainment of 9% in comparison to all other Asians, at 21% educational attainment (Pew Research Center, 2017). Okamura and Agbayani's (1997) findings of more degree holders by immigrant Filipino Americans versus American-born Filipinos continue to reflect in current day statistics, such as the Pew Research Center (2017) report.

In addition, Filipino Americans are behind in pursuing higher education graduate degrees in comparison to other Asian Americans, showing a reduction of educational pursuit beyond a bachelor's degree. Although immigrant Filipino parents have a college degree from the Philippines, their Filipino American born children are not obtaining college degrees at the same rate (Ong & Viernes, 2012). Overall, Filipino Americans are less likely to complete a college degree than Filipino Americans born in the Philippines (Teranishi, 2010b). Perhaps Filipino American students face different higher education barriers, such as a lack of access, recruitment opportunities, and retention initiatives specifically for Filipino Americans to pursue higher education (Okamura & Agbayani, 1997).

Who are Filipino American college students?. Buenavista et al. (2009) use the term "liminal" to "refer to the literal and figurative position of being between two states that are characterized by ambiguity" (p. 75). The researchers described "liminality in the historical positioning of Filipinos between status as foreigners and colonial subjects, being second generation college students, but not having the benefits of parents who understand how to navigate the United States educational system, and status as racialized people of color who are often marginalized by other people of color and whites" (Buenavista et al., 2009, p. 75). Filipino college students have been coping with their liminal states of identity by participating in activities such as, "discussions around Pilipino immigration and family dynamics related to college choice, multilingual events, and a Pilipino graduation" (Buenavista et al., 2009, p. 74).

First-generation college students are defined as students who are the first to attend college in their family. College-going, second-generation Filipinos are categorized as 1.5 generation college students as stated by Buenavista et al. (2009). Filipino college students who are the first in their families to attend college in the United States have higher education experiences similar to first-generation college students and may have been mis-categorized as second-generation college student. Unfortunately, Filipino students are not recognized as true first-time in college students because parents may have received some college or a college degree in the Philippines.

Even though the parents of 1.5 generation college students have received a degree in the homeland, many of the degrees from the Philippines are equivalent to vocational schooling in America. An immigrant parent's Philippine education and college navigation process is not considered the same in America. Thus, a second-generation

Filipino is called a 1.5-generation Filipino college students because their parent's college education does not make them a second-generation college student. This phenomenon challenges the notion of Filipinos being a model minority stereotype when in fact second-generation Filipino Americans are not achieving academically in comparison to the expectations of the dominant culture and the expectations of educated, immigrant parents (Ong & Viernes, 2012).

Immigration history, background, and status also shape Filipinos experience in higher education. Nadal (2011) suggested the experiences of second-generation Filipinos Americans differ from their immigrant parents. Many Filipino parents in America who are undocumented stress the need to accomplish academic goals and academic achievement (Buenavista, 2009, 2010).

Filipino American college students would most likely be an English speaker and not have any issues with language barrier, because Filipino families are more likely to understand English due to years of subjected colonization of American (Teranishi, 2010a; Wang et al., 2009). In a study by Wang et al. (2009), Filipinos in the sample population were the third largest (33.1%) Asian Pacific American group who said they considered English as their native language. Language was not seen as a barrier among Filipinos in comparison to other APA who had difficulty with English (Wang et al., 2009).

On the contrary, Buenavista (2010) stated how language barriers are an issue for Filipino Americans in regards to pushout rates and limitations with higher education opportunities. Ying and Han (2008) suggested that Filipino American parents who lack English skills are considered less acculturated to the United States culture. In turn, Filipino students also face obstacles with the English language. In a study by Pang and

Cheng (1998), Filipino students placed in Limited English Proficiency (LEP) classes due to language barriers became a form of shame and embarrassment for students because of their accent. In this case, language does play a role in Filipino student's education outlook, because the negative internal feelings may influence a student's self-efficacy.

Filipino American students are encouraged to do well academically and do their best potential in high school. The expectation for Filipino American students is to obtain straight A's by parents (Wolf, 1997). Unfortunately, Filipino Americans and Asian Americans have perceived their study skills as a foreseeable limitation to academic achievement (Luzzo, 1993). In Chang et al. (2010), Filipino and Pacific Islanders had lower GPAs than Euro-Americans due to difficulty in adjusting to college in relation to European American counterparts.

College preparation. Buenavista (2009) conducted an ethnographic study on college-graduated immigrant parents who were not familiar with the American education system. Filipino parents could not understand, help, nor support their children's college choice, enrollment, or retention. College educated parents do not understand the details of college navigation and college experience in American higher education (Pak et al., 2014). Filipino students lacked "college-going literacy" and struggled to navigate college preparation and career because parents could not relate or provide resources to assist the students (Buenavista, 2009). Filipino college student's higher education experience was similar to a first-generation college students, but they were not eligible for first-generation opportunities of educational support (Buenavista, 2009).

Suzuki (2002) recommended colleges to focus outreach and recruitment efforts for AAPI subpopulations, such as Southeast Asians, who lacked representation and

academic and financial aid support. Filipino youth did not have the guidance necessary to help assist them to get to college, navigate college, and then graduate college into the professional world (Pak et al., 2014). If opportunities are not available, Filipino American students find creative solutions open up the path to college graduation.

Okamura and Agbayani (1997) discussed how Filipino American student organizations from UCLA and UC Berkley created their own outreach and retention initiatives because Affirmative Action laws suppressed the enrollment of specific AAPI populations. Kim and Gasman (2011) recommended educating AAPI parents on college-going processes to help their children through the steps of preparing for college. Kim and Gasman (2011) and Surla and Poon (2015) recommended providing college information in multiple AAPI languages for families to help AAPI students with the college decision-making process. Using Hossler and Gallagher (1987) and Perna's (2006) college choice models, Surla and Poon (2015) reported the importance of college preparation programs as one of the college-going behaviors for Filipino and Southeast Asian students. Exercising behaviors, such as applying to more colleges, would help students better prepare for college and decision making.

College choice. For AAPI students, going to college was an expectation after high school (Kim & Gasman, 2011). The college selection process among Filipino American and Southeast Asian Americans was not an individual choice, but a family decision-making process (Surla & Poon, 2015). Asian American students were strongly influenced by collective decision-making based on the recommendations and approval of parents, older siblings, peers, and high school teachers and counselors (Kim & Gasman, 2011).

Parents play a big role in Filipino American college student's decision making process (Maramba, 2013).

The college's location, academic programs, and parent's approval were important factors when deciding where to go to college (Kim & Gasman, 2011). Filipino parents encouraged reaching the highest potential in high school, but when expanding opportunities in college, Filipino parents told their children to stay close to home. Living too far away and applying for out of state college is discouraged (Wolf, 1997). Filipino American students were most likely to attend college if they lived close to home and purposely selected a college that was close to home (Teranishi, 2010a). Surla and Poon (2015) also supported this phenomenon, stating Filipino Americans and Southeast Asian Americans selected a college that was close to home and family. Living close to home could be a result of a Filipino family's socioeconomic status and the expensive cost of college (Buenavista, 2009).

Two strong predictors of going to college for Filipino Americans was the parent's income and the father's educational level (Teranishi, 2010a). Kim and Gasman (2011) stated the cost of college was not a large factor in college decision making. Filipinos and Asian Americans did not foresee financial cost to be a barrier, but was a barrier for African Americans, Caucasians, and Hispanics (Luzzo, 1993).

On the contrary, Filipino Americans were most influenced to attend college if the student selected low tuition schools (Teranishi, 2010a). Cost and affordability were the top factors for making a decision among Filipino Americans (Buenavista et al., 2009). FACCS were the third largest APA group that would be expecting financial problems paying for college (Wang et al., 2009). "Cost and affordability, location and distance

from home, and institutional reputation-compounded by familial expectations and obligations, as well as students desire to feel a sense of belonging—worked together to shape Filipino's college choice process" (Buenavista et al., 2009, p. 77). Filipino Americans were most likely to attend college if the financial aid package provided to the student was available (Teranishi, 2010a).

Wolf (1997) pointed out an ironic circumstance for Filipino parents who make decisions for their children's education, major, and career choice. On one hand, student's succumbing to a parent's choice meant a safe decision and a well-defined pathway secures a financially stable future. Filipino American students do not have to be uncertain of a major choice and career choice, and surrender their free will to their parent's decisions.

On the other hand, parents who selected a college, major, and career for their children may not take into account the skills, talents, and interests of the Filipino American student. Making the decision for their children can hurt their educational success. In UC Davis 1980-1989, the dropout rate for Filipino Americans was at 33%. This could be attributed to an unsuitable match between the major choice, deficiency in interest, weak grades, and unable to deal with the parental pressure.

College attendance. Even though Filipinos have high rates of college attainment, their Filipino American children are not reaching the same educational attainment (Nadal, 2011). Filipino American students have "markedly lower college completion rates than their immigrant parents, who often hold a bachelor's degrees from the Philippines…[showing] how second-generation Filipinos are falling behind their other Asian American counterparts…both in college attendance and retention rates" (Ong &

Viernes, 2012, para. 2). Filipino American student's downward mobilization in higher education appears contradictory to achieving the American dream. The irony calls to question why this is happening to the second-generation of Filipino American students (Ong & Viernes, 2012).

Teranishi (2010a) claimed the majority of Filipino Americans selected to attend 4-year public colleges. The researcher also stated Filipino American were more likely to apply to only one college (Teranishi, 2010a). Out of Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, Southeast Asians, Filipino Americans were the highest group to choose low-selective colleges, and the lowest group to attend high-selective colleges (Teranishi, 2010a). A strong predictor for attending a selective college would be students spending more time doing homework. In addition, Filipino American students are heavily influenced by teachers to attend a selective college. Filipino Americans were most influenced to attend college if the student attended a college of influential ranking (Teranishi, 2010a).

Even though Orsuwan and Cole (2007) claimed a student's ethnic background does not have a direct impact on the experience among students, other researchers believe ethnicity, socioeconomics, and academic experiences influenced the college choices of AAPI and determined a student's attendance to a selective or less-selective college (Teranishi, 2010a; Teranishi, Ceja, Antonio, Allen, & McDonough, 2004). Filipino American student's experiences with ethnic identity, socioeconomics and academic achievement determine going to college and the type of institution. Kim and Gasman (2011) affirmed that Filipino American and Southeast Asian American students were less likely to attend highly selective universities and that they had the highest account in

public colleges that were less selective in admissions criteria. Moreover, other researchers claimed Filipino American students are heavily represented in community colleges than less selective 4-year universities (Buenavista et al., 2009; Kim & Gasman, 2011).

Reasons for attending community college. Filipino Americans students who attend community college have various reasons to attending a community college over a 4-year university (Wang et al., 2009). Teranishi (2010b) stated the characteristics of an AAPI student going to community college are students who are nontraditional, 25-years old and over, first-generation in college, less likely to apply for financial aid even though AAPI students need financial aid, had a lower academic preparation in English and mathematics, and had a low socioeconomic status.

Orsuwan (2011) posited that Filipinos and Hawai'ians were heavily represented at community colleges, and only less than 8% attended a 4-year university (Orsuwan, 2011). Filipinos students were considered disadvantaged in Hawaii due to lower socioeconomic status. Reasons for attending community college for Hawaiian Filipinos could be attributed to socioeconomic status, income, level of career and educational background, immigration background, length of stay in Hawaii, and social hierarchy (Orsuwan, 2011).

Wang et al. (2009) reported other reasons for FACCS attending community college were ranked in order of most important reasons: (a) wanting to obtain a college degree, (b) wanting to obtain a better job, and (c) attending community college was affordable and close to home. In contrast to all other APA groups, the top reasons for

attending college were the same for APA groups and Filipinos, but what differentiated between the two groups were language barriers (Wang et al., 2009).

Model minority. Poon et al (2016) completed a meta-analysis of 112 model minority research articles and observed how articles on AAPI do not encompass a holistic discussion nor historical perspective of MMM. The MMM assumes all AAPI are successful in life, modeling as the most ideal minority group over other communities of color (Buenavista et al., 2009). Not all AAPI are the same. Deducing the group into one monolithic group is a reductionist perspective because there are a myriad of ethnic subpopulations (Museus & Kiang, 2009). Model minority is a racial divisive tool, meant to stereotype all Asians and maintain White dominance narratives (Buenavista, 2010; Poon et al., 2016).

The myth does impact the academic and educational experiences of Asian American students (Assalone & Fann, 2017). "Model minority myth supports the idea that racial and ethnic communities can overcome challenges associated with minority status and persevere despite inequalities in American (Buenavista et al., 2009). The model minority myth continues to take shape against AAPI by labeling them as having no struggles, facing no racial issues, and existing as untrustworthy outsiders (Suzuki, 2002).

Asian Americans in higher education face serious issues, but Asian Americans' educational problems are not valuable enough to be in the forefront of educators (Museus & Kiang, 2009). AAPI are racial and ethnic minorities who have experienced a history of continual discrimination similar to other students of color (Museus & Kiang, 2009). AAPI students are overlooked in higher education because students are assumed to attend 4-year universities and succeeding with high grades (Lew et al., 2005).

On the contrary, Pang and Cheng (1998) noted that Filipino Americans have a larger dropout rate than all Asian Americans based on a University of California report. Model minority myth fails to recognize the diverse ethnic and socioeconomic background of all Asian Americans and instead, assumes one collective story. Failing to recognize the diversity of AAPI communities, means failing to recognize individual Asian ethnic populations, such as the experiences of Filipino American students (Buenavista et al., 2009).

Filipinos are lumped within the large Asian demographics of colleges and universities, leading college administrators to assume the Filipino American college experience is the same as all AAPI (Buenavista et al., 2009). Poon et al. (2016) recommend to stop representing AAPI in a deficit model and to not focus on the MMM, rather encourage new research on studying lived experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islanders in higher education. Specifically, Filipinos are hindered by the MMM, because they are expected to be smart, be able to navigate college, and be able to afford an education (Pak et al., 2014). "As Asians, [F]ilipinos are liminal people of color: honorary whites and model racial minorities," but issues facing [F]ilipinos are still "largely invisible to higher education researchers and in the United States at large." (Buenavista et al., 2009, p. 76). Filipino Americans appear to be the ideal model minority because they exemplify assimilation, acculturation, and moderate socioeconomic status. Unfortunately, this embodiment does not account for the different Filipino American lived experiences (Wolf, 1997).

Museus and Kiang (2009) stated that Asian Americans are considered invisible minorities and as a result making it difficult to research empirically. Hence, Asian

Americans are not counted, but discounted in the conversation because Asian American ethnic subpopulations are invisible and excluded (Museus and Kiang, 2009). Maramba and Museus (2011) stated that aggregated data is not reliable for understanding the needs of AAPI students. A prime example of research influencing higher educational practices is seen in the University of California System's institution of 23 ethnic categories in their admissions application, which has helped disaggregate data on Asian Americans (Museus & Kiang, 2009).

Assalone and Fann (2017) conducted a study to examine how the MMM impacted the perceptions and experiences of Asian American students. Students had to identify with one of three types of feelings they had regarding the MMM: (a) conflicted, (b) color-blind, (c) contempt. The majority of students felt conflicted about MMM, because the stereotypes have served as positive and negative roles in their lives. One third the students positively embrace the stereotypes and had used them as a form of motivation and confidence booster. A few students had a contemptuous view of the MMM because they understood the historical implications; the students experienced the backlash of the label. The Asian American students would feel pressured to meet the expectations of the MMM and fall into internalized pressure. The participants were not aware of the MMM and how the stereotypes were divisive and oppressive to Asian Americans and other ethnic minorities. Several more findings included misconceptions about AAPI students, such as faculty and other students assuming all Asian American students were smart students. When Asian American students could not meet the Model Minority expectations, faculty and other students were disappointed to learn that Asian American students were not what they expected.

Career choice. The history of Philippines' colonization influences career choices among Filipino American students (Patacsil, 2009). History, socioeconomics, and politics have influenced the poverty and unemployment rates in Philippines, leading to many Filipinos to immigrate and work outside of the country in occupations that are not the most ideal career choices (Patacsil, 2009). Despite Filipino parent's having a college degree, Filipino student's career choices were influenced by the downgrade of their parent's occupation due to racism and discrimination in the American labor force.

Luzzo (1993) foreshadowed the need to understand the growing diversity in the American workforce. In 1993, he assumed that colleges nationwide would be experiencing an influx of enrollment by 2000, calling for the need to do more research on career development for ethnic minorities. Poon (2014) recommended more opportunities for Asian American college students to explore different careers and more research in their career development. Poon (2014) pointed out the perceived, labor-market inequalities and racial isolation in atypical fields. MMM further complicates the pressure to select a career that is focused on a specific industry. More specifically researchers advocate for more research on Filipino career choice development by showcasing Filipino Americans in various career industries to encourage students' college, career, and ethnic identity (Halagao, 2004b; Patacsil, 2009).

Luzzo (1993) conducted a quantitative study to investigate college students' perceived obstacles to developing a career from different ethnic backgrounds. Filipinos and Asian Americans did not foresee financial cost to be a barrier and did not believe ethnic identity on career choice would be a large obstacle in the future, in comparison to African Americans, Caucasians, and Hispanics.

Other researchers had a different opinion and believed culture, ethnic identity, and values do play a role in career choice. Filipino values such as *hiya* (shame), *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), *pakikisama* (going with the flow), and *amor propio* (self-esteem) are important ideals to consider when developing a career plan (Patacsil, 2009). Immigrant Asian American families served as reference point and AAPI students took into account their family's desires for developing academic and career choices (Poon, 2014). Filipino American students were heavily influenced by parent's perceptions when choosing a career (Patacsil, 2009).

Shen, Abraham, Liao, & Weng (2014) conducted a quantitative study to explore how parental expectations and internalized stereotypes impact the level of parental pressure and career decisions among Asian American college students. One important finding determined that Asian American students are more inclined to live up to parents expectations for academic achievement and career development, which directly correlates to an increase in self-belief and motivation for stereotyped occupations (Shen et al., 2014).

Salazar-Clemena (2002) discussed how career choice among Filipinos in the Philippines is a collective decision, made by the family due to socio-economic constraints. Even though the college choice and career choice may not fit the student, the student is heavily influenced by the family to undertake an educational and career pathway that may not suit them personally because of socio-economic reasons. Hence, Asian American students face overwhelming pressure from parents to study in stereotypical majors, such as math and science, due to internalized stereotyping of Asian Americans (Shen et al., 2014).

Families decided on the career and education for their children because they wanted to make sure they completed college fast, in order to obtain a job right after they graduated with a degree (Salazar-Clemena, 2002). Filipino immigrant parents that have American born children assume this career guidance mentality because of their own experiences. Unfortunately, career guidance based on economic pressures led Filipinos to lower quality education experience, and ultimately placed in jobs that may not be occupationally competitive in the market (Salazar-Clemena, 2002). Students may *pakikisama*, go with the flow, with their parents and family's desires, but students may also react by going against parents' wishes by selecting a career opposite of the internalized stereotype (Shen et al., 2014).

AAPI students were most likely to major in humanities (18.1%), business management (19.6%), and health professions (17.8%) (Teranishi, 2010b). Asian Pacific Americans are being pressured to take science and math courses in high school because it was assumed to guarantee a stable and financially rewarding career in the future. "About 13% of Filipino Americans in 2000 were physicians, surgeons, nurses, or medical technicians. Nurses alone made up nearly 9% of employed Filipino Americans in that year" (Bankston, 2006, p. 191). The large number of Filipino immigrants in a specific professional field, such as the medical field, influences children to pursue math and sciences majors (Victoria, 2007). Filipinos are educated and highly qualified, but the occupational salary does not match the educational attainment (Okamura & Agbayani, 1997). Although specific Asian American groups are obtaining college degrees, the AAPI community still encounters lower wages and a lack of managerial or executive positions (Museus & Kiang, 2009).

Campus climate. Orsuwan and Cole (2007) conducted a quantitative study to investigate AAPI student's satisfaction in Hawaiian community colleges. The researchers measured academic integration, sense of belonging, potential opportunities, and social identity markers, such as ethnicity, household income, and parental education.

Orsuwan and Cole (2007) discussed the influential relationship between student satisfaction with academic integration and sense of belonging. Orsuwan and Cole (2007) also stated that Filipino students were more likely to adjust to the college culture if there was a large Filipino American student population at college. This may have increased the commitment and motivation to themselves and the institution, ultimately being able to integrate academically. An environment with a community of Filipino students is a positive indicator that they will have a better college experience (Orsuwan & Cole, 2007). Similarly, Maramba and Museus (2011) stated students feeling like they did not have a voice at their college because they did not have enough representation in terms of student population, faculty, and administration. Filipino students felt like the classroom setting was antagonistic, with faculty and teacher assistants disregarding the voice, opinions, and ideas of students.

Campus resources. AAPI higher education lacks administrative leaders and teachers in universities and community colleges (Teranishi, 2010b). Lew et al. (2005) recommended hiring campus staff to represent the AAPI makeup of the school. Teranishi (2010b) reported there was a total of 33 college presidents in 2003- nine AAPI presidents in community colleges and 24 AAPI presidents at 4-year universities. Hiring practices should be inclusive of a diverse faculty and staff personnel, paying attention to recruiting Asian Americans who can help AAPI students who are reluctant to seek out services

(Suzuki, 2002). Suzuki (2002) described a story about the lack of hiring an AAPI counselor because the assumption was that AAPI students do not have any mental health issues. After much persistence by Suzuki, the institution hired an AAPI counselor and many AAPI students started flooding into the counseling center.

Other recommendations are active ways to engage the campus community with the AAPI student population. A college's faculty and staff should reach out and learn more about AAPI students (Lew et al., 2005). One recommendation is to create a campus-wide committee who will track racial discrimination among students and staff, and provide recommendations for improving campus climate for AAPI students (Suzuki, 2002).

The lumping of AAPI higher education experiences excludes many Filipinos from different programs that will help students through their college education (Buenavista et al., 2009). Although English is mostly spoken at home and the educational attainment of Filipino Americans is higher than other Asian populations, Filipino American students do not receive the same higher education guidance counseling which makes them an invisible group for retention initiatives (Pak et al., 2014). Even though Filipinos are "no longer considered racial minorities in terms of institutional practice pertaining to access and retention, [Filipinos simultaneously] experienced similar barriers as students of color" (Buenavista et al., 2009, p. 76). Contrary to stereotypes, Asian American students do need and want college resources; they would use it if they were accessible to them (Museus & Kiang, 2009).

College campuses should provide accessible resources to help make sure students are successful. This includes hosting reoccurring multicultural programs, like workshops

and retreats, for the entire college community (Lew et al., 2005; Suzuki, 2002). More educational support and services in the community college setting would help augment Asian American curriculum and extracurricular experience, such as programming, speakers, and discussions surrounding racism (Assalone & Fann, 2017). Conferences and seminars would also help AAPI students develop leadership skills by encouraging them to advance and break the glass ceiling (Suzuki, 2002). Chang et al. (2010) suggest that Asian American students overcome parental directing, by enhancing study skills, attending time management workshops, and campus resources that support their autonomous transition into college. Lastly, Assalone and Fann (2017) recommended diversity coaching for faculty, staff, and students, so there can be a safe space to learn and ask more about Asian American student's experiences and struggles.

Experiences in the classroom. Halagao (2004b) offers several ways for educators to incorporate ethnic identity awareness, decolonization, and teaching guidelines for Filipino Americans students. Learning more about Filipino American students and getting to know them will improve the teacher-student relationship. Working together encourages developing a collaborative environment, called the spirit of *bayanihan*. Connecting the experiences of Filipino American students to the lessons will create a multicultural curriculum.

Allowing Filipino American students to be heard through different mediums of communication—such as the use of fine arts and performing arts in the curriculum, will help activate Filipino student’s engagement (Halagao, 2004b). Activities that are feeling-based will promote love of self, empathy, and perspective-taking. Mixed emotions of mourning, dreaming, confusion, struggle, excitement, passion, and empathy are natural

feelings to encounter and must be discussed openly in order to help students move forward in the decolonization process (Halagao, 2010). Educators must be able to balance the discomfort of sensitive dialogue when students start to shift their ways of thinking when they start participating in decolonization (Halagao, 2004b).

Halagao (2004a) interviewed six Filipino American college students who were a part of the Pinoy Teach program and discussed how the teaching program influenced their ethnic identity development. Students were challenged to examine their previous knowledge of Filipino history and culture. Thereafter, students underwent a form of educational decolonization, where students became more conscious of their ethnic identity development (Halagao, 2004a).

In retrospect, Halagao (2010) posited that the program teaches life skills such as critical thinking, public speaking, and social interaction that enhanced personal and professional growth. The teaching program created an academic and social space for formerly colonized people to gather, unite, and fight systems of oppression. Educational programs, such as Pinoy Teach, must have a social-action component that develops leadership, models activism, produces empowerment, self-efficacy, and inspires carving one's own niche in giving back to the community to effect social change (Halagao, 2010). Curriculum for Filipino Americans students requires deep critical thinking of one's history and culture within a multicultural and global context. The Filipino American experience touches upon the concepts of diversity, multiculturalism, imperialism, oppression and revolution and racism (Halagao, 2010).

Tintiangco-Cubales (2007, 2009, 2013) offers ready-made Filipino American curriculum for educators and communities to utilize now. Based on her Pin@y

Educational Partnerships (PEP) program, she has produced three outstanding curriculum books that have many contributing Filipino authors and community organizers. For elementary schools, *Kilusan (movement) 4 Kids: Critical Language for Elementary* School Students is already implemented in the San Francisco Unified School District. The two other books are a two-part volume series—volume I focusing on Philippine and Filipina/o American history and volume II focusing on Filipina/o American identities, activism, and service. All three books have detailed lesson plans, handout templates, and resource lists. The books are designed for anyone to teach in schools, colleges, or community workshops.

Family. The concept of a Filipino family is central and integral in understanding the context of second-generation Filipino Americans (Wolf, 1997). The importance of family being central to individual identity is a core value in the Filipino culture (Patacsil, 2009). Filipino American college students are spending significant amounts of time dealing with education and family circumstances (Maramba, 2013). Several Asian ethnic groups, including Filipinos, stated that a supportive network of family and friends is important to having a good college experience (Gloria & Ho, 2003).

Second-generation Filipino American students experience "emotional transnationalism," meaning the student is connected to the parent, grandparents, and self on an emotional level, which can sometimes be positive, and other times be negative and conflicting (Wolf, 1997). Not all AAPI families have the same level of cultural values (Eng et al., 2008). Family conflict clashes when Filipino parents enforce social and cultural values upon second-generation Filipino Americans (Wolf, 1997). When multiple nuclear families live under one household, "family consolidation" makes focusing on

schoolwork difficult because the large number of people in the home creates more familial obligations (Buenavista, 2010).

Parents. Parents play a big role in Filipino American college student's decision making process (Gloria & Ho, 2003). Student essayists in Pang and Cheng's (1998) study, described the influence of their parent's immigration from the Philippines to the United States as fulfilling the American dream. In the study, Filipino parents were labeled middle class, had a college degree, were proficient in English, had jobs, and were able to assimilate in the American culture (Wolf, 1997). Even though the parents of 1.5-generation Filipino students had received a college degree in the Philippines, many of the degrees from the Philippines are equivalent to vocational schooling in America (Buenavista et al., 2009). An immigrant parent's Philippine education was not considered the same in the United States. The majority of parents were unaware of the college navigation process due to going to college in the Philippines (Kim & Gasman, 2011).

Chang et al. (2010) conducted a qualitative study to investigate Asian American college student's agency in college adjustment and parental involvement. Measuring shared agency was defined as accommodation, support, and collaboration between parent and child. Measuring non-agency was defined as directing and non-involvement by the parent towards the child. Asian American parents displayed low levels of parental support and accommodation, and instead, exhibited high levels of parental directing (Chang et al., 2010). Asian American student have difficulty adjusting to college because of cultural factors dealing with parental involvement. Asian American students' parents have high levels of non-shared agency, supporting research that parental authority is predominant in the Asian culture (Chang et al., 2010).

Similarly, Salazar, Schludermann, Schludermann, and Huynh (2000) conducted a quantitative study to identify the socialization of Filipino American parents and the correlation to children's academic achievement. The researchers discovered a strong connection between parents who have an authoritative parenting style and students who were academically involved. Correspondingly, Eng et al. (2008) conducted a qualitative study to understand different factors affecting academic achievement among Chinese and Filipino American students. Eng et al. (2008) suggested that the more acculturated a student becomes with American culture, the lower the academic performance. Filipino American students had shown lower academic achievement in comparison to Chinese Americans due to higher levels of acculturation and lower levels of parental involvement (Eng et al., 2008).

Parents who were more enculturated, meaning parents who exercised Filipino culture and values, correlated to Filipino American students having a greater chance at succeeding in academic achievement (Ying & Han, 2008). Filipino American parents who are more acculturated to United States culture are more involved in the lives of their children, and have a closer intergenerational relationship with them (Ying & Han, 2008). Eng et al. (2008) encouraged families and leaders of the Filipino community to preserve Filipino values, while balancing the cultural values of mainstream America. Additionally, educators must actively reach out to Filipino American parents to be involved in the school community because Filipino parents may assume their input is not necessary, since parents place their trust in the school system to take care of college navigation (Halagao, 2004b).

The researcher discusses how Filipino American college students are conflicted with their immigrant parents beliefs in regards to ethnic identity and cultural values (Maramba, 2013). Much of the conflict could possibly stem from colonial mentality and inferiority (Wolf, 1997). Parental expectations were important values for Filipino American students, and they did not want to show any bad grades, any sense of failing, or deny parent's wishes, because they feared disappointment and punishment (Wolf, 1997). Filipino youth feel pressure from immigrant parents to succeed academically because parents want their children to improve their socioeconomic status (Wolf, 1997). Filipino American students are not able to communicate to their parents their needs and wants because the student would be punished or be compared to other people's accomplishments (Wolf, 1997). Thus, students with authoritative parents were pressured to maintain good academic standing in order to uphold a positive family reputation (Salazar et al., 2000).

The family is a center of contradictions and that even though parents want their children to go to them in times of trouble, children alienate themselves in fear of being reprimanded by parents (Wolf, 1997). According to Wolf (1997), Filipino American students face alienation from their parents due to the pressures placed upon them. Parents are not concerned by the mental well-being of Filipino students and instead, parents are more concerned with what the Filipino student can yield, such as a good major that will lead to upwardly mobility (Wolf, 1997). The pressure may cause stress and angst for Asian American students, leading to strained relationships with their parents and potentially serious mental health issues (Shen et al., 2014). Parents who are less acculturated and lack parental involvement have been connected to disregarding mental

health services for their children (Ying & Han, 2008). The alienation can run deep emotionally, and Filipino American students can feel depressed and suicidal (Wolf, 1997).

Gender roles. Surla and Poon (2015) distinguished the difference between men and women's purpose for college. The purpose for attending college for Filipino American and Southeast Asian American men was the desire for career opportunities. For Filipino American and Southeast Asian American women, the desire to attend college was for self-discovery. Similarly, Maramba and Museus (2011) investigated Filipino American student's gender and racial identity to their sense of belonging and the campus climate in a 4-year research institution in California. Students felt like they did not belong in college, with women expressing their feelings before they became involved on campus and men describing what they had to do in order to feel a sense of belonging (Maramba & Museus, 2011).

Wolf (1997) discussed "gendered notions of propriety," which is most evident among Filipinas. Filipina students had the most pressure to do well academically and be a student leader, yet parents wanted to put on the "brakes" to control where Filipinas go to school and their sexuality. "Pull[ing] homewards directly contradicts the push for academic excelling, but makes very clear parental desire for control over their daughter's bodies and sexuality." The gender bias against Filipinas is a form of control and oppression, limiting their potential education and career opportunities (Wolf, 1997). Daughters are expected to have a job, modeled after their own professionally working mothers, and the family will depend on her salary (Wolf, 1997). Filipinas have one of the

highest "labor force participation rates", and they are expected to work, maintain marriage, raise children, and remain a virgin until married (Wolf, 1997).

Maramba (2008) conducted a qualitative study to investigate how Filipina American college students balanced and bargained their college experience with familial obligations. The 1.5 to 3 hour interviews consisted of 82 undergraduate Filipina American women from various southern California research universities. The majority of the women were college seniors, first in their family to attend college, and were second-generation immigrants. Filipino American parents would constantly remind Filipina Americans about their hardships as immigrants, internally pressuring Filipinas to achieve high grades. The researchers concluded that Filipina Americans faced challenges balancing personal expectations versus family expectations, such as continuing gender specific roles, such as household work, taking care of the family, and doing well in school.

Gender inequalities between male siblings were evident, as Filipina American students were not allowed to be socially involved in school due to restrictive curfews. The pressures and restrictions created around gender and cultural expectations influenced academic, career decisions, and mental health of Filipina American women. Building upon Maramba (2008), Paz (2011) conducted a qualitative study to understand the relationship between Filipina American college student's academic and occupational choices with parental expectations. The researcher conducted 80-minute interviews with twelve Filipina American college students who came from immigrant families. All participants were studying in a 4-year university between their sophomore and senior

year of college in the West coast. The Filipinas were recruited through college classroom visits, club meetings, and referrals.

Paz (2011) continued to reaffirm the major influence of Filipino parents on their daughters' college major and career pathway. Filipina Americans are willing to set aside individual plans over the needs of the family. Women negotiate and adjust to parents expectations in order to manifest their parent's expectation of success. The definition of success is defined by parent's immigrant experiences of hardship, discrimination, and socioeconomic statuses in the United States. The immigration pressures placed upon Filipino students have led to mental health issues, obstacles adjusting to the college climate, a lack of involvement in retention initiatives, and attending colleges that are less selective (Pak et al., 2014).

Conceptual Framework

Three conceptual frameworks will guide the research design of this study. The first framework is Nadal's (2004) Filipino American identity development (FAID) model. Nadal's six statuses of identity development was based on several other models: Atkinson, Morten, and Sue's (1998) Racial/Cultural Identity Development Model, S. Sue and Sue's (1971) Asian American Identity Model, and Kim's (1981) Asian American identity development model (Nadal, 2011, p. 75). The FAID model is non-linear and dynamic. A Filipino American may experience several statues or stages at one time, or may lean towards one status over another.

The six statues are: ethnic awareness, assimilation to dominant culture, social political awakening, panethnic Asian American consciousness, ethnocentric realization, and incorporation. For each stage, he describes Filipino's attitude towards: (a) their self,

(b) other Filipino Americans, (c) Asian Americans, (d) other minorities, and (d) the White/dominant group. See Table 3 below.

Table 3

Filipino American Identity Development Model

	Attitudes Toward				
Stages of Filipino American Identity	Self	Other Filipino Americans	Asian Americans	Other Minorities	White/ Dominant Group
Ethnic Awareness	P/Neutral	P/Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	P/Neutral
Assimilation to dominant culture	N/SD	N/GD	N/D	N/D	P/GA
Awakening to social political consciousness	P/SE	P/GE	P/GA	P/A	N/D
Panethnic Asian American consciousness	P/SA	P/A	P/GA	P/A	N/D
Ethnocentric consciousness	P/SE	P/GE	N/GD	P/GE	N
Incorporation	P/SA	P/GA	P/A	P/A	A

Note. This table was modeled upon a similar table created by Nadal (2004). P = Positive; Neu= neutral; SD = Self-Deprecating; GD = Group-Deprecating; D = Discriminatory; GA = Group Appreciating; SE = Self-Empowering; GE = Group-Empowering; A = Accepting; SA = Self Appreciating

Ethnic awareness begins at an early age, when a Filipino becomes aware of their ethnic identity through cultural and environmental factors, such as, people, language, food, and music (Nadal, 2011). Being Filipino is seen as a positive aspect of their identity because they are mostly surrounded by the culture. Assimilation to dominant culture occurs when a Filipino recognizes she or he is not the same as the normative culture and may try to conform to the dominant culture and deny their Filipino American identity (Nadal, 2011). Social political awakening happens when a Filipino is conscious of ethnic, social, and political differences of Filipino American identity in comparison to the mainstream American culture. Pan-ethnic Asian American consciousness transpires when a Filipino embraces Asian American identity and feels connected to other Asian American stories and struggles. Ethnocentric realization is the opposite of pan-ethnic Asian American consciousness, and a Filipino denies an Asian American identity and only accepts being Filipino as their ethnic identity. Incorporation happens when a Filipino embraces roles as an Asian American and Filipino ethnic identity, and leverages positivity for activism rather than anger or resentment for progress.

The second frame work is Perna's (2006) student college choice model. Perna (2006) discusses how a student makes their decision to go to college based on four layers of contextual influence: habitus; school and community; higher education; and social, economic, and policy (Perna, 2006).

A student's habitus includes basic demographic traits, student's value on education, and how much they know about college culture. The school and community may support or hinder college resources to students. Perna (2006) discusses how students from low-income and racial/ethnic minorities may not feel comfortable developing

trustworthy relationships with teachers, counselors, and peers who serve as critical access points to college resources. Higher education plays a critical role in student's college choice. A higher education institution will provide resources to targeted groups via marketing and recruitment based on location and geography. Students may base their college choice on their own preferences that match their social and cultural identity (Perna, 2006). Lastly, the social, economic, and policy context influences a student's college choice. Large shifts in population demographics, financial circumstances such as tuition increases, and public policies such as education allocation, affect the local community, state, and nation. The changes within the socioeconomic and political spheres may directly or indirectly impact students and families to decide on college.

The third framework is Lent et al.'s (1994) social cognitive career theory (SCCT) and was created to study career development. This theory states that a person's choices and goals are impacted by how an individual defines and acts upon their beliefs. The three components to SCCT are self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals.

Self-efficacy is a person's set of beliefs on their level of abilities and performances around a specific area or activity. For example, a student may be strong athlete and have high self-efficacy around their sport, but weaker in an academic subject such as mathematics, showing a low self-efficacy in academics. Outcome expectations deal with a student's beliefs around the potential results of actions and behaviors. For example, a student will ask what will happen if they decide to choose a career, and will weigh out the advantages and disadvantages based on their self-efficacy. Lastly, personal goals are defined as a student's purpose in order to achieve a desired outcome. Acting

upon personal goals provides students a space to determine educational and occupational endeavors, and also helps maintain their own belief in themselves.

Lastly, Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimension inquiry space—inwards, outwards, backwards, and forward—will help frame the narrative stories in a contextual perspective. Theses frameworks will be the foundational basis for the method and interview protocol of this study.

CHAPTER III

Method

Although research on Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) in higher education is starting to emerge, specific ethnic stories are still unheard. The growth of the AAPI student population in higher educational institutions outpaces the number of research on AAPI students. Poon et al. (2016) suggested exploring the individual ethnic identities of the Asian American spectrum to understand the nuances and needs of the specific culture, such as the lives of Filipino Americans.

The Model Minority Myth (MMM) assumes Filipino American students are high achieving performers, but the stereotypes misrepresent the reality of students who are underprepared, performing poorly, and misguided through their higher education experience. Filipino American students do not receive the necessary attention to help succeed in education because the MMM hinders their eligibility for educational support services as well as financial assistance. Thus, the purpose of this narrative inquiry is to explore *mga kuwento,* stories, of Filipino American community college students (FACCS) from the Southern United States, particularly around the Greater Houston Metropolitan area.

I am interested in discovering how students develop their Filipino American identity, the experiences they encounter in college, and the contributing factors for higher education, career, and life choices. I want to hear their stories and understand the experiences they had to endure and where they see themselves in the future. Through this study, I hope to learn about the experiences of FACCS and identify ways to support their academic, personal, and professional ways of becoming.

In this chapter, I will describe the mechanism of collecting and analyzing field notes. There will be eight sections: (a) research questions, (b) research design, (c) role of researcher, (d) selection of participants, (e) instrumentation, (f) data collection, and (g) data analysis. In my qualitative study, I utilize a narrative research to address my research questions. I have selected Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimension narrative inquiry space approach as the main framework of my research design. In narrative inquiry, research questions are known as research puzzles. Clandinin (2013) states, "the shift from question to puzzle is one that allows narrative inquirers to make explicit that narrative inquiry is different from other methodologies. We begin in the midst, and end in the midst of experience" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 43).

Research Questions

Three key research questions are examined in the study. The following research questions were created to understand the experiences of FACCS: (a) How do FACCS describe their Filipino American identity development?; (b) How do FACCS portray their college experiences?; and (c) How do FACCS determine their educational and career goals?

Research Design

Narrative inquiry is the best approach to conducting qualitative research on the *kuwento* of FACCS, because stories portray the variations in human experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The purpose of narrative inquiry is to investigate the "stories lived and told" by FACCS, and these stories can help understand the experiences of Filipino Americans (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20).

Jocson (2013) provides a thorough description and history overview of *kuwento* deriving from the Spanish word *cuento*, meaning story. The author claims that *kuwento* embodies "both as a noun (story) and a verb (telling/listening/participating in a story)…and also the nature in which the stories take place…to understand kuwento is to understand the story" (Jocson, 2013, p. 185). Jocson's study utilizes *kuwento* as a "literary practice," and more specifically focused on high school classroom interactions of students and teachers in social studies. In this study, *kuwento* is utilized differently as a tool to understand the stories of Filipino Americans in higher education, and how they make meaning of their identity and life goals.

Creswell (2013) states narrative stories communicate experiences of individuals and reveal how identity is developed among individuals. Clandinin (2007) poetically claimed,

> the story depends upon every one of us to come into being. It needs us all, needs our remembering, understanding, and creating what we have heard together to keep on coming into being. The story of a people. Of us, peoples (Clandinin, 2007, p. 251).

The stories of FACCS represent the figurative and literal definition of *kuwento ng mga tao*, the "story of a people." During data collection, I asked FACCS to recount their experiences through storytelling, describing their concept of Filipino American identity, and how other people have influenced their lives. Studying the experiences of FACCS as *kuwento* is at the heart of this narrative inquiry.

Role of Researcher

According to Johnson and Christensen (2012), the narrative inquirer's role is to "retell stories." In this study, I captured the stories of eight participants who are FACCS as part of better understanding my own *kuwento* and my identity. I was motivated to learn more about FACCS because of my experiences and beliefs as a Filipina American in higher education.

As a college student in the early 2000's, I had struggled to reconcile with my racial and ethnic identity. I had difficulty understanding the college navigation process and how to decide on a major as an undergraduate student. Figuring out my future career was too daunting. I was confused about fulfilling my inner passion and how to harness my skills and strengths while simultaneously trying to fulfill my parent's expectations. With this in mind, my story of navigating my own education and career influenced the shape of this study.

I was the first person in my nuclear family to attend a college in the United States. Going to college was never optional for me and my younger sister. The steps of going to college and getting through college were confusing. When other Filipino and non-Filipino high school classmates were planning for college out of state, I felt lost and uncertain. The private, Catholic high school I attended had a guidance counselor who discussed the college admissions process. I look back now and I am grateful for the resource, but disappointed in the fact that the counselor did not know how to handle my cultural expectations.

I watched recruitment VHS videos, read college pamphlets, and studied for the SAT's. After observing other peers who looked like they knew what they were doing, I

decided to enroll in an expensive SAT prep course after several failed attempts. I filled out all the admissions paper applications by myself. I did not understand the idea of colleges within the university, and so I checked the wrong boxes for my intended major. I do not even remember if I filled out the financial aid application, and if I did, I do not remember who helped me—if anyone did. The whole process was scary and overwhelming. I was a high achieving, prominent student leader in high school. People at school and my family were expecting great things out of me. The pressure to go to a reputable college was weighing on my shoulders at the young age of 17.

When discussing my college future with my parents, we always ended up fighting about my major and how we were going to pay for college. My parents went to college in the Philippines and graduated with their Bachelor's degrees. By American education standards, I would be considered a second-generation college student. I realize now that the fights with my parents stemmed from all of us not knowing the college-going process. American college education was uncharted territory for my immigrant family; my grandparents decided on my parent's majors and completed the entire admissions process for them.

I went to a local 4-year public research university on the West coast and studied a STEM major in hopes of becoming a medical doctor. I assumed this career pathway would be a stable, financial, and reputable career. Reflecting back, the experience helped shape my views on Filipino American identity and higher education. Attending a 4-year university was a positive experience, but I left with a diploma in one hand and a large student loan debt in the other hand. After college, I was in debt for nine years. How was I supposed to know that this would be the reality after college?

Community college was never an option in my mind; I was focused on going to a university straight out of high school. I associated community college as being second-class to a university, and peers who were not accepted to the university landed in community college begrudgingly. I was more concerned about my reputation and what others would say about my college choice. I never saw a community college recruiter present information at my private Catholic high school. Moreover, I never once met a Filipino American higher education advocate. Did one exist?

Having worked in both community college and university settings, I have a change of mind about college navigation. I do not regret my experiences at the university, but I do regret the financial burden it placed upon my parents and my financial outlook. I now feel community college is a misunderstood, hidden gem because of the affordable cost, transferrable credits, and student leadership opportunities. I know Filipino American students who had my mentality and they would never consider attending community college because it is not an openly discussed topic. Through this study, Filipino American students might take greater consideration in attending community college and not disregard the option based on preconceived notions. Understanding FACCS's stories will help enliven discussion regarding the realities of attending community college. I hope more Filipino American families consider community college as a viable start in higher education. This information is crucial for counselors, students, and parents when helping support Filipino American students.

Context of Study

The identified institution is a multi-campus community college system, enrolling over 7% AAPI students located in Houston, Texas. *Criterion sampling* is the best

approach because "individuals [in this study] will represent people who have experienced the phenomenon" of attending a community college (Creswell, 2013, p. 155).

Selection of Participants

My recruitment plan for participant selection revolved around *convenience sampling* because I have a network of Filipino American community college students and graduates that I could easily tap into (Lavrakas, 2008). I made a list of FACCS I knew and who I have mentored over the last eight years. I called, texted, and emailed students individually, inviting them to participate in the study (see Appendix A for recruitment email). I made a list of all potential prospective interviewee candidates and sent them an informed consent form and a demographic questionnaire to complete.

A total of 11 people completed the consent form and demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B and C for the informed consent and demographic questionnaire). Out of the 11, eight had responded confirmation for an interview. After the student completed the consent form and questionnaire, I scheduled an interview with them, either face-to-face or through video conference. Each participant had a one to two hour block for interviewing and each location was confirmed by the participant. In honor of a narrative structure, I call the participants "characters" in chapter's four and five as part of identifying them as characters in their own *kuwento* and the larger context of this study's *kuwento*. Figure 3 is a list of all the characters pseudonyms in the study.

Figure 3. Cast of characters.

I interviewed FACCS who (a) might have just started community college, (b) might have been in and out of community college for several years, (c) might have just graduated from community college, (d) might have transferred from community college to a university, and (e) might have graduated from a community college and university, and have started working. Participants had to meet three criteria: (a) self-identified as Filipino, (b) had attended or is attending community college system in Houston, Texas, and (c) between the ages of 18-30. Once a participant confirmed their interest in the study, I sent them a reminder message to confirm the interview.

Instrumentation

I distributed a demographic questionnaire link for participants to complete before starting the interviews (see Appendix B for the informed consent form and Appendix C for the demographic questionnaire). The demographic questionnaire included information on educational background, gender, age, parent's educational background, major, degree, citizenship status (immigrant or natural born American citizen), and the year of college graduation or transfer. The demographic survey determined the eligibility of the

informant's participation and also helped cue me into specific background information about the participant.

I developed a semi-structured interview protocol for the study, influenced by Spradley's (1979) five types of descriptive questions: (a) grand tour questions, (b) mini-tour questions, (c) example questions, (d) experience questions, (e) native language questions. Using these types of questions allowed the participant to provide rich, descriptive detail of their *kuwento*, stories, while simultaneously probing more deeply into their perspective. The characters understood the concept of *kuwento* as a cultural experience of sharing stories, but they were not aware of the use of *kuwento* as an autobiographical way of understanding their history, present, and future.

The following questions below were asked of each individual participant during the one-on-one interview (see Appendix D for interview questions). I provided the list of questions to the participants ahead of time to make sure the participants felt comfortable answering the questions:

1. Tell me about yourself. What's your *kuwento*/story?
2. What does it mean to be Filipino American to you?
3. Tell me the story of your educational journey leading up to now.
4. What are your career aspirations? How do your career aspirations fit into your educational journey?
5. Who and/or what influences you?
6. How do your parents influence your educational and career choices?
7. Where do you see yourself in the next 5-10 years?

8. What other topics, comments, or questions, you want to share before we end our interview?

Data Collection

I submitted a request for research to the Sam Houston State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for permission to study human subjects via individual interviews. Once the IRB request was accepted, I started the participant recruitment process (see Appendix E for the IRB approval letter). Thereafter, I selected the final participants and interviewed them.

Narrative inquiry required an extensive amount of time listening and gathering stories. Therefore, my final sample consisted of eight Filipina/o American students, specifically four *pinay* (female) students and four *pinoy* (male) students to capture a variety of experiential perspectives (Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, 2003; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Each participant received a recruitment letter and they completed an informed consent form and demographic questionnaire before starting the interviews (see Appendix A for the recruitment letter, Appendix B for the informed consent form, and Appendix C for the demographic questionnaire). Upon completing the demographic survey, the information was placed in a spreadsheet and reviewed to determine which respondents met criteria for participating.

I communicated with each participant by phone and email to set up a face-to-face interview or video conference. The interview site for each interview was held at a location most convenient to the participant. Once the interview date, time, and location were set, I sent a confirmation email to each interviewee with an overview of the study and questions that will be discussed. Individual interviews lasted between one to two

hours. I recorded each interview via phone recorder or laptop video recorder. Audio files were saved in a password protected file, per IRB protocol. I uploaded the audio to an online transcription software called Trint.com. After uploading the audio, I cleaned the transcription by listening to the audio and following along to make changes in the transcription. After the interviews were transcribed, an electronic copy of the transcript was emailed to each participant in order for them to review the transcript and gain their feedback and approval. All participants agreed to the transcription via email.

All transcription and interview notes were kept in an electronic file that is password protected. Any hardcopy files, handwritten notes, and field texts, was locked in a cabinet to ensure protection of student's identities and information.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2013) says field notes collected in a narrative research must be "analyzed for the story [the participant has] to tell, a chronology of unfolding events, and turning points or epiphanies" (Crewell, 2013, p. 189). I analyzed interview transcripts using two analysis techniques. First, I used Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space—inwards, outwards, backwards, and forward. The inwards represents the "internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). The outwards represents "the existential conditions [such as] the environment" of the participant (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). The backwards and forwards represents the "temporality [of the] past, present, and future" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.50). The three-dimensional inquiry space allows the storyteller and the listener to "experience an experience—that is, to do research into an experience—is to experience it in four ways and to ask questions

pointing each way" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). I listened to the participants, noting and observing parts of the three-dimensional inquiry space they were sharing.

Secondly, to best represent the natural and raw *kuwento* of the characters, I decided to structure chapter four as a long, uninterrupted *kuwento*. I weaved each character's story with each other, along with my personal Filipino American experience layered in between. The tone and style of chapter four embodies Clandinin and Connelley's (2000) three-dimension narrative inquiry space: inwards, outwards, and backwards and forwards. There is no beginning and no end; just "in the midst" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 43).

Although this analytic approach appears unorthodox and deviates from a structured analysis, creating a seamless *kuwento* required a lot of organization before writing the analysis. I downloaded the transcripts onto a Word document and printed out all the transcripts. I read through each transcript many times to gain an overall understanding of each character's *kuwento*. Some stories and topics started to surface in the individual stories and I was able to connect similar stories of the characters together.

Attempting to make sense of their stories, I tried several methods to make meaning of the overwhelming amount of information. I created a matrix spreadsheet that would connect characters stories together by sifting through each transcript and categorizing their experiences. I also started drawing out mind maps, pathways, bridges, labyrinths and other creative illustrations to visualize the connections (See Figure 4, Figure 5, Figure 6, and Figure 7).

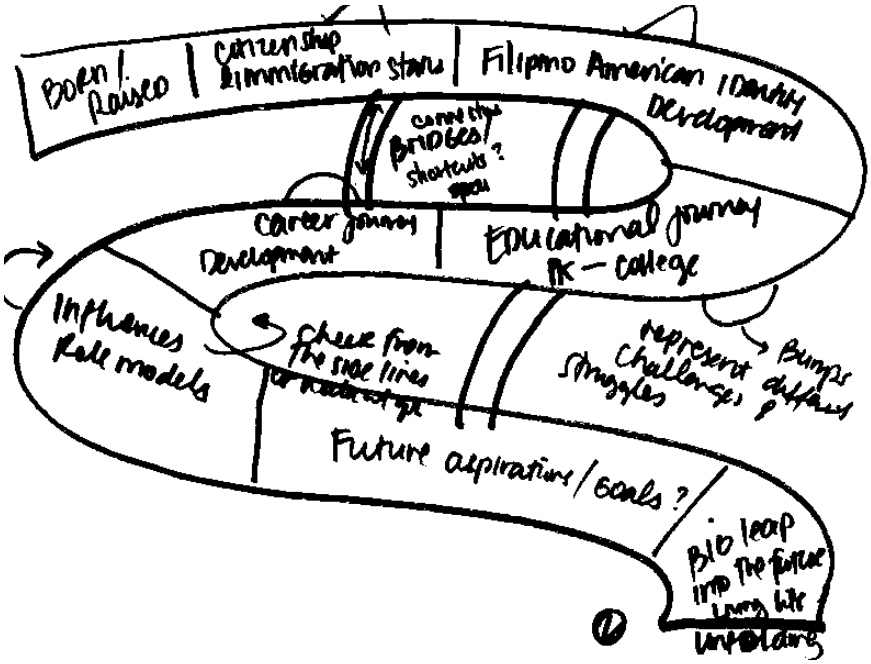

Figure 4. Road map with bridges.

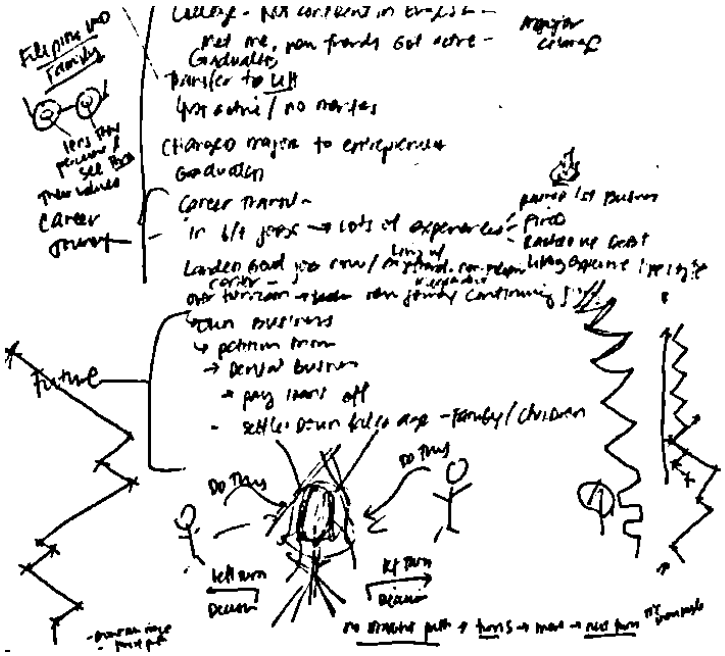

Figure 5. Stick figure.

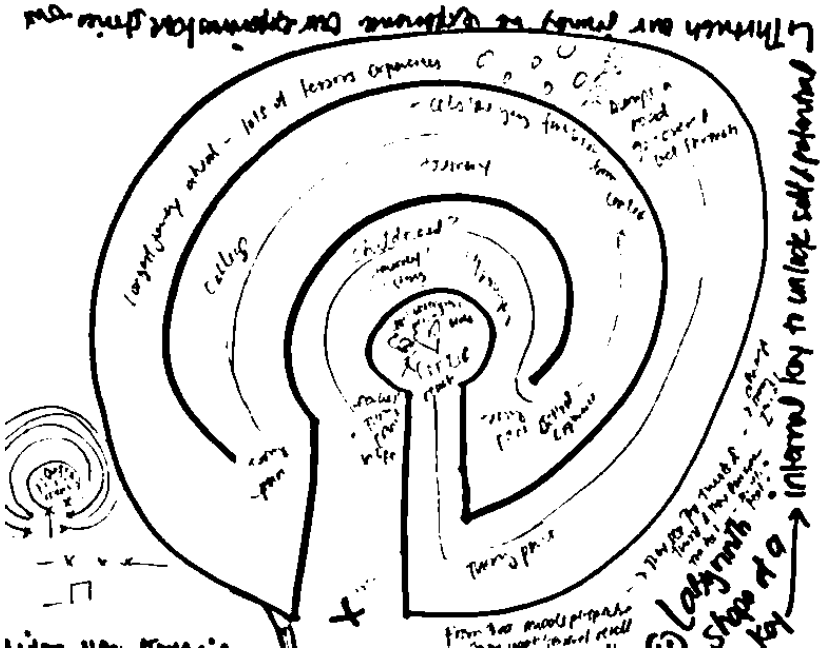

Figure 6. Labyrinth.

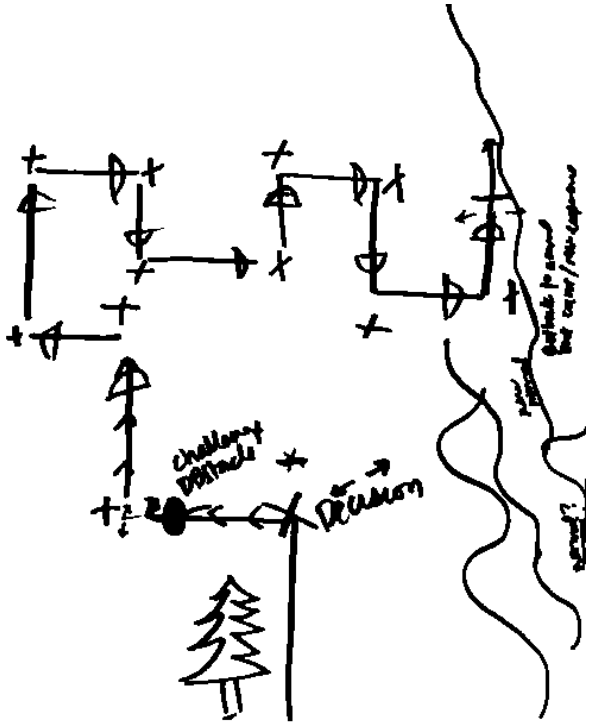

Figure 7. Decision directions.

When this became too much, I started walking in the park to reflect on the stories. Needless to say, there was not one main method, but multiple ways I grasped and grappled with the stories. Re-reading and re-listening to the character's stories helped me connect to their *kuwento*.

It seemed like I would never be ready to write anything coherent, but I decided to take a more personal approach and start writing from my own experience. Starting from a familiar place allowed me to introduce each character and their *kuwento* in a natural way. Because I had themes, categories, and visuals of character's experiences, I used all the methods to help me remember the necessary stories to make the overall chapter four *kuwento* flow. I reiterate what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) wrote using Filipino language to express the heart of chapter four:

> the *kuwento* (story) depends upon every one of us to come into being. It needs us all, needs our remembering, understanding, and creating what we have heard together to keep on coming into being. *Kuwento ng mga tao* (the story of a people). *Sa atin, mga tao.* (Of us, peoples) (Clandinin, 2007, p. 251).

CHAPTER IV

Into the Midst

During the development of my dissertation research, I spent a lot of time processing my thoughts. I would walk at my favorite local forest park, Jesse H. Jones Park in Humble, Texas (See Figure 8). I discovered it two years ago and I am proud of the amazing find. It is rarely busy, and many times, you feel like the only person there. It is quiet, tranquil, and peaceful. I can really hear myself in the silence.

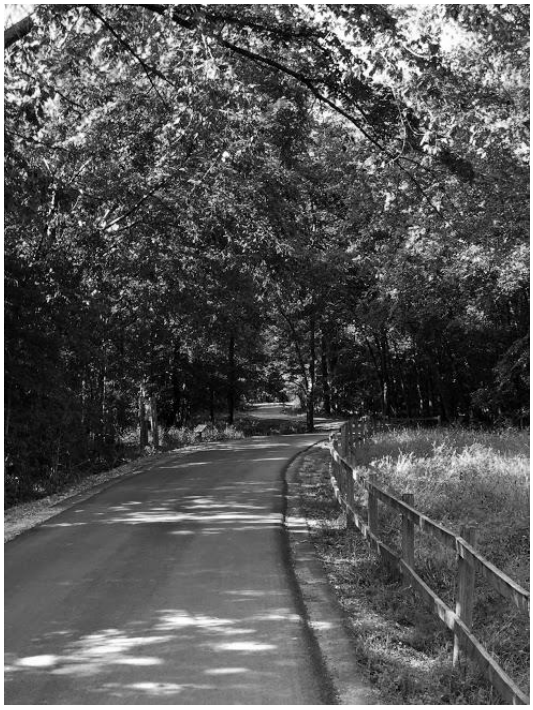

Figure 8. Jones Park. Photo by Pat Lindsay C. Catalla

I would walk a one mile paved trail that ended at the edge of a canoe launch for Spring Creek. The path is idyllic in scenery. During the spring and summer time, you are greeted with Texan wild flowers. All shades of red, yellow, and purple are scattered in a patch. It reminds me of a prairie scene, more specifically, my love for *Little House in the*

Prairie TV show and book series. I had a fantasy of running through the fields, but I could not do that in this reserved patch of Texas wild flowers (See Figure 9).

Figure 9. Wild flowers. Photo by Pat Lindsay C. Catalla

As you pass this patch, I enter the forest trail. As you look up to the sky, you are covered in a canopy of leaves, in luscious shades of green and yellow. The trees are tall and majestic. I feel like I am in another world. In between the leaves, you see pockets of blue skies and white clouds. I am basking in nature's surround sound, with leaves and branches rustling, amplified by bird chirping and whistling. The city bustle is in no sight or sound distance. At eye level in the middle of the forest canopy, you see the dense branches, looping vines, fallen tree trunks, and black barks from past storms. You could easily be scared by the density of the forest, especially when walking by yourself. But the calm atmosphere keeps me secure.

At one-fourth of the trail, there is a little oasis called the Turtle Pond. The image is breathtaking. There is small bridge overlooking the turtle pond and forest. An off-shoot, dusty trail leads people to a small barn like covering with benches and a sink. The

highlight of the turtle pond is the dock that is protruding out of the center of the lake. There are two benches on the dock, and a short railing, that does not go around the dock. When you peer over the dock, there is a large family of turtles in the water. Turtles of all shapes and sizes. My favorite turtles are the tiny baby turtles, and then the very large, old turtle. This turtle looks like the oldest one in the bunch and he has a tail like a reptile or dragon. I affectionately call this turtle, Dragon Turtle. When Dragon Turtle swims to the feeding dock, every turtle knows to get out of its way. The other turtles gather near the edge of the dock around Dragon Turtle in hopes for a meal from people like me. Standing at the dock, you can't help but scan the beautiful scenery around you. You are surrounded by tall trees, the bridge I passed up to the far right, and the sky. Nature surrounds me and gives me a warm hug of beauty. I get the same feeling when I think about family.

Once I finish soaking up this area, I continue back to the main walking path trail. I continue to walk until I reach the canoe launching. I know that creek is near because the tunnel of dense forest lessens, and the soil turns into light tan sand on the side of the path. Tiny little water bugs start jumping around you and move out of your way as you get closer to the open air.

When I get to the end of the walking trail, I arrive at my destination. The large creek is a calm, muddy, and yellow green. On windy days, the creek travels quickly to the west, and the large trees on the edge of the riverbank rustle their leaves loudly. It is a sight to see. I watch the water go by. I just sit there and breath in and out the fresh air. I feel so alive. I look to my left and the creek keeps going until I can see no longer see it. I look to the right, and the creek bends and curves, into a scene out of an American classic novel. This really is my piece of heaven away from all the normal noise of life. I like to

spend as much time near the creek. I sit, meditate, listen, and talk with my fiancé about life. I like to bring my family and friends to this spot because I love to share this piece of heaven with them.

What is also exciting to see is the large white crane bird, called the Great Egret. The Great Egret likes to lounge on different fallen branches in the creek, and sitting still, probably meditating, just like me. I have seen this bird on multiple occasions in the same area and I like to think that I am an observer in this bird's home turf. I sit on the edge of the rocky cliff of the creek, and I watch the Great Egret ponder in front of me as if it is ready for me to interview him. I close my eyes and say out loud, "Tell me about yourself. What's your *kuwento*?"

Family and Community

I open my eyes and Jay's eyes are beaming as he talks about his family, and upbringing. He is lanky like the long-legged Great Egret and his spirit is beaming brightly. His *kuwento* begins where he

> was born in the Philippines and I was raised here, like I was raised in California and Texas. And funny thing is, I was raised in the Philippines and then we moved to California and we had my little brother. And then after we moved to Texas a couple of years later—they [my parents] had my sister. So each place we stayed at, my parents had a kid. So yeah and in California, we used to live with my grandparents there and for only pre-kindergarten, only for a short time. And after that we moved here in Texas and moved around a little bit, mostly in the same

> area. So Springfield[1] [Texas]. So yes, I started elementary, middle, and high school here.

Jay and his family are like seeds, moving to different places, growing and expanding into a larger family, until finally taking root in Springfield, Texas. Springfield—a serendipitous city for Jay's family to bloom and grow.

In the same vein, Geralt is the eldest and experienced a major transition in his family and personal immigrant story. His *kuwento* started with describing his arrival to "the States," which is the colloquial way of saying the United States of America.

> I came here to [the] States [in] 2007. I was 12 years old. So I left Philippines when I was in—well there I was a first year high school, but then I arrived here, I was in seventh grade. That's the equivalent....I have a step-mom because my, [my[2]] mom, real mom, died when I was four-years old and passed away when I was four in the Philippines. So from her, there's two of us [children]. So I have one like, real sister. She's [uh], her name is Angie. She's the one who graduated from Stella Mar Community College (SMCC) and [is going] to Antonio Vargas University for pharmacy. And then [um], my real or my step-mom, she had a daughter from a different guy before she met my dad. And now she's also the same age as my real sister. So she's, the one doing the nursing [major]. So that's three [children]. And then my step-mom and my dad, they have three kids now of their own. That's how it's six [children].

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[1] All city names, including those in the Philippines, and names people, and names of institutions are changed to a pseudonym for anonymity

[2] Repeated words will be removed throughout the rest of the chapter to streamline the clarity of the message.

Life was different in the United States versus the Philippines for Geralt. He remembered his childhood, and described the local lifestyle in the Philippines. Geralt recalled,

> You know, riding the tricycle or walking to my school because it's always walking distance…Everything was like you know, walking distance. Hang out with friends. I don't have to go far. The market, the *palengke*, it's nearby. I would yeah, just go there. But then, coming here—you know everything is like—coming here in the States, everything you have to drive far. I mean, it's good. It's really big, the open space.

Geralt's description of his childhood in the Philippines exudes a sense of freedom and independence. Because school and the local market where close by, he did not have to travel far. In comparison to his current Filipino American experience, going to school or the market required transportation because these places are far.

The open space he describes reminds me of the vastness of Spring Creek, curving around the forest. You are in awe and wonderment, but also scared of what lies beyond what the eye cannot see. Things that are close, such as school and the *palengke*, provides a sense of home and comfort. The space between where I sit on the cliff to the distance of the forest tree line seem so close, but far.

I feel like Geralt sometimes. I want to venture to what is beyond the American classic scene, but the route down the creek requires a boat. Of course, I do not have a boat that will take me to the other end of the creek, but perhaps there is another walking trail to get there. But what route do I take? Walking through the forest can feel like a scary place at first, but once you start getting in the rhythm of the walk, the forest starts to

feel like home. Is this what it feels like to move to a different country, your new home, called the States?

As I continue to walk through the forest, I remember Rosalinda sharing her *kuwento* of the countryside. She said,

> My *kuwento*. Well okay. So yeah, I was born in Laya, Manila and then my parents were together for a while and then they separated. Like I think maybe a couple years after I was born and then my mom, [um], we moved to the rural side of the Philippines where that's where I mostly grew up with my aunts and uncles there. [My mom] worked as [an] OFW (overseas Filipino worker), like those Filipino workers that go overseas, like you know for like, unique jobs. Yeah, like she was like, the one time she was a fitness instructor in the middle of the—in the Middle East, in like Qatar. Yeah, she isn't really like—she wasn't really a big part of my childhood because she was always like that, overseas [and out of the country]. But she would still send money back to me. And then. Yeah. And then I think her and my dad like just stopped communicating at some point and that's still like part of life from what I'm trying to understand between my own parents. Yeah. And then I guess, like the opportunity of coming to the United States came up one day with my dad, and my mom was really opposed to it because like they really like, they don't get along as much, or like they don't talk to the point where like they kind of disagree. But yeah she didn't want me to go with my dad and my brother. Oh sorry. I feel like I'm skipping parts. I have four brothers by the way. Four brothers—four *kuyas* [who] work. [Um] I'm the youngest and two of my older *kuyas*. Their name is [sic]. They're still in the Philippines; they got left ‘cause they

> were too old to be taken here to the [United States]. So it was just me and my other brother that was closest to my age, when he was still pretty old. And yeah, we moved here to Texas in like the year 2008, it was [President] Obama's first year…It was really hard you know, because like you know, you would see—I would have like friends and they really wouldn't like make fun of me, but like I would see that their own family dynamics and [compared it] to mine, or [ask myself,] "Why isn't my parents like that?" You know? Or I feel—I felt like I was kind of really different, but different from them because I—you know all Filipino families are like, "Oh," there's like, you don't hear much about like, separation. We call it "affairs." I guess like, it's very—it's not really talked about. So like there's this image, I guess. Yes, but that's just my family.

This is Rosalinda's family in the raw, no sugar coating—her true story. She said her *kuwento* in the most respectful, solemn way. There was something melancholy in Rosalinda's *kuwento*—describing her parent's marital strife, the effect on the family dynamics, and her assumptions of a traditional Filipino family in comparison to her own "separated" family. There is a sense of longing for the ideal, traditional family and to not feel like the outlier. But Rosalinda accepts this is her family and this is the way of life. She had a certainty in her voice and was not afraid to share her family secret.

In my own personal upbringing, I was told that Laya, Manila had a reputation for being a tough, impoverished town. I would not have guessed that she came for this part of the Philippines. Rosalinda has a sweet and calm demeanor opposite of the place she was born. When I inquired about this stereotype, Rosalinda said,

> Yeah it's a pretty rough [town] like where I grew up [um]. The houses are really, really like squished together, like the—there was a little walkway. I mean it's kind of like squattery because it's in the city, like yeah. I don't know. But then again like, [um], you know like I remember more of like my childhood when I was living in the rural side, like with my mom and like her side of the family. But I didn't get to go there when I visited last summer. So hopefully, like next time, I can go back home. I'm gonna.

Going back home is known as *balikbayan*. *Balik*, means to go back or return, and *bayan* means country. Hence, *balikbayan* is a person who goes back to their homeland. Rosalinda had to return back home because her father had died. Similarly, Vivienne also went on a *balikbayan* trip. In contrast to Rosalinda, she does not remember much about the Philippines, but remembered the images of her hometown during a trip back to the Philippines when she was 14 years old. Vivienne observed the stark differences between her life in America versus the Philippines as she recalled:

> I was 11 months old. We came to America in February of the next year, so I don't remember anything. From my travels, Kalaya City was very cramped and there's a lot of people. It's also very noisy, so just from coming back home to the States and hearing less noise was different. Philippines is bustling with life. It's night, day, always bustling with life and there's always, as you can see—they're outside—the elderly, the kids. They are outside, spending time with each other. And that's one thing I valued about or liked about Filipinos, they value family. You know, I don't think there's a lot of Americans, who just sit outside and just

> talk. Filipinos will, on a daily basis, get a beer and drink and just talk. They are very relaxed with time.

Vivienne's description is a typical description of the Philippines lifestyle—*tambayan*. A concept of hanging around with friends and family outside on the porch, curb, or local canteen. From the perspective of a 14-year old American, Vivienne saw the Philippines as a vividly loud dream, opposite of the American suburbia she was used to living. At the heart of the hustle and bustle is the gathering of Filipinos enjoying a good, social time together. Why is this memory so strong for Vivienne? Was her observation of the Philippines evidence of the connection to her heritage she was missing in her reality in America? Vivienne continues to wrestle with her Filipino identity and American identity.

> I was born in the Philippines, but raised in in America. But it also means, embracing both values of both cultures. So for the Philippines, it's embracing their values of faith and family. And in America, it's embracing the values of hard work and success. I feel like I embody both the values of both cultures, all values. I feel like America's values are more individualistic, focused on being more of an individual, ambition, and the drive to be successful. So I feel like I embody both as a Filipino American and like I said, there is a lot of struggles with being Filipino American, which I spoke earlier about—not being Filipino enough or American enough. But you know, I've accepted myself. I've accepted that 14-year old feeling of just out of place. I accepted this, as I know I was born in America. Yes I speak English. Yes, I'm also Filipino and I can understand the Tagalog language than speak it. I accept that. I accept that I may not always respond back

> in in Tagalog. I accept that there was a language barrier. So overall, I've become more accepting of myself and my background. I was very open to the culture, the foods, just all of it.

Vivienne feels that she is "not being Filipino enough or American enough," even though she embodies both identities simultaneously and seamlessly. She understands her saliency towards American values of individualism, but also values Filipino culture that is focused on family and faith. To Vivienne, she sees both aspects in her and feels the need to accept that she cannot be both at the same time, even though she embodies both. She struggles to reconcile the differences.

As Vivienne exclaimed, "there is a lot of struggle being Filipino American," Ramona shares one humorous example of the struggle: punctuality. We call it, "Filipino Time." I know every culture has their quirks with punctuality and yes, I acknowledge it is a generalization. But in my experience, my family rarely arrives on time for anything. And when we do arrive on time, we are proud to call out our accomplishment of being on time. Ramona has first-hand experience with "Filipino Time" and shares a funny *kuwento* on the concept of time.

> What do I dislike about being Filipino? [Laughs] What I appreciate about American culture is that they are on time to things. [Laughs] I feel like being Filipino, I think in a lot of cultures too, it's like when you say show up at 9:00, it's like, more like, "We'll try to leave the house by 9:00, maybe." [Laughs]... I went to my sibling's graduation and it said it starts at 9:00. And they said the procession starts at 8:30. So I know that's when the kids start coming out. Now like, I wanna be there by the time the kids start coming out. So I was there by 8:15. And sure

> enough I knew I would have to save seven seats for my family. So sure enough, they got there are around like 9:20, 9:30. Thankfully the speaker took so long; the kids hadn't walked [in yet], but I already assumed [my family would be late] because I knew that's how it worked at my household that I grew up in.

When I asked Ramona how she was able to save all those seats, she proudly exclaimed,

> Oh, I went there with papers! I knew I had [to] put [them] on the chairs. [Chuckles] I really did. I knew I would have to save seats, so I folded [the papers] in half. I [made the folded papers] like little tents over the seats. So everyone knew that they were taken. And I went prepared for [my family] to be late. Well the one thing I don't like about being Filipino, I think—I feel like it's more normal to be less punctual. I don't like that. That's probably just a personality trait of my mom [to be late].

Ramona knew her family would be late, and prepared ahead of time for the inevitable consequences of "Filipino Time." Family is family, even if they make you do ridiculous things, like save half a dozen seats in a crowded graduation. Jay feels the same way about the importance of valuing family in the Filipino culture. Jay shared,

> Main thing is family, for like family is like a big thing in the Filipino community, especially like, Filipinos like to help out with each other, like [Pacific] Islanders. I have an Islander friend too and like, they always hang out and they like the tight-knit community. And that's how I feel like Americans are Americans [meaning that they are not as tight-knit]. I mean Filipinos are like, we always have like family gatherings or family friends, and they're all Filipino. The tight-knit

> community—everyone knows where the Filipino restaurants here, like Jolibee and like Filipiñana. So in like, I have just seen being Filipino and knowing like I have a couple of classmates that are full of, you know like, "Hey"—like we just have a connection—and we're just like "Oh, you're Filipino. You are? Cool, cool, cool."

Having a "tight-knit" Filipino family and large Filipino community are positive aspects of identity for Jay. He assumes that Americans and American culture do not value a close family and community, differentiating Filipino culture as a collectivist group, rather than an individualistic way of life. When other Filipino peers see each other, he is able to make a connection based on being Filipino.

Filipino social gatherings are another critical aspect of being Filipino identity. Filipino regional associations or church communities become a second Filipino family and serve as an important network of support (Cherry, 2014). Geralt shares a *kuwento* about his Christian church group.

> So Filipino community, [um] just being amongst other Filipinos. Uh. [Long pause]…Well when I got here to [eh] to the States. We—our parents you know, they got involved in like a church. So those are like our first friends, first family friends. And they still are. So [people at church] are like our community here in Texas…What do I like about being Filipino American? Let's see. Basically, yeah—like I said like the community, when Filipinos gets together, when they have their own like, party—Filipino style party. Yeah, with karaoke and we're chillin'. And yeah I love those. Yeah, because I guess, now I'm used to—I grew up having those type [of] like events, that we always do those events.

Geralt is not the only one who leans on his church community. Jay also enjoys the Filipino Catholic community at his local parish. Jay says,

> Just the community—like the Filipino community—is just awesome…The traditions that we have—you know you're not alone, like you're not the only one—only Filipino here in America that's like going through [this] stage by yourself. So it's just the community really. Not even like certain people, it's just like it's like "Oh we're having the thing that we had this church and everyone goes there" kind of thing. So I it's like welcoming. It's like how my family is the focus. Even though we don't know each other, we still gather and try and get to meet new people.

Although there are many religions in the Philippines, Catholicism plays a large part of Filipino identity. Jay mentions how being part of the church allows him and his family to connect with other Filipino families. Knowing that there are other Filipinos around them, makes them feel like they belong and are not "alone." Steve also discusses being Filipino and Catholic in the United States.

> Even though I'm living here in the United States, I did say that [my cultural] beliefs and everything is Filipino then American. Then again America is very diverse so it's very controversial. Same with it being American, just because it's a melting pot. We're a mixture of everything. I guess when I say I'm Filipino, I bring some of the more traditional aspects and cultures from the Philippines from my life. Examples could be [um] family oriented. Very close with my family, religion. Majority of the Philippines is Catholic. So I'm Catholic.

For Steve, being Catholic stems from his traditional roots of Filipino identity. Just like Jay, Catholicism is synonymous with the Filipino family. Catholic traditions become Filipino traditions, such as the way Christmas is celebrated. Rosalinda recalls her childhood memories of Christmas in the Philippines.

> Like, we have a very, like fun and vibrant culture in the Philippines we all grew up with and like, I guess when you compare that to like, [um] I guess like American culture. Like I really miss some of the stuff that we used to celebrate—or we do celebrate, we still celebrate in the Philippines, like now that you're an American. You know like you miss home, a lot more…[I miss,] I guess for example like, around the holidays. I remember as a kid, like really loving like the Christmas time and New Years in the Philippines, because you have like *simbang gabi* [evening mass] and like everyone's just like happy about the holidays…[*Simbang gabi*], it's like you go to church every night. I don't know how [many nights] leading up to Christmas, but it's pretty much every night until Christmas Eve. And you go there it's like a mass it's like really late at night.

For Rosalinda, she compares Filipino culture as "fun and vibrant" in comparison to American culture. She associates wonderful memories of Christmas and New Year celebrations, interlaced with Catholic practices. Jay also shares a *kuwento* about *simbang gabi,* evening mass*,* as a way to practice his faith and also gather with other Filipinos.

> *Simbang gabi*? Yeah that's a big one. Like my parents always try and go to almost all of them. Usually we can't, but we always try and stick to the ones that are closest to us so, and especially like family friends. You go to one day [and] try to make sure that they go to that one as well. So that's a big Filipino tradition.

> [For Christmas] we try and get like—[because we are the] only family [members] here [in Texas and] like—[my family tries] and go spend [the] day together [with the other Filipino church families] even if it's the next day [after the] holiday. We try and get the [families] together, especially Christmas.

Simbang gabi, known as "evening mass," is a Filipino Catholic Christmas tradition consisting of a nine-day sequence of consecutive masses at different Catholic churches. Every city has this own circuit, and this occurs nationally and globally. Jay's family tries to attend as many *simbang gabi* and he looks forward to meeting the other Filipino families at every mass. After the mass there is a fellowship in the church's hall. The hosting Filipino community donates and prepares a free dinner and entertainment for all the guests who attended the mass. In my own experience, it's like celebrating Christmas nine days in a row minus the presents, but memorable times with your extended family you have not seen in a long time.

Vivienne also remembers the impact of *simbang gabi* growing up and how much it influenced her definition of family. She recalls a lot of positive memories. She says,

> What do I like about [being Filipino]? I love the *simbang gabi.* That's nice. It's prior to Christmas, where Filipinos will do mass every day of the week? I think in the Philippines, they perform mass early, early in the morning. So I participate in this Filipino tradition in Texas, which usually occurs during the night. But I love being among other Filipinos and just seeing their generosity, their cheerfulness, and their values of being family centered. It's just when you see other families being very close knit, the energy is contagious. Everyone's family friend is a *tito*, uncle. You're all one family. Yeah…There's a Filipino pride in sharing the

> ethnicity. I know that sounds weird. That sounds very racist, but for example, being at *simbang gabi*, just sharing the faith, the same culture, the same ethnicity; it's beautiful because it makes you proud to be Filipino.

Vivienne describes *simbang gabi* as a place where family and friends come together, even if they are not related to each other. As she recollects her experiences, she feels a sense of pride for being Filipino and being part of this tradition. For some reason, she associates having pride for Filipino gatherings as "racist" when really, she is just trying to express her joy over the "contagious" energy of being surrounded by people like her. Just like Jay, Vivienne and her family do not have a large extended family in the United States and she says,

> Christmas is symbolic for family time. It is a gift to be with family that you haven't seen in a long time. Being with family is like Christmas. Maybe that is why Christmas is so special in the Philippines?...It was great, being with family. In America, I don't have a lot of family members who live here, maybe just an aunt and second cousins to my mom. So those are the only type of the kind of family I have and even in here, we're only somewhat close to them. But going back home [to the Philippines], seeing my parents very happy, being in reunion with their family—their brothers and sisters—I was seeing them at their most happiest. But yes, coming to the Philippines feels like it's Christmas. And even though, I don't visit the Philippines [often], there's this innate closeness because of blood. Blood, is stronger than anything, so you can immediately form tight bonds with them.

Even though Vivienne has some relatives in the United States, she does not feel the close connection to them. Instead, she feels the "innate closeness" of a Filipino family when she is attending the American *simbang gabi,* similar to the same genuine closeness she observed during her parent's family reunion back home in the Philippines.

Bunny has very strong bonds with her family, even though both her parents were separated at young age, just like Rosalinda's parents. She had only one family member in America when she was 17 years old and "came here in America back in 2011." Bunny said,

> I grew up in the Philippines and I was petitioned here by my dad…Because it's—I mean, first of all, I've missed my dad. I never really met who my dad really [was] as a person. I've only met him when I was a kid and he's always promised he's going to come back. He did for a vacation, but I never understood as a child. And I counted one to 100 because he was gonna be back after 100 days. And then I learned in school there's 365 days a year—I was like, "OK that's a lie [he is not going to come back]." But I honestly [missed] my dad. And I visited him before and he seemed pleasant, so I wanted to see more of that and so that's what encouraged me to actually go and see what is there [in America]. But I know I was leaving my mom [in the Philippines] so and I didn't really like that. So my mom came with me to America to drop me off, like because I don't know how to fly alone. I was very spoiled. I think that's the term. I was not independent at all.

Unfortunately, Bunny's older sister was left behind because she was over the age of being petitioned. This is the same reason for Rosalinda's older brothers, who were also too old to immigrate to the United States. Even though Bunny's parents are divorced and

living in different countries, Bunny is cognizant and grateful for her parent's hard work. She looks forward to helping her mom move to the United States, but recognizes the need to save up enough money to help make her dreams come true. Bunny plans to help transition her mom, step-by-step by paying for the immigration process and supporting her mom's educational and career goals.

> I have a good life…And my sister (in the Philippines) has a good life, and that's because my mom and my dad both worked for it. And so I have—I mean, that's the reason why when I was in college, I don't want to be in debt or I don't want to ask my dad (for money). So I found ways to not have a loan and never ask for the money except for food. And then the same thing with my mom, right? This is all going to plan—I came [to the United States because I know that I missed my dad] and that because I know my mom wants to live here. It's her dream. So I'm giving it back to her. Yeah. It's just really ironic [that] I'm the person that doesn't want to aspire to come here. It was my sister and my mom's [dream]. And yet I'm the one here [in the United States,] so I owe it to her to you know, to have the life she wants. Finally after all the hard work, [she can say,] "Oh my God, I lived in the Philippines," you know? When [my mom] became pregnant at 19, people be judging [her] and she's still—she didn't stop school. She kept going, [even if] she had a big belly. Maybe that's why me and my sister are good at school. I don't know. So that's why I hope I pay her back…So she gave me the life that I want. And so now when she comes here [to the United States], she's starting as I did back in 2011. Clean slate. And it may be harder for her because, you know, she has this [dentistry expertise]—or [lived] her life in the Philippines for most of her

> life, and she's emigrating here, starting over [with] her credentials in her career. Not a lot of people know her here and she has to start over. And by the way I can pay her back is through putting her to school…First of all, [cover all] of the basics, like shelter, car, insurance, [and] food. Yes. And then finding her a job in the dental field could be a hygienist at the moment, and then putting her through [dental] school. I [was] pretty sure she [had] money saved up, to cover all those expenses, but I feel like she needs me. Because I also found out that she doesn't have savings, and that really broke my heart. She's been working all this time and she's been giving all that money to me and my sister. I felt like I really needed to pay her back.

Bunny has a deep sense of *utang na loob*, debt of gratitude, for her parents and most especially her mother. She feels the need to pay back her parents by reducing educational expenses and helping her mom and sister immigrate to the United States in the near future. Bunny just found out recently that she did not need to file for citizenship, because her father was a naturalized, American citizen; by default, Bunny was also a citizen because she was still a minor under his care. When I asked Bunny what she thought about being Filipino American, she replied,

> Oh, not until I became a citizen, because I wasn't identifying as an American until I was a United States citizen. And I didn't know that when I first landed in the United States and I was a minor and my dad was a citizen that I automatically became a citizen. I went through—instead I went through that five year process of becoming a naturalized citizen. But the immigration [center] told me, ‘No you're already a citizen. You don't need to apply for it.’ I was like, ‘OK I don't need to

> do the oath, I guess.' Or I did the oath in front of one person. And that's it. And so I was like, 'Oh I guess I am a citizen'. If I would have known I would have applied for those scholarships in college. [Laugh] They say scholarships—that is only granted for United States citizens.

How unfortunate for Bunny to find out that she was already an American citizen after several years, and on top of that, did not reap the financial aid benefits as an American student. Bunny takes the situation lightly, but she knows that applying herself for scholarships could have been very helpful for her.

I hated filling out scholarships in high school and college. The scholarship process was confusing and mysterious. [Un]fortunately, I never had to think or question my citizenship status or worry about being the main person to reunite my family, like Bunny. I am an American born Filipina, born state-side with a large immigrant family. I was born and raised in Los Angeles, California for 23 years of my life before I moved to Texas. Steve, Ramona, and Justin are like me. Born in America, but now living in the South.

Steve said, "I was born in the United States, specifically [northeastern] part. But I was raised in Houston, Texas. So I spent the majority of my years my life in Houston but currently I'm actually living in [another southern state] because of work." Steve shared with me that he was planning to return back to Houston in the following month and live with his family temporarily until he can figure out his next move.

Justin was also born and raised in a predominantly, white population north of the city. Unlike Ramona, Justin recalls being the only Asian American in his school as a positive experience:

> I was born and raised in Forest Greens, Texas. Growing up, maybe I was one of the few Asians there. Maybe one of two Filipinos there. And so I grew up in where I felt like I was the only Asian/Filipino in high school...I moved to the North Houston area in Springfield [Texas]. And I went to a high school that there was a third—maybe [a third of] the class was Asian, and so it was a little bit of a change. I went from growing up in high school, I went from being like one of the smartest people in my class as I felt, you know everyone thought that too. They would come up to me and be like, "Hey you know you can you help me understand this."

Even though Justin was the only Asian American and Filipino American student in school, he described the Model Minority stereotype as a positive aspect of growing up in a predominantly white area. He liked being the token, smart Asian American. When he moved out of Forest Greens to a new area that was more diverse with Asian Americans, he was no longer the only Asian American student. He perceived being in academic competition with other students, specifically Asian American students who were also academically astute.

Justin has an affinity for his hometown of Forest Greens, but he does not fully understand the roots of his family background in the Philippines. He discusses his perception of his Filipino family.

> It's weird because I don't even know my parents background, or like, if you're to say Illinois—like [pretend] if I'm Filipino from the Philippines—you say Illinois. I'd be like "Who the fuck is Illinois? I need to pull Google out. Oh where's Washington? I need to pull Google out." But like for [my parents] they pinpoint

> [where they are from]. So my dad is from Gasinanan and my mom is from the Tenorte? I don't even know where those are? I know Gasinanan is a little bit up north, right? From Manila? I don't know where Tenorte is but, a lot of my family is in Manila and like they would tell me stories about how my mom would like travel from [short pause] Tenorte to Manila, maybe? I don't know? Like I don't know my geography over there. [My parents say] "Oh yeah, we need to go visit because it's from where your mom is from." I'm like, eh? I don't know. It doesn't really interest me. I went to Gasinanan and I saw "Oh this is your dad's table, you know, when he was in architecture school, you know. We had made this." I'm like oh cool? [Pause] Eh? [Laughs]. It's like, I don't know. It's just like—what am I trying to get at? What am I trying to say?

Justin honestly shares his lack of knowledge around his parent's hometown and upbringing. Even though he had visited his parents' hometown, he was very disconnected to the place, stories, and experiences of his parents. He could not understand the significance of his mom's arduous solo travel to and from the province to the city. He did not really care about his dad's surviving architecture table. Little does Justin understand, these stories and artifacts are evidence of the hard life his parents used to live. Perhaps being an American born Filipino, Justin could not really appreciate or understand the significance of these things because he did not personally experience this in Forest Greens, Texas. His parent's history and his current life in America are two, vastly different experiences that is difficult to reconcile.

Ramona described her background and asserted her Filipino American identity, saying:

> I was born from a Filipino—100% Filipino parents. They came straight from the Philippines to here, I think in about the 80's. So [um] that was a lot of my upbringing. That's a lot of where I come from, is from totally first, I'm first-generation, so my upbringing was 100% Filipino. I lived in the Midwest. Yeah I was born in the Midwest. We lived there. [Um, uh,] how long did we live there? I was, moved here to the South when I was still a baby. So most of my [um] childhood and my life has been here, [um so]. I grew up in a big family. It was my parents and I'm one of five. And so that was a lot of my experience growing up, was growing up in a large traditional Filipino family. So a lot of the [um] influences that I had growing up—if there was any American influence I had growing up, it was from my surroundings and not from my home. So [uh] that is definitely what brought the American side into me is just living here. It wasn't anything that, it was on me at home. Everything I had growing up was strictly, purely Filipino [laughs] for my Filipino parents. So that's me—been living here for 20 some odd years now. [Um,] went to school and in Perry [Texas] which [is] mostly [a] white area, very, very Americanized area. And, yeah. I grew up in Perry ISD.

Ramona recognizes that her Filipino heritage and American environment were two separate, compartmentalized identities. She realized she was Filipino when she was in the midst of non-Filipinos in Perry ISD. Home was the center locus for being "100% Filipino." Outside of the home was white, or as Ramona equated, "Americanized."

Ethnoracial Experiences

Justin and Ramona lived a similar lifestyle, but the locations of their schools were in opposite locations of the greater city. I am sitting across Ramona, who is wearing dark reflective sunglasses from the bright sun. We converse about her experiences living in a "predominately white" area. Ironically, we are sitting in the balcony of a high-end grocery store with a neighborhood of the same demographics. Ramona tells me,

> My educational journey. Well I grew up in Perry which is in a school district that was predominantly white. [Laughs] So I went to elementary there. I went to junior high there, high school and then the first time I left the school district was when I went to community college, [uh] Stella Mar Community College. And it was different going to Stella Mar because [it] was the first time there was a mix of cultures I feel. I saw a lot more Hispanics than I did at my high school. A lot more black students, a lot more. It was more of a melting pot. So that was very interesting to me. And that was also kind of what broke down the wall of me thinking that everyone was so, everyone was so ingrained with an American culture ‘cause I saw people who were expressing their cultures, like loudly and proudly. And that's not something I was used to seeing in junior high or high school.

This was the first time Ramona experienced racial diversity. She was surprised to see visible pride for ethnic and racial identity in school. Perhaps her observation gave her intrinsic motivation to express her Filipino-ness in front of others in college.

Geralt's initial understanding of being Filipino and Filipino American was also surprising. To him, being American was binary: you were either White or Black. Other

races were just a hyphenated identity—an attachment and accessory to the dominant "American." He had trouble explaining at first,

> So Filipino Americans they—Filipinos, in America. Being an American, when I fe—okay when I first came here in the States, I thought, American people was [only] white and black people. They're the original citizens. And other cultures, they're just, you know, Chinese-American, Mexican-American, Vietnamese-American. So I guess being an American is like if, you…were not just born here, but you're like...

I could tell that Geralt was not articulating himself clearly. I posed a difficult question, asking him what it means to be Filipino American. This is what he really meant to say was,

> That's my first thoughts when I came here in middle school. I was like, oh either you're white or you're black. And yeah. Even then it was like, [um] mostly white, that's the American one. Because that's what we see like in the media in the Philippines. You know, the movies too.

"White" meant being Caucasian, and this was equivalent to being the "one" that is "mostly" American. Geralt believed in this because these were images he watched growing up in the Philippines. Now that Geralt has immigrated to America, he now believes he is an American by citizenship. Geralt's ultimate answer to being American was, "So, first if you got your green card, [heh] your residence." He meant that he needed to obtain the proper immigration papers in order to stay here in America and become an American.

What does an American look like? In Geralt's eyes, a white person. A person who is not white, is not perceived as American, but othered, colored, and marginalized by citizenship status. As a white American, there is no questioning of residency or whether they belong in the States. They just belong, because they look like they do. In contrast, people of color, who do not look white or pass for being white are typically seen as the outsider. I have been questioned many times of my origin. There are many occasions where someone starts talking to me in Spanish. Why do they not know that I am not Latinx, but Asian American and Filipina America? Does my skin color tip them off?

Racial microaggressions occur daily and this challenges people of color to reconcile these unwanted issues (Nadal, 2014; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, Torino, 2007). Justin shares his *kuwento* with facing the same dreaded question.

> Well you know, I know my patients ask me all the time and they ask me "What are you?" And I don't answer "American" because I know what they're alluding to. I'm not trying to play a game with that. I'll just answer honestly, "I'm Filipino" because I know that's what they're alluding to. But [um], if you asked me on a survey[3], I'll feel a little bit uncomfortable if I put Filipino American. If I put straight Filipino, I mean ethnicity, [eh] that's fine. But like, when do you—what do you go as? Filipino American? [Eh um,] I question myself and that's why I don't feel confident. Because, people here that are Filipino American, at least in the city, just lack everything that I'm all about, right? Maybe if I move back to Forest Greens and I just stay there. It's like "Fuck!" Everything [might have] changed maybe, I am Filipino American, cool! But maybe it's just living in this

[3] The survey is the informed consent form and demographic survey I gave at the beginning of the research process for all participants

area. I love this city but, maybe it's just the city's people. I don't know? That might play a factor to it. But [um], the way I think.

Justin experienced a racial microaggression at work, specifically, a microinvalidation, in which people unconsciously make "verbal statements that deny, negate, or undermine the realities of members of various target groups" (Nadal, 2014). His patients assume that he is not from America because of how he looks, assuming he is "an alien" in this land (Nadal, Vigilia Escobar, Prado, David, & Haynes, 2012). Justin succumbs to what his patients are assuming about his racial and immigrant status. By Justin claiming his Filipino identity, his admission does not stem from a place of pride, rather, he says he is "Filipino" out of resignation and assimilation to his patient's expectations. Why fight against a microaggression, when in the scope of things, the question appears to be a small thing to worry over? Justin finds it easier to simply offer an inoculated answer of "Filipino" and let the benevolent racism roll off his ego, rather than fight what appears as a miniscule battle of racial identity. In Justin's case, there is no point giving into the question, most especially because he is "uncomfortable" self-reporting as Filipino American. He also thinks there is a difference between the communities attitudes in his hometown, Forest Greens, and the current city he resides in, because he did not have to worry about racial identity in his hometown. Racial identity was color blind, and he blended into the White community landscape. Justin found security in assimilating and being the Model Minority student.

Not all the characters feel the same way when asked, "Where are you from?" Steve faced with the same question, but he reacts differently. He said,

> So I guess when someone asks you like this, this happens all the time. They would ask me where I'm from. I always say, just because I always say "I'm American." But then I emphasize that [I'm American,] but my parents are from the Philippines and I'm of Filipino descent. I always say that's just cause I want to be—I was born in the United States, so I consider myself American. But then with my parents being Filipino, I also consider myself Filipino. So I always combine Filipino American...Being born and raised in the United States, I want to say is major thing. One, since I was born here and the majority of my life, and spent majority of my life [was] I'm going to school—and the school is under American, I guess, rules and regulations. So all the culture is American culture and everything. And that's what I've been living throughout my life.

Steve fights the microaggression battle and says "I'm American." He also acknowledges his Filipino heritage, but makes a point to say that he was born in America, attended school in America, and lives his life steeped in American culture. Steve makes an effort to keep close to his Filipino American identity, making sure people know he is not an "alien in his own land" (Nadal et. al, 2012).

Questioning nationality is not the only identity in question. Jay shares his *kuwento* from his grade school and high school experience of what students assumed about him.

> Because, when we—when like the Asian community—is pretty tight, especially in like high school and stuff. Like I'd always hang out with like the Vietnamese group and stuff like that. Like they were more accepting towards each other than some other person. They're like, they'd always like to tell you, "Oh, are you Chinese?" I'm like "No, freakin' Filipino." People would say that to you. Like in

> [elementary school] elementary school and middle school you know they're like not educated in ethnicity…[As] I grew older, you know, a lot of people started noticing like others differences. This person's Chinese, this person's Vietnamese, this person's Taiwanese, or Chinese, Filipino. So—[it, so like, most of us you]—like in high school—because there's very little of us, we [the Asian group] usually mash up and eat with each other at lunch and stuff like that…Like, "Oh! Aren't you—?" Like usually, I'd sit with them but I also have like close friends that…I'd eat with. So I would sometimes not eat with the Asian table. But I'd usually eat with my friends instead. I don't know. I had like a lot of variety of friends.

Jay is offended when peers assumed that he is Chinese or a different type of Asian American. He recognized that primary school education did not address ethnic or racial diversity, and thus, peers would make assumptions about his identity. Jay also shares how he is able to hang out with a "variety" of Asian and non-Asian friends during lunch time. He was able to go back and forth freely, wherever he wanted to sit during lunch (Warikoo, 2016). Who are his other friends, if they are not at the Asian table? And why are all the Asian kids sitting together? (Tatum, 1997).

What happens when a person does not look like American enough, and does not have the defining features of an "American"? Rosalinda discusses Filipinos appearance in comparison to other Asians, or in her assumption, a lack of a "distinct look."

> Like with the way we look like Filipino Americans, I feel like we don't really have like a distinct look to us. Like I guess for example, you see like a Korean American and you think it's a Korean American. Like most of the time they're probably correct because they'll have distinctive features. And with us like, we

> either get like mixed up with like, "Well are you Hispanic or like, are you Asian? What are you?" You know? And that's it.

I disagree with Rosalinda that Filipinos do not have a distinct look. Filipinos have not one distinct look, but a multiplicity of phenotypes. When Rosalinda says "distinct" features, she is trying to identify "one thing" that sets Filipinos apart from the other racial identities. Filipinos appearances are a representation of the multiple colonizers who invaded the Philippines. Filipinos can appear in all shades, with distinct facial features from different colonizers. I grew up believing a sharp nose and pale, white skin was the standard *mestiza* beauty. To claim being *mestiza*, meant claiming the influence of Spanish blood or another colonizer's phenotype. This declaration is seen as positive acceptance in the Filipino culture. Bunny, explains the concept in her *kuwento*:

> I like my skin tone now…So it's very heavily advertised in the Philippines to be lighter. I have issues with that when I was living there. But, I came to appreciate my skin tone which is *morena,* brown, because it shows that I'm Filipino. [Laughs] It's weird, but I'm proud to be a Filipino. I'm representing that even though we're from a third [world] country—we can excel. And we can adapt. And we can help other people. We're very nice people. [Chuckles].

When Bunny claims her "morena" beauty, the implication is that she embraces her darker shade of skin color which makes her identifiably Filipino. Although American beauty standards regard tanned-skin as high-end glow, both White and Filipinos perceive lighter skin color as the beauty norm. Bunny exudes with Filipino pride by being able to "excel," "adapt," and "help other people," implying that even though her skin color is not widely accepted, she at least meets the expectation of being the model minority. Bunny

may seem to embrace her Filipino beauty but as she continues to describe other troubling parts of her body:

> My eyes—eye shape. I didn't really like it at first. It's so small. But, it's not as small, as to what I used to think about it. It was, it looked Hispanic, mostly. [Laughs] But, and my nose. So my nose, and my eyes, and my skin tone—you would know I'm Filipino! [Laughs]

Bunny proudly recognizes that her facial features are distinctly Filipino, but also attributes the Spanish influence in her features. I have also experienced the oppressive standards of Filipino and American beauty. After watching Filipino *telesereye* (Filipino TV soap operas) as a young adolescent, I admired the beautiful, pale actresses. They had such creamy, white, and clear skin. My mom purchased *Likas* skin whitening soap bars at the Filipino grocery store. Ironically, *likas* means natural. There is nothing natural about skin whitening ingredients. We took our beauty obsession further and used alum rocks to scrub all the dark spots of my body: elbows, knee caps, neck, and armpits. My goal was to transform my brown color into whiter skin gradually.

Growing up, I was also encouraged to *tangos 'yong ilong*, which means to sharpen or point my nose, by pinching the nose bridge often. It was a ridiculous beauty regime exercise. The goal was to mold the skin into a bridge shape, so that I would no longer have a flat, bulky nose. Somehow, my nose would have a bridge and become a pointy nose, like a white American. My nose is just like my Grandma Felina, who had a cute button nose. My grandma hated her nose and she would always *tangos* her *ilong* in dismay. Our noses were a point of shame because we had a bulky nose with no bridge. Our features are innately Filipino, something I am proud to embody now.

My Grandma Felina, also known as Granny or Gramma, was one of most hardworking, resourceful, and caring people I knew. She took care of me and my sister since we were born until after graduating college. Gramma co-raised us when both of my parents were working long, hard days in their blue collar jobs. Her highest education was equivalent to 7th grade until she had to stop working to help support her family. She loved to sing and recite poetry, but she was terrible at math. She hated math so deeply, that she would feign using the restroom during testing days. Grandma always felt inferior of not graduating from formal school, but it never stopped her from finding a way to send all seven of her children to college. The woman was smart, tenacious, and amazing.

My grandma's relationship with math and academics, juxtaposes Bunny's academic experience. Bunny's friends have high expectations of her math abilities, but she realizes that she does not quite meet their expectations. Bunny recalls her *kuwento*,

> I guess when it comes to stereotyping, people think I'm really good at math or maybe semi-good at math? [Chuckles] But I'm not that good at math. It's semi. So I'm definitely stereotyped a lot that I'm smart. I mean, good stereotypes. Not much with Filipinos [meaning, the stereotypes are not by Filipinos but by other cultures]…Well there are a lot of good stereotypes to Filipinos. Not like with other cultures…[Um] they expect you to be very smart. Smart, meaning like in school, that you'll excel, [that] you're a natural leader. Ambitious. You're good at math. Everything. You can sing karaoke. You can play a lot of instruments. [My] friends my age and some people older than me [say these expectations]. They would tell me like, "I hear that Filipinos, [um] can play at least one kind of instrument." And I was like, "I think that's just everyone." [These friends are not

> Filipino], they're either—they're another culture. [Chuckles] Mostly Hispanic or Caucasian. Or other cultures. Yeah that's what they would expect from me and [uh,] that I'm very good—so I had this, a friend. When I was in school, I was struggling in accounting and he commented, "Well I thought Filipino's are good in math. I guess not." And that really offended me, because I'm a person! [I'm,] I am who I am.

I completely relate to Bunny and her experience. As a young girl, I thought it was my obligation to my parents to do my very best, or at least appear to be "perfect." I grew up surrounding myself with so-called "smart" Filipinos all throughout my Catholic school upbringing. I excelled in the arts: I was in lead character in musical roles, I was a lead hula dancer, I played the piano and guitar, and I was winning in academic decathlons in impromptu speech. I felt superior and motivated by my accomplishments as a pre-teen. But math, science, and social studies—those subjects were a complete disaster for me. I was just like Grandma Felina. I never felt I was academically smart because I could not master hard subjects. Science was too abstract, and social studies was about history on people and places I could not comprehend. The historical dates were so confusing and I did not care about the topics. I believed the arts were just natural things anyone could do and so I disregarded my artistic strengths as fun hobbies, and not true academics.

My best friend, Sunny and I started reminiscing about our school experience a couple of weeks ago. We did not become best friends until junior high and we hung out with different crowds. He said he always saw me as one of the "smart kids" and that his Filipino parents would always compare me to him. He never considered himself to be part of the smart Filipino kids group; he was an outlier. Secretly, I too felt I was always

compared to the other smart Filipino kids and my parents told me, “Look at Emilio, look at Gabby, look at Freddie, they are doing well in school. Be like them.” Comparison to other Filipino kids was the worst feeling—inadequacy. I wondered if the other Filipino kids felt the same way?

I scoffed at the idea of being “one of the smart kids.” I told Sunny various stories that would totally debunk his perception. I confided in Sunny and told him that I hated math as a child. In first grade, I would speed through math worksheets by purposefully writing down wrong answers so that I could finish the assignment and have free time in the reading corner. I was happy reading my *Little House in the Prairie* and pretending to be Laura Ingalls. As I mentioned previously, I was gullible for an American-classic novel.

I would never show my mom my bad grades; I only showed her good grades. If my sister and I had low grades such as C’s, we would show our progress report sheets to my dad at the very last minute in the car, before being dropped off at the school gate. With a pen ready in my hand, we would say, “Dad, can you please sign this?” He already knew what it meant, and he signed it, shaking his head, “Eh-eh.” In those two grunts, he was sharing his disappointment for not sharing with my mom ahead of time.

I do not know if my dad ever told my mom of the grades, but we were relieved to be spared from my mom’s hot, scalding lectures. But if grades were really bad, I had forged my dad’s signature on a couple of progress report sheets because I was so afraid of my parents seeing the bold, red ink letters of death: D’s and F’s. That red ink was a sign that I was not the “perfect” Filipino child, and I feared my mother’s punishment (Wolf, 1997). How could I compete with those smart Filipino children who were getting straight

A's and B's? I internalized the Model Minority Myth at a young age, without even knowing there was a theory to describe my behavior. I took matters into my own hands. I did what I had to do to maintain my reputation, but sacrificed my integrity. Sunny could not believe my crazy antics, and he felt duped by my "supposed smart Filipino" act this entire time. A part of me felt bad that he no longer thought of me as a smart kid, but I felt authentic sharing my *kuwento*. I am not proud of lying and forging my parent's signature, but it is my ugly truth.

School friends, such as Sunny, are honest—and sometimes brutally honest with their opinions on your identity. Ramona recalled a time when her school friends expressed their candid feelings about Ramona's parent's Filipino food.

> So like whenever—for example, whenever it was like my birthday at school or something like that my parents would want to bring in Filipino dessert [or something]. They would like to bring *leche flan* [Filipino custard], or like *hopia* [stuffed pastry], *halo-halo* [shaved ice dessert] or *puto* [rice cake] or something like that. And my [my] friends like they didn't know what that was and I was like [to my parents] "No, you can't do that! That's weird to them [ha ha ha]!" That's not normal here. They would think it's weird. And also they're very vocal about it too growing up, about what they thought was weird and not. So it kind of did, growing up, made me feel a little bit insecure about my upbringing because it was so different from theirs…You know kids growing up. Just, your classmates and stuff. If there was anything different, they were really quick to point it out. So you were really quick to feel singled out and, quote, unquote "different in a bad way"

> because we [Filipino kids] weren't like them. Kids are brutal when they're younger.

Sharing Filipino food in a non-Filipino setting is one way of displaying pride for culture. Unfortunately, Ramona exclaimed her embarrassment and alarm towards her parents, telling them not to bring Filipino desserts. Being singled out for school snacks is just one example for Ramona. She reclaims her pride in Filipino food, after years of being embarrassed by Filipino cuisine as a youth.

> How do I try to fit in? I tried to make it—I tried to [follow] like the American norms. Such as like different foods they ate or something that was normal for me when it wasn't. Like having dessert after [a meal]. That wasn't normal for me! But whenever I went to my friend's house, I acted like [it] was normal like, "Oh yeah. You know we do this all the time. We do that all the time." No I didn't [eat dessert after dinner]. Like, we just ate rice and whatever, like *sinigang* (sour soup) or whatever. And that was it. And also I think my palate also was different than most kids growing up. I didn't grow up on like a lot of sweets. It was like we ate whatever my parents ate. And then that was it. Where as in, I was growing up there was like a kids menu and [and] things like that and I was like, 'What?' When I was little, we just ate whatever my parents ate you know? We just go to a restaurant and whatever there is there. And that's what you ate. If you didn't eat then you were hungry. There's like a kid's menu in America and then there's an adult menu. But in the Philippines, just like you eat rice and *sabao* (soup) just like your parents do.

Ramona grew up eating Filipino food, not American food. Around her friends, she pretended to follow American food norms of having dessert after the main course, but in reality, she did not do this at her family dinners. She ate what Filipino adults ate, such as *sinigang* and *sabao*, because her parents did not accommodate for a “kids menu.” Now that Ramona lives on her own, she finds a way to incorporate her Filipino culture in her everyday life.

> How do I show it? Well me, because I live away from my parents now. I live on my own and I go to my job and everything. So [back then] was a lot of my Filipino influence was my parents. So being away from that now, a lot of that is not as present as it used to be. I used to be around my parents everyday so the quote, unquote “Filipino influence” was around me every day. So now that I'm living apart from that, I actually find my pride being like bolder now because—for example, whenever I go to work and I have food, like Filipino food and people are like "Oh, what's that?" Before I used to be like "Oh it's nothing, you know" like kind of like, I guess embarrassed in a way because it was something different to them. But now I'm like "Oh this is the Filipino food! We do this, this, this! You guys are missing out! It's really good! Blah blah blah!" To me, that's my Filipino pride showing. It's like, if anyone thinks something that is traditionally Filipino about me, that has a weird quality to me—before I used to be embarrassed of it, but now I'm much more proud of it, even if it does make you stand out more. To me, that's how I personally show them Filipino pride…I think because of growing up I saw how, I guess pushed down, in a way, that people—that people of different ethnicities were. Like everything that was made, anything that was

> different—and then American culture [had made it] feel wrong or weird or absurd, and it was so rude and that's just something that I was just, you know, that's something that—I don't know. I just, I hated feeling that people would try to make anyone different from them, [make them] feel weird about themselves. I think that's what kind of brought out [Filipino] pride in me. Because whenever you're younger, you feel more insecure about things, because whenever you're at that age or trying to fit into society—and you're trying to be accepted. But whenever you grow up and you kind of establish more of a place for yourself—you know, having your education, having a job. And you kinda see the world is more diverse than you thought growing up. So I think also seeing other people's pride show makes my pride show a little more too.

Ramona has reclaimed her Filipino pride by bringing Filipino food to work and not feeling ashamed about it. Rather, she is excited to explain what interesting cuisine she has to offer. Ramona's parents are not the only ones who took pride in Filipino food and cuisine. Steve's parents were also excited to showcase their home-cooked meals to others. Steve explains his perspective,

> Filipinos are...they are very nice and generous, so whenever Filipinos invite you to their house, there's always plenty of food. Always take their food when they ask you. They do it for you and they feel prideful [to make] delicious meals [and] dishes for you. Well especially when it's like a non-Filipino guest that comes and visits. And for example my parents when they [serve] Filipino dishes to [non-Filipino] guests, they [are always] interested to hear what they think about the

> food [and if it] is delicious; [if] they've never tried anything like it or that exact dish. So they are pretty prideful of their dishes.

Steve's parents are eager to share their home-cooked meals with other people, especially non-Filipino guests. Steve warns people that guests must "always take their food when they ask" guests to eat. I can identify with this *kuwento*, because my mom will relentlessly offer guests food, even after they have declined. Just like my mom, Steve's parents want guests to feel comfortable and gain approval for their Filipino cooking. Filipino American artist, O.M. France Viana calls this type of behavior, "Radical Hospitality" when Filipinos go over and beyond to share Filipino heritage through food. I wonder if a part of being radically hospitable stems from the idea of pakikisama, being in harmony with others, so that we are accepted as who we are.

Just like Ramona, Steve expressed his Filipino pride in the most unexpected places while he was traveling for work. He describes how he found a Filipino-inspired dish in a surprising place: Cleveland, Ohio.

> All of sudden…I've never seen—like I don't know if there's a big Filipino community in Cleveland [Ohio] or not, but I'm on my client's site. I go to lunch. I typically just go straight to the salad bar. But then I saw the pizza area and I was like "Man that pizza looks unique." I look closer to the pizza. I'm like "Man, this looks like, I never seen this pizza before."…My client's cafeteria, they have this [Adobo Pizza]. It's [uh] banana ketchup, Adobo chicken, onion, cilantro, scallions, drizzled with coconut sauce…When I saw that I was like, "Wait, what?" I'm looking like behind the counter to see if it's like Filipino chefs. Oh my God [they are] White, Black, Hispanic. I was like, "What the heck?" I should

> have asked the chefs, like "What made you guys think of [an Adobo pizza]?"… Yeah and it's funny. I'm shocked [and I say to] my co-workers, I'm like, "Yo, that's the first time I've ever seen a Filipino pizza." That was crazy. Literally that was this past week…I was happy. I was thrilled to see that. It was unique. It was something that I couldn't stop talking about actually, during lunch. I was saying to my co-workers, like, "Man, they have Filipino pizza here." And they are like, "What's Filipino pizza?" I was like, "I don't even know!" I had to look at the picture. Like it has all these ingredients [that make up Adobo]. I wish I should have tried it but I'm on a diet…I feel like [the Filipino pizza] represents [uh] there has to be reasoning why the client put that in their menu last week. I think I know why. Alright so [um] my client. I think it was Wednesday, they had some kind of cultural awareness workshop and I'm a subcontractor for that client so I wasn't able to attend. So now that I think of it, it had to do something with that cultural awareness workshop that they had this week, this past week. So that might have been something that "Hey let's put a Filipino dish." Not really a traditional [Filipino] dish. But like, a little Filipino there…Yeah. Filipino American right there. Filipino American pizza right there!

Adobo is a Spanish influenced style of cooking, where vinegar, soy sauce, onions, garlic, pepper, bay leaves, and ginger are used to stew any choice of meat. *Adobo* is a popular home-cooked dinner meal, and it is usually served with white rice. To Steve's surprise, the traditional Filipino cooking style was remixed into a pizza, in a cafeteria line in the middle of Cleveland, Ohio. Even though there is no such thing as a Filipino pizza in the traditional cuisine, Steve was very proud to see a part of his culture in a public

space, but in the private company of his co-workers. In Steve's eyes, the pizza best represented "Filipino American right there." The pizza is American and the ingredients on top of the pizza are supposed to represent Filipino culture. This kind of dish is defined as a fusion of two cultures, but I cannot help but think if this is the most appropriate way to introduce the public to Filipino food, when it really is not true Filipino food.

Rosalinda finds herself wanting to cook real Filipino food and bring back the nostalgia of her homeland cuisine. She proudly shares her kuwento about cooking a Filipino dish all by herself.

> Well of course [Filipino] food is the best in my opinion because like I've been recently trying to cook more Filipino foods…I tried it, this is like—I mean the, you know beginner's level, but I tried to make *giniling,* like pork *giniling* once. It turned up pretty good…It has pork, ground beef. Yeah. Ground pork and then I put like—it's pretty much like a sautéed pork, browned with like carrots, green peas, and potatoes. Pretty good. Eat it with rice.

I have to admit, I have never had pork *giniling*, probably because it might be a regional dish in her hometown. But the description of her food makes my mouth drool, even though I am a pescatarian. Rosalinda was proud to "cook more Filipino food" and share it with her roommate while she is in college. To me, this sounds like good, old-fashioned homemade Filipino food. The pork *giniling* is the real deal.

Although I find Steve's story about the Filipino adobo pizza endearing and humorous, I cannot help but think if this culinary fusion is a cultural mis-appropriation. Why not serve chicken adobo in the Filipino traditional way, just like Rosalinda cooking real pork *giniling*? Similarly to Ramona's observation, why feed children from the "kids

menu" when you can feed them the food that the adults eat. Is there a need to cater to American taste buds by dumbing down the ingredients into something Americans feel most familiar eating—pizza? Or is this a new way to promote Filipino culture by fusing pizza and adobo together? Nevertheless, it appears that Filipino culture needs to be more appealing for American approval. Is this the "Filipino culture," that my community can be proud of, even though it is not authentically Filipino? Characters like Ramona and Steve seems to be in a constant dance between assimilation and enculturation. Ramona shares another *kuwento* about showcasing her Filipino identity through traditional apparel.

> I remember one time when we were growing up and we were doing—we grew up doing taekwondo. And I remember in fifth grade we had this thing called [Hawk] of the Week. It was kind of like the "highlight-a-student-of-the-week;" you get to bring a poster, show the class about like your life and family pictures, and your interests and stuff. And my parents wanted me to do it like they wanted to show them like traditional Filipino wear and stuff, [but] so I brought like a *barong*. And I brought like all these things, and everyone was just so, "This is weird." They're like "This is weird. This is—this looks funny. Like my parents just wear like suits and tuxedos and stuff, and [you guys] like these guys wear this like flowery, floral, elaborate stuff." And they thought it was girly, thought it was weird just like—I didn't know it was weird, you know? Like I didn't know it was super different because that was just about as formal wear when I was growing up.

The traditional Filipino *barong Tagalog* is made from the fibers of pineapple leaves, called *piña.* Because the material is delicate and sheer, an undershirt is worn underneath.

Each *barong* has a special, decorative embroidery of flowers and detailed designs. One *barong* could cost over $100, and much more if it was custom-made. My dad would wear a *barong Tagalog* to special occasions, such as weddings, funerals, and formal parties. This is not street wear and the *barong* is held with high-esteem and care. When he wears his *barong*, I know that he is going to a very important event.

Ramona's pride for showing off the *barong Tagalog* turned into a traumatic experience. Instead of being accepted as a proud Filipina by her peers, their brutal honesty showed their inherent racism. Her classmates saw her as "weird," because the *barong Tagalog* challenged the masculinity of American "suits and tuxedos." Suits and tuxedos are layers of clothing on top of each other, and have a boxy frame. While the barong Tagalog is sheer and lightweight. The "flowery" embroidery is seen as effeminate; but in reality, the embroidery represents hours of painstaking craftsmanship. Instead of seeing her cultural identity as a positive aspect, Ramona left feeling unwelcomed, singled out, and in an identity crisis. In moments like this early memory, Ramona was faced with the binary effect of being Filipino American. She had to decide between being American and being Filipino, because being both Filipino and American was not accepted—it was "weird."

Ramona felt that her Filipino upbringing was limited to boundaries of her conservative home and family. Her friends had a different experience by living American values such as family dynamics and negotiating with parents.

> "What was interesting, [and] what was so American about my upbringing that was different from home was just everyday life—like the way my friends will live their everyday life, like they had a certain bedtime. They had [a] certain things

they couldn't watch and my parents is just like “When you go to sleep, you go to sleep. When you're done with homework and you’re done eating, you go to sleep when you're tired.” You know what I mean? And there was no such thing as like being grounded when you were little. If you just got in trouble you got in trouble. There was no like, “Oh we're going to take away this from you for this amount of time or anything like that.” And also honestly, [laughs] I got in trouble a lot as a kid. The way you talk to your parents is not the same. And so sometimes like if I—say I wanted to spend the night at my friend's house or something—from my parent, they would say no and I knew [it] was a no. But I will see my friends they will be like, “But Mooooom, you know I want to! It makes sense for me to spend the night at this person's house because this, this, and this.” With my parents they won’t tolerate that if it was—they said “no,” it was no. And so I would try to reason with them sometimes as a kid and that didn't always go over so well with them. [Laughs] So those were some American things that I tried to bring home, but that just did not work with my parents…Filipino values I feel like are much more conservative than American values because growing up in school, my friends were allowed to hang out you know spend the night at their friend's house. Stay out late with boys and things like that and that was not okay in my house. It was like, “You’re home at this time. We know who you are hanging out with.” Definitely you—no hanging out with the boys at past a certain time and they always know who you're hanging out with. So they're very much so strict. I guess I feel like Filipino values, they [they] focus a lot more on making sure you maintain your quote, unquote, “morality.” Growing up I don't know if that sounds

> like mean, but they want to make sure that you're not giving yourself away in any way—not just like physically—but also in your values. They don't want you to be disrespectful. That's another big thing that I feel like a traditional Filipino—they always want [you] to respect your elders. There's talking back to your parents, which is unheard of growing up. You don't do that. To where I feel like, a lot of my friends growing up they could talk back to the parents and the parent would actually hear them out, and try—and actually consider that they had a valid point. But if my parents just heard [that,] you're being disrespectful [and] just the fact you're being disrespectful [is] is no, that's not OK for them.

When Ramona tried to exercise the same American behavior as her friends with her parents, such as negotiating the permission for a sleepover, her parents did not approve of her reasoning. Ramona confides the real reason why her parents would not let her sleep over.

> Like at the end of the day we went we weren't allowed to spend the night anywhere [because of] safety reasons growing up—because my parents grew up in [a tough city in the Midwest] where they lived in an apartment complex where their neighbor's child got murdered. At a sleep over. So I was never allowed to sleep over at my friend's house for that reason, which I totally understand. So I was never allowed to spend the night and that's also one thing that my American friends didn't understand. They were like well “Why can't you spend a night? Everyone else is spending the night.” My parents say no, and there's no reasoning with that. They say no, it's no.

Ramona's parent's early immigrant experiences in America was tainted with crime and violence. Witnessing a traumatic event to a neighbor's child hit close to home. It is any parent's worst nightmare to have anything tragic happen to their child not under their supervision. Thus, this traumatic memory influenced how they would raise Ramona and determine how much assimilation she would have to the American lifestyle, such as innocent sleepovers. Although my family has never witnessed this type of tragedy, my parents also did not allow me to sleepover with my friends as a child due to safety concerns. Moreover, my parents were very weary of how much time I would spend outside of my nuclear and extended family, which is the circle of trust.

Educational Journey

Steve experienced the same rules as he recalled his yearning to socialize with friends growing up.

> I was raised under Filipino traditions and culture inside my household. But then, when I am outside of my household, the majority—or the culture is American culture—well I think my parents [if] they wanted the best for me. So they were very strict. Comparing me with my friends who are American and their parents [who] are born in America, the household rules are a bit different. I'm not too sure it is like a Filipino way, [uh] Filipino rules, but consider them Filipino rules just as they came from my parents. I couldn't go out as much. [Uhm, yeah] I couldn't do any of the things I wanted outside of school. But now that I am older, I could see my parents just want the best for me. But they could have done it in a different—in a different way. Okay so like they restricted me from hanging out with my friends outside of school so whenever I come home from school and I

> wanna hang out with my friends—I couldn't. They wanted me to—I guess stay concentrated in school and everything—making sure I don't get sidetracked with my social life. But [um], I feel like the way it should have been done is that there should have been a balance. Of course I mean school, your social life. You're there for education. So outside of school that's when you want to socialize majority of the time. So there should have been some kind of balance of my parents letting me hang out with my friends and going out [and yeah].

Steve's parents were concerned with him being too social and losing focus on completing school. He admitted that he had difficulty learning in school and his frustration lead him to be demotivated and apathetic. He did not see the value in education growing up, but knew he had to do something to become independent. Steve digs deep in his childhood and shares,

> I could go way back. Back in elementary school, my parents they put me on like, [not a program], they bought a program for me called "Hooked on Phonics." It was for learning how to read and stuff like that. So growing up, my parents they thought there was like something wrong with me, but I was just being lazy. So they put me on a program so I could [like] start learning and stuff but I take account I was just being lazy. I didn't really like school or studying. [In] elementary school and middle school, I would have to go and attend summer school because I would fail, back then, it was called TAKS test. I was flakier. I take the wrong. I was just lazy. So it wasn't until high school that I was like, at the end [of high school] I can't be lazy. I need to do good in high school. It wasn't even the whole time in high school; it hit me 10th grade in high school. I got my

[um] not report card, [but] basically where, [oh] all a full transcript as it turns up. So I got my transcript and grade and then I saw that I was not performing well. I was like, “You know what? Something has to change.” It was until I hit the 11th grade that I started doing—I thought about it and I told myself, “Alright, I screwed up in high school already.” [I] At the time, I thought it was already too late for me. So what I did, was I thought of the future. Even though I was in high school, and I knew I screwed up early on, there was still a way for me to recover from it. So, when I started my 11th grade, I started taking dual credit classes. I told myself, “Why worry about my high school grades. Where I could—I already know that I messed. And now I'm trying my best. So the best way I can do that is to start taking dual credit classes.” And yes I'm sure you know with dual credit classes are. Where I can get college credit for the classes I'm taking. So I'm 11th grade to 12th, I decided to take dual credit classes. I only focused on those classes even though I was still in high school; I still have my other high school classes. But I was thinking of the big picture, which was college, so I wanted to do the best that I can with those college classes…So the reason why I decided to take dual credit is because I'm a bad tester. So I didn't want to go with the AP (Advanced Placement Testing) route where I relied all of my knowledge on one test and if I fail it, I don't get it [the college credit]. So I decided to go to dual credit route where it's a journey—throughout my journey [taking dual credit], is being captured or logged. So no matter what, Ima get a grade. I'll get a college credit grade. I'm gonna get college credit no matter what. The reason why I decided to take it, is going back, I considered my high school—I guess—career,

> over with. Which, I didn't want to worry about my high school grades anymore. I felt like I was already too far behind to catch up with my high school grades, that you know what, "Why, [why] worry where I could jump straight and get into college credit. So that's why I chose dual credit…And one [uhm I] I didn't tell myself, but thinking of all the possibilities that, I think the best route for me after high school was community college. So right after high school went straight to community college. Fortunately I already had a couple of college credits through the community college that I attended. So I felt like I was already ahead of my game. I totally forgot about my old high school grades and everything—that didn't matter to me. Went through community college after high school and then after that I transferred—or as soon as I had enough credits from the college I transferred to the university, where I graduated with a bachelor's in business admin[istration].

Steve experienced a moment of self-awareness when he received his high school transcript in 10th grade and realized that he was not performing well academically. He knew he was just doing the minimum, and decided to think about his "future" and the "big picture" which was going to college. Taking dual credit classes became his opportunity to start working on college classes before going to college. This made Steve feel valuable and "ahead of the game," even though his high school grades were a disappointment. With already having college credit through community college, he decided to continue his education there and then transfer to a large university. Steve admits that growing up, he was not keen on going to school and would have rather done something else.

> [Uh] I say I didn't want to study at all. Did not enjoy it. There was other things I'd rather do. Go outside. Play video games. Let's see, watch TV or watch movies back then. School wasn't really my priority [so] or studying or anything. I just didn't want to do it. But then again I think about it now, it wasn't my priority.

When I inquired more about why school was not a priority, Steve admitted.

> Oh, I think I was so eager to start making money that—[chuckles] I was eager, to, start making money, and like getting a job and stuff that, I just wanted to do that, instead of sitting in a classroom. [Uh] Like you could do more things, you know, when you have a bit more money. My parents they always wanted to save money and stuff. So my, [my] mission was to make money so I could enjoy my life. I felt like my parents were too cheap, [chuckles] I could say. So I just wanted to not live like that anymore…Oh I think it's because they knew where they came from like growing up. So they just wanted to, [uh,] not spend too much money on non-necessity stuff. But [uh,] that's why I think I never really asked them [for money].

Steve's parents were tight on money growing up and he was influenced by his parent's experience. He saw the "big picture" of going to college and getting a job as a way out of the financially restrictive lifestyle they led and the life he had to live under their care. Steve admits that he was not academically astute growing up, disdaining the idea of going to school. His motivation to live a better socioeconomic status than his parents fueled him to get through his education. Steve further clarifies the reasons why he chose community college over going to the university first. Interestingly, his academic performance, the value of family, and the affordability of college became the trifecta for his college decision-making process.

Okay, the reason why I decided to go to community college was that I wasn't confident [in] my high school GPA to be accepted into any universities. And that's one. [And] the main reason, and this is going back to my family being Filipino. [They] wanted to save money and keep me home, so they advised me and encouraged me to go into community college. So I came home and go to school at the same time. Yeah, there's two reasons I would say, the main reason—it's like 50/50, that's the family reasons [and the high school GPA]. You know, so money was a big part of it of course, just because it's expensive to go to universities straight out of high school. Going to community college is a great way to—not save money—but to [uh]...It's more affordable way to get a degree—going through community college then transferring to a university…So education, [uh] they influenced me a lot. Uh, as I said before you know, throughout school they always pushed me to do good—with school, my grades, and everything. Career wise, [uh] they tried to push me towards the medical field work. I stopped them. I was like "Nope, that's not for me!" Yeah, like throughout high school, like graduating high school I thought I was gonna go into pre-pharm, but it wasn't until I started [uh] college that I said "Naw, that's not what I'm going to do." So, I had to, I guess stick up for myself for a career choice-wise and education, yeah—I had to switch from all the science classes to business classes. So I had to [uh] tell my parents what I want—what I wanted to learn and what I wanted to do, work-wise and career [wise]. [Uh] Career [wise] it’s a bit different, just because [uh] in business, you can do a lot, career wise. My parents had no clue what supply chain management was, so that was something questionable. Because when I told them

I wanted to do business at first, at first I want to do accounting. Of course they knew what accounting was, but then when I transferred to a university and I took my intro[duction] to the supply chain and I saw that I had an interest in it—and then when I wanted to switch my majors to that—and when I told my parents that I wanted to supply chain instead, they didn't know what it was. So I had to explain to them what it was. But then [um,] actually—it was my dad that was okay with it at first because [uh,] my uncle he does logistics, and that's part of supply chain. So my uncle was able to talk to my dad and tell him everything about supply chain and my dad was like, "Alright yeah, it seems like a good career choice to pursue"…And then now I'm doing consulting—information technology consulting, which is totally different from when I was studying. But I told my parents that the [the] stuff I learned in supply chain helps a lot, [um] with my current job now. Like for example the team that I work with, I work closely with the procurement team, which is a part—which procurement is part of supply chain. So, [uh] supply chain is very [uh] it fits everywhere in business—supply chain. Almost every business has supply chain in it, so yeah. Oh yeah, [uh] I think at that point my mom trusted me already that I knew what I wanted. [Um] Because at first she was worried that I wasn't going to, I guess, finish school or anything, because of how I was before. But then, as soon as she saw that I was very goal, goal-oriented and I knew that I was going to finish school no matter what, she was happy, whatever choice I made. And then of course, it being business, she was okay with it. I think if I would have chosen something else, like if I would have chosen like music or something, then she probably would have

> been—a bit of upset about that or something. But since it was like business, she was like "OK." And my mom now, she's like a bit more business-oriented so…well I was using [music] as an analogy or as an example. It was never an option. Hmph!...Before they would have been like a bit upsetting [if I chose a major like music]. They probably wouldn't [um,] support me, if I would have chosen that major. But I now, now that they, they have changed a bit now. Now they would be supportive, but [uh] yeah before they wouldn't have. But now if I would've said today that, "Oh I'm going back to school to pursue music." They'd be OK with it.

It took Steve's uncle to explain the benefits of his major change into supply chain. Retrospectively, his parents now accept his major and career choices. Steve joked about pursuing music. Filipino children, like Steve, have a fear of majoring in arts and humanities, because parents do not want them to study it. Parents want them to major in something more "stable" and that will land them a job. With Steve being the first in his nuclear family to attend college in the United States, he had an influential role in his sibling's educational pathway. Steve shares his *kuwento,*

> Why the sudden change [of my parents' mentality]? I think because the growing. Throughout the most recent years, [ah,] I've been talking to them about like how they should be more supportive and stuff. Specifically for like my sister and my [eldest] brother, because I—acted more like an older brother—or like I—was the one that went through all of the different phases my parents went through, [uh] taking care of like, their children. So I was the rebellious one—I was the one that would always like, tell them like, "You should do this instead of this," you know

"You should have raised me like this, instead of that." But then, [uh] now that we know and I tell them like, "You shouldn't do this to my sister or something, because she's just growing up. You gotta support her in what she wants to do." Now that they a have an insight in what my sister is feeling inside, [uh,] they take my [my] opinions to heart, and [uh] yeah…So I'd like, education-wise, my [older] brother he had the same situation [as me] where my parents pushed him to do medical but he didn't want to. But he didn't stick up for him[self], he didn't stick up. He didn't tell our parents that he wanted to do something else. It wasn't until I said something and like—he really had, like a year or two in [community] college [ahead of me]…Until I started going to [community college] with him that's when I say "Yeah, I'm telling mom and dad I'm not doing pharmacy anymore. I don't want to do that." That gave him the courage to I guess, [to] stick up for himself. So that's it. That's one instance where I felt like I was [the] bigger, older sibling. And then another one is, I graduated first with a bachelor's [degree] and my brother, I think it took him a little bit longer for him to achieve his bachelor's. And then another one is that, I think he's still looking for like, a job within his field, while I already have like a professional job or something. Yeah. I know, I know at home it's kind of tough on him. My parents are proud of me. I can't really acknowledge that they're proud of me. I can't, I can't—brag something like my parents. They don't like to brag that I I'm like successful at my age. Just 'cause you know, if my brother hears that, he'll have like, feel down and stuff, and I totally understand. I mean he's the oldest, he's the oldest, so I'd feel down if I was in his position too. I was more of the outspoken one within my family or my

> siblings. So like growing up whenever there was like a party in the house or something, I'm the one that's like I want the spotlight on me. So I was like, I was OK. But like talking and stuff –my brother, he [is] the quiet one. So it was just easier for me. And like I was rebellious towards my [my] parents and my brother he just listened to whatever my parents would say. So of course, me wanting to pursue a different educational journey, I was more outspoken about it. And then as soon as he saw that my parents let me pick my [my] choice in major I wanted to study—[it] gave him life assurance that "OK maybe I could do that too."

Steve was in a situation where his *kuya*, older brother, was much more reserved and quiet about his career and educational choices. When Steve realized that he did not have the aptitude to pursue pre-pharmacy, he made a resolve to stand up to his parents and let them know that he was not going to follow their way. This inspired Steve's *kuya* to gain some courage and follow suit. Steve's amazing accomplishments are dampened because he is respectful of his *kuya's* pride and feelings. Typically, the older children are expected to excel and pave the path for Filipino families. Steve placed himself in a unique position to create his own path, even if it meant changing the family hierarchy dynamic.

As Steve trail blazes as the more successful son, he is also the only Filipino at work and where he lives. He traverses a lonely journey on his own and it impacts his emotional views of being Filipino.

> I'm here in a different state. I've only seen one Filipino family, in two years, here. And the Filipino family I saw was actually in a different city, which is an hour away. But I mean I guess. Yeah. That's the main one. But then again you know

> when I'm in the Philippines, you know I'm the majority. So it feels [pause] it feels good, being a Filipino. I guess other things I disliked about being Filipino I can't really say. So to be honest, I don't think about too much [that I'm the only Filipino around,] just cause I feel like if I restrict myself, I am just looking for all the Filipinos and feeling down that there are no other Filipinos. I'm just making myself feel bad, you know. I mean I don't know. There's no point in me thinking about it, being down about it. I can do nothing about it. So I typically don't think about me being the only one and I don't feel down about everything I guess.

I doubt that there are no Filipinos in the city he lives in, but he has not had any interactions with other Filipinos while living in a different state for work. Steve feels sad and lonely at the idea that he is the only Filipino, but he tries not to think about it. The same situation occurred at work.

> I guess I first realized [that I was the only Filipino] when I guess, I started my job. The way—when I was hired, I was hired with about 50 to 60 other newly graduated [students]. And [um] I was the only Filipino amongst the hiring class. Of course, I guess that's one of the first things I looked for—like anyone, [uh] like we have everyone. First I'll look where [are] all [the] Asian people and then after I see that, that's when I determine, are any of them Filipino. [Uh] I guess that's like my initial thought on that. Like for example, when I went to my client for the first time, I would bet my team was like, "OK there's three Asians." They are not Filipino, but yeah, I guess that's my initial thought I always have. Well then after a while, I don't think about it too much. Somethings I don't like about being Filipino—I never thought of that before. Well I guess being a minority, that's one.

> It doesn't really specifically have to be Filipino. Just minority in general. Say my current job. [The] majority are Caucasian. For example, I'm the only Filipino on my project. My current project right now it always seems—not really cliquey, but you know, like when it's lunch time, there's always you know, the Caucasian people would hang out with each other. For example, the Middle Eastern people would hang out with each other and stuff like that. Me, [where do I sit?] Whoever I feel like hanging out with. I'm pretty—I really, I'm not in a particular group or anything. It's just really depending where I need to talk to one person and I would sit with them during lunch. Oh, oh and then there's age. So like people my age, I would sit next to them at lunch. So there's an age difference also.

Similarly to his experience of being the only Filipino in his city, he also feels like he is the only Filipino at work, with the majority being "Caucasian." He looks for another Filipino who he can identify with, but he only had other Asian Americans to connect with at work. Once again, he says that he does not want to "think about it too much" because it happens to often. Just like Jay's lunch room experience of which group to sit with in the cafeteria, observing racial and generational cliques continue in the work place. Steve observes that every racial group sits with each other during lunch, while he sits with co-workers his age or with co-workers needing to talk about business. Just like Jay, it appears that Steve's racial and ethnic identity is fluid, but to the point of irrelevance and invisibility to racial division.

Steve's education and career journey appears to be on track with his life plans. He is very focused on his career advancement and aims to rise up the ranks within the company in order to reach his view of success and financial stability.

> At first, I would I would think, "OK," [to] you know, wife and kids or whatever. It was probably my answer maybe a year ago. But now I kind of want to live. I don't want to have the responsibility of having a wife and kids yet. I'm 24. I want to get married—until like maybe, like mid 30's. I want to focus on my life. I don't want to be responsible for anyone right now, other than myself and my family. Now it's a bit selfish, but that's how I'm thinking now. I just want to pursue my career. Don't add on any distractions...No, no, no, no, wife or kids for sure! I think I like woke up one morning, I was like, "You know what I don't want to settle down like anytime soon." I'm traveling a lot. I'm traveling every week, Monday through Thursday, I'm traveling. Having a kid, having like a serious relationship or anything, is difficult. Broke up with my ex[-girlfriend] just because I travel a lot. I rather pursue my career than pursue my love life at the moment. So that's how all I'm thinking right now. Me? It could change tomorrow. I don't know as of right now. I just want to pursue my career and pursue a business in the future.

Justin also had a clear, focused path—he wanted to speed through his educational career because of past experiences that kept him down. Unfortunately, going to community college was not his first choice. After being rejected at his top university choices, he had to go to community college because he said "not going to school" was not an option, but an expectation by his parents (Kim & Gasman, 2011). The rejection ate at his core. Justin shares his *kuwento*,

> Being one of the smartest people in your class [in Forest Greens] to moving to a bigger high school with 900 plus students, and a third of them are Asian, and you're still not top 10%, and that's the reason why you don't get accepted to

> University of Saxon…And so I mean it kind of sucks to say that if I stayed [in Forest Greens, Texas that] I would have gotten accepted to Saxet University or University of Saxon, which doesn't matter right now. Before when I thought, you know, that was the thing that everyone gravitated towards like, "Oh I want to go to University of Saxon. I want to go to Saxet University. I want to go to this big university that would be a big university. At the end of the day I, didn't get [in]. And I remember being so down about it. And I was crying. I told my mom, "I am sorry I am not that student—I'm not that student you want me to be." And she was like "No, no." But I'm like in my head I'm like man you dropped the ball somewhere. You dropped the ball somewhere." And that that helped with the maturity process too and that's why I feel everyone right now—I'm 25 right now, graduated when I was 24. People don't just graduate [as a] Physical Therapist at 24. That maturity process takes a while and then average is like 26, 27, 28. And for some reason I found a secret which is not really a secret—I just [matured] a bit quicker because of my experiences. And so yeah, that's just that's just how it went.

After realizing the reality of his rejection to his top school choices because he was not a top 10% student, he wanted to get out of school and start working immediately. By attending a multi-campus, community college system, he was able to take advantage of the close proximity and transfer credits. Justin shares why he went to community college:

> Because I didn't get into it—truthfully because I didn't get into [University of Saxon]. Now [community college] was cheaper. Yeah, I got accepted to Jose Antonio University, but it's not like I want to go there. I just applied because

> everyone else was applying. I didn't want to go to school. So I was kind of like—"No, no, no, I didn't want to go to a big school" because I don't think I was ready for that step. So I was like well I can still live at home and go to community college. And so there is that. Racking up my credits was a good experience. Everything else kind of sucks…The best part about community college was just racking up the credits. And I was able to go not only to one community college but another community college campus, another campus, another campus—because I'm in the middle of everywhere. And so it helped to fill up my schedule because [if] it's not offered [at South Kevin campus], I go to [Mando Square campus]. [If it] is not offered at [Mando Square campus], I go to [Hillside campus]. It's not at [Hillside]? So I go to [Babyville Moor campus]. I'll go through every one and saw that I was really pleased, and like grateful for that kind [of opportunity]...The reason why I went fast is because I didn't want to go to school. I think when you're self-aware about what you're good at and what you're not good at, I'm not good at school and then I was self-aware—I became self-aware that it's not—that it's—I wasn't interested in the subject. I could be good at that class, but if I'm not interested, why am I doing it? And you're not going to catch my attention, like I'm not going to want to go to school.

After community college, Justin eventually transferred to his local 4-year university, Jose Antonio University, to obtain his bachelor's degree. During his time as an ungraduated, he was gaining observation experience for Physical Therapy. When he applied for graduate school, Justin recalls the pain of rejection again:

So here's the thing because I was going so fast, I applied to physical therapy school as a junior, but I was graduating next year because I was taking max credit—maximum amount of hours. [Sarcastic laugh] I was about to graduate next year. But then it was like [I'm] still considered as a junior. How is that possible? I was going ridiculously fast. But I did apply to three schools…Rejected from all three and they told me you know, what I was lacking or I wasn't as competitive. Low GRE, a little bit lower GPA, at least for math and science—obviously I'm like, "I hate science." I almost failed physics at Jose Antonio University. Yeah I was rejected. I didn't get in. And so one of the advice that one of the PT's in Forest Greens told me was, just get in anywhere, even if it's out of state, and it will pay off at the end. Another one told me "Go to the Philippines and get your bachelor in physical therapy and then [back] come over." I was like, "Oh that's like the most ludicrous idea!" Least for me I think growing up in America, I want to stay here and like, not that I'm closed or not open to that, but that's going to be even harder to come over here and try to go back to school for my doctorate in physical therapy. Why don't I just get into a doctor at a physical therapy school versus going overseas? And physical therapy is different throughout the world. I don't want to say you know one place is higher than the other. Physical therapy is more advanced here [in the United States] than in the Philippines, in terms that it's more needed here. It's more valued here, because in the Philippines if you're in pain, so what? Like you need to put food on the table right?...So I applied to a private school University of Physical Therapy (UPT) and I got in and I took that chance even though it was expensive as heck, I took that chance because I thought

> it would pay off. And actually it did. But yeah. So I went through that I went through the program there. Obviously I had my ups and downs, but it was a fast track program. So it was like two and a half years instead of three years. And so at the end of the day. So I want to go back now, and back track [on my thoughts].

Justin was feeling very dejected again when he was not accepted into his top physical therapy schools. He was very upset by the advice of going to the Philippines to complete his education there. He also believed Philippines education is inferior to American education. I have heard stories where other people were encouraged or forced to return back home to the Philippines to finish their college education, such as nursing. Justin definitely did not want to go back to the Philippines; he felt that was a regression in his life. When he said he wanted to "back track" his memory, he was physically experiencing the backwards and forwards of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimension inquiry space, remembering his struggles.

After graduating from undergraduate, Justin tried to get a job into local city hospitals. But without work experience, no hospital would hire him. Justin had to find an entry job in his hometown, where his family had connections in the hospital.

> So after I graduated from Jose Antonio University, I didn't have a job till then obviously because I was taking all these hours and these credits. When is their time? And my mom was saying stuff like, "It's ok. Focus on school. When you get like a job at like McDonald's or you know, Wal-Mart just like something that's the pay isn't well. That's not really a job. That's just like more of a distraction than anything. Yeah sure, you can learn these lessons and this and that, but it'll benefit you if you put your time and effort towards finishing up [school]." So I did that.

> And plus it's not like I didn't try, because I did try in high school; I tried to apply everywhere, even McDonald's and I didn't get anything... No one wants to hire me…Anyways, after I graduated from Jose Antonio University, I guess my job happens to be where I was born too and where my mom works too. And my sibling worked [there] too, like they know me; they know what I can do. And they opened up a position for me and basically, I was doing the same thing, except I was getting paid. And I was like this is crap. Like I get, I feel like I got a pity job. I graduated and I couldn't find anything, so I got a pity job. But no, it ended up being OK. Finally worked there for four months, five months because then soon after I got accepted to the private school, physical therapy school. And so I went through that. Yeah I keep going through this [feeling of failure].

Justin was able to find a job opportunity because his mother and sibling both worked in the same hospital. Although he thought it would be a "pity job," the experience he gained helped him accrue experience on his resume. After graduating from his doctorate in physical therapy, Justin was able to obtain a decent position with one the city's finest hospital system.

Both Steve and Justin have something in common; they did not like school and they were not engaged enough to like what they were doing or learning. Their anti-dote to their disengagement was to get out of school quickly and by all means. Fortunately, they did not choose to quit high school or college, but they found the best shortcuts, like dual credit or taking multiple classes at different campuses. On the other hand, Jay had an opportunity to go to a prestigious, private university. He chose to go to community college instead because of the financial cost. Jay says,

> I started going to community college because it was cheaper. Actually, when my parents were talking about, [uh] going to nursing, I got accepted at Holy Regal University (HRU), and that was expensive. And they were like "Oh you could go there." I'm like "Mmmm, but it's like, a career choice I didn't really wanted to go into. I don't know if I kind of want to continue it." And good thing I didn't go to HRU and you know, put my foot in the door with Holz Worth Community College, like with nursing classes [instead]. So, that was a good choice. [Chuckles] Because I would have been paying [a lot of money if I went to HRU].

Jay knew that if he went to the private school with half a heart into a nursing major, it would have been an expensive mistake. Instead, he decided to go to community college where he had to balance several life circumstances, while trying to maintain his grades. His life started to fall apart afterwards, and he fell into a deep depression.

> That's basically when—I kinda stopped going to school too. Like a lot of things started happening. Like, [um] my grandparents came in, [uh]—to basically, my grandparents lived in [a different state], and they were basically all—they're not all by themselves there, but they had like grandchildren over there and like a couple of family members. And—but they lived in the house by themselves. So my dad and my dad's sister, my aunt, decided to fly them over here so they could, you know, try and spend like—they didn't want to put them in a nursing home. That's one of the things like, I guess, that's how—what my parents kind of told me. Like, for a Filipino family, it's like you don't put your parents in a freakin' nursing home. They take care of you, you take care of them, you know? So they wanted to take care of them [grandparents]. But, they—we tried to run them

through here, like if they want to live here. And they kind of didn't like [the] whole Houston—heat and everything. So, and then they started getting homesick too with the like—because they haven't flown back to Philippines in forever, and they wanted their final resting place to be the Philippines. So they decided to [leave] instead of staying here. And my dad and aunt were pretty disappointed that they wanted to move back to the Philippines. And that's where [my grandparents] want to, you know, live the rest of their life at. So we decided th—so during that time I was going to school at [Holz Worth Community College]… And I was taking care of my grandparents at home and all of that. And after that, like they decided to move. So like I started, I started to like—my grades are starting [to dip] down a little bit, while taking care of my grandparents. And after that they moved, I'm like, okay. So my grades went back up. But then after that like, I broke up with my girlfriend. Like, Mom had cancer and all this like, like, "Ooof!" Like, just like a wall (hand clap sound and chuckle). So then I'm just like, I got depressed. So then, I basically just took time to myself and like dropped out of school, [um,] and just try to take care of my mom. But so far she's in [uh] what do you call that when like the cancer is gone?...She's in remission…Basically it was just an emotional, like wall. Where, like I didn't have the energy to—like to think clearly. Because everything like, is just spiraling—spiraling out of control and like "Ugh!" I kind of—I kind of have to step back…Well honestly. Like emotionally I wasn't, like, ready to keep going forward, because I was just like stuck. Because like I had, I had—I was volunteering at school. Like that, that kind of kept my mind off of things and all of that, but it was still like, you're just stuck.

> And you just bounce back to like just being depressed again. I guess it was just a deep depression, but I kinda moved from there. And just like, trying to get a step and start moving on the right direction.

Jay experienced multiple life transitions that propelled him to dropping out of school. Taking care of elders is a value in the Filipino community. Jay proudly exclaims that Filipinos do not put their parents in a nursing home. But the new family dynamics of becoming the full-time care taker for his grandparents and his sick mom and then thereafter, the break up with his girlfriend, became all too much. Several obstacles challenged him, and he had trouble balancing real life problems with school work. His grades started to suffer, and he made a personal decision to stop going to school to work on building himself back up. Jay was experiencing what Wolf (1997) claimed as "emotional transnationalism," meaning Jay was connected to his parent, grandparents, and self on an emotional level, which can sometimes be positive, and other times be negative and conflicting. Having to balancing everything became a hindrance to his education because he had to take care of them. Jay continues his *kuwento* on how he was able to overcome his depression:

> And luckily, I had like really good friends and they're the ones that kind of like, "Oh, you should go back to school, you know? Everything's going great now, you know? You're working and you know, life's going good so far." So yeah. So now [I've] decided to go back to school. And, so still working with the same company [I] had been for three years now. Wait, I think it's my fourth year… Yeah, because before I used to work at like [Jack and the Box] [chuckles]. At [J.Crew, retail store]. But yeah, I started going na—doing well and going to [aviation

> mechanical] school. So it feels good to be back. It's good to be back to…like school. Like trying to go back and get my education. And it's like, it's crazy how like it's stuff from high school I could still remember like we were doing electricity and I'm just like I remember doing like resistors and putting stuff together, like it's awesome. Like just learning—like knowing that stuff from high school wasn't totally useless.

Jay's friends helped motivate and encourage him to return back to school. He is currently attending a proprietary institution focused on mechanical aviation certificate. Even though Jay has returned to education, his ultimate desire is to return back to college and obtain a traditional degree after he completes his certificate.

> Who knows, but I kind of want to do programming as a degree after I graduate like graduate with my A&P license. So, make my parents proud, but also like have something to work for. Because I don't want to just have a license. You know, I kind of want to have a degree on something certain. Certificates like—"eh, here you go. We're not going to be in caps and gowns or anything." [I'm] going to get like a piece of paper. It's like a—graduat[ion]. For me— I'm like OK, but I kind of want something—[a] diploma. Yeah, but that's what I want in the future. But I do want to work as an aircraft mechanic. Maybe programming for fun, you know? Something I want to do on the side.

When Jay mentions a diploma, he implies that he wants to graduate with an accredited degree. He envisions a graduation, with "caps and gowns" and diplomas. Obtaining his A&P certificate license is a step to advancing his career in his airport job.

He wants to “make his parents proud” by getting a computer programming degree. By the sound of Jay’s excited remark, he is motivated to reach his educational goals.

Geralt’s educational journey to higher education was different—he almost did not go to college. Geralt shares his *kuwento*:

> At first I thought I wasn't going to be able to attend college because I knew it was going to be expensive. So I was telling my parents, you know, I was going to do, Air Force. I was going to do Air Force, and then from there I'll figure out what I want to do, you know? Cause [I] I learned if you joined the military, they kind of like help me pay for school. You know you can go to school through [the] military. But then [then] my other plan was to go to like a technical school. Like ITT Tech, if Air Force won't work out. But then my mom convinced me, you know like a technical, like degree or certificate. Well, to [my parent’s] standards, that's not enough, you know, not to get [a degree]. Then I was surprised that I was able to attend Vargas Community College (VCC) when, I was able to afford it because of—through financial aid. Yeah, and with [my parent’s] help too…Because then, I was like surprised or I guess—that I was able to attend. [Uh,] Really grateful for that, for that TASFA [Texas Application for State Financial Aid]. [Laughs] Federal Aid, yeah. Because even, because even without you know having a green card you're not being—because I thought financial aid was only for like citizens—not citizens but like residents. Or yeah. But TASFA's also for others, is it? So [that was a] really big help…So there, that's where you know, that's where I started my college at VCC. [Um,] I got my—I spent two years there and then got my associate's degree in science... And then from there I

> transferred to [uh,] the Jose Antonio University (JA-U). And then I switched my major when I was at VCC. I was thinking of doing accounting, so I took some accounting classes at VCC before I transferred. And then I was going to do accounting at JA-U. And so when I got to JA-U—so I was taking like the basic business classes that every student has to take anyways. To major like in any business. So I took one accounting class that they called like, you know, "weed out" class. Yeah. So [um,] and then that's when I realized, well I realized that after I got my grades back in class, I got a D. [Laughs] Yeah I was really struggling in that class too, my first semester at JA-U. Yeah. Even though all I did was study that one particular accounting class, so I was like, "Okay maybe it's not for me." And so my backup plan, which was still—you know how it was not too late to switch because it was still part of the business program—was the supply chain [major]. And when I was you know taking the first class in the supply chain, that's when it really got me interested in it. And now here I am—now I graduated two days before this interview. Two days ago and now I'm still looking for a full time job. [Uh] I work part time job right now too, at [uh] Makers Meal Market."

Geralt's educational journey led him down different paths. At first, he did not want to go to college, and was opting for the military. His parents wanted him to go to school, so he flirted with the idea of attending a proprietary institution. This was not enough for his parents, and they wanted Geralt to obtain more than a technical school certificate. When Geralt completed the TASFA, his financial assistance was large enough to influence his decision to start college. He was surprised because he did not realize his "green card" status would allow him to receive any educational financial aid, making his

first step to college was community college. The cost of college is a financial concern for Filipino students and parents, like Geralt's. Thus, the affordability of college is a large factor in school attendance.

Similarly, Rosalinda was able to overcome the expensive cost of college through a rare scholarship opportunity, the [Excellent] Fellowship.

> OK, so yeah, as I mentioned earlier about, when I was talking about myself. I went to high school, like in Texas, for four years. And then after that, I really had [uh] no—well I had like a slightly—I didn't have like a solid plan on where I wanted to go. Like you know, university wise. So I was like last-minute on everything. But [um] yeah like when I was in high school I, was never like introd—, well like there was always like this stigma, like this negative stigma of going to community college because like you know, people always want to go to that university or university route like immediately after high school, and they think that you know, "Oh going to community college is like, oh you're just staying home, blah blah blah." But you know, like it's actually the best idea that I've ever made myself cause [um] you know it was like I was able to live at home like, a couple, two more years before I had to completely move out of my house. But yeah it was really I really, really loved community college. Like it was the best experience. [Um,] And then [uh,] my counselor, my high school counselor actually liked, helped me on all the scholarships, including the one that I got, which was for the Honors College at Gabriella Vera Community College (GVCC). And that was really, I was really grateful for that cause, like it really helped a lot. But like, where I am right now and stuff like that…It was the

[Executive] Fellows scholarship. It was [um, uh a] two years, two year scholarships. So they paid for like your tuition and books and like [uh,] you get to go to like honors presentations, honors conferences. You get to talk, to talk to people about your research and stuff like that. And then there was also like some travel opportunities in the mix…And then you get to get your degree at the end of the two years. So, yeah! I was able to go to community college like, not having to pay for tuition and books. I was really—I am very thankful for it. [Chuckles]…My dad, at that time too, like he was really encouraging me to go, just you know, to go to community college. He didn't really know like, much information about it. Other than the fact that it's like, close to home, you know. He wanted me to be home, hah. And basically like what made me really decide on going was [um]—was like because of a scholarship like [um] I had received it. And then like, I didn't have like, we didn't have any college fund for me to go, to like a big four-year university, even in Texas, because I was like—it was pretty expensive for us…[Um,] Well I guess like [um.] When me and my family came here to the United States, like my dad had a really hard time finding a job, because like, he didn't go to college. So, he only had a high school diploma. So, [um] he worked for Wal-Mart, like for all of his time here. [Um,] we were only able to save up, like for daily necessities, and like not so much for the like funding for college, yeah. But [we] lived with my aunt. So like, we've never actually, like had our own house and stuff. We still lived with my aunt, who [um] petitioned or sponsored us to come here. So yeah…I think so, [I would go to community college without the Honors scholarship]. Even though, like I really wanted to go

> to like, I think at the time I wanted to go to Rockie Emhart University (RE-U) because I wanted to become a nurse. But it's like, "oh, oh!" It's not like my route anymore. But yeah, I would have probably listened to my dad and just went to community college, which would have been a good choice for me too.

Rosalinda's father did not have a college degree and did not have a job that could support her going to a university. Going to community college was the answer to her father's expectations of staying close to home. Obtaining the scholarship helped her go to community college for free, resolving any financial burdens for the first two years of undergraduate education. This was the best situation for Rosalinda and her family.

Ramona also had financial concerns paying for a university education. She discussed several factors that influenced her decision to go to community college after high school. Ramona recalls her decision process:

> Because I figured at least the first—well because the first two years I wasn't exactly sure what I wanted to do. And I feel like every career path, every major has a lot of the same basics. And I didn't want to go to a four-year college and have my parents take out loans and spend you know 20, 30 thousand dollars for a basic education that I could spend a couple thousand on in community college. That'll put a lot of stress on my parents; a lot of stress on me because I paid for part of it too. I feel like it just made more sense financially and also being closer to home with my family. I've never left them, so leaving them would be hard…Well I have seen my sisters go to the community college system as well. And I saw how much it helped my parents out financially. Because, [um,] honestly, my parents did not want us to have a job while we were still in school

> because they thought it would take away from our focus on our studies. But as we graduated [from high school] and went to college, we're kind of able to have a more balanced schedule, because the college days are not eight hour days like they were in high school. We're able to take a few days off to work; three days off to study, [and then they] were more okay with us having a job. So I did get a job when I went to college, and with that money I put towards my education as well. My parents would put some in, but I would also take a certain load of it as well. That's another privilege [other kids had].

Just like Justin, Ramona's parents did not want her to work while she was in college. Because the flexible college class schedule, she was able to work and go to school. Ramona revealed that she followed the footsteps of her older sisters who went through community and she knew it would be more affordable for her and her parents. She was very aware of student debt, and she did not believe in taking out large loans to pay for general education. Unfortunately, I did not know the impact of my student loans until after I graduated. Ramona had a lot of foresight at a young age, and she was very cognizant of her financial situation.

I can relate to Ramona. My parents did not want me to work while I was in college. My creative side found a way around this dilemma. I started working as a college student leader and I was paid to be a student coordinator. Not only was I able to make some money, I was able to gain a lot of leadership experiences in Asian Pacific Student Programs (APSP) and Student Life, meeting lifelong mentors in the process. I was able to gain a sense of belonging and self-authorship when I participated in leadership activities. Perhaps this was my privilege. On the other hand, Ramona spent her time working

outside of her college and did not have a chance to participate in such leadership activities—she had to spend her time working to pay off college instead. Ramona felt other peers were more privileged than her when it came to paying for college. She continues to share the idea of privilege when choosing a college major. Ramona says,

> When I was in high school, mostly I did want to pursue music and I did want to pursue all that. And when my parents said "No, that's not realistic," I viewed it as not supporting me. And I viewed it as them not believing in me, when now that I'm an adult I can see that it really was only for my best interest. But they wanted me to have something that could—that didn't leave me hungry at the end of the day you know— that could, if anything happened to them, if they ever fell ill, I could take care of them and I could take care of myself and my siblings if I needed to. And I did not see the value in that growing up, and I think part of the reason I didn't see the value in that was because of—because I didn't have a lot of American influence—because my, [my] American friends were so—honestly I hate to say it but I feel like they grew up more privileged. So they, so it was easier for them, for their life, their life vision. [They were] more primarily focused on pursuing what they wanted. It was less about taking care of your family. It was less about providing for your family. At the end of the day, because if push came to shove, their parents could take care of themselves because they had more money—they had more privilege. They've been here [in American] longer. And so I think that's part of the reason why the parents emphasized that "safety net" because we didn't grow up with all those luxuries, you know. And so they wanted us to be able to support each other…I feel like my other American friends had

their parents [pay] for all of their college, where I was—not only was I expected to take on some of that financial load, but I also wanted to because like I said that was something that was instilled in me—is helping the family and yeah. If it was something that I was pursuing—it was something that I wanted to help my parents fund…So I went to community college. I did my basics there for two years and then I went to the respiratory therapy program for another two years…Why didn't I know what to study? [Hmm,] I know I wanted to go into the medical field, because that's a stable career path. That's also one thing my parents addressed to me. I think that is more Filipino than most of my friends growing up. And that they stressed on your education, when you study something, make it something that you can actually find a career in. I feel like a lot of my friends, when we were going off to college and stuff, they were kind of following their interests or their pa—or their passions or their hobbies. [Which] honestly didn't really make a lot of sense to go into as a career. Like I have a friend. She's white. She went into—she's American—and she went and majored in art history and because that's what she liked. And her parents supported [her] because she always liked to draw growing up. But whenever she went to the work field, she couldn't find a job with an art history degree…So she actually had to go back to school for things. And I knew—and my parents told me that if I followed one of my passions, as much as they support the hobbies and passions that I have when it comes to school—they want me to be realistic. They want [college] to be for the purpose of finding a job that will make me stable. And so I went by that and I honored that so—and it made sense to me. So that's why I wasn't exactly sure what I wanted to do, but I

> know I want to go into the medical field because that was—I knew I could get a job in it. I knew that Stella Mar Community College had a lot of medical programs. [Ha ha ha!] So yeah, I was kind of narrowing it down whenever I did my basics, but I figured all the basics I was taking would apply to the medical career path that I chose.

Ramona selected a major that was heavily influenced by her parents. She chose the medical field because she felt it would provide her a sense of stability and security. Similar to Steve's *kuwento*, majoring in music or any arts and humanities was off limits. Her parents would approve of a medical major, but not a major that would not financially benefit Ramona in the long run. Ramona's decision was affirmed by the cautionary *kuwento* of her white "American" friend choosing a major that did not lead to a direct job after college.

The same thing happened to me. Although I was very musically talented, many people assumed I would pursue a musical career. I remembered at the end of my senior musical, a White parent asked me if I was going to pursue music and Broadway in college. I was surprised—that was the first time anyone had suggested that to me. I immediately said no. I knew that my parents would never agree to me majoring in music or arts. I took matters into my own hands and decided to pursue a science major instead as part of validating my academic rigor. Being a biology major would lead me to becoming a medical doctor—something my parents were very proud to share with others.

In a similar situation to Ramona, Vivienne's mom was also an influential factor in college choice and major. Vivienne had an upbeat vision of the university life, but

parental influence led her to community college instead. When I asked how her mom knew about community college, Vivienne responded,

> I'm sure they heard or seen advertisements, but I have to ask them. I'm not too sure but I think everybody's heard about community college. I think you just hear it just from being around people. "Oh this is the community college." Word of mouth.

Vivienne shares her *kuwento*, with her first encounter going to community college. It was a surprising situation.

> Well there's a funny story. You know I wanted to go to U-Sax (University of Saxon). That was my dream school. It's a big school [in a different city]. And you know when I was 18, I don't know, when you're younger you had the vision of partying big [in college]. At that age, you think that's the best kind of fun. You want to be in that group. But on my 18th birthday, my mom surprised me on a trip to Grande Community College (GCC)…I don't think I knew we were heading there until we were there. [Laughs] I was like, "Mooom, what are you trying to tell me?"

I was quite humored by her mom's surprise birthday gift—touring the local community college. Her mom's actions remind me of my parents favorite *payo*, advice—"We can't give you everything, but we can give you an education. Education is the key to your success. So study hard." In a funny way, Vivienne's mom was giving her the best birthday gift she could give—the gift of education. But Vivienne believed that she was not meant to go to community college, but straight to a university. Vivienne recounts,

Yes, [on my birthday]. And she said, "C'mon. Let's go to Grande Community College. Let's just look at it. Let's just have a look!" Yes, my mom. She's a force of nature, huh? [Laughs] But when you're younger, you have the desire to fit in and to belong, and as a [high school] senior, there's always the question of "Where are you going to college?" You know the teacher would ask. I didn't want to say Grande Community College, as there was this impression that at the community college, you're not going to have all the fun things that university kids will experience—the football games, the parties, just the big school culture. So, yes, my mom surprised me. I didn't want to go there. And so, I was really reluctant to get out of the car. But [Grande Community College] was beautiful. I remember seeing the flowers in the front, near the library. Initially I was not too thrilled, but then June came along and I was going to take my first class. And it was an interesting experience because, unlike the big schools, you are not surrounded by people the same age as you. I was in philosophy class and there was other people of different ages; some of them in their 30s. Just different, different ages—so it was interesting…More involved in the school and especially in [REACH], where it was a group where we had to recruit other [senior] high school and junior high students to consider community college. So I had to get into that mindset. And I gradually accepted it more and more. I got in the mindset that community college is a great choice because, financially, you will save so much more money. You can get the same experience. You can learn the same things, take the basic courses at a lower cost and it's more intimate, and you can still meet a lot of people. And I know when you're that age, 18, it's important to

> be a part of a group and make friends. So Grande Community College holds a special place in my heart. [Laughs] Those years in college were one of my best years in my life. I'm very [glad] that I chose this route to community college. This is where I met Emilio [my fiancé]. I've met a lot of friends…So, I have no regrets. I feel more financially secure, compared to other people who have to worry about loans. You know, right now, I'm living in a nice apartment on my own and my dream, my hopes are to eventually travel more, explore more, and, and maybe become a creative entrepreneur. I'm already investing in learning about videography. Because I saved money from going to community college, I can now invest in myself and my future.

Vivienne went from being anti-community college to being the poster child for community college. She was embarrassed to share with high school teachers where she was going because she was expected to attend a university. Living up to the Model Minority stereotype was motivating her to not attend community college. When Vivienne started community college, she changed her "mindset" as she became more active and involved on campus. Vivienne found her sense of belonging and community in her leadership roles, filling in her desire for the big, vibrant university life. After hearing her *kuwento* about her negative first impressions of community college, it is hard to believe that she may not have not gone to community college. How many more Filipina American students are just like Vivienne and find that the community college experience was more positive than they had initially thought?

Ramona also yearned for independence in college too, but unlike Vivienne, she never fulfilled her wish to experience the university life. Ramona says,

> One of the big privileges going into college that my friends had, is that they could go to a 4-year university right off the bat. And I craved that as an 18 year old. I craved getting away from home and craved that sense of independence. ‘Cause like I kind of touched on earlier being a family unit is so emphasized at growing up that you crave a sense of independence. Especially whenever you get to those later teen years and you see all your friends doing it. But going off to 4-year university off the bat, meant tens of thousands of dollars on basic [education] like I said. And so that was the one thing—I really did feel like I missed out on that time. But now looking back on it, I'm [I'm] grateful for the path they [her parents] chose in my education.

Ramona was torn between a few college decision factors: wanting to be close to family because it is an important cultural value; exorbitant expenses for “basic” college education; but also yearning for independence by going off to college like the rest of her peers. Although Ramona did not experience leaving home for the university, she recognizes her appreciation for her journey. Unlike the majority of the other characters, Ramona is more independent, has a full-time stable job and lives on her own. Vivienne and Ramona have this in common, and their ability to support themselves as young professional women embodying a strong *pinay* role model.

Bunny discovered her independence by becoming an avid student leader in community college. She shares her journey of student leadership throughout her life that stemmed from a traumatic experience:

> I was never chosen, or selected, or viewed as a leader. I was always the follower because in the Philippines it's very competitive in school. And I can never

compete with them [other classmates] for some reason. And part of that is because of my, you know, myself not believing, not believing in myself. And I never really unraveled until I tried here in [community college]. Like a new life, a new identity, a new me. But definitely, I participated; I was involved in dance groups and chess club. But other than that, I never really became an officer of some sort in a club or a president of something, as an officer…going [as] far back into elementary school. I've always been in co-ed classes in the Philippines private school. It's just how life is there if you can afford private school. Great, [um] we're considered middle class, upper middle class. And so I had that privilege. And then still, I was not, you know, I was not participating as a leader or in an officer position but, I've always been involved in like a dance class or dance organization ever since and then up till my sophomore year in high school, I transferred to an all-girls school because I was being violated by my male counterparts. Like, they try to touch you in areas that shouldn't be. And so I felt upset. I felt unsafe and so I told my mom "Can you get me into an all-girls school?" And my mom was considerate enough to have the capacity to do so. So she did make sure for me, for my last two years of high school. And that was the best time of my life. Yes…So that's when I participated in chess club I love. And then I won my first prize award from my first tournament which is very fun. And then I participated in dance groups again. We won as well and then from there I have to move to America in 2011 after I graduated from high school. And I was excited at the same time I was—I don't know what I was getting into. I was just following what my parents told me to do.

Bunny recollected her experience with sexual violence from male classmates and she voiced her concern to her mom. When she moved to an all-girls high school in the Philippines, she started to bloom as an active student member. Bunny came straight from the Philippines as a high school graduate, and had no choice but to go to community college when her parents enrolled her into college. Bunny's *kuwento* continues to reveal her positive experiences at the community college.

> I went to, like I said earlier, I went to Walter Community College (Walter) for two years. I met Ms. Geena [a mentor] there and that's when I became really involved because, it felt like home—because [they're] Filipino too, but like she's American. That's so cool, she's both.

Bunny was able to feel comfortable at her community college because she was able to relate to a Filipina mentor who is "both" Filipino and American. She continues sharing her leadership experience in community college:

> That's why I was very motivated to be involved because I was never that leader back in the Philippines but because of that experience, I became you know, I got involved. I became an officer in a huge Asian organization in WCC and I was taking opportunities left and right, and I was excelling in my studies. And soon after, I was you know, I transitioned into a 4-year university and then from there I was not involved in a 4-year [university] which is, I don't know why.

Bunny discussed her transition from community college into the university life. In contrast, her life at the university was vastly different from her colorful experience at community college:

And then when I transitioned to, [to] University of Newton, it was a total change again. And I have to start new friends, new life. And it was so different. I just wanted to, get through it. It wasn't like the Walter experience. You know I was always comparing Walter to UN. Which was bad! Yeah I was like "UN has like—I mean Walter have, like have better landscaping than UN." And I'm like "Oh my God that is so bad"…And then when I went to tutoring—[sigh] it's just the resources from Walter and UN. It's so different. I feel like when you're at a community college you're more taken care of as an individual. Whereas when you're at a university it's like—corporate. I'm not sure how to describe it, but it'—well there are three things that I definitely saw a big difference, which I think made [Bunny or] myself not as motivated. First of all I never had—nobody. There is a Filipino adviser there, but she was—it felt like, I felt like she was closed off. Like I can't connect to her because she's—it feels like she's just doing a job and she's not passionate about it. And I was like OK so this is a different environment and I've always looked back like, "Oh Ms. Geena is like—I hope I have a Ms. Geena in this university" but guess what—no! [Laughs] I've got to do it myself. But anyways [um]—so first of all, the parking, right? We have to pay a ridiculous amount at UN and then at Walter it's free. And then the advising at Walter is so good like, they actually talk to you. It makes you feel cared for—like trying to guide you. But [if] you wait—you have to know what you want. Otherwise, you know, yeah you know—you can talk to them, but that's about it—was just, "what good classes do you want?" OK? And then what else? It was just so different. So, I just went through life there [at UN], like a zombie, like I was just passing

through. And good thing—so I mean and that's how it led me to have a major in entrepreneurship. Because I don't know what I want, and I thought entrepreneurship will touch every subject in business. Because in business there's, I think six majors you can do or you can have a focus on one. But entrepreneurship touches on all of that, so meaning finance, accounting, marketing, supply chain and then something with computers. And so that was a good move for me because I met a mentor there's—kind of. I'm not close to him because he's a guy. I don't like guys too touchy, feely with me. And he's such a nice, older gentleman and he likes to hug people. [Chuckles]…Not—because I never told him that I don't like to be hugged. Like I have a personal space, it's like a Filipino thing I think? But I know it's in the American culture where people hug. So I just kind of have to accept that. Right? And so—but then even though I've met a mentor and they did assign me with a mentor as well. It's still not the same mentorship as I had with Ms. Geena. Or *Ate* (older sister) Geena. I didn't realize that opportunity until I didn't have it. And I mean that's the time I realized "Oh my God. God has given me so much better back then." And I never understood it until I experienced other mentors. And they're still good and everything. But they can't relate to me. Not in that level. I wasn't in their house. I wasn't like, I have never met their family. I'm probably, met their dog. I mean I have met other family, but it's just probably like a job to them. You know when it's just a job and you know when you're actually passionate about that student that you want to help or mentor. And so that's it.

Bunny found a Filipina mentor at the community college and she felt comfortable continuing her leadership and academic activities with support and guidance. She continues to contrast her experience at UN and life after undergraduate school.

> I actually graduated after two years in University of Newton and—you know I didn't participate in anything. I wasn't involved as much in student organizations, which is really not me. But I made sure that I applied for FAFSA. So not to pay all those bills. [Chuckles] Yeah. So I, I got a free ride to college. Yes. I got a free ride to college. So after college that's when the in-between jobs started happening...I was already in the right path. I had a great student worker job, but it's not really through FAFSA, it's a student worker or job at the [Executive] Division, [executive] business office. That was my job and right then and there I knew that it was my stepping stone to a full time job.

After several in-between jobs, UN hired her in multiple positions that lead Bunny to her full time job working under top leadership. Unlike Ramona who never attended the university and had to work off campus, Bunny was given an opportunity to work on campus to gain experience and connections that led her to her current full time position.

Geralt has his own *kuwento* around his student leadership development, starting in community college. He shared:

> And then at Vargas Community College (VCC), I was involved with [a college department]... And [it] really helped, because even without, I guess my like I said, my Social Security, my green card, I was able to work. And that program gave me experience on how to be involved in the community [and] customer service. I've learned not to be shy in front of people. I was able to, I was even able to lead you

> know, a group of students for a college tour explaining to them the benefits of attending [the community college and] showing them the campus. Giving them tours [and] talking to the parents. So I was able to, just come out of my shell.

Geralt had a positive experience as a student leader in community college, and being a student leader allowed him to "come out of his shell." He was hoping to do the same at the university, but unfortunately, he was a commuter student who did not have a chance to spend more time experiencing student activities.

> I guess my biggest problem, going to [university was that], I was a commuter. And it's tough to be a commuter because you don't get a chance to be involved as much as compared to people who live on campus or in the vicinity. [um] Because you know, you've got to find time. Some events are on a Saturday or Sunday or Friday. It's not convenient to travel long distance just to be there. At one point, one time I had a class where I had to take a class, an exam on a Friday. And I finished that exam quicker than what it took me to get there. It took me, like 40 minutes to travel. Exam last[ed] 20-30 minutes, and then I went home right away. Yeah, so being [a] commuter [student], that's why sometimes I stay on campus longer so I can avoid the rush hour traffic. I would just take my time and study there. So I don't have, I don't waste gas just going there and spending, [heh,] few minutes like that.

Geralt recognized that his commuter experience influenced his ability to experience a more engaging university life. Perhaps because his community college was local, his commute was not an issue with his student life activities. Geralt's *kuwento* on driving to campus for a brief exam describes his frustrations in living far away from the

university and living at home. Geralt advices his sisters to enjoy the university life and avoid his uneventful experience, even if it means taking out loans:

> Yeah, I was ‘bout [to] tell so, like also, like some [of] the advice I give [my sisters]. Like if I could redo college again, [I would] take out loans, you know, if you want to live there. Try it, ‘cause I didn't get to do it. And then, especially you're a girl. You're not a good driver yet. I mean, you're not a good driver yet. And you're transferring next semester, so it might be hard. And then, we don't have another car yet. (Chuckles)

Geralt recognizes the difficulty of being a university commuter, and recommends his sisters to live on campus even if it means accruing debt. He also assumes that his sisters do not drive well enough to travel to the city, and he is concerned about their commute. I cannot help but think if Geralt is imposing gender stereotypes on his sisters and their ability to drive safely (Maramba, 2008; Paz, 2011).

Unlike Geralt, Steve lived on campus at his 4-year university. He compares his experience between attending community college and the university and breaks down class size, faculty engagement, student resources, and college life.

> Oh, I guess my educational journey, going into specifics, the different types of learning or methods of teaching from community college and university. In community college it's small, smaller classroom setting. While university [has] large auditoriums. A big difference was that between the two. I really, really like, value the small classroom getting face-to-face with the professor while in community college. And [um] transferring to university. Being in a big auditorium unless you make the time to get to know your professor, one-on-one,

if you're just going in class and taking exam in a university, the professor won't know your face. While in a community college the professor sees you, you're one out of 30 students and of course [they] will remember you, while in the auditorium, you're one at a thousand. And the university professors won't even know if you're a student or not, just like walking down the street…My experience by the time or [um] in community college took advantage of all the tutoring opportunities. There was a program in the community college called TRIO that I took part of. It was an excellent program. A lot of resources and tools—private tutoring and stuff like that. So I took advantage of that during community college. And I guess talking about my point that I made earlier when I actually went to—when I transferred to a university—I actually did not do that much tutoring sessions or anything [like that] when I was at the university. Now that I think of it, I'm not too sure if I was, if I was like, I could handle it. In a university setting, my personal experience I did more studies with my friends, actually going to organized tutoring session with an instructor or tutor. [Being a student worker] didn't feel like work. It felt social. I mean, I hung out with a lot of people. I wasn't that social, I would say, until I started working [at community college]. But majority of my social life in community college was working with the job I had. In the university, my social life was [um,] I guess I spent one year living on campus. So after school, the people I hung out with were like, we would go to the gym together. Get dinner or something. And then oh, and there's always [student] organizations. So [um] in community college and universities there's student

organizations. I joined student organizations in both community college and the university. That was a big impact on my social life also.

In comparison to the college life *kuwento* of Vivienne, Ramona, Bunny, and Geralt, Steve was living the ideal community college and university life. He had a sociable job in community college; he lived on campus at his 4-year university; he was able to join student organizations and hang out with college peers. Steve's *kuwento* sheds light on the benefits of community college's intimate setting, offering a personalized relationship with professors and academic support through TRIO. Through the lens of Vivienne, Ramona, Bunny, and Geralt—Steve was living the college life most students dreamed about. These characters had something clearly in common that rarely is discussed among Filipino American students: going to community college was a positive and life-changing experience for all the characters.

Career Pathways

Speaking of dreams, my parents always had this dream of me being in the medical field as either a doctor or a as a nurse. I tried forging a medical path as a biology major undergraduate student, but my grades told a different *kuwento*. Filipino parents highly encourage their children to pursue the allied health and medical field because it is a stable profession and there is long-standing history of Filipinos in the field (Choy, 2003). For example, Steve said, "my Lola [grandmother] was a nurse," meaning the health care career was in his family lineage. Filipinos know that every family has a nurse-relative, and that many children are expected to have a career as a nurse. All the characters in my research were directly or indirectly encouraged to study a STEM major and to consider nursing as their career. With the frequency of nursing being mentioned in each *kuwento*, I

ask, why are Filipinos encouraged and expected to work in the health industry, and specifically nursing? How about other career options?

Vivienne was my only character that pursued nursing as a major and career. As mentioned previously, her mother was “a force of nature” and she highly encouraged Vivienne to pursue nursing. Just like her resistance to going to community college, Vivienne also resisted her future career. The *kuwento* begins with the story of her mom’s life *kuwento* and where her mother’s “force of nature” began:

> So when my parents came to the United States, it was a hard life for them initially. Even though, my mom came earlier in 1983, she had to deal with a condition called myasthenia gravis. And then she—that's a condition where your muscles—you're just like a rag doll, basically. Your muscles—I don't know the specifics of it. But you are just like a rag doll. It's hard to swallow. You produce a lot of secretions and it can be hard to swallow or cough. And in addition to that, my mom was initially the breadwinner, since my dad had a little difficulty finding a job [as an engineer], but was acting as a stay-at-home dad. So my parents knew full well that even though people in the Philippines may perceive America as a country of great wealth and abundance and opportunity, life can be hard. It's hard to make a living [in America]. And I think my parents were driven by that. They don't want me to work so hard to make a living and pick up a second or third job as my mom had seen with some professors. She wanted me to be self-sufficient. She came in 1983. She was 23 years old. Yes, she came from the Philippines, just by herself, with the intention to help her family and create a better opportunity for her. Because in the Philippines, as I learned, nurses don't make a lot of money. I

> know those who work in the call center, who may make the same amount of money or maybe more than the nurses there. Maybe it's just a difference of how they value the nurse profession and other professions. So she wanted to create a better opportunity, so she came to America. She came to that town, Peatonway, where I grew up in and worked as a nurse at Peatonway Monument Hospital, and then she came back to the Philippines because of my grandmother. Her mother had died. And then she was not able to renew her visa, so she lost everything. She lost her car and she needed to find work, so she had to use her savings. But, like my mom always says, that it was a blessing for her to stay there [in the Philippines] for a couple years until I was born. This was around 1988 to 1991. Because she was able to spend time with her dad, my *lolo*, grandfather, before he passed away in 1996, and then, of course, she wouldn't have met my dad and then had me if she wasn't stuck in the Philippines. [Laughs] I think she applied for another visa. Yeah. And I think at first, they did not want to bring me. I don't know the whole story. But then, my mom was, of course, like in a demanding way, "I will not go without my child" or something like that. [Laughs] So, my mom noticed life is hard in the Philippines. Life is hard in America. So you know. And my mom is a very practical person. Compared to me, I'm more of a dreamer and the possibilities, what could be. But my mom is more realistic, more practical. That's her personality.

Vivienne shared her mom's struggle: she was chronically ill; her parents both died; she had to find a job; her visa expires and she had to do the immigration paperwork all over again; and she was the "breadwinner" for her family. Vivienne recognizes that

she and her mom have different personalities. She understands now what her mom had to go through— making a living in the Philippines and in America is very difficult and challenging. I can sense her *utang na loob*, debt of gratitude, and respect for her mother's journey.

Although Vivienne was an optimistic youth, she did not always go with her mother's flow; she resisted and protested against her inevitable destiny.

> I like to make people happy. From when I was younger, I've always been someone who is very observant about people's emotions. I'm intuitive and know when people are happy or unhappy. That makes me, what I think, vulnerable to being a people pleaser. I can tell when I should say certain things. For example, when I was younger, I noticed that saying that I wanted to be a doctor made my parents happy, but I know deep down, as I got older, that wasn't what I really, I wanted to be. It wasn't, you know, from the heart. But I knew it pleased my parents by saying that kind of thing. They would brag to their family or their friends and say, "Yes, Vivienne wants to be a doctor!" Yes, I didn't know myself then. I was like 9 or 10 years old…So early on I was very [much] of a people pleaser. And growing up, I told my parents, "I want to be a doctor" and I would hear them brag with joy, "Vivienne wants to be a doctor." I was just getting all that positive feedback. I was just more interested in that.

When Vivienne shared this story, I immediately could relate to my own experiences. Was Vivienne retelling my own, real life *kuwento*? I also had the same experience as a young nine-year old girl, and I told my parents that I would become a

doctor. I was hungry for their approval, praise, and public display of pride. I kept the charade going until I could no longer live a lie.

How many young Filipinas experience this same situation and find themselves feeding into the perpetual, hegemonic narrative—all in an effort to avoid *hiya*, shame and embarrassment, and instead feel accepted and supported for who they will become? Ironically, Vivienne had a burning desire to confess her inner truth to her mother during a church confession.

> But when I was 18, my mom and I were going to confession. And there, we met these two other Filipin[a] girls around my age. They were talking about how they both wanted to be a nurse. And inside of me, I wanted to tell the truth. I was burning to tell the truth. I don't want to be a doctor. In my mind, I didn't want to be. I didn't want to follow that route. I knew who I was. I was inspired to be an English literature professor. And I just said it while my mom was talking to these girls. I said, “I want to be an English professor. I don’t want to be a doctor.” But then, my mom's reaction was priceless. She said in front of these girls, "Whaaaat?? Really? What?" But even after I became a nurse, which I now [find] the career [to be] rewarding, I know that I’m not defined just as a nurse. I can practice other avenues of what I want to do. But after that confession, I used to feel so much resentment and felt that she was forcing me into nursing, as an alternative route to being a doctor. They were angry at first or surprised at first, because of their fears that their daughter may not [be] self-sufficient enough. My mom knows a lot of teachers or professors, who had to moonlight—pick up second jobs even as a housekeeper, to pay the bills and survive. So my mom was

> worried. Her fears were more out of worry. Fear that I couldn't get out of debt, especially student loan debt…And then as I became older and became more aware of who I am and what I liked, I knew that I had to be true to myself. I knew that I should not care too much about what other people thought, but I don't think I really truly understood. I don't think I was really emotionally prepared because I would tell a few people that I wanted to be a professor. And I remember this—mom's friend, my mom's friend was like "Really?" with a disappointed reaction, similar reaction to my mother's. It was not the traditional Filipino route. It was not practical in their eyes. But as I grew older, I realized that people's fears or people's reactions are more because they value stability. They grew up in the Philippines, where there's more people than there are jobs. Not everyone can be what they wanted to be so. So there I think my mom was trying to be realistic with me and trying to drive me into what would probably produce the best results. But, like I've said, I've accepted my path. It's not that I was forced into it. I've accepted it. And I am using my own strengths and being in a positive environment has made me more happy with what I'm doing and I believe that there's so many things that I can do. This is not just it. There's so many things."

Vivienne enjoyed the "positive feedback" of her parents support. She wanted to continue pleasing them so she could feel good about herself and been seen as a good daughter to others. Vivienne's behavior at a young age became a way to boost her self-confidence by internalizing the Model Minority Myth of becoming a doctor. But she was also torn by the dream of becoming an English Literature professor. She knew at a young age, that it was not the "traditional Filipino route." Meaning, becoming a professor was

influenced by American ideals, and being a nurse was the expectation from the Filipino culture. When it came time for Vivienne to decide on a college major, her “practical” mother became her guidance counselor.

> She was more of guiding me. I got accepted into pharmacy, you know pre-pharmacy at University of Saxon (U-Sax) which was my dream school, but I didn't want to do pharmacy. I knew within. U-Sax is expensive and then if I did pharmacy and hated it, it would have been a waste of money. That was [what] ultimately led me towards nursing. I compromised, but I realized now with more [than] four years into the profession that this career does utilize my strengths of being empathetic, my love for helping people, my love and curiosity about people. You know it's never a dull moment in the health profession. So I hold no more resentment towards my mother. I am more appreciative and I know that as [a] more, older adult, that it's not the circumstances that I've had that control my emotions. It's me. It's how I respond to the events. And I've learned that. And you know I've learned that this career [is] rewarding and I'm thankful to work in a hospital that is very supportive of its employees. I have a manager that's very empowering, just as [my mentors] were empowering for me.

Vivienne had the foresight that going to the university and being a pharmacy major was not her true path. Vivienne acquiesced to her mother’s wishes and decided to follow the nursing route. Throughout the years, she believes that nursing has become a perfect fit for her. But perhaps, she had to assimilate her personality and skills into nursing out of limitations, reaffirming that her mother’s counsel was a good path for her

life. Vivienne's mother is proud of her and encourages her to do what she wants in the future, now that she is a successful, stable nurse.

> And now that she sees that I'm self-sufficient, she has said, "Oh yeah, you can quit nursing and do whatever you want." But like I said earlier—it's not my circumstances, but how I respond to the situation that I can control, and I know that my mother did not force me into nursing. I know that there was part of myself that I saw that I would make a great nurse. My empathy. So I'm more confident now that I can do what I please, as I am more self-sufficient. I can go wherever I please. [Laughs] Yes, wherever my heart envisions, yes.

Vivienne internalized her career option and chose to do nursing, finding out that it was perfect fit for her. But I also wonder what would happen if her mother and Filipino cultural expectations influenced her to do something else. For example, what if in a reverse situation, cultural norms expected Filipinos to become an English professor instead of nursing—would Vivienne have done that instead? Nonetheless, Vivienne shares what is in store for her future:

> Well I currently work as a nurse at Julie Combs Hospital. And I am four years into nursing. I am now working on the observation floor and I am considered a medical surgical nurse. So I guess my next step [of the next step] in the career is becom[ing] certified in medical surgical nursing. And already I'm fulfilling the duties as a charge nurse. So as a charge nurse, you know you act as a resource to other nurses. And I also have acted as a preceptor [trainer] to even student nurses, who are learning about the field, which I really enjoy and I think my manager can tell that I really enjoy teaching others. That's where I feel most alive.

I find it ironic and amazing that Vivienne has found a comfortable niche in nursing—training and teaching new nurses. Even though she never became a professor by profession, her current job allows her to exercise her desire for teaching others. Perhaps her dreams did come true after all and she was able to find her silver lining. Vivienne continues,

> And as I told you earlier the path that led me to nursing. I know at this age now, even as a nurse, I keep evolving. When you call that my, whatever I like—my passion for English literature, my passion to create, to inspire and coach people, for Psychology Mental Health is still there. It's still strong. And I realize there's other avenues. I can't just limit myself. I'm not going to just limit myself to nursing. Now that I'm more self-sufficient, I can do other avenues and my parents are very supportive of that…So yes, I feel very satisfied. And I know that I'm not just defined as a nurse. There's a part of me that actually wants to be a creative entrepreneur. I've always loved to create, as in the past, it was fiction or poetry. And combining my passion for helping people, I'd like to coach and inspire people to find their purpose and be their best selves. So I don't hold any resentment towards my mom…But I personally envision myself, as I had said earlier, to someday be a part time nurse and part time creative entrepreneur. But I don't like to say my goals aloud, as I like to act on them and not feel as if the goals are already achieved by saying them aloud. But I'd like to also travel and become a humanitarian in other countries. I've thought about working as a nurse or doing volunteer work mission work in undeveloped countries… And I want to try this out, but I know that being an entrepreneur, it can take years to grow and

> years to build a brand. So eventually—I hate to say goals aloud, as I personally believe that it will not come true or you will have less motivation if you say them aloud without taking action—but I'd eventually like to become a life coach or just create whatever satisfies my creativity. I want to do that and continue on with the humanitarian efforts. Maybe even—I mean Emilio wants to do this as well—teach English in other countries. I want to see the world, you know just—I really admire that you're in higher education. And I'm always thinking "What should I learn?" And I know that I want to continue, educating myself and independently learning. Whether it's different languages like Spanish [or] Tagalog. I just want to continually be improving myself. Family wise, I would like to eventually be married. But I don't know about kids. Ha. Maybe, maybe, maybe. But I think I'm really very focused on those other goals. So that's what I see myself in the next five to10 years.

At first, nursing was an obstacle in Vivienne's career trajectory. She was able to get through school and land a well-paying job. She is now proud to be a well-paid nurse, but she knows she wants to venture beyond the limitations of the profession. Although nursing maybe a terminal career for her mom and for many post-1965 Filipino immigrants, nursing was a stepping stone for Vivienne to fulfill parental and cultural approval, financing her ultimate dream goals. This important life experience helped her gain self-confidence and financial stability to fund her personal desires of becoming a life coach, a traveler, and an English teacher. It was, and continues to be a journey towards self-empowerment and actualization for Vivienne.

In terms of following the footsteps of role models, Ramona had big shoes to fill. Both of Ramona's parents are nurses and she

> Remember[s] stories my parents told me of when they started working [in America]. Because we lived in [the Midwest] and my mom got her degree in the Philippines…when she came here it was—she just had to find a job and she could start working. But my dad actually finished his degree here from a community college, ironically enough, up in Michigan. And I remember when they started looking for jobs, they told me stories about how people would say "Oh you're taking our jobs!" because they knew, I guess from their accents or something, that they had recently gotten here. They were saying "Oh you're taking our jobs! You're taking away our money! This is our society!" And they were really verbally discriminated against by their peers for quote, unquote, "taking their jobs." Everyone has the same goal at the end of the day. But I know that's the story that my parents have told me. Me, personally? [Experiences] of discrimination I face—it was never anything personally, directly done to me. I think it was more of the stereotype that people just assume for me to be true. Such as, "Oh I'm a minority," therefore I must not have enough money to go to a four-year university, where that wasn't the case. It was just. Well that was, that wasn't the case. It's not that we didn't have the money because we were able to take out loans just like any other family does. We were able to—my parents could have put that money down towards going to a 4-year university. It just wasn't logical for us to do so, because the only difference there was—not how much money we had—it was the way you viewed money. That was the big difference… I think,

> just because [of] the discrimination they faced, it was much harder for them to get that job, [it] was much more harder for them to get that dollar. Therefore, they are very conscious of where they spend it. So I think that was the most discrimination I face. Which is just assumptions made like, “Oh it's because I am more cautious with my money than I must not have as much.” Well that's not true. I just have a different take on it than you do.

Ramona wanted to pursue music, but her parents, would not agree to the major perhaps because experienced the hardships of discrimination in the workforce. She recognizes the racism she and her family face as a minority group in America. When she said that people would tell her parents, "Oh you're taking our jobs!," it is as if the 1930’s Watsonville riot against Filipino American labor workers remain alive in her parent’s immigrant *kuwento*. Ramona chose to pursue the medical field like her family, but instead of a nurse, she discusses why she chose to become a respiratory therapist instead:

> Realistically speaking, it was something that paid pretty comparable to a nurse and my parents were nurses, [while I was] growing up. And so it was something that was similar to what they did. But the job is honestly a lot less more— a lot less—I guess involved than nursing. Because nurses, they do they deal with a lot more function and the body. There's a lot more liability on them, honestly, as opposed to respiratory therapy. But it's still comparable. You can still make a living off of being a respiratory therapist. And it was available to me to at the community colleges that were nearby, so to me it made sense. That's honestly the logical reason why I went into respiratory therapy [school]. As I went into it, I kind of found the emotional value in helping patients and everything. But if I'm

> being honest, that's not why I entered respiratory therapy. It was because it was easy, it was an easy quick way to become financially stable.

Ramona emphasized how a nurse's salary is comparable to a respiratory therapist's salary. By saying this, it seems as if she is trying to qualify that both career paths are equally good, stable jobs. Hence, it is as if she were doing nursing. With both her parents being nurses, and as mentioned earlier, her older sisters were in the medical field, Ramona knew how important it would be to meet the expectations of her parents. She admits that she initially went into the medical job because it was easy and a fast way to make money. The respiratory program was at her local community college, which further solidified how accessible and fast it would be to accomplish her goal. She eventually grew to like her job as a respiratory therapist, and she sees the "rewards" of what the experience offers her now. Ramona further expresses her feelings on nursing and the Filipino culture.

> I feel like [being a nurse is] a very common career path for [uh] Filipinos. And it's almost expected in a way. Because for my relatives—it's not just my parents who were nurses—my aunt, my uncle—everyone's a nurse. And so when I went out[side of nursing], when they heard I was doing respiratory therapy, they honestly didn't discourage it at all. They were like, "Good for you! It's less work than a nurse." And you can, you know, still, still provide for yourself. So they did try to encourage me to go to the nursing route, because I do think there is more opportunity for career advancement in nursing—but they were still proud of me. They were so proud that I did it, because [nursing is] the path that most of them took.

Ramona recognizes that nursing is a “common career path for Filipinos” and that she was expected to follow this path. Even though she did not follow this path, her family and relatives are still proud that she is in the medical field. This is the reason why she thinks Filipinos push nursing as a career:

> I think it ties back to that financial stability I was talking about. That seems to be—I'm realizing this as I talk about my culture—is that is something that is heavily emphasized. I guess the Filipino upbringing is to—as long as you're stable, financially stable, that's all [parents] want for you at the end of the day. And nursing was a quick way to do that. And like I said nursing programs, like it is a great field to go into and programs like that are readily available at like community colleges. Why not take advantage of that?

Ramona equates a well-paying job, such as nursing, as part of a person’s financial stability. She realizes the real reason why her parents “heavily emphasized” the medical field.

> I feel like one of [my parent’s] wishes, their last wish in life is to know that their kids are stable. I feel like even more so than their own money or their own possessions. What—Oh my gosh, I'm going to cry! [Laughs and cries] What they really want to leave you with is something that can always get back to you, like your education. Oh my gosh, I'm going to cry because it's not so much about material possessions. It's not so much about monetary value of items that can give you when they pass. It's do you have the education to provide and take care of your family like we took care of you. So, I think that's the safety net they want for

> us. And I never thought that I would appreciate that growing up because I always tried to rebel, rebel against that honestly.

Ramona realizes that her education is her "safety net" because it will lead her to a good paying career that will give back to her family. Her *utang na loob* to provide for her family, can be tapped into anytime, for any family emergency. Despite this realization, Ramona still wants to pursue her dreams.

> Honestly, I would still love to pursue my passions, 'cause I honestly don't feel like I have. I feel like you know, I went on the straight and arrow of getting a degree quickly. That provided a stable, cushy life for me, which I did succeed at doing. Gratefully, I'm really grateful for that and I'm grateful that my parents pushed me to do that. I have no regrets because they always actually told me they said I will support you in your pursuit of your passions. But I want you to be able to provide for yourself first and be able to make money first. You know be able to have a job have a career, have your own place and when you start making thaaaat money, then you can pursue the arts and everything you love because you'll have a safety net. You'll have that safety net of that job that your education provided you. So I would still love to pursue that. I still to this day I would love to start writing music like I did before and everything. But I have kind of gotten away from that as I kind of started working more and being an adult. I guess if you will…The next five or 10 years I really want to—the first thing that comes to mind is, I want to pursue those passions I never did growing up because that is kind of—at the end of the day, it was a good thing. But I do kind of have a minor, regrets about not pursuing them. So that's something I want to do within the next

> five to 10 years. I kind of want to pursue the quote, unquote, "What could have been" because I wanted to pursue my music. I wanted to pursue my writing. But that wasn't exactly a stable field to go into. But now that I have the stability that my parents always enforced. I kind of want to go back and [um] see. See you know the kind of writer or the kind of musician that could have been if I had pursued it when I was 18. So in that sense I kind of do have regrets because you know, I kind of wanted to do it when I was younger and when I had more time. But I had to have to spend that time getting being quote, unquote, "realistic." And I feel like Americans when, they are that age they don't have to be realistic. You know, they pursue whatever they want because their parents, their parents can fund for them to pursue whatever they want.

Ramona concluded that her current education and career can financially support her true passions of being a musician and writer. She assumed that pursuing the arts too early could have led her down the path of instability and insecurity. Ramona believes that her parents pushed her in the right direction because she is able to provide for herself and she can pursue her other passions now, just like Vivienne's *kuwento*. Only a little regret settles in her mind and she does wish she had tried her way before, but now she is feeling more compelled to accomplish her goals. When I asked her what she needs to fulfill her passions, Ramona exclaims,

> Oh, guts! [Laughs] Because honestly, financially speaking the education that I've gained and the job that I got from my education has provided me the opportunity to pursue the passions I have. So also, nothing [is] stopping me from pursuing

> them—it's just me. It's just my guts. I just need to, [ugh] have the courage to do it. So really nothing's stopping me other than myself.

Ramona is financially stable, but she is most concerned with moving forward and having the courage to pursue her passions. Did all the years of following her parent's plans create a sense of confidence crisis? Perhaps feeling risk-averse from the path of uncertainty has lead Ramona to doubt herself, and ask herself to find the "courage to do it."

For both Ramona and Vivienne, they compromised their initial dreams of becoming a musician and English literature professor, to meet the standards of their family's career expectations. To a certain extent, they had to let go of what they wanted to do, and go with the flow of their parent's dreams and Filipino cultural expectations. Going with the flow with others is called *pakikisama,* literally meaning "to get along with others" as part of showing your solidarity with the group values.

At first, Jay followed his interests, but then he switched to the expected path of nursing. Once he started the journey, he knew that nursing was not going to be his ultimate career. When I ask Jay about what he likes about being Filipino, he immediately thought, "I don't know why, [but] like Filipino and nurses like came to my head." Being Filipino is synonymous with being a nurse.

> Basically throughout high school I was [in] architecture program… I was interested in architecture and really I was really good at it… Like top of the class doing architecture stuff and we'd do [uh]—my teacher like showed us his, like old job and how they worked and stuff. I'm like, "That's what I wanted to do!" It's like that draft—like my favorite part of architecture was the drafting part on the

computer. Like putting points together and making an item. That was like, the thing I wanted to do in high school. Like he would put us in competitions and stuff like that for architecture. It was pretty fun... [My] senior year, [he was] all like "You should continue doing architecture at RV which is Rebecca View University" And he's all like, "Once you graduate I could find you a job like that!" [snaps finger] I'm like, "Oh cool!"…And, straight off, straight outta high school, he's all like "Oh"—because I see him at church he's like—"If you're still interested in architecture you know hit me up! You're a really good student and all that"…Like straight out of high school my parents are all like, "You should try nursing." [Laughs] I'm like, "Huh?" [Parent's say,] "You know it's a stable job and everything." I'm like—ugh! [Exhales]. It's like, "You know a lot of, you know a lot of Filipino nurses. You know our family friend 'this' is a nurse, 'this' is a nurse, 'this' person's a nurse. You could be a nurse!" [Laughs] I'm just like, like in my head I'm like, "Yeah I could be a nurse! I could easily get a job!" And I started taking nursing classes straight out of high school. So like high school graduation, a week later, college starts. [Laughs] Because I took college classes—summer classes. So I wanted to try nursing now. And I was like "Alright nursing sounds fun." So I started going, take nursing. Did pretty alright first semester. And second semester I'm like "I can't do this anymore! It's too much! It's too much!" So then, I couldn't do nursing…And, well I ended up going to nursing. [Laughs] Because my parents wanted me to do nursing. Because they knew it was like a stable job. They didn't know how architecture is. It was like an unknown thing to them, because all they knew is like "Filipinos! Nurses! They're pretty good. Good

career choices!" [My parents] are not [nurses]. Actually business majors! [Laughs] Surprisingly! And what they knew [is that] they knew a lot of family friends that were nurses and they are doing well with their lives. So they're like "Oh nursing, you should do that!" It's like Jo Koy [the Filipino comedian]. Have you seen any of the [Netflix] specials? The Filipino parent: nursing! [Laughs] "Do that!" [Laughs]…And, after that [my parent's] are like, "OK if you don't like nursing, why don't you go back to doing like, engineering stuff." I'm like "I wasn't doing engineering, I was doing architecture." [Laughs] And so I was like [to myself] "Oh you can do [engineering]. I'm like architecture sounds—like engineering sounds pretty good!" So I started doing all of this—I switched to being from nursing to engineering. And I did not like chemical engineering, so I started—I switched again now to mechanical engineering. And I actually got an internship at an oil company. And through that internship, it was during the summer. It was paying pretty good just for [an] internship. I was like "Dang, it's pretty good!" But I kind of learned that your, [uh] position in the company is really not set, because they were right, right when we're like meeting all of the engineers and stuff like that, and the engineers are just like super nervous about who is getting fired next. [Laughs] And it's like "Oh wait, this company is hiring internship—like interns—and they're firing people. This doesn't seem like a very safe career choice." [Laughs] So I kinda like stopped going to engineering and that's when everything started going down too, like with my mom and my grandparents. So I guess, that was another thing. Like all my career choices—that was kind of picked for me—started going downhill… [My parents] were more—

they were supportive in the ideas that like "Okay if nursing's not going to work out”—but then they gave me a different choice which I also didn't like! [Laughs] Was like "engineering?"…Even though like I did like nursing in certain ways—I was hands on, but everything like terms and memorizing all these certain things—I was just like, can they just like tell me what to do... like hands-on wise like, can I know what to do but, it's just like trying to like mentally grasp the theory behind everything is [all] you can do…[My parents] try and influence me through like, what they see other families [doing] because you know we don't have family here. So they [they] see like another family doing pretty successful with their kids—are like their career choice and like “Oh, you know you should do what they're doing. You know look at them there. They're making good money. They're doing, they're doing well. It's like nursing, engineering. [You] should do that too.”…Because that's what my cousins are doing. And like [my parents say] "She's, she's in a petroleum engineering, [uh] like companies. And she's making a lot of money. She's like making more than your dad!" I was like, "Oh, ok I guess I should try that too." So like for me I was like, I was trying to make my parents proud, but at the same time, I was like trying to like force myself to do something I kinda wasn't feeling. Like I didn't feel like I wanted to do nursing. I didn't feel like I want to do engineering. And you know even though it's kind of close to, to the architecture part—but the only part that was really close to it was like the design and drafting part to it—which I kind of wanted to do, but there was no good field for it. So, I was like I guess, like after I went through all those choices I didn't know what else to do… And so I'm like, trying to make my parents proud.

And trying to grow—like grow, but try and be at that expectation—like be successful, be able to take care of myself. Right? And maybe a family like that like—all right that's what I want to do. And so I try and go the route of like, picking a career choice that I'm not really interested in. But then no— it doesn't work out unfortunately…So I was just taking classes and that dropped out from there with everything going on with life. With my mom, grandparents, school. I was like, "Ugh!" The career choices I made. So I took a break. I think I took almost three years—no, like two—four year break and to finally put my foot [stomps foot] down and start back up again. So like my dad is like, "Oh just work for you know, [the airport] where"—and that's where my dad works. And he's all like, "Just work there and see how you like it. At least it's like a stable job right now. And if you want to, you can move up." And one thing I've learned from that internship, even though it was mostly hands-on stuff —not like engineering things—I kind of like doing things hands-on. So being—working at [the airport] in the air transportation area, kind of learned that, I liked watching these people like, do hands-on work, like mechanical work. So I just, I noticed that, I kind of wanted to do that. That's when I started pursuing this year, to get my A&P license, Airframe and Power Plant (A&P) license. And so far, it's going really well. And with everything, like, like everything going well. My mom's doing well. Like my grades shot back up and I'm making a 4.0 GPA. It feels freakin' good! Like high school all over again! [Laughs] Yes. Yeah. It's like once I went to college, just like all right. I was doing really good. And then after that,

> pussshhhooo! [Sound of missile going down] And now it's come back. So it feels good knowing that I am not dumb. [Laughs]

I reassured Jay that he is not dumb, but I am sure he feels the inferiority of having to switch out several majors and the eventuality of dropping out of college. Exasperated, Jay knew he tried his best to show that he was going with the flow of his parent's career counseling, in hopes that he would become successful. He realized that all the career paths that were chosen by his parents did not work for him. By dropping out of community college, he was able to forge his own path by gaining work and life experience at a stable job in the airport. There, he discovered what he really liked doing—working with his hands and drafting—something he already knew when he was in the high school architecture program.

Nursing and engineering is a major and career that displays family success, and when Jay's parents saw other family's children pursuing nursing, they encouraged him to pursue it too. When Jay started on the route of nursing, he did not have a true interest in the subject. He liked the "hands-on" experience, but the actual memorization of theories and terms was very difficult for him to understand.

> Yeah I think it's more like my perception of it; as long as my parents told me like, "As long as you're happy and you're able to take care of yourself, then you know what, we'll be proud of you." But at the same time, like myself, I'm just like maybe if I did like graduate as a nurse or like an engineer or what, [my] parents would have been a lot more happier with that, than just you know, getting my license. So it's much more of like "Oh no" because like a perception that I view now, like I want to make my parents proud. [Uh] Yes it is more like, I don't know

> something like “Oh no”—what put that in my head? It's like, to guess how I was raised and everything like, “Oh no, what put that [idea of making parents proud] in my head?” But it was like something that I wanted to do. You know, yes. Also saying like my friends trying to make their parents proud, like my friend Ricky. Like he tried really hard to get his nursing [degree] and he like, he's doing well now. He helped pay for his parent’s house and everything, like now and that's what I kind of want to do. Like make my parents proud [of something and] like try and take care of them.

Jay emphasizes the desire for his parents to be proud of him, and to see him successful. He believes that his parents would be more proud of him if he had obtained a college degree from either nursing or engineering. By choosing these career paths, he is guaranteed a way to receive his parent’s approval and to also ensure that he will be able to take care of his parents when they are older. His *kuwento* is further supported by his admiration of his peer idol, Ricky, who is a nurse, a youth minister, and someone who helped pay off his their parent’s house. Ricky is the embodiment of the perfect Filipino child—successful nurse and showing his *utang na loob,* debt of gratitude, to his parents by financially caring for them. Jay wants the same thing when he says,

> So it's like, I don't know if that's a trend, like a Filipino thing, or if it’s just instilled in us, that you know, you live with your parents. And so you settle into a point where you could move out [to] take care of yourself in a family. You know that's I guess that's how I kind of see it too. It's like all right I'm not ready to have a family or, or I'm not so old yet so I'm so living with my parents instead...And also, it's like my parents are saying, “Why spend money on like living in an

> apartment and everything, when you're just wasting money there," when you could just live with your parents you know, and save the money. And so eventually you can move out you know, and buy a house rather than an apartment. So yeah I don't know why being part of like your parents want you to stay with them for so long now. I don't know. It's like something. It's like it's like a thing. Especially like with your grandparents to living with you. Because in the Philippines, we had three, four generations—usually three generations inside the same roof. And it was really nice because like you could see your grandparents and your family, aunts, uncles to see.

Jay's parents want him to live with them until he can save money to purchase a house rather than live in an apartment. His parents pass down the belief of stability, but at the same time, Jay is torn by his need for independence and living in a multi-generational family household. He aspires to continue Filipino traditions, such as providing for his entire family and future family. A lot of pressure is on his shoulders to succeed and make this come true.

I can feel Jay's desire for approval and acceptance from his parents, his culture, and himself. Jay's personal *kuwento* of resilience—from dropping out of school while caring for elderly grandparents and ill mother—is a journey that is worthy of honor, even if he did not pursue the common path of nursing. Jay exhibits "family consolidation," where multiple generations of Filipino families living under one house hold can make it difficult for Filipino American college students to focus on school because of the many obligations they have to fulfill (Buenavista, 2010).

Sometimes I wonder if we, as a Filipino community, create a limited definition of success that focuses on the expectations of others, instead of what makes us as fulfilled individuals. As a result, the expectation places an unbearable pressure to have to succeed in a specific way. Jay shares a counter-narrative of another Filipino peer who pursued entrepreneurship after starting a nursing major:

> There's also like, another family from—that we had [known]. Like [the son] tried to go into nursing and…his parents kind of wanted him to go to [nursing], and like basically [he] ended up spending a lot of money trying to go to those [nursing] schools and stuff like that. He didn't do so well and now like, he's doing well as an entrepreneur. But like, even though it's like, he's doing well—it's like, it's still not enough for my parents [to have] that kind of like, career choice. You know what's going to happen, because they're like, "Oh engineering and nursing and a pretty stable job great. You could have a family with those [jobs]. With like being an entrepreneur, you don't know what the market's gonna be like and stuff like." Ugh! It's like they—it's not a norm of job choices...

When I asked Jay what type of business the son pursued, he said,

> He basically bought a vape shop. And I guess that's another reason why [my parents] don't look at it as a pretty good career choice—you know smoking. [Laughs] Like a bad habit.

My dad likes to use architectural terms for life and success. He would always say, "Use a blueprint and follow that," meaning, look at what others have done well, and use that as a blueprint for your own choices. Jay followed a blueprint created by his parent's expectations and other people's experiences, such has relatives and friends who became

nurses or engineers. Jay shared an interesting *kuwento* of a different path, but his parents were not proud of this example of success. They did not want Jay to be an entrepreneur who pursues a risky investment. Jay took this *kuwento* as a cautionary tale of where not to go and what not to pursue. Even though the example was financially successful, being a vape shop owner does not bring pride to the family name. Unfortunately, other people's blueprint, or career pathway, is not a cookie cutter formula meant to be replicated for another person. Each life has a specific path, and ultimately, each person has a different *kuwento* plot line. For Jay, he has to battle between pleasing his parents and figuring out what he really wants to do. In between all this discernment, real life struggles happen such as caring for the health of his grandparents and mother. In the end, Jay finds out what he already knew from the very beginning, and he seems very fulfilled in his life at the moment.

Unlike Steve who was the middle child that influenced his *kuya*, older brother, and younger sister, Jay plays the role as a *kuya* who influences his younger brother's career path way. As the *kuya*, Jay faced difficult challenges that his younger sibling did not have to undergo. He shares the reason why his younger brother is attending community college.

> Mainly because it was a lot cheaper. But he's planning on transferring out soon. He's doing dentistry—dental hygienist. OK. So he wants to do that…Yeah, not nursing. Yes it's surprising…Right. It's like the medical field. So my parents are like "OK that's good". [My brother]—he actually chose that surprisingly. But yeah, I was like I didn't really see that because like, [when] he's in middle school, I remember him telling me that he wanted to be a basketball player and everything

> and I was like "All right. Go ahead!" [Chuckles] I was all like "You're not going to be tall." [Chuckles] And then he joined like the middle school basketball team and all that. Like, he didn't do so well. I guess he learned that basketball is not a good choice for careers…Like he's working harder and try and like—if anything happens, like with my mom and stuff, like I try to take care of all that. Like so, like he didn't have to deal with, you know taking care of my mom. Like driving around when she was in that radiation thing—so yeah chemo. Like I took care of all that. So he, like he had, you know he didn't have to worry about everything. So he just had to focus with school. So I basically wanted to take the brunt of it from my siblings. You know, so at least they could, you know, do well in school. I didn't want them to go through all of that.

Jay became the sacrificial, protective *kuya*, who had to take care of adult responsibilities, such as taking his mom to chemo, all the while going to college. His younger brother did not experience the hardship of balancing school and work because Jay felt it was his obligation to make sure they focused on doing well in school. His younger brother had aspirations of becoming a basketball player, but he soon learned that he was not fit for the sport. Although his brother is not pursuing nursing, he has decided to pursue a medical career path as a dental hygienist. Jay was not sure why his brother chose this field, but his parents are happy that his younger brother is pursuing a pathway in the health industry.

Geralt on the other hand, has just graduated from undergraduate school and he is trying to find a job in supply chain. But just like Jay, he was also encouraged to do nursing as a major.

> I mean [my parents] want me to have a degree. But, [laughs] like the typical Filipino, they were pushing me towards nursing, at first. Yeah. I get—that goes back to the comparison too. Like, [my parents would say] "Look at this person", you know. "It only took her two or three years and she got a nursing degree that is paying—let's say 24 dollars an hour. And you're still in school, your last semester." But now that I'm done, I'm still looking for a job. And you know [the family friend] sometimes says that, "If you, you had, [uh] got a nursing [degree], I could have helped you get into Ericka Landry Hospital where I work now." You know, then making $24 an hour. So their influences, yeah you got a—you know education is [a] very important responsibility. But they were pushing me towards nursing at first. They accepted now [that I am not a nurse] because I'm done [with college]. They didn't really like force me, or stop me. They weren't mad or anything like that. It's just always— it's just simple, like, "Hey if you could, if you did [nursing]—you could have [have] been like [a nurse] already." But they weren't like forcing anything on me. So I'm happy about that one.

Just like Vivienne and Ramona, Geralt emphasized that he was not "forced" to do nursing. Except passive aggressive statements implying that his future would be better if he had pursued nursing has led Geralt to re-think and doubt his current plans. His current major did not land him an immediate job after college; but Geralt should give himself credit. It was only two days after graduation when I interviewed him, but the lack of job prospects in his industry was causing him anxiety. He continues his *kuwento*:

> That's why as of right now I still, like don't know where it will take me. I've tried applying for even a hospital, because they know, they have like an inventory

> specialist of supply chain tech who handles their inventory—you know like new injection; nurse took it home; so we gotta buy a new one! Ha! I could work for a food industry—like grocery, like HEB, Wal-Mart, and handle their distribution. Or the oil and gas side or industry like, ExxonMobil, as a consultant. So supply chain's really a broad degree. So I don't know what I want to specialize in yet. But right now I'm leaning towards like logistics side, like freight, handling freight handling trucks. Either that or inventory. I kind of don't like the oil and gas because that's where everyone else is going like amongst my peers. See who graduated, that's where everyone else is going and then—I guess it's not as stable, the way I see it. There's a slowdown in economics, the economy. Oil and gas gets affected. There's a lot of layoffs.

Just like Jay, Geralt recognizes that the oil and gas industry fluctuates in employment, and so he is looking for an industry that is more stable. I also observed that Geralt wants to apply at a hospital, where he can work in the supply chain division of the hospital. Steve also stated that he wants to be an expert information technology consultant in the health field. The need to be connected indirectly to the medical field may mean that they are still trying to fit into the mold and approval of their family's expectation and the Filipino culture reverence to the medical field. Geralt perpetuates the expectations of being in the health field towards his sisters.

> I mean, I feel bad too, because I tell my sister, just do nursing. Because a lot of like her friends, they're the same age. They graduated from high school, and so now they're at Bustamante Community College (BCC). A lot of them are also pursuing like, nursing…[They should become nurses] so [they can] help my

> parents too. Because I know it's going to be a lot of like—because of the payment, it costs— the tuition. So I told them like, "Ay, so it will not, it's not going to take you longer." [Laughs] But it's not— the other one's [not] bad because it's pharmacy. That, that will pay out well eventually. So I just tell them, maybe yeah you take out loans then. It's not bad.

Just like Steve had an influence on his younger sister and older brother, Geralt also has a major influence upon his younger sibling's career and major choices in the health field. Geralt's beliefs are based on other people's experiences that showcase the ideal path versus the wrong path. He says his kuwento like *tsismis*, gossip, which is a common way to share cautionary tales.

> You know it just goes into the drama now. Of my church community and there's [uh,] do you know Joy? So she was. She's a good person. But, I don't want to talk bad about her, but like she is—it's like learning through other people again. So she was, going to [university]—she went to [community college] too. Then she went to Montelongo University (MU). But I don't think she finished her college because she got pregnant early. Yeah, but now [her parents] still live together with her husband. Part of the church too. They got two kids now and then she, she went back and did [uh,] think she's doing pharmacy tech now. And then her husband works at the airport. I brought it up because I see like, their struggles sometimes. Because if you don't have like education—because the husband works at the airport. But, I feel like, they only got married so that he could work! [Laughs] Because he didn't have—he was like, what do you call it, *TNT* [*tago ng tago*, hiding from immigration customs]? Not *TNT*— that's cause, you don't see it,

> because I'm Filipino. We have opinions of others. So that's how I see it. I don't know if that's their plan or what. So, they still live with their parents. Their parents are paying for the-house bill. I feel bad too sometimes of their family, because the mom is the nurse one—her mom, Joy's mom. Her dad used to work for [a company]. I don't know about now. So he didn't really have like a real, full-time career job because he didn't finish either…You know, it was an extremely Filipino struggle. So she's, I mean they're getting old too. [Parents are] like 60-ish. They are paying for the house. This couple with their two kids now they live with them. Yeah. And then sometimes I feel bad cause, [uh,] they still, there's still a young couple. They're like in their mid-20s. So they [are] still trying to live [like] what, what's it like to be [in] they're mid-20s— going out, eating out a lot, while they still have two kids. Sometimes they would leave those two kids to their grandparents. Or give it to my sisters. They're paying my sisters like 10 bucks. "Can I leave my kids here?" [Chuckles]. Yeah. So I tell my sister look at this like. See that's what I like [said]—education is important. You know—so if you—before you like, have kids. I mean, I'm not trying to put them down. But I mean, eventually you know God knows what's best for them and they'll figure it out. But, you still have to do what you have to do. So copy Dawn. Do, finish school first. Don't get married.

After discussing what not to do based on Joy's experience, Geralt talks about Dawn, who represents what his sisters should do in the future.

> Yeah. Also, yeah that's also part of what's influencing me is yeah, that [um]—like I said, I'm looking at other people. I also have like comparisons to like the church

> people. Because I see them like, those older than me. Not that old, but who finished first before me. Some are like I guess, some did nursing too, like Dawn. Now she got married [um]. And both of them [Dawn and her husband] are nurses. That's what I'm telling my sisters to "Look, you have to wait. Just be like Dawn. Look at Dawn. She didn't date right away. [Laughs] She finished, so she gets her degree in nursing. And her husband is also in nursing."

Tsismis, gossip, is used as cautionary and preventative tale for Geralt and his sisters. He provides a clear example of two role models when it comes to career, marriage, and work. The examples are binary and dichotomous. Which path do his sisters follow? Do not follow Joy. She started dating early, became pregnant, and did not finish nursing school. Joy had to return back to school in a different major while balancing family life because her husband does not work a high paying salary. At the same time, she continues to live with her parents, burdening them financially at retirement age. Joy is not able to live her full life as a young parent and wife. Geralt makes an explicit campaign to follow Dawn because she did not date early, she finished nursing school, she married another nurse, and she is now successful. Geralt's push for nursing is based on the success stories of other people. For some reason, his story reminds me of Bible parables of what to do and what not to do in a life. His *kuwento* is a way of telling his sisters how a young Filipina woman should behave.

For Geralt, taking care of the family is a big responsibility, which requires an adult to be stable in their own life. When asked what Geralt thought about having such a large family, he admitted good and bad sides of the family dynamics. His experience has lead him to his own beliefs of his future. He said,

> I think it's fun sometimes you know. And it also comes with the problems of handling a big family. Some of the responsibilities fall into the older siblings you know like. That's how I get experience; now I think I'm ready to be a dad. But I'm not going to! Yeah ha! I wanna like, after I'm done with college I will live my life first, because I've learned to like take care of like babies, because there's a big gap between me and the youngest one. But they're fun, because their boys. So I learned to take care of them you know. Like I'd give them a bath. Like help them with their homework or like, you know change clothes. And tell them, "Ey, it's time to go to bed! Stop playing!" [Laughs] I say the good part about being the eldest, or the good thing is [uh] you learn how to be responsible, like at an early age, because like a lot of responsibility fall your shoulders and you've got to learn how to like take care of the younger ones. So responsibility. Learning that an early age is a big part of it. And I guess the bad part is, you know it's taking your time away from you a little bit. Because you've got to also you know manage your siblings and take care of them when your parents are not there.

Just like Jay who had to be responsible for taking care of his grandparents and ill mom, Geralt was responsible for raising his younger brothers. Having a large family has taught Geralt to be a responsible son and adult. He acknowledges the rewards of helping raise his siblings, but also recognizes that his time is limited when it comes to himself because of the responsibility of a large family. Just like Steve and Bunny, his experience has led him to believe that he does not want to start a family or settle down until he lives his life to the fullest first.

Justin feels lucky that he was not forced to do nursing. He recognizes that his gender was all the difference between him and his sister's his career pathways. He shares his *kuwento*:

> Armmm? They didn't really force me to do anything. They just said I need to do something. I think it was different for my sister. [It was different for me] because I'm a male…My sister wanted to be a teacher—[in the voice of his parent] "Oh that's not practical, this and that! Do nursing!" OK. I don't know. [My parents] just wanted me to do something [laughs] and so I just picked PT (physical therapy) and like, that was that. Like it wasn't that much stress compared to my sister—I'm sure my sister got a lot of stress. But she's actually very thankful now, because she's like "Yeah, I don't know what I would be doing now if I went that [different] route." But like nursing there's so much opportunities, and even if I didn't want to do nursing, I can use that as a side job and that's like—that's my side hustle—right? That's something that's putting food on the table, when I could be doing my passion as well, so I feel like the pressure wasn't there. Pressure wasn't there. Although, I know school was not an option. That's the only pressure, but, I think it kind of opened up when I said, "Sorry for not being that son. I didn't get into top 10 percent. I didn't get into Saxet University." And my mom was like "No, you know, that's not—you know, you don't—you're still my perfect son. That's not—nothing to be depressed about or anything." But for me, I think that also kind of proves like "it doesn't matter what you do." At least that's the way I took it.

His mom's reassurance gave Justin the confidence to pursue whatever he wanted to do, unlike his sister who was forced to become a nurse. How did Justin feel about the gender differences and emotional stress levels of his sister, and other Filipinas who were expected to do nursing? Justin was very honest in his response and basically said,

> I don't know. I guess, I'm not sure how it is in the Philippines, but I know a lot of the daughters and the females go to nursing… Maybe because [um,] nursing is very practical in the Philippines and that's what they go to. Not even physical therapy, right? Nursing—like nursing will get you to America. Nursing will—you're already in America—still do nursing. "We want you to do nursing!" I met this family when I was going to the Philippines, after I graduated. She's a nurse at St. Matthew the Fuller Hospital in downtown. And she had three daughters. [I ask her,] "Oh what do they do?" [The Filipina nurse responds,] "One just graduated, she's a nurse in Dymae Hospital. My other two are in nursing school." I was like, "Oh! Oh? OK? That's three nurses—cool?" I was just like, "Did you force them?" Like why?!? Why did it become like this? But then yeah, I did ask her, and she's like—"No, they chose it." But still it—you asked that question like, "How come females or daughters are going into nursing at a higher rate?" I don't know.

Justin acknowledges that many Filipinas go into nursing and he also knows that because he is male, he was not pressured to do nursing. He recognizes an invisible force and expectation for Filipinas, like his sister and mother, to become nurses. When Justin realizes that the Filipino nurse had three daughters in nursing, he came to the conclusion that maybe they were heavily influenced to become nurses, and then internalized the expectations. Reflecting upon Justin's *kuwento*, I started to think about the concept of

nursing as being the equivalent to how the Thomasites inculcated the Golden Legend, the concept of America as the land of opportunities to Filipinos (David 2013, Pido, 1997). Going to America will secure many opportunities for a Filipino to have a better life. When Filipinos decided to immigrant and work in America starting in the early 1900's, Filipinos became the backbone of American labor. The land of opportunities became a land of back-breaking work. Nursing is promulgated in the same way. Filipinos promote nursing as the career of opportunities but the actual task of nursing is tedious and labor intensive. But the promotion of going to nursing school and becoming a nurse sounds like a simple task to complete, when in actuality, the nursing journey is very difficult. Justin also says that nursing can be a "side hustle" if a Filipino needs extra money while they finally purse their actual passion in life. Nursing is a solid "plan B." Although Justin chose a different career path, he did not stray too far from the realm of the medical industry. I asked him if becoming a Physical Therapist (PT) was his life's passion, and he responds,

> Now it is. Yes. Before, I was still figuring myself out, and so that kind of leads me to believe these young people saying "I want to do this"—I wouldn't do that unless they have that firsthand experience. They're just all talk, because I was probably all talk too—I was like, I want to do PT. I was all talk too but at least I was doing the work behind it, but I really didn't know, because obviously I didn't want to do neuro or obvious—obviously, I didn't want to work, inside the hospital. I was like when I was doing my internship I was like, "Urgh, is it five o'clock yet?" I have to carry this maxisus patient which is, you know, maxisus is something that we say [when] the patient can't do much. You have to pick them

> up and transfer them—hell no! I'd rather get my work out after work, and not during work! Like I'd rather my patient come to me because they're motivated, I'm motivated to help them. They're motivated to get better. They do their exercises at home. And I treat them with my hands and we're all good. We call it a day—they get better. That is the—the only hard work is critical thinking. And I will take that any day versus manual labor where I have to pick this maxisus patient that says "Go away, go away!" But it's really good for them to sit up and I have no choice—and if they poop on me, they poop on me. If they, they throw up on me, they throw up on me. I don't know, it's not satisfying to be in a position where you want to help someone, but they don't want your help or they're not motivated in this and that. And I'm a good motivator. I know I am. We have people in outpatient that are not motivated. I motivate them. But the thing is, it's just like the labor portion of it, like lifting people. That kind of sucks. Yeah…Truthfully No. No. [No one asked me about doing nursing.] And so like, when my friends are like, that would say "Ima do PT. I think I might do nursing." I'll be all like Ha! Because all the girls are doing that! My mom's a nurse. My sister's a nurse. Oh my goodness! Nurses galore! Makes me feel like I don't want to be nurse, to nursing. I am, I'm a rebel.

In Justin's eyes, nursing is a female-dominated industry and he has made it clear that he is not going to pursue this pathway.

> I'm thankful that I was in Forest Greens [Texas] and I felt like the only Asian, because if I tried to fit in with all these other people, I might not be where I am today—because I might have been sucked in and I might be still changing

careers—or “I'm doing nursing. Oh, I'm doing P.A. [Physician’s Assistant] now! I'm doing speech.”

As mentioned earlier in Chapter IV, Justin liked being an Asian American in his hometown because he feels like he would not have been surrounded by Filipinos who keep changing their minds about their major. They would be bringing him down because of their indecisive behavior. He is proud that he is not following Filipino expectations, he fights back when oppressive expectations are placed upon him. An example of his rebellious attitude stemmed from when he was a younger teen, when his lofty interests were dashed and “shut down,” by a relative from the Philippines.

> My uncle came here from the Philippines. I want to say when I was in 9th grade. So yeah, 9th grade for the first time. Fucking shut me down! He was like, "You need to be—do something useful with your life Justin. You need to you know, do something you know, get a lot of money in this and that.” I don't know what he was fucking saying. But I was really big on basketball. "No Justin! No! Don't do that!" I was like, what the fuck? And that's my mom's fav—I don't want to say favorite—yeah favorite brother. I guess favorite brother and I was like, "Fuck mom! Like, who is this? No! Screw them!" And that's part of the reason too [of why I don’t like being Filipino], I hate that. Like I respect that [they] they feel that way, and you need to do something with your life. And listen—it’s different in America! You can't just come here into America and preach your Filipino core values about how you need to make money and this and that. And that was—that’s what made me even hate, become more of—what did I, what I call it—a rebel. And just hate—I don't want to say hate, that's a strong word. But it's like,

> it's stemming from that too—that incident too. ‘Cause that was a killer moment. That was in high school too. That was like "The fuck! You, you're telling me I can't do something that I enjoy. Like fuck that—it did piss me off in the same way that their physical therapist said to go to the Philippines, and "Why aren't you traveling right now? You should. If I were you, I would travel right now and get money, and you'll get more money. Why are you in school? It's not like you're going to get paid more for that."

Just like Jay’s younger brother who wanted to become a basketball player, Justin also had the same aspiration. Except, his dreams were dashed when Justin’s uncle challenged his interest in basketball and wanted him to do activities that would further a better career outlook. Justin took it very personally and felt threatened by his uncle, who represented Filipino values. Justin continues his *kuwento* on the difference between Filipino values and American values.

> Values are different here in America. That's why I see myself more of an American. That feeds into that—because Filipino values...Filipino values, they want to put food on the table. I understand that. They're not as privileged as we are here. But when they come over here it carries over, like it's still the Philippines. Um, fuckin’ sucks. We have food. Our food is already going rotten. [He mimics the voices of his parents] "No! We can still eat it." "Fuck No! We got to throw that shit away! Do you see this? There's like mold right here!" And like things in the garage. Oh God! "Let's throw this away!"[He mimics his parents] "No! We can still use that! We can give to the Philippines!” [high pitch scream] Ahhhhhhhh! This is stress. This is so stressful! I don't know if I really like being

> Filipino now…Like it's—my parents. Yeah that's my parents. It's like—fuckin' sucks sometimes. And that's also why I don't like to be so proud of being Filipino. Because ever since my uncle came and he, he told me—he shut me down. Fucking, I don't want to say I hate him for that—I don't like, have these like hard feelings against him but—that kind of made me who I am today too, and not like—and being a rebel and not like being Filipi—oh not that I don't like being Filipino. But like, shit if you're going to tell me I can't be something because I'm Filipino, fuck you. Like being American is being able to choose whatever you—so I'm more—don't know if I'm more privileged to be an American than I am Filipino? Like that's how I feel. Like I'm very proud to be American. Am I proud to be a Filipino? I don't really know? Am I proud to—I just don't know if I can accept those values, of what they have. I just don't know. That plays a part to all this too…It seems more like Americans, they have more freedom into what they want to do in their lives. Obviously, my mom and dad said you can do whatever you want to be, but my uncle didn't say that and I know he's straight off the boat—if you want to call it that. Fresh off the boat—fresh off the plane. But like it really affected me in that, if I'm Filipino I'm going to be limited because, it's not Filipino culture, it's not Filipino values. This fucking sucks, wow. And you'll only love me—no I don't want to say that! You'll only respect me if I do [a job] that's so Filipino. Maybe I should be the governor? Oh I don't fucking know.

Justin goes back and forth, trying to reconcile his Filipino and American identity, but realizes that he disdains many of the Filipino values and behaviors of his parents. A lot of his parents behaviors, such having trouble of letting go of moldy leftovers and built

up junk in the garage, frustrate Justin to the point of letting out a loud, high-pitched scream. He makes a comparison of Filipinos trying to survive and put “food on the table.” Thus, basic necessities are held to high regard as part of his parent’s survival in America. Justin is not proud of these Filipino behaviors and shows his embarrassment towards these actions, that he does not want to be associated with this type of Filipino culture. He also recognizes that some American values have down falls, as he says

> But um, [in] America, it's like it's different too. 18. "Go away! Get out the house!" [Clap] Right? I'm just chilling out right now. Saving. And so, there's plus and minuses, pros and cons…Chillin’ at home, making money. There's no reason [to move]. I work right here. There's no reason to buy something. I'm patient—so the thing is, I was self-aware. I'm not going to buy something flashy and post it on Facebook, Instagram and be like "Look at me! I'm a big baller now!" That just shows that I'm insecure about something and I need to post something to get people's approval. And be on that high for one week, two weeks and then I'll go down. And I need something else I need—I need a new, new Rolex. I need a new house. I need a new car. I am aware of that and I'm not going to fall into that. I'm gonna be patient. I'm going to hustle. I'm hustling with two jobs right now and the fellowship. I'm being patient with it, whatever it turns out to be. I mean, we'll see. The sky's the limit, right?

Justin is aware that he can get away with playing the double standard as a Filipino American. Even though he is proud to be American, Filipino values, such as living at home with his parents as a grown adult, is looked down upon in the American culture, but valued in the Filipino culture. Justin is able to save his money and then leave home

whenever he is ready, versus being kicked out of the house at 18 years old. He enjoys this Filipino perk, but dislikes the Filipino rules he lives under. Justin continues to provide examples of when his American identity is in tension with his Filipino identity:

> That moment in my life [with my uncle]. It kinda made me want to punch a wall cause that—you're putting handcuffs on me and saying I can't do that. "No Justin! Bad, bad Justin. Like I'm a dog. Come on? I'm like, it pissed me off and made me not like family. When I went to the Philippines I said "No! I'm not going with you mom, dad, or sister because if I do it, it's gonna be a family affair. I'm not—this is for me traveling. This is not a family affair. Yeah, sure I'll give the respect and I'll have dinner and lunch for like a couple of days. But other than that, no, I'm off! I'm off to the races. I'm off to see this and this and this. [Um] Screw family! I mean, no, no! [slams table] I say that because—but then like my family is such an important thing. But you can't let that run your life. Like [they say] "you can't do this!" Why not? Why not? If you're self-aware and you know that being a nurse isn't for you then why the fuck are you being a nurse? And that falls into self-awareness. Everything is self-awareness and some people are so handcuffed, and they don't have that self-awareness, and they're going through the struggles because their uncle came and told them to be a nurse. Their grandma, grandpa came and said "You need to do this!" Your mom and dad came and said "You need to do this!" Like it's a struggle, if you don't have the maturity or the discipline or even the strength then your—you'll end up being Filipino, I guess. That's the reason why I see myself as American. I know there is a question on that. That when I mean—the survey I answered "American" because that's how I

truly feel. I felt uncomfortable putting “Filipino American.” I don't know if that offends people. But I am American. And then I just happen to be Filipino, you know. [Chuckles] I don't know. I don't want to put the two together because I see “Filipino” as something I'm not. Maybe I like—I am Filipino—my blood is Filipino, but like mentally, what is a Filipino? They’re fucking proud. They have these virtues from the Philippines that are fucking stupid sometimes. Because they don't describe who I am. There. I'm not the person to, to put food on the table, which I am, I am very well capable of. But that, we're not at the severity of "Shit you need to put 100 percent of your effort into what you do in the day. And then there will be this much food on the table." Like in America, you can just put even a little effort and be like "oh I got this for you and I got this. And we can put it in the refrigerator for lunch tomorrow." [mimics hand motions of removing food out of the bag] Like it's different. Like, calm down, don't—and like I'm aware of that. And not at all, like I'm not saying that I don't put 100 percent effort into what I do because people that know me—I wouldn't be where I am today if I didn't. I do. And it's just, I like being American more than I do like being Filipino. Hard truth. Cold, hard truth—but that's it. I really like being American.

Justin’s American privilege is in full display. At the end of the day, he knows he can always put food on the table and provide for his family. He does not have to worry about poverty or starvation, unlike his parent’s history and Filipinos back in the Philippines. He makes no apologies for saying that he likes being American because he does not have to worry about scarcity. Being American means having an abundance of food and life choices.

When Justin refers his “blood” to be Filipino, but implies his mental and emotional state as American, this is what David (2013) calls “brown skin, white minds” which is the title of his book. Filipinos are distinctly non-white in their features, but their mental state is one that is colonized by white thinking. In Justin’s case, he feels uncomfortable identifying with being Filipino and Filipino American. Being Filipino means you are destined to be a nurse or should be someone with power, influence, and wealth, like a “governor.” Justin has made it very clear that this is not who he is. He wants to be referred to as just American. When deciding on a major or career, he believes the importance of knowing who you are and deciding on one path, and then following through with it. He shows his discontentment at other Filipino American college students who cannot make up their minds and listens to other people, such as their “uncle,” “grandma,” “grandpa,” “mom,” or “dad.” He believes in himself; in his own “self-awareness” of what he is able to accomplish. He continues his stance:

> Their actions doesn't back up what they're talking about! A lot of people be like “I'm going to do P.T.! I'm going to do nursing! Now I'm going to do P.A.! Like “Oh my gosh! Shut up! No you're not!” Like I can call out these people and it sucks, because a lot of them were my friends—at least in high school—and I had to be the mature one to say “Hey you're not doing me any good. I might cut you out.” I didn't say that to them—like in my head I'm like “You're not going to get me anywhere where I want to be and you're not”—not saying that you know “you're really bad—like you do drugs and you're going to get me hooked on drugs or this and that”—but like “your actions in terms of your discipline, your work ethic, your hustle, [and] your drive. It's not there!” People that are older have that

> and that's why the crowd that I surrounded myself with was usually the older crowd.

Justin had to let go friends who did not help him become successful. He surrounded himself with older Filipinos, who he believed had a better work ethic and decision-making process. Even though Justin does not feel close to his Filipino culture, I am proud that he can acknowledge that he is in this space at this moment in his life. He seems so certain, confident, and hopeful for his future. I can feel Justin's fervor and perhaps, even judgement of his peers and younger Filipino Americans. But I do ask, where is his empathy and compassion for those who really are lost in what they are meant to do? Justin shut out other distracting influences—such as his family members and indecisive peers—and only listened to his own inner voice. But the voice seems to be overpowered by American values of individualism and meritocracy.

Unlike Justin who has his career all figured out, Rosalinda is in a major that does not "directly" lead into a specific job. She is very concerned about what will happen to her in the "real world" after college. Rosalinda shares her *kuwento*,

> About graduating? You know I'm kind of scared. [Um] Because like after you graduate, you're not going to be in that—in a college life. So you have to like, go into the real world and find [a] job…And I don't know, like where to look. That's like one of my—one of the things I'm dealing with like, is post-graduation… Ok [um] my career aspirations, um? Right now like, [uh,] I really want to become like a professor or like—I just want to be like in a school—like preferably like a college school setting. And hopefully teach something like, maybe you [as a higher education administrator]. And but I don't—I don't wanna go like on to

> grad[uate] school just yet after undergrad[uate], because like I wanted to [um]—like I just want to have experience working in that setting. That's why I'm like—wanting to like find a job in, at Linh-Tayler Community College (LTCC) hopefully or like Delia Community College (DCC) if there's like openings. And then how does that fit my educational journey? [Um,] Well I had—like I guess, like my major, is like [uh] kind of like a liberal arts. Like it doesn't [um,] lead you directly to a job like—or a career, career field like—you know like a law degree would, or like engineering, or even like a nursing degree. Like I feel like with my, my government major, like you could take it [uh] anywhere. Like you could work for like the state or like federal government; or like in my case, like I want to work in [the] educational sectors… I guess like I realized that I wanted to become a teacher when I was in community college. [Um] it was one of my honors director. Like he really inspired me to like, [um] you know I, I wanted to be like him. So yeah…Well yeah that's how I made that decision. And like I did think about it, like pretty hard. Like what else I wanted to be besides [a] teacher, besides being an educator, and like I just didn't want to do [something else]. You know?

Rosalinda is about to graduate from her university, and she has an idea of what she wants to become: a college professor. But for some reason, she is unsure of herself. She finds solace in having a role model in her previous Honors College director, but she is not confident in her pursuit. She is aware that her path is not as clear as a “law degree” or “engineering” or “nursing.” The lack of certain boundaries of a career path is not

clearly defined. Rosalinda speaks from a place of anxiety. She talks about how nursing has influenced her educational journey:

> Oh well, like back in high school I had a different track that I had than I am now. I was in nursing—I was planning to pursue nursing. [Uh] I think was at my senior year of high school where, um, we had an internship at a nursing home. And I really didn't enjoy it and like, plus like I didn't, I didn't have an interest in science subjects or like in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) field. And like all the reasons why I was even like in nursing was because of like—influences like from my—probably from my dad and like mostly from my aunt cause like—I feel like in America there's a lot of Filipino American nurses. And you know I feel like that's [um]—what do you call it? That's the common path—I think for Filipino Americans—to go into the medical field because there is like a demand for those types of jobs, and you know of course, like the pay is really good, sounds pretty good. But yeah, I guess I just didn't like have a passion for it and like I mean I wanted to—I guess [um] fulfill my aunt's wish of me becoming a nurse, but like I really did not want to torture myself with that, if like I wasn't gonna you know, like it or not like it...Yeah. Like [uh] she, she partly—slightly encouraged me to like, "Why don't you become a nurse? Like, there's like a lot of money there." And like, in like four years, I don't even know like—how long does it takes to be like a nurse? Well basically, she's like in a short amount—short amount of time you can be a nurse and you can have a job and like, you can be successful in life…Even though like, I really wanted to go to like, I think at the time I wanted to go to Rocky Emhart University (RE-U) because I wanted to

> become a nurse. But it's like, oh, oh, it's not like my route anymore. But yeah I would have probably listened to my dad and just went to community college [anyways] which would have been a good choice, like a good choice for me too.

Rosalinda had an opportunity to explore nursing in high school as part of an academic track. Unfortunately, she did not find the clinical internship rewarding. One of the main reasons Rosalinda considered doing nursing was because of her aunt's persistence and not because of her own choice. Her aunt influenced her to pursue nursing because of the quick educational-to-job turn around. The faster Rosalinda could finish school and get a job, the sooner she can help support her and her father. Ironically, her father was supportive about her major choice and did not force her to go into nursing. Rosalinda continues to talk about her father's influence in her educational and career decisions:

> My Dad, [uh] I feel like for my dad like, [um] I feel like I don't want to disappoint him and like get away from you know, what he wanted me to do, because like, he won't like—what he wanted the best for me and my brother. So I feel like he influences me that way. And like, I'll make sure that I focused on what I want to do. [um] Even when I, when I said that I didn't want to do nursing. He was kind of, he was supportive and like—what I wanted of—what I wanted to do instead. Like he wasn't like trying to force me into nursing and it was really, really cool. Well [uh] my dad like, I know like, you really stressed on the educational part, like [he] wanted me [uh] to finish college. And I guess it came from like, it came personally for him because he didn't get to go to college when he was in the Philippines. He only went to—he only finished high school. And I think the same goes for my brother, but like, he lets my brother do what he wants to do. He was

> like, actually right now [my brother is] in community college too. The career choices I feel like I made—it was—I make for myself like [um]—I was fortunate enough to have like my dad to support me with it. And I know that to be like, hard for other families you know. Like they are strict on their kids about like going out like a path—like a certain path—like maybe like, in the medical or engineering, or like law or maybe like, following the path of what their parents did.

In comparison to other Filipino children, Rosalinda recognizes that she is lucky that she was not forced to do nursing. She also mentions that her older brother is in community college, but he is able to choose his major. Similarly to Justin's comments about nursing as a Filipina dominated industry, are Filipina's educational and career choices limited to nursing because they are expected as women to pursue a nurturing industry? Rosalinda takes a different path and shares how she selected government as her major of choice.

> It was [uh] partly—it was like a class that I took at Linh-Tayler Community College (LTCC). It was a government class and I really, really was interested in that. And I really didn't even have like, any aspirations to become like a politician or get in any of the—I guess like—yeah I didn't, I didn't want to become a politician, but I just wanted to major in government because I really enjoyed the topic. And then you know, I wanted to teach too so, I figured I could teach government or maybe like history…I enjoy—I like reading about like,[uh hmm] What do I like? I actually like to—well as hard as it is for me to—like, I like to, to write—kinda. There's a lot of like there, wasn't a lot of like government specific classes at Constelle cause it was like [uh] what do you call it? A core. It was like

> core courses, like you have to just take Federal government and Texas government. But like once I stepped into University of Montelongo (UMont) and like, my major was government I—[uh] I was able to take like—actually the things I like about it the most is comparing like different political structures in different countries. Like [I'm] taking this one class right now. It was like, about Southeast—Southeast Asian politics. We were just comparing you know with each other. Like we, we learned about the Philippines the first time. And like I have like a brief overview, like the history and stuff. So I really enjoyed that part of the class 'cause we talked about like, where I was from! And like, we kind of talked about like, the current president too; but it wasn't really that much. I wish there was a class about the Philippines, like just the Philippines you know!

Learning About Filipino American Identity

Rosalinda shares how excited she is to take a government class where she was able to learn a little bit about Philippine's political structure. She admits to wanting to take more classes focusing around her Filipino background.

> Like you know? [Um.] For example like, at UMont they have classes about like Mexican history, or like Latin American [classes], or like the Japanese. Like there's not really a like [uh]—yeah there's not really a class about Filipinos or like the Philippines. Like mainly when we're, [uh] discussed like when we're—I guess lumped into like the South—Southeast Asian category. Like OK!?! If you're talking about the Southeast Asian, you can—like the Philippines will hopefully be talked about too. Yeah, and even like the languages they that they offer. They offer—they don't offer Tagalog…[Um] well I don't have it—like I don't know

> [why they don't offer Tagalog classes]. I don't have a definite answer for it, but I feel like it has to do with Philippine history, in like their ties with the United States Because I feel like, since [the] United States was—since the Philippines was like part of the United States as a territory or national? But [um,] I don't know—I guess like. Or um? Hmmm. [long pause with background noise]

At this point, Rosalinda takes an extremely long, silent pause. She ponders deeply and intently as to why there are no Filipino American classes at her university. The length of the pause is alarming, uncomfortable, and revealing.

> I actually want to know like, why there aren't like any Filipin—like Filipino, ethnic study courses. Lemme like guess, like—like the equivalent of [Filipino classes]—there's Chinese, Japanese, Koreans—like the East Asian, like eth—East Asian ethnic studies. That's what they call it. [Chuckles]…Um. [long pause] I don't know?

In the midst of her long pauses, Rosalinda is stumped and she is unable to come up with a reason why there are no Filipino classes. Or in other words, why do other Asian American cultures have a class, but there is not one for Filipino American? I inquiry about why she believes this and I ask her to unpack her feelings about the inaccessibility to Filipino classes.

> Like (pause). [Um] I feel like we're kind of left out. And like, we're kinda of like that ignored Asians, you know? Even though like, I don't even know how much—I feel like there's a lot of Filipinos in Texas or maybe that's just me. But, I don't know, I feel like there's not much…like there's not any like literature for example

> on like Filipino Americans in community college. [Um.] Yeah. That's kind of sad. [Nervous laugh].

Rosalinda is not far off from her observation. Despite Filipinos being the third largest Asian American ethnic group in America, there are no Filipino American classes in Texas, the second largest state in United States. The West coast, East coast, and some parts of the Midwest, have strong Filipino American ethnic courses. Unfortunately, I have not seen or heard of any Filipino classes in Texas. Filipino Americans continue to be an invisible topic in higher education, despite evidence and artifacts showing that Filipino Americans have been in the United States of America for hundreds of years. Fred Cordova's (1983) pictorial essay, "Filipinos: Forgotten Asian Americans" is a great example of how the first Filipinos settled in St. Malo, Louisiana as shrimp and fishermen. Curriculum on Filipino American history, culture, and identity is readily available, but where are the classes in the South (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2007, 2009, 2013)?

Rosalinda could have taken Filipino American classes if she was afforded the opportunity in her degree plan. Unfortunately, she did not even have a choice because it is not offered. Rosalinda is not the only one who is interested in taking Filipino American courses. Geralt exclaims,

> I would retake [Filipino classes], yeah! I would take it, yeah. To learn some of the things I didn't learn. I guess I just picked, heh, what I want[ed] to learn before. So here [in America] are probably some things I need to learn too…No [I did not get to take any Filipino American classes in my university] because when I got to Jose Antonio University (JA-U) my—I guess—credits were already becom[ing] like full. So all I had to take was like, any other electives that they would take.

They count my Vargas Community College classes as, “Oh, you already took physical education?”

Geralt could not take any other classes outside of his supply chain degree, and any additional electives were already fulfilled by his community college transcript. How could a college student fit in a Filipino American course despite a “full” transcript of credits? The answer is they do not, and cannot fit in a class that will interrupt their set degree plan.

I can relate to Geralt because my jam-packed Biology Medical Science Track degree plan did not allow any space to explore different classes outside of my set schedule. During my last semester at the university, I could not stand my last Biology course, Genetics. After the second class, I decided to find a way to drop the class without hurting my path to graduation. I changed my major to Biology, which did not require the Genetics class. Thereafter, I added two fun classes—Costume Construction and Asian American Contemporary Issues, with the illustrious Dr. Lane Hirobayashi. This was the one and only ethnic studies course I took in my entire college career. My university had multiple Filipino American classes, but I never took advantage of taking these classes because I felt it was taboo to fill up my class schedule with non-science classes. Non-degree classes would hold me back from graduating on time.

Reflecting back, I regret not taking the Filipino American classes, but I am proud that I took a stand and carved my own degree pathway by taking classes that helped me explore myself. My last semester was the highest GPA I ever obtained, most probably because I did not take any science classes. When a college student’s educational direction

is filled with pre-determined degree plans and set pathways, when and where do they have the time or space to explore themselves?

Perhaps students seek information about their cultural identity with peers. When I ask Jay if he has ever talked to his Filipino friends about being Filipino, he said,

> Actually I am interested in it, but it's like I've never talked to my Filipino friends about that. Or like, we know that there's, [uh] there's. Hum? Like there's—I remembered going to the Philippines and stuff they'd learn about their history, like they'd learn about their history and all of that. I never tried to explore, you know myself. So, but it'd be interesting to have learned more about "us" in a way. ‘Cause the only thing I know about the Philippines, history-wise, is World War II. [Chuckles]... Well, [um the War] was about, [um]? Is there a MacArthur? Yeah...And the Japanese conquest and all that. And then, or also like we were conquered by Spain. But I don't really know like, details in the history about it [because] it's not outreached to us here, like the Filipino Americans. Like the only other person that I know that's like, that makes fun of like the Filipino community is Jo Koy...Like history and like some like "oh I'm not the only one," like parents putting Vicks vapor rub on you. Cure all your sickness and all that. [Laughs]I was like, "Oh okay, that's, that's a Filipino thing!" [Laughs] I didn't know that was like a thing.

When I ask where would Filipino Americans, like him, learn about Filipino history and identity. He responds,

> Like even? [long pause] That's a good question—I honestly don't know. It's like. [Long pause]. Like the [uh,] I don't know? The Asian community also like—and

> [like] we also, [like] struggle to go into like the [uh]—movie and like TV screen...yeah, media. So it's really hard to get the Asian community out there. Because it is like a huge thing when they had that one TV show of a family being, like the main family is Asian. And you know they made fun of like the typical Asian stuff. You know even though it's just a general—it's not Filipino, it's like oh you could still relate because, you know you're Asian. Right? Rice. [Laugh] and things that the kids don't go through in school. It's just—in Asian Americans in media. It's like very little of it. So it's like how people in the black community is all like, “Oh there's no superhero that's black.” And so then, boom! Black Panther—you know? [Chuckles] And they cast like—I think Dr. Strange is supposed to be Asian. I don't remember. But they cast a White guy. So it's like really hard for the Asian community to see, like a big figure...I was mostly like—not Filipino—but like Asian community. It's just, I generalize the whole community, because [long pause] there isn't that much for us to view from like, [short pause] as a big figure except for like, you know Jackie Chan was a big thing. Lucy Liu is a big thing. But other than that, it's like who else? But yeah. And also like, [like] we make it a big thing! It's like we make it a big thing when [like] someone is [like] part Filipino. We're like, "Yo! He's part Filipino!" It's that Filipino pride.

Jay admitted that he learned about Filipino history and identity from Jo Koy, a Filipino American stand-up comedian who currently has a Netflix special. Because Jay could only think of Jo Koy as the only Filipino influence, he had to think on a larger scope about Asians in the media. He realizes that there is a lack of Asian Americans and

Filipino role models in the media. Because of the lack of prominence, Jay becomes excited when someone who looks like him appears on the "TV screen," and he is proud to claim their Filipino identity. When Jay shared his minimal knowledge of the Philippines' role in World War II, the short mention of Spain's "conquest," and the wrong order of historical events, it is evident that Jay is unaware and unable to talk about his Filipino American history with confidence. Rosalinda and Jay provide the same long, perplexing pauses when it came to facing their historical past. They did not know much and could not find the words to explain why they did not know.

Geralt observes his position as a Filipino American in relation to how other languages are “conveniently” utilized and how others are expected to “conform” to American culture. He provides an example:

> I can compare it to like, let's say Mexican, right?...Here's the word: to conform. Yeah, if you conform—because a lot of like Mexicans, I would be like racist, but like, you know we have like public places [and] they have, like the words that [are] translated to Spanish to help, I guess help [Mexicans] to be—so it will be in their convenience, right? I mean they do [the same] if you go to Chinatown. You know, that's translated into like Chinese characters. I guess I see those as like, not completely conforming to America. Like you know, it's not in English. Yeah, so [Americans] have to cater to their, to their culture. But you know, being in America like, conforming to their culture—like celebrating Thanksgiving, celebrating Independence Day. [The Mexicans and Chinese are] embracing [these American traditions], you know? But, and then so being Filipino American, I guess is like balancing. You also like celebrate like Filipino heritage, their culture

[meaning other culture's traditions], while also celebrating the American festivals and Thanksgiving and Independence Day.

Geralt speaks from a stand point of colonial mentality and racism. His observation of translated words in Spanish and Chinese characters appear to go against American culture and does "not conform" to the English language norm. He questions the application of these translations as a form of "convenience" for Mexicans and Chinese, and assumes that these translations are used "to help" them here in America. In an different point of view, what if the translations are a point of cultural pride and diversity in America? Geralt assumes that America's main language is English and fails to recognize how prevalent cultures and languages are a part of American culture. In addition, the idea of American culture as being the dominant culture is further perpetuated when he identifies Thanksgiving and Independence Day with American heritage—holidays you must celebrate because they are inherently and patriotically American. On the other hand, Filipino heritage and the other cultures such as Mexican and Chinese heritage are separate from the entirety of American culture.

I disagree with Geralt. We make America "great" by being able to celebrate freely all our different cultures with each other. America continues to flourish because of the sharing and celebration of everyone's diverse heritage. How amazing would it be if Americans was more accepting of a new, inclusive definition of American culture by accepting different languages, cultures, traditions, and heritage as inherently and patriotically American; our differences is our strength.

Coming from the Philippines, characters like Bunny, Rosalinda, and Geralt find strength in being able to understand and speak Tagalog fluently. They all had formal

education in the Philippines. What is more impressive is their pride for being bilingual with English and Tagalog. Their Philippine education forced them to read, write, and speak English fluently. Bunny exclaims,

> I'm really proud that I can talk Tagalog because first of all, it was a second language other than English and, and even though I mean, I've met other Filipinos who want to learn Tagalog, but they didn't have the chance to learn as I have. Like I had the opportunity to…I am proud to be a Filipino because I can understand some Hispanic language—just words [laughs]. And it's certainly my roots.

Bunny is proud to be able to speak Tagalog and English. The influence of Spanish colonization surfaces as Bunny shares her pride in understanding the "Hispanic language," implying she knows some Spanish words. Tagalog has many root words from Spanish, thus, learning Spanish is a little easier to comprehend for Filipino Americans who speak the Tagalog language and other dialects like Chavacano.

Similarly, Rosalinda is also proud to be born in the Philippines and to be multilingual, but wishes she spoke other dialects like her family.

> Oh [um, I speak] Tagalog. But you know my family like speak like other dialects. But, I wasn't fortunate enough to learn those. That would be cool though you know, if I knew like Kapampangan or like Bicol or like [um], what else is there? I don't know, but yeah anyways. I just speak Tagalog and English and hopefully I can understand Spanish because I'm taking Spanish too.

Rosalinda expresses her desire to learn other Filipino languages, but also takes pride in learning and understanding three languages like Bunny, including Spanish.

Geralt discusses how American born Filipinos lose their heritage by not knowing the Tagalog language.

> Being a Filipino American is retaining your heritage while being in America. ‘Cause there are a lot of like, I've encountered like a lot of friends, a lot of families who were born here in the States. And then, [um,] you know they only speak English—don’t speak Tagalog. So they kind of, kind of lose the—I mean they are Filipino American, but the kind of lose their like—or they didn't lose [their heritage], they didn't have it to begin with. So Filipinos who were born here, they [yeah]—they still experience the Filipino, like way, because they're still surrounded with [the] Filipino community. [Ah] So yes they are born here but they didn't experience how it's like to live in the Philippines. So they're still Filipino Americans, but they're more Americanized. They only speak English and then, they don't know the language. They have some idea I guess, some key words from their parents. But then compare that to the Filipinos who live for a while in the Philippines who then moved here. So they have to like, you know experience some of the difficulty of living in the Philippines. And, and they carry that experience here in the States, and you know—they’re much more like appreciative I guess of what they have here now.

Geralt is keen to recognize that American-born Filipinos still have Filipino values, but feels they lose a sense of Filipino heritage because they do not speak the language or understand the experiences of living in the Philippines like he did. When Geralt and Bunny talk about the hardships of living in the Philippines and then coming to America as a place of opportunity, they both try to explain how they do not take living in

American for granted. Perhaps Geralt's description is the answer to why Justin struggles with his parents not wanting to throw away moldy left-overs and garage junk. They have a deep appreciation, and perhaps difficulty letting go of things they once did not have before they came to America. Maybe the misunderstanding between Justin and his parents is the difference in immigration experience—a circumstance the Philippine born characters understand deeply and intimately.

For Jay, Vivienne, and Ramona, understanding Filipino language has been a personal barrier they would like to overcome. Jay's parents had "forced" him to speak English. But now as an adult, he discusses his frustration of not speaking or understanding Tagalog.

> So I'm just like, I feel like that as I did when I went to—when I moved from the Philippines here. My parents did not want to have me speak Tagalog [at home]. Once I get out of school, like [pre-kindergarten], they were like "No, no, no!" like no Tagalog or nothing. "You have to learn how to speak English." And my grandparents are with that too. They're like "Oh no! You to go [to school to] learn how to speak in English." So it kind of diverted away from my native language which was kind of—feel bad about that because being bilingual is actually pretty good. [Laughs] Like dang it! I was deprived as a child. So yeah, just I guess it's being an Americanized...Yes it's more of like, I don't speak Filipino. I can't speak Tagalog at all. I try. But then I feel it's like one of those things where you try and say something in Tagalog and then you're just like that sounds pretty bad. Like it's crazy. Yeah. It's like, oh yeah, it's like, you're trying to teach a friend, like a white friend, to speak Tagalog and you're like you know, "That's not how you say it."

Even though Jay tried to speak Tagalog, he does not feel confident in his self. Jay was discouraged to communicate in Tagalog at school as a child. Similarly, Justin reminisced about his childhood not having "*kuwento* time," which was comparable to children's story time. There was no space to really discover his Filipino heritage or roots. Perhaps this is another reason why he comes to believe more in his American identity than Filipino identity.

> We didn't have *kuwento* time. You know like, you know like "oh it's story [time] at the library or I'm at school. Oh, it's story time." No one ever said that to me in Tagalog like it's *kuwento* time, oh where I don't know don't—the first word I understood was *buhok*, hair... And I mean, I know a little bit here and there, and I can understand when someone's talking just a little bit because they do throw English words here and there and some—like [I] puzzle piece it together. And then in combination with the words I do know them that—I don't know. I don't know shit! [How do] I feel about that? That makes me even more of an American in my mind. Well, shit. I guess I'm more American than Filipino.

Not understanding the Filipino language poses as an obstacle to understanding Filipino culture and nuances, and therefore, forces Filipino Americans to choose a side, just like Justin. The thought of feeling like an outsider in his own culture makes him feel like he did not belong to the category of Filipino. He has no choice but to claim being American.

For Vivienne, she expresses her frustration of not being able to speak the Tagalog language and not being able to communicate with her family.

> I mean, when I was younger well, there's still is the language barrier. I can understand the Tagalog language. My mother tongue is English. So it would be hard. They would speak to me in Tagalog. I understand, and then I respond back in English. So I guess that's more on me. But I guess I dislike the fact that I am not able to communicate back in Tagalog, especially in a Filipino accent. That's one of the things, because I feel like that was a barrier, especially with my family, my uncles, my aunts. You know, I can feel like there's a language barrier. There are things that every country can experience happiness, but I think every language is different in expressing yourself. It's just different in English and in Tagalog. It's interesting. So, like if I were to express myself in English, I would sound different. Filipinos are more, very emphatic or emotional. So I think that's one thing I dislike. I wish I can improve and work on speaking and understanding Tagalog. [laughs] But I think it's easier to pick up and learn the language when you're in the Philippines, because you're around Filipinos. I even caught onto the language. The words were becoming easy to understand and easier to respond back versus as if I were in Mexico. I learned Spanish in high school. But I don't think I would understand Spanish [as well as] I understand Tagalog, [because] I grew up listening to my parents [speaking Tagalog]. I understand when they talk to each other, but they never expected me to respond back.

Vivienne is eager to learn the language so she can understand how other Filipinos are feeling and so that she can relate with them. Jay and Vivienne want to learn Filipino to feel connected to their families, and ultimately to the Filipino culture. Unfortunately, Jay and Vivienne's parents, did not expect their children to speak in

Tagalog in fear that they would be seen as *ibang tao*, other people, by American perception. Their parents did not know that discouraging bilingualism would lead to a deep disconnection from their Filipino heritage. The yearning to belong to a culture through intimate knowledge of a language is evident in their *kuwento.* The expectation was to learn English well, assimilate into school, and become successful Americans. Just blend in (Pido, 1997).

Just like Jay and Vivienne, Ramona used to speak Tagalog as a child, but also lost the language as she started going to school.

> It was my parents only really mostly spoke Tagalog. I was actually bilingual as a kid. Yeah and I just started speaking more English as I went to school more because my parents said whenever we went to school sometimes we would speak like, you know, half Tagalog half English at school, and my parents didn't want that. They didn't want us to be bullied or made fun of because, honestly, it wasn't as when it wasn't normal to see like bilingual kids. Back to that as it is now. So [um] they want us to start speaking more English, and so as they started pushing that more, I just started reading all English. I still understand Tagalog from my parents ‘cause they still speak it primarily at home, and that's what I mean by mostly Filipino.

Ramona’s parents wanted to protect her from being bullied at school for confusing English and Tagalog. They enforced her to speak English, but she still understands Tagalog because her parents speak the language at home. But just like Jay and Vivienne, she is not able to speak the language. Even though parents are worried

about their children being bullied by other American students because of language confusion and heavy accents, Filipino students also bully each other.

Bunny has a *kuwento* about a Philippine born friend who was bullied for being a good Filipino student. She said,

> What I don't like is crab mentality. Not all [Filipinos], but most of them know most Filipinos. That's why I only have selected Filipino friends because the Filipinos I have met that are my age, I feel have some sort of [crab] mentality still and crab mentality is basically when you're successful they try to pull you down to their level. And I've experienced this myself and I've experienced this. I've seen this be done to my friend, [April]. So April stops schools because she was being bullied by other Filipinos [here, here in the United States]. And I was like, "Wow!" So I need to be careful with who I become friends with. That's the only downside and I feel that we're better than that. I didn't know that the dark side is the same thing with the Philippines, you know especially in school. People are very competitive. It's because like when people graduate and they're at the top of the class, you know they get good jobs. And that's usually how the culture is you get better jobs when you're the smartest.

Ramona and Bunny are not the only ones who had to worry about being bullied for being Filipino. Justin confided that as a young child he was bullied by an older student.

> I was bullied as a kid, by this Filipino who is seven years older than me. I don't know. But like, he loved bullying me. It happened to be the brother of the Filipino that was the same age [as me]. But yeah, I think bullying too, had a big part to do

> with [being depressed]. I was very self-aware about, why I always feel—I started to learn about why I was feeling depressed. It all stems from bullying. And then everything just stuck down there, like bullying. I was bullied as a kid and it stuck with me forever… Fuck, he's just like "Oh, you're gay!" Or he would like, get a hanger and like, hit me with it. I was maybe kindergarten…He was my main bully. Yeah sure, I had bullies in school, but like this was like the bully of bullies.

Being bullied by another Filipino student was a traumatic experience for Justin. He asserts that his negative experience with the Filipino bully and the rejection of his uncle were both experiences that led him towards his disdain for Filipino culture. Filipinos, like his uncle and the bully, made Justin hate being Filipino even more. He could not be himself at home nor at school.

If Filipino American history, language, and cultural classes are undervalued by their parents and they are not available in all levels of education, where would these characters learn about their identity? When will they get a chance to practice being and becoming Filipino without feeling embarrassed or talk to someone about being bullied by another Filipino? Perhaps outside of the classroom, cultural student organizations can provide a space to explore being Filipino American. For a couple of the characters, their college Filipino American student organization (FASO) provided them a way to understand what they like and do not like about their identity. Steve shares his *kuwento* on interacting with other Filipino Americans at his university.

> I never really hung out with a lot of Filipinos, you know. My school—just because the majority were Hispanic or African-American—there was maybe a handful of Filipinos when I was in elementary, middle, and high school. So it was

at community college that I saw a Filipino community; I decided to be part of it. So the Asian American Club (AAC), which was a great way to be part of the Filipino community in a community college. Going to university there is already organization Filipino American Student Organization (FASO). Now, that was a big Filipino community as well. But I joined it for like, two semesters and then I stopped. I stopped participating in it. It was a different—just different. A lot of the people were into modern dancing and hip-hop [dancing]. I'm not really that interested in it. So there was a Filipino organization. You know, I do have my own personal interests in things and—dancing and everything wasn't really my interest, so I stopped being part of [FASO]. So yeah, I would say I started for two semesters—the first semester was heavily part of it [and] I went to the meetings. The second semester, I didn't go to any of the meetings; I was just hanging out. I would just hang out like, if I see someone from the organization I'd say "Hi!" There is someone I knew in the gym [and we would] work out with them or something. I guess one thing is that [FASO] lacked Filipino culture and awareness. It was very focused on dancing. So to say they have this thing called GoodPhil where a lot of the same FASO organizations from different universities come together, and they basically compete with sports and dancing pretty much. And at that time when I was there, there were sports, there was modern dancing, and there was some—and then there was cultural. And I felt like culture was lacking. Just because, one, in the competition you could only win by your ratings between sports and the modern dancing. The cultural dance was not rated amongst everything else. [The cultural dance] was just there—there I guess

showed that, "Oh yeah, we have Filipino culture." But it wasn't a part of the rating to see who was first, second, or third. I think now it's considered they—the judges now that like say "Alright, this school did the best for cultural and stuff like that." But the time there was—when I joined, that there was a huge turnoff for me just cause when I joined the FASO, just because I'd like to be part of a Filipino organization. And like, but then there wasn't that much Filipino culture happening. Just sports and modern dancing. I would say like during the FASO meetings they had some kind of [discussion] if they would talk about certain Filipinos. So like in the organization, not everybody is Filipino. So [when] they're conducting their meetings—that [is] maybe like spend 10 minutes, like [on] a fun fact about the Philippines or being Filipino, or Filipinos fun fact, or something—you know Filipino awareness—when they are just, you know, everyone gets together—[there] are modern dance auditions next week or something [else]. They talked about socials and stuff. It was like nothing Filipino. It was basically [a] social organization. [um] So I joined when—I joined, I was actually part of a Filipino cultural dance. It was funny because the majority of the people weren't Filipino that were in the cultural dance. Majority [were] Vietnamese. Yeah. So that's another thing. Also the majority of the students I say are Vietnamese. And it goes back to the sports and dancing; they get to see that FASO has a well-established program for both sports and dancing. So of course someone's looking for an organization they want they want to join the organization that has, I guess the best in rep[utation]. The FASO has the best in rep[utation] for those things—a lot of –a lot of non-Filipino students is joining the organization. Yeah there is. But

> going back to what I said, dancing and sports. FASO had the majority of athletes and dancers I guess, so people would join that organization and then if you go more in depth, you know there's always like a social aspect of it. There's more people in FASO that means more social gatherings so everyone would go there.

Steve did not grow up with a lot of Filipino classmates in middle school and high school. When he reached college, he had an opportunity to join an Asian American club in community college, and then an FASO in his university. He initially joined to be part of the Filipino American community, to learn more about his culture, and also to meet other peers. Steve started to notice that the organization barely discussed or taught about Filipino American history, culture, or identity. He admitted to attending club meetings for social purposes, and not for actual active membership. Club meetings gave a small amount of time to "fun facts" about Filipino culture because a lot of the student members were not Filipino, and mostly Vietnamese. Providing little factoids at the beginning of the meeting were a sufficient coverage for their cultural mission. Steve even observed that at the largest Filipino American college student event in Texas, the GoodPhil Games, cultural dances were not taken into account for the competition ranking. Slowly, Steve began to realize that his experience in FASO was only focused on dancing, sports, and socialization. Even though Steve enjoyed all these aspects, on a deeper level, he was missing out on a chance to learn, debate, understand, and unpack the meaning of being Filipino. How many more Filipino students find a student organization they want to obtain as sense of belonging and a place of pride, but only to figure out that is lacks in fulfilling their identity needs? Steve left the club after the second semester when he no longer saw his personal values aligned with FASO.

Justin also feels the same. He has a very strong opinion about his university's FASO and associates the group with a generalized, Filipino identity.

> When I went to the university, they had this thing called the FASO. I call a lot of bullshitters [there] and that is that, if I ever say—I'm, I don't want to say that as I'm like, Filipinos suck. Okay. But a lot of those young FASO's are like—they suck! They like to party here party an—not that partying is as bad, as I do that too, it's like they don't do the work to back up what they're saying. They love to talk! Everyone's a talker and then everyone makes excuses, and so that's why I don't like to hang around the Filipino crowd unless they're a Filipino that was mature. That's a different story. And so all that young—those younger people like my age, that were Filipino, how I would not want to hang out with them. I just didn't feel that connection. I matured. I feel like I quickly [matured] and I was self-aware of it too. Sometimes you get caught in the crowd and you just let it happen. Your self-awareness isn't there. Like I felt like I was lucky. I was parented the right way...I don't want to say it's hard for me to say I'm Filipino American but because there are so many people that say "I'm Filipino American; I'm Filipino American and like these FASO are...and they just ruin it, because I don't want to feel like I'm Filipino American and party all the time, and like [don't] have a good work ethic. Like that's what I see what Filipino American is because they kind of ruined my vision of being Filipino American is when they all they do is make excuses, and they like to talk a lot and don't back it up. That's why I like to sometimes I just be like I'm American. I don't want to be like Filipino because when you say you're Filipino it's like "Oh you're so proud—

> you're so proud to be Filipino" And I'm not that. I'm very humble. I'm very like, grounded. And a lot of people that I'm sure they kind of realize that they turned to me. "Justin can you mentor me?" Like I have a lot of people I'm mentoring right now because they see that in me and they want to be like that. Why did I get a job at the hospital and I beat out someone that had two years' experience? Because they saw I had good quality traits and they're like "Man this is someone that we want to work with." Everyone would kill for that job. That is a big name that can still open doors for the future. I just felt like "Filipino" was ruined at least growing up, and that student you know that FASO, like it kinda ruined my perception on like, well being Filipino American... Don't be so proud because that doesn't describe who I am. Like, "I'm so proud that I can make excuses and talk a big talk and not back it up"...But I mean shit—I don't know why, but people there [in the FASO] like, I think also like other cultures kind of rub into being Filipino. Like there's Vietnamese people in the FASO. So it's kind of like, yeah I guess you know I had a couple crushes on Vietnamese people, and then when you get to know a Vietnamese girl. I'm trying to say that they're kind of bad, but like they are very full of shit, bitchy or arrogant, and family-oriented—that's nice, but like it should be this way.

Justin does not connect with the concept of Filipino pride, and most especially, the pride exhibited by the members of FASO. Just like Steve, he also observed that there are a lot of Vietnamese students in the club. There are some major ethnic tensions between Filipino and Vietnamese students. He mentions having some "crushes" on Vietnamese people, but describes misogynistic, patriarchal words to describe his attitude

towards them. The only aspect he liked was Vietnamese's value for family. Justin admits that he does not want to date Asian or Filipina women.

> I always say, "Fuck I can't date an Asian. I can't date [a] Filipino." And part of that is because I don't want that Filipino culture. I'm into like, white people, because they're American. And like, that's how I am. That's honest. [At] least I'm being self-aware. You know, like I don't think I can do the whole Filipino culture. I'm sorry, it's just me. And I know there's some people that, you know are that, you know...I might not be the only person, but like I just don't like Filipino culture around me. Why? I think I like it around me, but I don't want to marry it at all. If I can marry Filipino culture, and if it is—at least let them be more whitewashed, which is what we call more American, more Americanized. Let them be more whitewashed! Yeah that's my two theories…Yeah [I consciously date white women.] I don't know if I can do Filipino. I don't know, it has a lot to do with—obviously you want them to fit the criteria of good traits…But in terms of, you know, other things, yeah. Culture has a lot…The bulk of it for me is kind of like "Hey remember, [I] don't like Filipino culture."

Justin refuses to date and marry a Filipina because he does not want to marry the cultural baggage that comes with the Filipino culture. If he were to marry a Filipina, he wants her to be "whitewashed," meaning be just like him—more "Americanized." Although Justin never says he has American pride, he makes it clear that being American is the better part of his identity, and "washes" his hands off any kind of popular Filipino pride. Justin shares an example,

> Fuck! I don't know why [the Vietnamese students are] trying to reinvent Filipino too. There are a lot of people say that there is an FASO because they want to be they want to be Filipino, because they know Filipino is the coolest Asian. And then when I hear that [Filipinos are the coolest Asians], I'm like, "Oh, gosh!" here we go again with Filipino and the Black Eyed Peas Filipino—like "Oh my gosh, stop being so proud about that—about everything" and you make it like a hype song. Like, "We're just Filipino." I don't know why, I could say the same thing about Conor McGregor [the Mixed Martial Arts Fighter]…being from Ireland. So it's like [his fans] highlight just "Irish, Irish, Irish!" It's the same thing as [Filipino] "Pride, pride, pride!"

In comparison, when I ask Justin what he thinks about what Filipino pride means to him. He answers,

> Well I think that I play—I have a picture of like [Manny] Pacquiao just like doing something like, you know, raising his arms. I mean I might not even know how it feels to be Filipino truthfully, like—I can't make that connection at all.

Justin expresses it plainly—"we are just Filipino," implying that there is nothing to celebrate about being Filipino. To Justin, what is the point of rapping "hype songs" and acting like we have arrived? Similarly, Justin associates the students in the FASO as Filipinos who party too much and do not have a "good work ethic," meaning, they are not academic or career-oriented like him. Filipino students end up going to him and seeking mentorship because they cannot decide on their major. He sees the FASO as a major hindrance to their success, as well as being Filipino. To Justin, the FASO showcases a false sense of Filipino American identity that he does not want to associate himself with.

Perhaps this is another reason why he does not like being called Filipino or Filipino American. Unfortunately, none of the other characters discussed any interaction or engagement with their university FASO. Listening to both Steve and Justin's stories about their experience on FASO makes me question and challenge the purpose of FASO. Even though they are two characters with two different outlooks, they both have the same stereotypes of FASO—a means for socialization, a club for non-Filipinos, and a lack of Filipino American identity and cultural dialogue. If FASO is not a safe space to explore Filipino American identity and culture, then what space do Filipino American college students have? Where can Filipino Americans build self-confidence and pride for their cultural identity?

When I asked the other characters what makes them proud of being Filipino or the Filipino culture, I received a variety of answers. The use of celebritism is one major vehicle to developing and visualizing Filipino pride. Vivienne shares,

> It's just like any country pride. When you say those words, I immediately think of that boxer. What's his name? Manny Pacquiao. I think we all had country pride when we all, Filipinos, would get together and watch the boxing, back in the day when he would win. Yes. But yeah, there was a pride, for example, supporting our other fellow athletes, anyone who's successful, like our Miss Universe, [Pia Wurtzbach].

Beauty pageants are another way Filipinos display cultural pride. This year, the Philippines won Miss Universe again, making the show the center of attention at all holiday parties. Filipinos are proud and fascinated by the winners, as if they were our

own family members. The year Pia Wurtzbach won, my mom religiously watched YouTube videos and Filipino news, as if she had another daughter.

Justin describes pride as Manny Pacquiao, the iconic Filipino champion boxer turned politician. He represents the fighting spirit of all Filipinos and this is why he is so popular. In the eyes of his Filipino fans, Manny's accomplishment is a visual representation of Filipino pride. Just like Vivienne and Justin, Jay immediately identifies Filipino pride with the boxing champion.

> Uh, Filipino pride? It's just I don't know it's like you're cheering for your whole country saying it's like it's not just you. It's like the whole country, you know, like they are cheering for that one person. You have like—it's not a bandwagon, it's like a huge freaking country cheering for you. And like everyone supports you because "oh you know he's one of us." You barely see these guys out there. So if you see like Pacquiao, as like he's, he's the person that we all can get behind and cheer for because who else are we going to cheer [for] that's like full Filipino? I'm pretty open about it. I'm not afraid of being like, "oh yeah I don't care [of what] like the statistics say that, Pacquiao is going to lose this fight. I believe! He's one of us. You know what it's like. It's that, that just unconditional pride. Oh it's pretty big in the Filipino community too. It's like, who wears their flag on their shirt? [Laughs] Like I've never seen that, like no one puts like—well except for Americans. [Laughs] Other countries don't like—[uh] well, yeah there's some. But I mean like, Filipinos are another big, big country that like put pride in their flag. It's like [uh] I can't even explain it. It's like I don't even know why. It's just cause.

Jay believes in Manny because he is “one of us.” Jay hits upon a Filipino value of *kapwa*, we are one spirit, and this is evident by Filipinos “unconditional pride” and love for Manny Pacquiao. I have been to many Manny Pacquiao viewing parties and watched two live boxing matches. There is an undeniable sense of pride, knowing that someone who looks like you and sounds like your parents, is rising above the poverty and oppression. He represents success and that any Filipino can make their dreams come true. But I do question, is this expression of Filipino pride too much for others? What about characters, like Justin, who are opposed to excessive Filipino pride? Jay says,

> I mean there is too much pride. It's like trying to like force—it's like trying to force feed someone like, okay? Like they're interested, right? They're interested in knowing about Filipinos, but then you're just like forcing way too much. You're being too, like too prideful and ignoring, like you know, ignoring that you know sometimes, you know, we make mistakes, you know? All right, yeah, Pacquiao lost. He's not the better boxer. But I mean we're still...I don't know how to explain it. But like you except that, you know, he lost. Alright, cool. But it's not like, "Oh yeah he should have won this way." And like your being—you're trying to look into it too much, kind of thing.

For Jay, having too much Filipino pride can lead to arrogance. Instead, he implies the need to put down your pride and accept defeat, just like when Pacquiao lost in several controversial boxing matches, leading to the demise of his fame. Even though the Filipino community believed he should have won, nothing could change the outcome. Jay and other Filipinos had to accept the truth. Jay has

Never met anyone [who was not prideful of being Filipino]. It's like really hard. It's like they're either—like, super prideful, or like pretty—just like, proud to be Filipino. It's never like—I'm [not proud to be] Filipino. You know, usually if I hear, like something negative [about us], it's usually not from a Filipino. It's like [uh] my friends from Guam. They're islanders and stuff like that. So they don't consider Philippines as an island, even though it is an island. It's a huge island! Right? So they're like, "Those, [uh] the Filipinos are like, [um] the Mexicans here [in America]." [Laughs]. No, it's like they compare us—as like an island, as like the Mexicans here in America. But I'm just like, "I don't understand?" They're like "I don't know it's—we're kinda—it's just like instilled in us." I'm like "OK?" [My friends still say,] "But we like you guys." [Laughs] It's like, [the Filipinos] are kind of outcasts, over there [in Guam]. And [one of] my friends [are] like, "Yeah I was like, I wasn't part of like the other islanders. I always hung out with the Filipino groups in Guam" at school, when he was in high school." He was like, "Yeah they're really cool people. I'm like I don't understand that mentality." Like, I don't either. Like I guess because we like, we like to distribute our people, like wherever it's like, where they could make a living, you know, other than the Philippines, where they're not getting paid as much. So like, so it's interesting. I never heard that before...until like recently. I was like "Huh? I never heard of being Filipinos being called like the "Asian Pacific Islander Mexicans." [Laughs] You know because—I guess it kind of makes sense, because we do distribute our people a lot. Like they don't stay in the Philippines; they move around a lot…working overseas, like trying to find a better place. Like [the] people from

> Mexico trying to move here; [they are] trying to find better work and working conditions and like, a place for their family. And that's what we're kind of doing too. That's what my dad did. He moved over here to find better work.

What Jay does not realize is that Guam was a part of the Treaty of Paris in 1898, where Spain relinquished their power to the United States, which included Cuba, Puerto Rico, Philippines, and Guam. To a certain degree, Guam and the Philippines faced the same colonization, but Guam is still a territory of the United States, and the Philippines is now an "independent" country. Jay was surprised to hear that his friend described Filipinos in Guam as the "Asian Pacific Islander-Mexican," a pejorative label to assume that both Filipinos and Mexicans are the lowliest rung of the labor workforce. Perhaps the conversation between Jay and his Guamanian friend is a battle of who can exert more colonial mentality? To a certain extent, Jay's conclusion have been noted; Filipinos have been coined as "The Latinos of Asia" by Ocampo (2016). Jay recognizes the connection between the journey of Mexican immigrants with his own immigrant father; both communities left their country to "find better work" in America, even if it means "not getting paid as much." Perhaps, this is the irony of chasing after the "American Dream."

On the other hand, Geralt wants the Philippines to be known for more than Manny Pacquiao. He wants the Philippines and Filipinos to be known as a global powerhouse for economy and intellectuality.

> It may come out bad. But, [um] I guess what most people you know, they just think about the culture, right. That's what they're proud of—how they do things. People keep saying "Oh—is like, Filipinos are hard"—oh , this is going to come out [wrong]—"hard worker or, they're like [the type to have] [um]—they're big

> on families." But then I also see like the bad side of that. I see actually like other countries, are like that too. Like, they're all hard working. Mexicans are hard working. Other countries that immigrated here are big on families so I don't know like what to be. What's the big deal about that? That's what I think of sometimes, you know? Because like I said other countries, they have something to be proud of like—what do you think of when you think of Germany? What do you think of when you think of Britain? What do you think of what you think of Japan? Now go back to, what you think of—well what do other cultures know about us [Filipinos]? What do—we ask, let's say American. What do we think of, when you think of Philippines? What did they say, besides Manny Pacquiao? Right? So, that's like I guess, sometimes I daydream. You know if I were president, I would do this. [Chuckles]. Heh.

Geralt questions the reputation and contribution of the Philippines and Filipinos on a global scale. Just like Jay, he recognizes that Filipinos are "hard working" like "Mexicans," but he does not find this as reputable or important aspect. Rather, he starts listing powerful countries that are globally influential and then compares the Philippines' most visible success, Manny Pacquiao, as a weak highpoint.

He daydreams about being in a position of power to make changes and do something to make all Filipinos proud of their country and identity. When I pressed about him stepping up to the plate of leadership, he shared that he could have had a career in law and politics if he did not leave the Philippines. His grandfather was a popular politician in his hometown, and he would have probably continued the family legacy.

Unfortunately, all of this was just a “daydream” and the glimmer of hope was just in his fantasies.

Conclusion

Winter has arrived in the South and the air is crisp and cool as I walk through the Jones Park trail again. As I walk through the forest, I no longer see the colorful, wild Texan flowers; I am greeted with a new parking lot to the left and a bike path that cuts across the main trail. The change is jarring; and most prominently lingering is the scent of newly laid asphalt. I keep walking and I am clearly by myself on the path. As I look side to side, the forest is no longer dense or thick with leaves; I can see much deeper into the woods. The change in weather has exposed the naked truth about the forest and the early evening light shines on the bare and fragile branches. The forest’s secrets are revealed and the truth is, she is old, aging, and changing. Despite the fragility of the forest in the winter, the sound of happy birds singing continue to be a sign of reassurance that the forest will continue to exist.

I arrive at Turtle Pond, my half-way point to the creek. I was stood in one of my favorite spots—a small overlooking bridge. I was admiring the scenery and I looked down to see something carved into the wooden rail. It said "Stinky." I chuckled. Why? My sister, Cindy, lovingly calls me Stinky, which rhymes with my Filipino nickname, Pinky. Thus, "Stinky Pinky." And, she absolutely loves turtles. Perhaps this is why I think of family when I visit this pond. The gathering of turtles, is like the gathering of my Filipino family. I take a picture of the carving as a remembrance of our inside joke (See Figure 10).

Figure 10. Stinky carving. Photo by Pat Lindsay C. Catalla

Across the distance, I see two older people observing the lake. I take in the beautiful view and I continue through my journey. I arrive at my destination. The creek is still and quiet, but remnants of a storm were evident in the large tree branches strewn around the area. I take in a deep breath and I feel like I have arrived home. I brought an autobiographical book called, *A Voice in the Darkness* in hopes I could draw some inspiration from the *kuwento*. The author was my co-worker, Jeanne Celestine, and I had just recently found out that she is a Rwandan genocide survivor. I was in the middle of starting the chapter when the genocide first started in her town and she and her little twin sisters were fleeing into the forest. The forest was right in front of me and I started hearing rustling as I was reading the frightful pages. I felt scared for a quick moment, but was comforted to know that it was the couple who I saw at Turtle Pond. I noticed the woman had a serious set of binoculars and big camera lens. I was curious to ask if they were bird watchers, like the characters of Jack Black and Steve Martin in the movie, *The Big Year*. I greet them with typical Southern hospitality and we start a friendly chat.

Ironically, the woman was named Cindy, the same nickname as my sister. She was with her partner, Norm, and they were from Philadelphia. They had come to Texas as part of Cindy's birding bucket list. In our brief encounter, I learned a lot about them. They confided that they had avoided Texas for many years because the wave of red politics was too much for them handle as proud blue "liberals." Cindy was reminiscing about the Texas shaped waffle she had eaten the first day she arrived. She could not believe the pride of the state is in the shape of our food. I remember thinking the same way as Cindy when I had my first Texas shaped waffle—I did think the state pride was a little overbearing, but now, it does not bother me at all. Our conversation led to their great adventures of their trip and how Norm had driven over 150 miles during the day, complaining over the outrageous Houston traffic. Cindy also started listing all the birds she had seen on the trip and she was able to check off her bucket list of must-see birds.

In the middle of Cindy's conversation, Norm had interrupted us and said, "Look, a Great Blue Heron!" I looked over my shoulder to look at the creek, and I did not see anything but the water and landscape. Cindy looked through her binoculars and confirmed that it was indeed a Great Blue Heron. She was kind enough to offer me to look through the binoculars and so I took the opportunity. After giving me a quick rundown on how to use the binoculars, I was looking through the lens, trying to figure out what the heck was I looking for in the creek. Norm gave me some directions and said to look between the two branches and I would see the bird. For the first 10 seconds, I did not see anything, and I was so worried that I would have to lie about seeing something, just to not feel like an idiot. But after a couple more seconds, I saw what they saw. The Great Blue Heron was visible and basking in the sun. The shape of the bird was tall and

slender. The glow of the sunlight was bouncing off her chest. She was so bright, that she blended into the sandy edge of the creek. The bird looked like she was taking a quick break and soaking up some sun in the cool winter weather. I was so excited to find her and in that moment. I removed the binoculars to assess how far in the distance the bird was from where I was standing. With my naked eyes, she was so far away to the point of invisibility. I could not believe how much she blended in and how Norm could even see a bird that far with his own eyes. I put the binoculars up to my eyes again and I saw how close the bird was to me. It was an incredible feeling to find the Great Blue Heron and see her exist in a place I was not expecting her to be. Just like the Great Egret, I wondered why is she basking in the sun? What is she doing here and where is she going? What is she thinking? What's her *kuwento*?

My friendly chat came to an end with Cindy and Norm, and she encouraged me to visit Bayou Bend in the Gulf Coast to see the beautiful park. She also invited me to friend her on Facebook to see her pictures. Norm asked me about the best restaurants to visit and I provided some local dinner spots for them to try out. Although our serendipitous meeting was fleeting, I learned some lasting lessons that day, deep in the forest.

One—pursue your passions and goals. Cindy is deeply passionate about birds and the protection of the environment, and for years, she makes it a goal to search for all the birds she reads about in books. Even though they were driving around the city looking for her must-see birds, she and Norm had a wonderful experience bird watching together. Birdwatching is not my interest or hobby, but I admire Cindy for pursing her passion. What she does motivates and inspires me to do the same.

Two—we need to take a look closer at things that we cannot see with the naked eye. The Great Blue Heron represents my characters and their own *kuwento*. When we shine a light and look through with critical lens, the characters of this research have colorful lives and experiences that have yet to be heard or shared. How many more Filipino students are we overlooking in higher education because we cannot see or understand their challenges with our naked eyes?

Lastly, three—the path of life, education, and career is not linear and straight. The *kuwento* of the characters traverse a winding path of highs and lows, and "do this and do that's." Their stories are different and the same; their *kuwento* takes us into the complex labyrinth of their own becoming. How do we as scholar-practitioners, community members, and educators, support the journey of our Filipino American students, without perpetuating racism, whitewashing, and colonial mentality?

CHAPTER V

Finale

"We begin in the midst, and end in the midst of experience"

(Clandinin, 2013, p. 43)

As I write the final chapter, I am reminded of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimension inquiry space—inwards, outwards, backwards, and forward. For the eight characters—Bunny, Geralt, Jay, Justin, Ramona, Rosalinda, Steve, and Vivienne—looking inwards meant remembering and recollecting personal experiences for the first time. When I ask them questions, their minds are compelled to walk through the labyrinth of their past and dig into the soul of buried stories. Their minds and spirts are taken back into the past and their present "self" searches, excavates, and rediscovers why they exist in the moment. Some memories are captivating, while others bring a sense of emotional pain and uncertainty. Their memories of childhood, coming into adulthood, influential relationships, and reasons why they chose a certain path, all come flooding forward into the present moment. Perhaps for the first time, each character's Filipino essence surfaces into reality and I am present to witness and record their life *kuwento*.

I enter their life *kuwento* "in the midst and end in the midst" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 43) as they continue their life experiences beyond our interview and this research. Although the characters let me into their life *kuwento* for an hour or two, their stories contain layers of complex information about Filipino American community college students (FACCS) in the South. Here is where I begin the journey of unpacking the meaning of their *kuwento* and what this mean for future research.

Identity

My first research question asked, "How do FACCS describe their Filipina/o American identity development?" There is no linear path or correct way to develop Filipino American identity. Each character experienced various stage(s) of Kevin Nadal's Filipino American identity development (FAID) Model (2004) depending on the retelling of their life *kuwento*. To recap, the six FAID stages are: ethnic awareness, assimilation to dominant culture, social political awakening, pan-ethnic Asian American consciousness, ethnocentric realization, and incorporation. The FAID model is not linear and characters can experience the stages at different times in their life and simultaneously.

Ethnic awareness. Ethnic awareness begins at an early age, when a Filipino becomes aware of their ethnic identity through cultural and environmental factors, such as, people, language, food, and music (Nadal, 2011). Filipino youth at this stage are proud of their identity because they are surrounded by people and experiences who showcase Filipino culture in a positive light. They are aware that the Filipinos who are not related to them may be treated as if they are part of their family and, by extension they see all Filipino people as part of their familial and social network. At this stage, the Filipino does not understand the difference between Filipino identity and Asian American identity, as well as other minoritized groups at this stage, because they may not understand racial or ethnic identity. The Filipino may not have a lot of interaction with the White/dominant group, but images in the media or print are visible, and the Filipino's constant exposure to this may create a positive perspective of the White/dominant group.

In terms of ethnic awareness of the characters, the concept of family and the Filipino community as your extended family, is the main source of Filipino identity and

cultural (re)production (Patacsil, 2009). Geralt, Rosalinda, and Bunny talk about their non-traditional Filipino families that are blended, separated, and in the process of uniting. Ramona shares that Filipino culture is performed and exercised in the confines of the home. Places of faith, such as Geralt's Christian church, or Jay's Catholic community, are places where Filipinos gather and socialize. Vivienne describes the impact of *simbang gabi*, as a positive space for Filipinos to congregate and practice their faith and identity. Outside of the home, characters start to learn the politics of American culture in school and work. Steve is living in a city where there is no Filipino community, and he feels "down" thinking about the isolation. Back home, he is surrounded by his Filipino family who expects him to always spend time with them, even during his own down time. Sharing personal space and time may seem overbearing, but in Steve's perception, it is all part of being part of a Filipino family.

Time is also an important aspect in Filipino culture. Ramona and Vivienne share stories about time and punctuality, where "Filipino Time" is very relaxed, while American culture is always on time. Bunny feels that it is her time to give back to her parents, and show her *utang na loob*, debt of gratitude, by helping her mom immigrate and settle in America. Jay shared his goal to make sure his parents live with him when he buys his own house. Filipino culture has an expectation of having multiple generations living under the same roof. Placing parents in a nursing home is an American philosophy and a Filipino taboo.

For Jay, Vivienne, and Ramona, they realize that they are Filipino at a young age because they were able to speak Tagalog fluently. Family members told them not to speak the language in fear of being bullied as a social outcast in school and in American

society. Characters had no choice but to assimilate into the dominant language of English, placing them at a disadvantage being disconnected to their cultural roots.

For Philippine born characters, such as Geralt, Bunny, and Rosalinda, they recall their time growing up in the Philippines, not being aware of their identity until they came here to America. As a new immigrant, they perceived themselves as "other" by Americans and Filipino Americans. Geralt had an assumption that Americans were only "white and black" people, because Philippine media depicted America as only white and black, and no other races.

Food is also another source of understanding Filipino identity. Steve discusses his parents pride for sharing Filipino food with other people. Ramona's parents are also proud to share Filipino food and traditional apparel at her school show-and-tells, but unfortunately, Ramona's American classmates made fun of the Filipino customs. This left Ramona feeling ashamed and embarrassed about being Filipino. Ramona also shared a *kuwento* describing how American food has a "kids menu" but parents cook meals eaten by adults and children—there is no such thing as making children's food apart from adult's food, meaning both generations share in the cultural cuisine experience.

Assimilation to dominant culture. Assimilation to dominant culture is the second stage and occurs when a Filipino recognizes they are not the same as the normative culture. They may try to conform to the dominant culture, particularly White American culture, and deny their Filipino American identity (Nadal, 2011). Filipinos in this status will assimilate to dominant cultural expectations by rejecting and disdaining their Filipino appearance, such as hating dark skin and accepting the beauty standard of

being more fair-skinned. Bunny's *kuwento* on being pressured to have light skin, bigger eyes, and a sharper nose is an example.

Nadal (2004) also states that Filipinos in this state are ashamed of Filipino cultural traditions, behaviors, and values. The Filipino may not want to be singled out or be associated to Filipino identity or being Asian American when in the presence of non-Filipino, non-Asian American individuals. Instead, the Filipino will attempt to behave in a manner that shows their assimilation to the dominant group. They will adopt the dominant culture's beliefs and will behave as a Model Minority. By embracing the dominant culture, the Filipino distances themselves from being a part of a minoritized community. They will adopt colonial mentality and perpetuate the same oppression of the dominant culture to other Filipinos (Nadal, 2004). A Filipino in this stage will view White American culture and race as the epitome and ideal culture, whitewashing over Filipino culture. Thus, it will be important for a Filipino to accept and perform White American social norms and behavior, such as Justin consciously dating and wanting to marry a White woman, or Bunny exclaiming that Filipinos excel despite coming from a "third world country." Many of the character's experiences and *kuwento* are from this stage, making it the largest and most evident status for FACCS in this study.

Several of the characters faced microaggressions, such as Justin and Steve, who were asked where they were from. The response between the characters differs, displaying each character's level of Filipino identity development; Justin responds to the microinvalidation with resignation as part of assimilating to American expectations. Steve responds with a politically correct answer, honoring both his Filipino and

American identity. Bunny also faced a Model Minority stereotype when her classmate expected her to excel in math. She felt dehumanized when she says, “I’m who I am.”

The term “Americanized” or “Americanization” was mentioned by several characters (Pido, 1997). In the ethnic awareness section, Americanization occurs outside the Filipino home. For example, Ramona observes her non-Filipino friends behaviors as Americanized, something she was not able to do with her traditional Filipino parents. Some of these behaviors were being able to negotiate with parents, eating dessert after dinner, and majoring in the arts and humanities. Another example is when Steve acknowledges that his educational upbringing is part of American culture, and thus his knowledge is American intellectuality. His cultural upbringing comes from home, where his Filipino family reigns the domain.

Justin felt out of place when he moved from a predominantly white town to a more pan-ethnic Asian American school. He was no longer invisible in terms of racial identity, but he became invisible in terms of academic competition. Because many of his Asian American classmates were excelling academically, he blames the competition for not being able to stand out and make his top college schools.

Justin and Jay both consciously date white women. Jay confides that he is now open to dating Asian women to fulfill traditions of dating within the culture. Justin on the other hand, abhors the idea of marrying a Filipina and hopes that his partner will be more “white-washed” than Filipino.

Assimilating with the White dominant culture stems from issues with being Filipino. For Justin, he experiences a generation and cultural gap with his parents and relatives. He is not able to comprehend the importance of their immigration journey. In

addition, Justin, Bunny, and Ramona all experience bullying to a certain extent. Justin was bullied by a Filipino boy in grade school; Bunny's Filipina friend was bullied to the point of dropping out of school; and Ramona was bullied for speaking Filipino.

Although Vivienne, Jay, and Ramona all learned to speak the Filipino language as a child, their families imposed assimilation behavior and forbade them to speak Tagalog in fear of bullying. As a result, the characters feel disconnected and deprived from their Filipino identity. Not understanding the Filipino language forces characters, such as Justin, to embrace his American identity side and deny his Filipino identity.

Characters are challenged to conform to American culture or deny their Filipino identity on a daily basis. Geralt discusses his feelings about other Filipinos "conforming" to speaking and understanding English, while other minoritized groups, such as Mexicans and Chinese do not conform to American culture by having their own language visible in public. Sometimes Filipino identity appears unexpectedly, like the time Steve was surprised by the Filipino Adobo pizza in a work cafeteria. Although the novelty of fusing American food and Filipino food seems creative, Filipino culture is being produced by others and not by Filipinos. Perhaps the narrow definition of diversity automatically equates to the "melting pot theory," and therefore fusing American and Filipino together allows for the birth of cultural mis-appropriation and cultural erasure of the Filipino identity (Ashley & Plesch, 2002).

Colonial mentality is perpetuated when the characters see the Filipino identity heavily represented in areas that no longer bring pride to them. For example, Filipino nurses are a critical part of past and present day economy. Unfortunately, because nursing

is heavily associated with Filipina nurses, characters like Justin want to disassociate from nursing because of the intersection of gender and race associated to Filipina nurses.

Colonial mentality is present when the characters say the Philippines is a "third world country." Geralt hopes that the Philippines and Filipinos as a whole community, improve their fame and reputation in the global economy, and become "first world" super power nations like the United States, Britain, Spain, and Japan.

Social political awakening. Social political awakening happens when a Filipino has become more conscious of the racial inequalities facing Filipinos in America. The Filipino realizes that they have been oppressed by White dominant culture, and will disassociate from the standard norms. The realization may occur when the Filipino experiences discrimination and prejudice from the dominant culture, or has become aware through education. Filipinos in this status may appear irate about the inequities facing themselves and other Filipinos, and they will want to combat the racism, discrimination, and microaggressions. Their sense of pride for Filipino culture, identity, and community will rouse action and they will enlist the help of other Filipinos to also join the cause. They will also feel troubled towards Filipinos who do not want to make changes and perpetuate assimilation to the dominant culture. A Filipino at this stage will start to feel a connection with other Asian Americans and minority groups by developing alliances. On the other hand, the Filipino will feel infuriated by the dominant culture and will show prejudice and discrimination towards White culture as a form of retribution for past incidents.

The characters in this study have not exhibited signs of social political awakening, but realize something is lacking. For example, Jay has stated that there is little "outreach"

to the Filipino community in regards to raising awareness and education about Filipino identity. Although he states the obvious, Jay is not empowered to make any changes. Perhaps the most social political awakening occurs during unexpected situations when characters are forced to react to microaggressions. When Steve proudly states he is American but also Filipino to people who ask where he is from, this shows his own form of resistance to dominant culture's assumptions about his origin. The characters have been focused on advancing their education and careers, leaving little time to fight the battle of racism and discrimination facing Filipino Americans.

Pan-ethnic Asian American consciousness. Pan-ethnic Asian American consciousness transpires when a Filipino embraces and connects with their Asian American identity. The Filipino feels empowered by surrounding themselves with a larger pan-ethnic group of Asian Americans. They are proud to be both Filipino American and Asian American, and they will campaign for the needs and issues of both groups in a holistic effort. A negative view against White culture continues to persist in this status.

There are several examples in which the characters embraced their Asian American identity. Steve, Vivienne, and Bunny all mention being part of an Asian American club in community college. Steve mentions that he always looks for fellow Filipinos at work, but because he is the only one, he is only able to connect to the Asian American co-workers. Jay identifies with his Asian American identity when he realizes that there are no Filipino role models that he can admire, except for the Filipino American comedian JoKoy. He starts listing popular Asian actors, such as Jackie Chan and Lucy Lui, because he cannot identify any Filipinos in the media.

Ethnocentric realization. Ethnocentric realization is the opposite of pan-ethnic Asian American consciousness, and a Filipino denies an Asian American identity. They are now frustrated by both the dominant culture and everyone who is Asian American. They only accept being Filipino as their main ethnic identity and want to be recognized for being marginalized within the Asian American community. Similarly like the social political awakening stage, the Filipino is empowered to recruit other Filipinos towards their cause. This behavior may cause controversy with other Filipinos who are not at the same identity status. The empowered Filipino will have distanced themselves from Asian Americans, and instead, they will connect with other minoritized groups, such as the Latinx Americans, African Americans, and Pacific Islanders. Lastly, the Filipino is still very wary of trusting White people, but they may raise awareness towards White counterparts of the differences between Filipinos and Asian Americans.

The characters have made efforts to distance themselves from the Asian American identity. For example, Jay was assumed to be Chinese American; he responds back saying he is "freakin' Filipino!" Other characters want to recognize the uniqueness of Filipino identity from Asian American identity. For example, Rosalinda says that Filipinos do not have a distinct look in comparison to more prominent features of Korean Americans. The implications means we blend in and people are not able to recognize Filipinos apart from other Asian Americans.

Rosalinda also observed that her university offers ethnic studies classes for other Japanese Americans, Latinx Americans, but lack the offering of Filipino American studies. She laments that Filipinos are lumped into the "Southeast Asian" category and topics around Filipino American identity are lost in the mix. Interestingly, when

Rosalinda completed the study's demographic study, she identified her ethnicity as "Southeast Asian" and not Filipino or Filipino American. Rosalinda's experiences coincide with the findings of the study of Pak et al. (2014) on how Filipinos identity as Southeast Asian within the Asian American community.

Characters feel a sense of connection to non-Asian American community. For example, Jay discusses how Guamanian Pacific Islanders have similar values to Filipinos, such as having a tight-knit family. Jay and Geralt both mention Mexican Americans having a common history with Filipinos as labor workers and being perceived as lower-socioeconomic community. Jay and Geralt exhibits the assertions of Ocampo's (2013) "cultural hybridity" of Filipinos feeling closely aligned and connected with the Latinx community.

Steve and Justin have developed negative views of their university Filipino American Student Organization (FASO) because they do not feel like they belong in the club. Many of the FASO student leadership are non-Filipino students and are pan-Asian American, turning off Filipino Americans like Steve and Justin. Perhaps, the social and political awakening among of Filipino American students are underdeveloped because the student leaders in political power are not Filipino; they do not truly understand the real needs of Filipino American students who are straddling both identities. The number of non-Filipino American students who lead and join the club surpass the number of Filipino Americans in the organization.

Perhaps overtime, FASOs have experienced an assimilation mentality to embrace the term diversity and non-discrimination as a way to be accepted by others. Thus, the result is a shift in student membership demographics, leadership, and mission. Characters

like Steve and Justin, who see the lack of cultural awareness leave the club and do not have the energy to fight for changes because they are focused on their academic degree plan. I presume that the lack of critical dialogue about cultural mis-appropriation and the lack of pan-Asian American student clubs make FASO an enticing space for non-Filipino American students—leaving Filipino American student excluded from their own safe space and thwarting existence of their own needs.

FASOs have the greatest potential to activate a large Filipino American student movement, helping facilitate the growth of Filipino American identity in college students in the South. Each university FASO is part of a larger umbrella called Southern Intercollegiate of Filipino Alliance (SIFA), formerly known as Philippine Students of Texas (PST). Through SIFA governance, all the FASOs in Texas and Oklahoma collaborate and support each other throughout the year, culminating in the annual GoodPhil Games event in March.

There is minimal support or advocacy by the universities because FASOs view their institutions as a bureaucratic barrier to their mission. Events are hosted off campus, and rarely do the FASOs request financial help from their respective universities. FASOs raise their finances solely through membership and fundraising events, accumulating thousands of dollars in hosting GoodPhil Games and social events. FASO has the financial clout to allocate money towards educational programs and curriculum, but the motivation is not present.

Although FASO is a place that embraces the diversity of all college students, is the concept of FASO just a place holder for institutional diversity checkboxes? An institution may pride themselves in being “diverse,” just like FASOs—but little progress

towards helping students with their issues is substantiated. The existence of FASO may appear as a positive place for Filipino American students to grow and belong, but perhaps the lack of critical consciousness in FASO's structure is a reflection of how institutions deal with diversity in higher education—a commodity for institutional image, reputation, and capital, but not for the success of minoritized students, such as Filipino American students (Ferguson, 2012; Warikoo, 2016).

Incorporation. Incorporation happens when a Filipino embraces their identity as an Asian American and Filipino American, and leverages positivity for activism rather than anger or resentment for progress. The Filipino is respectful of other Filipinos who are not at their conscious level of identity and action. Advocating for social equality and justice for all groups of people become the core importance for a Filipino at this stage. Although the Filipino is no longer angry at White people or the dominant culture, they are mindful of their own bias practices and will need time to trust White people again.

Once again, the characters have not displayed overt aspects of the incorporation status. Perhaps Vivienne, Ramona, and Rosalinda expressed the most feelings about incorporating Filipino culture in their own lives. Vivienne is eager to learn how to speak Tagalog, and Rosalinda wants to learn new Filipino dialects. Rosalinda is starting to experiment in the kitchen and shows pride in learning how to cook Filipino food, such as pork *giniling*. Even though Ramona no longer lives at home where the majority of Filipino influence resides, she is proud to bring Filipino food to work as part of displaying her identity.

Fitness of FAID Model. Nadal's (2004) FAID Model helped frame the overall experiences of the characters, but because their *kuwento* were mostly under the ethnic

awareness status and assimilation to dominant culture status, I found it difficult to fit the characters experiences into the other four statuses. Could it be that the characters have not yet been exposed to different experiences that challenge them to advance to the different statuses?

Nadal (2004) discusses how Filipinos may progress or stay in specific statuses of the FAID model, depending on the Filipino's specific circumstances. For example, living "in a predominantly White community, he or she may dwell in the Assimilation stage for his or her whole life" (Nadal, 2004, p. 60). Justin is a prime example of Nadal's example. Ramona also lived in a predominantly White community, but she has been able to progress to the incorporation status, where she brings her Filipino food to work as a symbol of her pride and as a way of educating others about her heritage.

All the characters in this study are aware of their Filipino American identity, but they are not empowered to make changes to combat the struggles of Filipinos, Asian Americans, and other minoritized groups. Thus, the social political awareness and incorporation stages have the least amount of characters in these statuses. While this can be frustrating, Nadal (2004) says that a Filipino should not be forced to progress to the different stages by counselors or other people. Dialoguing about Filipino American identity and interacting with other Filipinos with different outlooks, may help Filipinos advance to different stages. A Filipino needs to advance naturally and organically towards their intended status. In addition, the FAID model is not meant to judge a Filipino's lack in identity, rather the model helps understand the how and why of a Filipino's racial and ethnic development.

Educational Journey

My second research question asked, “How do FACCS portray their college experiences?” The reason for asking this research question was to understand the character’s educational journey. All the characters attended community college, but the journey before and after college is a distinctive experience for each character.

Perna’s (2006) student college choice model (SCCM) framed the experiences of the characters in this study. The core of SCCM is the human capital investment model and sociology concepts of habitus, cultural and social capital, and organizational context (Perna, 2006).

The characters in the study encountered different types of transitions; support by the college and community is necessary to help them overcome obstacles. For Bunny, Geralt, and Rosalinda, transitioning their life from the Philippines to America was an adjustment to a new lifestyle in a different country (del Prado & Church, 2010; Tuason et al, 2007). When characters transitioned living from a predominantly White town to a diverse school, such as Justin, the characters were forced to reconcile their racial and ethnic identity.

Characters had to transition into the college setting, with several of the characters aiming to go straight to the university as opposed to community college or the work force. The *kuwento* of the characters reveal that they all attended community college first, supporting researchers who believe that AAPI students attend less-selective colleges and Filipino American havinh a heavy representation in community college (Buenavista et al., 2009; Kim & Gasman, 2011; Teranishi, 2010a; Teranishi et al., 2004;).

Characters in the study who attended community college chose this route because the education is affordable, and at times free—like the case for Rosalinda's scholarship—showing that cost and affordability matter to Filipino Americans in the South (Buenavista et al., 2009; Teranishi, 2010a;). Rosalinda's *kuwento* about her father not going to college and her financial situation supported Teranishi's (2010a) two strong predictors of going to college for Filipino Americans—her father's income and his educational level. Her *kuwento* and the other character's *kuwento* debunks the research of Kim and Gasman (2011) and Luzzo (1993) that the cost of college was not a large factor in the college decision-making process. On the contrary, the characters in this study faced financial struggles, and as a result, gravitated their college decision towards community college. Geralt is a prime example of choosing community college. After completing his TASFA, he was awarded a surprising amount that covered his education throughout community college (Teranishi, 2010a).

The proximity of community college is close to home, and by extension, close to their family and Filipino identity (Kim & Gasman, 2011; Surla & Poon, 2015; Teranishi, 2010a). This poses as a benefit for families who want their children to live with them and save money due to a lower socioeconomic status (Buenavista, 2009). For example, Vivienne wanted to attend her dream university which was in a different city within the state. Eventually, she was influenced by her mom to go to her local community instead (Shen et. al, 2014). Vivienne's *kuwento* affirms Wolf's (1997) research on Filipino parents encouraging their children to reach their highest potential in high school, but limiting their potential by staying close to home when deciding on a college. Although Vivienne will never know what her life would have been like if she went straight to a

university, but the intimate environment of community college allowed her and other characters to explore and discover their major, leadership skills, and academic aptitude.

Steve and Justin did not want to go to school as youth, but they both knew they were expected to attend and graduate college. Thus, both characters had a rough start in their education and faced many personal failures that would propel them to do their best and speed through college. Their motivation to finish school stemmed from a desire to gain independence. Steve took dual credit courses in high school, allowing him to build up college credits before starting college.

Because Justin was rejected from his top university choices, he decided to focus his efforts on speeding through community college even though he did not want to go to community college. He took the maximum number of credits every semester, and opted to take summer courses and mini-mester courses in order to finish community college and his university career in less than four years. He took the same attitude when he went through graduate school and graduated in two and half years, instead of three.

Vivienne detested the idea of going to community college because it was not the big university experience she wanted. Once she started community college, she excelled in the classroom and as a student leader. She transferred to the university, but did not have the same social involvement as she did in community college.

Like Vivienne, Ramona also wanted the big university experience, but knew the pragmatic choice was to attend community college like her father and older sisters. She pursued an Associate's degree and did not transfer to a university. Ramona is proud of to have followed her parent's wishes because she was able to afford college and she did not accrue any student loans (Salazar-Clemena, 2002).

Bunny did not have a choice in which college to attend because she was a new immigrant in the United States. Her parents automatically enrolled her to the local community college. Although Bunny transitioned well and become an active student leader, she had to change her major several times. Seeking support from a campus administrator who was also Filipina, helped her excel in community college. When she transferred to the university, Bunny constantly compared her positive experience in community college with her university experience.

Jay, Geralt, and Rosalinda were unsure of their post-high school plans. Jay declined acceptance to an expensive private school because he was uncertain of his major. Going to community college was his best choice because he was changing his major from nursing to engineering. When dire life circumstances outside of school started to impact his school performance, Jay decided to drop out of college and take some time to put himself back together. After four years, he returned back to school at a proprietary institution and hopes to use his licensure to advance his career in the airport. Even though he is on the right track, he still feels the need to obtain a college degree to make his parents proud.

Geralt flirted with the idea of going to a proprietary institution and the military, but after completing the TASFA (Texas Application for Student Financial Aid), the amount of financial aid was persuasive enough for him to attend community college first. He also became an active student leader before transferring to the 4-year university. Unfortunately, he regrets being a commuter student because he was not able to spend more time participating in campus activities. Even though Geralt studied supply chain

management, he hopes to use his knowledge to work in a hospital's supply chain division.

Rosalinda admits that she did not have any solid plans after high school. Although she focused her energy on the nursing track in high school, she did not really want to pursue the health field (Shen et. al, 2014). Financing college was a problem because her father worked a low-paying job that could not support her college education. Fortunately, her high school counselors helped her apply into an honors program at her local community college, and she was accepted into the program with an all-expense paid scholarship. Because of the honors program, she was able to thrive as a student leader, study abroad, and transfer to a top university as a government major. Her positive community college experience left a major impression on Rosalinda—her career goal is to become a college professor, just like her honors college director.

Life Goals

Lastly, my third research question asked, "How do FACCS determine their educational and career goals?" I was curious to explore how the characters chose their college and career goals, and how their Filipino American identity influenced their choices. Although the characters had a distinct experience before, during, and after college, several topics continued to surface naturally, revealing connecting threads between the characters.

Lent et al. (1994) social cognitive career theory (SCCT) lends well to viewing the career development of the characters. This theory states that a person's choices and goals are impacted by how an individual defines and acts upon their beliefs. The three components to SCCT are self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals. Self-

efficacy is a person's set of beliefs on their level of abilities and performances around a specific area or activity. Outcome expectations deal with a student's beliefs around the potential results of actions and behaviors. Lastly, personal goals are defined as a student's purpose in order to achieve a desired outcome. Acting upon personal goals provides students a space to determine educational and occupational endeavors, and also helps maintain their own belief in themselves.

Based on this study, the characters beliefs and actions are heavily influenced by their families—specifically their parents—cultural obligations, and gender expectations. As mentioned in the ethnic awareness stage, the characters place importance in the role of their family when it comes to decision-making in their lives. Although students may have had personal goals set for themselves, such as Ramona wanting to study music, or Justin wanting to play basketball, their ideas were dashed by the influence of other people.

Every character shared that they were positively and negatively influenced by their families—parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings—to pursue a major and career in the medical and allied health field (Kim & Gasman, 2011; Maramba, 2013). As characters were wavering in their future career path, they were highly encouraged to become doctors, pharmacists, dentists, and respiratory therapists. Moreover, the ultimate expectation was to pursue nursing as a college major and future career, even if this is not their own personal goal.

In this study, the characters immediately related being Filipino to having a career in the medical field. More specifically, all characters mentioned the encouragement, suggestion, or coercion to become a nurse. When Jay was asked about what being Filipino meant to him, he automatically said being a nurse. The two pronouns—Filipino

and nurse—have become synonymous and predetermined. Some characters reacted to the pressure of the medical field and nursing in different ways based on their beliefs of their Filipino identity development. Some rebelled, like Steve and Justin, while others acquiesced, such as Vivienne and Ramona (Salazar-Clemena, 2002; Shen et al., 2014).

Nursing has become a cultural identity marker for Filipinos in the health industry (Choy, 2003). A career in nursing assumes a guaranteed life of notability, job security, and constant prosperity. In addition, for the parents and relatives of the characters, nursing was a way out of the poverty in the Philippines; nursing was salvation, and perhaps, part of the allure to immigrating to the United States and living a better life.

Several of the characters had families, relatives, and friends who are nurses—all of whom influenced the characters to consider nursing because they themselves were succeeding in the career (Victoria, 2007). Even though all characters experienced a push into nursing by their families or cultural expectations, Vivienne was the only character who pursued nursing as a major and career. Ramona was also encouraged to do nursing by her parents who were also nurses; but she decided to take a "comparable" route in respiratory therapy instead. Justin wanted to avoid nursing altogether, because he associated the career path with Filipino identity—something he disdained (Salazar-Clemena, 2002). He pursued a more masculine health profession, a doctorate in physical therapy.

Rosalinda was encouraged to do nursing by her aunt, but she is now glad she pursued a government major instead. Geralt's parents also told him to pursue nursing, but landed in supply chain management instead. Jay attempted to complete basic nursing requirements and failed. He admires his best friend, Ricky, who is a Filipino nurse that

supports his own parents. In some senses, Jay fantasizes that he could have followed Ricky's footsteps and be like him—the ideal Filipino child.

All the characters were recommended, suggested, encouraged—but never "forced" to pursue nursing. The emphasis on "not being forced" may be in part of avoiding *hiya*, shame, upon themselves and their families. This maybe the case for Vivienne, who asserts that she was not forced to do nursing, even though she admits that she had to accept her predetermined destiny from her mom (Shen et. al, 2014). Perhaps Vivienne experienced Wolf's (1997) "gendered notions of propriety," and was pressured to pursuing nursing and live close to home as part of controlling Filipinas.

Steve and Justin both stood up to their parents, exclaiming that they will not pursue their expectations, but their own career aspirations (Surla & Poon, 2015). Geralt perpetuates the expectation for the health field career in his younger sisters by sharing cautionary tales of two Filipina women—Joy and Dawn. Joy was the bad example who bargained with sexuality, education, and career. Dawn was the ideal Filipina nurse, who followed a chronological order for success.

Defining success. The perception of "success" appears to be one of the root causes for the characters in this study. Success to them means reaching the highest form of stability so that they can help their family. *Utang na loob*, debt of gratitude, is the underlying motivation for characters to succeed. In several stories, characters shared how their ultimate success in life is for their family's benefit and in turn, brings them happiness.

Bunny is anxious to reunite with her mother and sister again. She is saving more money so that she can help pay for her mother's immigration transition to the United

States from the Philippines. When her mother arrives, she will transition into starting a dentistry practice with her mom, who is a dentist in the Philippines. Bunny also internalizes the "gendered notions of propriety" because she feels obligated to work, provide back for her family, and be a model Filipina by fulfilling the dreams of her mom.

Jay hopes to make his parents proud by going back to college and getting a "real" degree. He plans on marrying an Asian woman who follows family traditions and starting a family. Thereafter, he plans on purchasing a house for his parents and new family to live in.

After college, Rosalinda is eager to move back to her home city, even though her father has already passed away. In some senses, she is like an orphan without any parental guidance. Her relationship with her mom is still strained and she feels the need to be closer to her only brother in the United States, even if it means sacrificing potential job opportunities in the current city she resides. But because Rosalinda is uncertain of job prospects, she is certain that she wants to be near family during this transitionary period time in her life.

Although Ramona did not follow her music major, selecting her respiratory therapy career confirms that her family's encouragement towards the medical field was the right choice and path (Salazar-Clemena, 2002). Ramona was in near tears when she came to the realization that her life's purpose was to succeed in becoming financially stable. If ever there was an emergency, she could provide for her large Filipino family in an instant.

Ramona's sense of obligation is not isolated to her generation; it seems to be an internalized idea shared by older generations of Filipinas. Justin shares a *kuwento* of his

mother remitting back money to the Philippines to help finance extended relatives educational endeavors, even though they may misuse the money for personal gain. Justin says his mom continues to support this behavior because her family in the Philippines depends on her stability (Wolf, 1997).

Perhaps this is one definition of success for Filipinos—the investment into your life's purpose is utilized to give back to the family and community. In essence, how much you uplift your family is the measurement of your life's success. Traversing the fastest way out of education and selecting the best career choice becomes detrimental to a Filipino's success, and by association the family's wellbeing and reputation.

Focus on the individual. For Justin, Steve, Geralt, and Vivienne, their current focus is not on their family, but in themselves. Vivienne is focused on self-actualization and she hopes to pursue her dreams that she could not do when she was younger. She hopes to start her own online business, teach internationally, and travel the world. Justin is "stacking" up money so that he can buy a house and move out of his parent's house. He hopes to travel more and live an independent life. Steve purposefully broke up with his college-sweetheart because he was not ready to settle down. His career advancement is his main focus, and he hopes to settle down in his thirties, when he is much more stable in a high position at his company.

Geralt just graduated from college and is more concerned about finding a job so that he can start saving up money. Because he helped raise his young brothers, he is not interested in starting a family yet. In the future, he hopes to marry his college-sweetheart, buy a house, start a family, have a car, and be comfortable at a "$40,000" annual salary. His perception of financial stability is a bit concerning for modern day consumption.

Geralt's idea of living comfortably at $40,000 supports David and Nadal's (2013) research on the majority of Filipino American professionals are making less than $40,000 and are not reaching higher salary ranges.

For Bunny and Ramona, family is always at the forefront of their life purpose, but they too strive to achieve their highest potential. Although Bunny's main goal is to help her mother immigrate, she also shares her desire to focus on her career before starting a family. She had hinted the idea of marriage with her current boyfriend, but she is adamant that she is not ready to have children. Bunny is reminded that she does not want to be a young pregnant woman like her mother's *kuwento*. History cannot repeat itself or else her dreams of reuniting with her mother will be difficult to fulfill.

Just like Vivienne, Ramona wants a chance at pursuing her artistic side because of *tiis*, sacrificing, her pursuit of music in college. Ramona recognizes that she must have "guts" and gain the confidence to follow her dreams. After years of following the desires of others, Ramona is finding the courage to propel herself into her own destiny. Her self-efficacy is much stronger than before she started college.

But first, plan B. Is it American ideals or Filipino roots influencing the character's motivation to explore what is beyond the present, in order to live out their "Plan A" now? They had to forego their "Plan A" and succumb to "Plan B" first. Fulfilling their personal goals was at the expense of finding a "stable" job to support their dreams. Families encouraged them, and at times, dictated the path to obtaining the perfect major and job that would help reinvest back into their families, but not necessarily their personal vision. The character's educational and career path was not influenced solely by individual choice, but was part of a family-decision making process (Surla & Poon,

2015). Is the perpetual expectation of sacrificing self-fulfillment rooted in colonial mentality? Following the expectations of people in authority is a way to respect elders and exhibit *pakikisama*, companionship. Pursuing the road not recommended runs the risk of being excluded as *ibang tao*, other person, from the cultural network.

Suggestions for Practice.

Even though the characters travelled their paths, many factors influenced the direction, pace, and experience of the journey. What could we—Filipinos, non-Filipinos, scholar-practitioners, administrators, policy-makers, and community members—do to make the journey a fulfilling experience for Filipino American college students towards self-actualization and community empowerment? I propose suggestions based on the research of FACCS in this study.

Broaden definition of success. The current definition of success is rooted in how fast the character can achieve educational and career goals, and reinvest their accomplishments in helping uplift their families and their selves. While this may seem like a positive outlook, underneath the surface, characters are feeling lost, uncertainty, and sometimes resignation, to follow the path and expectations of others. On top of educational and career liminality, characters are influenced by certain Filipino cultural values that propel or hinder them from exploration and risk taking. Doubting their ability to trust their "own guts" is the consequences of the speeding to the end result without taking ownership of their own decisions and placing it in the hands of those who are influential in their lives.

Facilitating conversations with FACCS and their families will help begin the process of removing limitations and barriers to educational and career options. Dialogue

around what it means to be successful and why; how the intersections of gender, race, and ethnicity influence their definition of success; and how FACCS fulfill their own desires and balance cultural traditions.

Life plan: educational and career development. The characters in this study had limited major and career choices due to family and cultural expectations of success. Perhaps FACCS are limited because they lack educational support needed to navigate college and beyond (Buenavista et al., 2009). Although the majority of the characters' parents went to college in the Philippines, the characters cannot be treated like second-generation college going students. They are the first in their families to attend college in the United States, having more similar experiences with first-generation college students who struggle with college preparation, financial aid, and academics (Buenavista et al., 2009).

Having a college preparatory and exploratory program for FACCS and families can be significant in helping prepare a Filipino American decide on their educational and career plan, while balancing the expectations of cultural values. By creating a pipeline of support, starting in elementary school thru college, Filipino American students can see and feel confident to take any path that leads them to self-actualization.

Within the exploratory program, hosting fairs and workshops by Filipino Americans from a wide variety of occupations can help build confidence in both the student and the families. As mentioned several times in the study, characters mentioned the influence of an uncle, cousin, or sibling as conduits of persuasion for the character's parents. Since the Filipino American community is viewed as a large familial network,

seeing a non-relative *kuya*, big brother, or non-relative *ate*, big sister, in a non-traditional career path, can speak volumes representation success in a non-traditional career path.

Educational and career events are short term interventions for the masses, but a long-term educational and career counseling program is necessary to help future generations of Filipino Americans and their families understand their options. Bringing families into the dialogue is critical in debunking the singular path towards only one industry—such as the medical and allied health field.

As mentioned in this study, parents and family shape the decisions and plans of Filipino American youth, but parents may lack the college preparation knowledge to help their children navigate before, during, and after college (Kim & Gasman, 2011; Pak et al., 2014). By bringing all key players together to learn and understand higher education processes, this will help Filipino Americans decide on their life goals and increase "college-going literacy" (Buenavista, 2009). Providing sessions and documents in English and Tagalog can also help parents feel at ease with the college-going process (Kim & Gasman, 2011; Surla & Poon, 2015). Creating college and career plans is not exclusive to graduating high school seniors or college students. Discussing educational and career options can begin as early as elementary school.

College and career preparation programs need to be cautious of helicopter parents and relatives who want to play the role of college and career guidance counselor. They may not take into account the skills, talents, and interests of the Filipino American student. As recounted in Steve's *kuwento* about his older brother, following his parent's wishes to pursue the medical field led him to switch majors, graduate later, and have difficulty finding a job. Parents who make the decision for their children can hurt their

educational success, leading them towards dropping out of college attributed to an unsuitable match between the major choice, deficiency in interest, weak grades, and unable to deal with the parental pressure (Wolf, 1997). Jay is a prime example of this finding—he succumbed to his parent's choices as a safe decision. Their choices were supposed to offer him a risk-free path straight out of college, towards a financially stable future. Unfortunately, Jay ended up dropping out due to all the reasons suggested in Wolf's (1997) findings. Parents are not completely to blame for the parental pressure. Perhaps colonial mentality and assimilation have influenced parents to push their children towards specific educational and career choices as part of their own internalized pressures from society.

Although primary and secondary education in the South includes college preparation classes and special academic programs for targeted student's population, such as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), there is a lack of early outreach and intervention specifically for Filipino Americans in both the secondary education and higher education. A good example of what could manifest in the South is the University of California System's Early Academic Outreach Programs (EAOP), which is a critical initiative in helping underserved students and families navigate college preparation and expectations. Creating a version of EAOP for Filipinos can significantly help educational access for college preparation.

After Filipino American students understand their educational and career options, establishing a counseling program can help students and families develop a customized life plan focused on strengthening the Filipino American student's self-efficacy and personal goals. The life plan is not rigid, nor static; rather, it is like an ever-evolving map

that visualizes the wealth of options for a Filipino American, guiding the student throughout grade school, high school, college, and career entry.

In 2010-2011, *Pilipino Americans, Taasan Ating Kabataan*, Filipino Americans, Uplift Our Youth, known as (PATAK), partnered with the local community college and Filipino Young Professionals of Houston (FYP) to host multiple workshops, career fairs, and cultural fairs and to explore identity, cultural values, and college and career options. Unfortunately, funding by the college ceased and the program was not able to survive. Reviving PATAK or supporting other community initiatives, like FYP's Youth Outreach scholarship, is another way to help reach the masses.

Support for smooth transitions are critical. The transition from community college to the university seemed to be a challenge for characters. For Jay and Ramona, they did not have an opportunity to go to the university because their career paths did not require a bachelor's degree. For Bunny, Justin, Steve, Geralt, Rosalinda, and Vivienne, the university environment was expensive, impersonal, overwhelming in classroom size, and underwhelming in terms of educational experiences outside of the classroom.

College and university outreach programs for underserved populations, such as the University of California's Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP) could be replicated and customized in the South. Suzuki (2002) recommends institutions to focus outreach and recruitment efforts towards Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, like Filipinos, who need the support to transition from high school to college and beyond. Another way to help transition college-going Filipino Americans can be through early outreach efforts among FASOs. Okamura and Agbayani (2007) researched FASOs in the West coast who created their own outreach and retention

initiatives because their universities did not do enough to outreach to Filipino American students and families. Unfortunately, FASOs in the South have a long way to go in order reach this level of activism.

Curriculum for developing Filipino American identity. The characters in the study do not have access to learning more about their Filipino identity and culture, other than living their own experiences or joining a club like FASO. In primary education and secondary education, none of the characters mentioned learning about their culture or Filipino American history.

In college, Rosalinda observed the lack of Filipino American studies, and yearned to learn more about the Philippines and Filipino American experience. Rosalinda and Geralt both exclaimed the need for Filipino American classes so that they can learn more about the language and culture. Jay shows his lack of Filipino American history and recognizes that he does not know very much. Ethnic studies departments in the South might consider including and incorporating Filipino American classes in their catalog, most especially since Filipino Americans are the second largest growing Asian American population in the United States. Offering classes on Filipino American culture may help students, who are just like Rosalinda, Geralt, and Jay, understand themselves better and know the issues of the Filipino American diaspora.

Filipino American curriculum resources are available for all grade levels, but not widely utilized on a national setting in the P-16 setting (Halagao, 2004b; Halagao, Tintiangco-Cubales, & Cordova, 2009; Tintiangco-Cubales, 2007, 2009, 2013). Universities in the West Coast and east coast are utilizing a curriculum for educators and community activists. Most notably, Tintiangco-Cubales (2007, 2009, 2013) has three

curriculum books that educators can use now: *Kilusan 4 Kids*, which services primary education; and two-part volume source books called *Philippine and Filipina/o American History* and *Filipina/o American Identities, Activism, and Service.* These books were developed for easy implementation in schools, colleges, and community. Lesson plans, outcomes, and handouts are prepared and readily available. All that is needed are facilitators to teach the curriculum, and students who are interested in learning the information.

Improve Filipino American Student Organizations (FASO) experience and student leadership. Because there are no Filipino American classes, the characters found alternative spaces in the college to discover their Filipino identity, such as joining a Filipino American Student Organization (FASO). Unfortunately, the FASO's mentioned in this study lacked the depth, breadth, or even critical consciousness to help Filipino American students grapple with their identity. Steve and Justin both admit their frustration that FASO is not a cultural awareness club, but a social athletic and dance club for mostly non-Filipinos.

With the majority of non-Filipino students leading the organization and the lack of critical dialogue about Filipino American identity, the purpose of FASO's in the South need to be re-examined. FASOs are meant to be a place of exploration, discovery, unpacking, and debating about Filipino American identity development. A space for healthy skepticism and speculation for Filipino Americans will birth student activism and could propel FASOs into social political awakening.

Need more Filipino Americans in higher education. If Filipino American curriculum were offered and institutions made an effort to hire Filipino American faculty

and staff for the programs, perhaps FASOs in the South would have better access to learning Filipino American history, language, culture, identity, and activism. Filipino American students of the South have been long denied what could be education and awareness that is necessary for them to succeed in college and life. Maybe the lack of access to this knowledge in the South, is the reason why many of the characters are not manifesting Nadal's (2004) social political awareness stage.

When Filipino American students see someone who looks like them and understands their cultural identity crisis, students may feel a sense of belonging to the college climate. Finding Filipino Americans to teach critically conscious curriculum is a challenge in the South. Filipino Americans are not encouraged to pursue a career in higher education and teach Filipino American studies due to emphasis on jobs with high economic return on investment. In addition, Filipino American students and FASOs are not demanding the need for Filipino American classes, thus, institutions do not see this as a priority. What should be tackled first?—building student activism and demand for classes or injecting Filipino American educators into the systems? Maybe the question is inconsequential and both student activism and hiring Filipino Americans in higher education needs to occur simultaneously in order for any progress to occur.

Leveraging community relations. The non-profit organization, UNIPRO of Houston, is trying to fight the apathy of Filipino American students and FASO leaders. In UNIPRO's infancy stages, they are mentoring and teaching a growing number of FASO leaders and members about critical consciousness leadership. The battle to influence the Filipino American college student is slow and gradual. Nonetheless, supporting UNIPRO and any efforts that will help improve FASO leadership may spark the fire to challenge

identity, oppression, and the needs of Filipino American college students in the South. The path to Filipino American student activism in the South is happening right now, but the journey is long and slow.

Mentorship grows community activism. Activism in the local Filipino community is strong, but Filipino American organizations will cease to exist if the next generation does not have the same values of advocacy as their predecessors. UNIPRO's example of mentoring Filipino American students is critical to advancing the progress of awakening the Filipino American critical consciousness in the South. This is evident when Vivienne and Bunny both expressed the positive aspects of having a Filipino mentor in the community college, but Bunny was not able to find a Filipino mentor who would care enough about her at the university. A lack of a Filipino mentor in the university speaks volumes. Maybe if she had a Filipino mentor, her university experience might have been more positive. A Filipino mentoring program could also be helpful for FACCS and newly graduated students.

With the exception of Filipino church communities, none of the characters mentioned the support or assistance of Filipino community organizations in their development. Key community organizations, such as local Filipino Young Professional's group, Filipino American National Historical Society (FANHS), and UNIPRO, could help bridge the generational gap between the younger generation Filipino Americans. A mentorship program must be established and developed to include training and mentor development for community organizers and activist to become the bridge for youth and college students.

In addition, Filipino American mentors are in a position to help facilitate Filipino American identity development and career outlook, introducing students to other career avenues, and not just the medical field. Having a role model in non-traditional Filipino careers could help spark inspiration and motivation to achieve their dreams, while also balancing cultural expectations.

Addressing mental and emotional trauma. The characters in this study experienced a lot of mental and emotional anguish—whether it be dealing with family separation, constant failure, gendered expectations, financial burden of college, the uncertainty of career plans, or being bullied by other Filipinos. All of these are real struggles stemming from colonial mentality, Model Minority myth, acculturative stress (David & Nadal, 2013). Mental health is an area that needs to be addressed amongst Filipino Americans in the South.

Providing a program or campaign to address mental and emotional health will encourage Filipino Americans to deal with their internal pain and struggle. Educational institutions can train college counselors using Nadal's (2004) practices on how to deal with Filipino American's mental and emotional trauma. For many of the characters, sharing their painful memories for this study might have been the first time they released their anguish. Sharing their *kuwento* is a way of decolonizing and understanding their Filipino American struggle.

Future Research.

Although the existence of the study is one way to build upon the progress, future research is necessary to keep the issues of Filipino Americans in the South relevant and important. Many questions arose from this study, becoming potential topics of

investigation. Using *kuwento* as a form of narrative inquiry has been a positive method for understanding the experiences of the characters in this study, therefore continuing to use *kuwento* in future research will strengthen the voices of the Filipino community.

Continuing kuwento/stories study. I would be interested in following up with the eight characters after five years and after 10 years, transitioning this research into a longitudinal study. I would like to find out: (a) what happens to the character's lives after the study, (b) has their Filipino American identity status changed, and (c) what struggles do they face and did they reconcile with the struggles they were encountering during the time of the initial study.

New characters, new kuwento. I would like to replicate the study with new characters and see how similar or different their experiences compare to the first set of characters. More specifically, the all characters in this study had a mono-racial identity. Therefore, a future study could explore future study allows, it would be fascinating to include the *kuwento* of multi-racial Filipino Americans. None of the characters mentioned challenges with their sexuality; a future study could also investigate the *kuwento* of queer Filipino Americans in the South. In addition, I am curious to find stories regarding the intersectionality of gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and sexuality. The Filipina characters discussed their experiences with gender bias for their academics and career choices, but two of the male characters, Jay and Geralt, also experienced similar expectations. As the *kuya,* older brother, they assumed the role of rearing their siblings and taking care of household affairs, while balancing school and work. Pursing the study with new characters may reveal new stories and issues, gleaning on more Filipino American experiences to investigate. Reoccurring problems may also surface again,

building upon a stronger case to address the needs of Filipino American community college students.

FASO experience and diversity in higher education. I am very curious to pursue deeper research on the implications of institutional diversity on the FASO experience. Because FASO has the potential to grow as a student movement, I am curious to find out what kind of cultural climate and environment is needed to grow Filipino American student activism? Listening to the *kuwento* of members and non-members of FASOs in the South may help reveal issues facing college students and the institution. The results of the study could help FASOs and institutions address the problems facing Filipino American college student's success.

Is the South ready for Filipino American curriculum?. Future research can include interviewing Asian American studies departments in the South and find out their thoughts on including Filipino American curriculum in their catalog. Many questions can be fielded, such as: (a) how willing and prepared are institutions towards including Filipino American curriculum, (b) what type of resistance hinders institutions or propels institution to move forward with Filipino American classes? (c) what are the challenges to having Filipino American studies in their institution?; (d) how does the institution view diversity and the role of Filipino American studies?

In addition to understanding colleges and universities motivations, the research can also include the role of community organizations with community classes and programs. Similar questions can be asked of key community leaders about (a) how willing and prepared are community organizations to include Filipino American curriculum in their organizations, (b) what type of resistance hinders or propels their

organization to move forward with supporting Filipino American classes? and (c) what are the challenges to having Filipino American classes and workshops as a community program?

Filipino Americans in non-traditional careers. This study revealed the heavy influence of the medical health field amongst the characters. This study was able to share the *kuwento* of the character's college and career development, but more research is needed (Halagao, 2004a; Patacsil, 2009). How about Filipino Americans in non-traditional careers? I would like to research Filipinos in the South who choose different out of the norm careers and learn how they were able to balance cultural expectations and personal goals.

Ending in the Midst

As I reflect upon the writings of Sharon Lee's challenges of being an Asian American woman in education, I ask myself the same question she does (Lee, 2010). Where is my home—more specifically, my future professional career home? I consider choosing a career in research and higher education a non-traditional career path. It feels lonely many times here in the South, to be the only scholar-practitioner to do this type of work focused on Filipino Americans in higher education. No one really understands me. I am labelled as too serious and militant about this cause. Fortunately, my chair and faculty understand my desires to pursue my research on Filipino Americans from the very beginning of my doctoral program. I feel encouraged to keep moving forward and to cross, *pagdayon*, the bridge of new research.

I wish more Filipino Americans would cross the bridge with me, because the benefits for oneself to research on this subject outweighs the risks. Over three years of

my life have been dedicated to the creation and development on the *kuwento* of the Filipino American community college students. I relish every second of this experience.

My personal journey has been difficult, and at times, I was at an existential crisis as a higher education professional and Filipino American. With every passing milestone of this doctoral program—I celebrate the outcome, but cherish even more the lessons I learned in between. Creating something out of passion and love means you must have a deep well of energy inside of you to make your dreams come true. I had to manifest self-love and take care of myself. The long walks in the forest, addressing my own physical and mental health, the endless dialogue with my chair and faculty committee, the support of family and friends, and remembering my ancestor's struggles—all of this helped keep me moving forward beyond the midst of uncertainty.

I have learned that the act of writing and researching is a beautiful struggle and has become my form of decolonization. Many times I would sit in front of my laptop paralyzed by what to say. Where do I begin? What path should I take? Where will this take me? Who knows? I did not know the answer, but eventually the stories surfaced and revealed their purpose. The feelings of uncertainty of the unknown should not to be feared, but relished and welcomed. Answers to my research were found during the unexpected twists and turns throughout the process.

Writing and researching on the topic of Filipino American stories has always been and will always be at the core of inner voice. I have realized that in retelling the stories of these Filipino Americans, I have learned to trust my own voice as a writer and researcher.

Graduating from formal schooling is bittersweet—I had to reach the highest level of American education to learn more about my Filipino American heritage, when I should have learned this much sooner. I am aware of my privilege for having the opportunity to pursue a higher education, because I know others do not have the time, money, or energy to dive into a subject matter they love.

My passion for Filipino American issues is bottomless. I am satiated by the closure of my study, but hungry to research more than ever, to explore pathways that have yet to be discovered on Filipino American experiences in the South. My craving to research my community issues fuels my desire to do more. Perhaps it is because I have been denying myself for many years to study a topic close to my heart and I have found that it is my form of decolonization. I continue to make meaning of my own Filipino American identity; I am entering a new chapter of my spiritual and professional journey towards my own self-actualization. This is not the end; this is just the beginning.

I encourage future Filipino American researchers who are interested in this topic or method of study—pursue the journey. Researching and publishing the *kuwento* of our community is the weapon of choice to combat the invisibility and oppression of our existence in higher education. The more we can write, study, research, and document, the harder it becomes for colonizing systems to deny our existence.

Final Thoughts

Narrative inquiry on the *kuwento* of these eight Filipino Americans in the South is a powerful representation of more students and community members whose voices are often unheard. Higher education may view Filipino Americans as the model minority because they exemplify assimilation, acculturation, and moderate socioeconomic status.

Unfortunately, this embodiment does not account for the unique experiences of Filipino American lives in the South (Wolf, 1997).

Previous researchers encouraged new studies on the lived experiences of different Asian American and Pacific Islanders in higher education (Poon et al., 2016). This study is a response to the call, building upon the *kuwento* of the Filipino American community, vital to the progress of racial and ethnic equality. Even though there are no formal Filipino American classes in southern college institutions yet, research becomes a tool for contesting the status quo. Coming together to research our lives and share stories is part of understanding who we are as Filipinos and why we exist. The act of gathering, listening, dialoguing, and documenting, are all forms of decolonizing the experiences of both the Filipino American characters and researcher. Capturing more stories and publishing the Filipino American experience will tackle the invisibility of the growing community in the South.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment Email

I
R
B

Recruitment Email

Hello *[Name of Prospective Participant]*,

My name is Pat Lindsay C. Catalla. I am a Sam Houston State University doctoral candidate who is doing research on Filipino American college students in Houston, Texas under the supervision of my Faculty Chair, Dr. Rebecca Bustamante. I am interested in understanding Filipino American community college student's experiences and life stories. Based on research, there is very little research on Filipino American community college students in the South. I am passionate to learn more about what Filipino American students are experiencing so that I, and other people, can be a better advocate for the Filipino community's needs.

I am recruiting for participants, like you, for my research. The study will be completely confidential and all personal information will be kept safe. I will never reveal the true identity of any participants.

If you are interested, you will be asked to:

1. Take an electronic survey that will last 10-15 minutes.
2. Upon completion of the survey, you will be asked if you want to move forward with being interviewed.
3. If you consent to being interviewed, we will have a sit down, face-to-face interview at your most convenient time and location.
4. At the interview, you will be asked about your story, educational goals, career aspirations, life influences, and Filipino American identity. Your stories will be recorded via tape recorder. Please allot 1-2 hours of time.

At any point during the survey or interview you do not feel comfortable, you are free to withdraw or not answer the question.

I would greatly appreciate if you would email me back if you want to participate or not, in the study.

If you need further clarification of what the study will entail, feel free to email me or call me on my cell at 310-425-6675.

I look forward to your response.

Thank you,
Pat Lindsay C. Catalla

You have been sent this message because you have shown interest in participating in this study.

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form

I
R
B

Informed Consent

[Note: This message below is shown before the electronic survey]

Hello/Kumusta,

My name is Pat Lindsay C. Catalla. I am a Sam Houston State University doctoral candidate who is doing research on Filipino American college students in Houston, Texas under the supervision of my Faculty Chair, Dr. Rebecca Bustamante. I am interested in understanding Filipino American community college students' experiences and life stories. You have been sent this message because you have shown interest in participating in this study.

Before you proceed, I need your permission to participate in my research study.

By clicking the button below, you acknowledge that:
-Your participation in the survey and study is voluntary
-You are 18 years of age
-Your personal information (name and contact information) will be kept confidential
-Your stories may be included in the research, but real life names will not be revealed
-You have the right to withdraw at any point during the survey and study, for any reason, and without any prejudice.

IF YOU CONSENT TO PARTICIPATING:

1. The survey should take you around 10-15 minutes to complete.

2. You will be asked to move forward in completing the survey in which you will be asked to answer questions about yourself.

3. Upon completion of the survey, you will be sent a confirmation of completion by email.

4. All responses will be kept confidential and your name/identity will not be shared with anyone. If you would like to contact me in regards to any questions throughout the process, please e-mail pcc004@shsu.edu.

5. After completing the survey, you will be asked if you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview.

6. Please note that this survey will be best displayed on a laptop or desktop computer. Some features may be less compatible for use on a mobile device.

IF YOU DO NOT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATING, please click "No" to participating in the study and submit. The survey will automatically end and you do not have to complete the

demographic survey. Upon submission, I will send a confirmation email that you have chosen not to participate.

For questions, issues, or concerns regarding the protection of human subjects or subject's rights, please contact Ms. Sharla Miles, Coordinator, Protection of Human Subjects Committee. E-mail: irb@shsu.edu; Phone: 936.294.4875

Thank you/Salamat,
Pat Lindsay "Pinky" C. Catalla, M.Ed.

APPENDIX C

Demographic Questionnaire

Electronic Survey Link:
https://goo.gl/forms/cWYCbhBol9vz4RfJ2

Filipino American Community College Student Research: Survey and Consent Form

Hello/Kumusta,

My name is Pat Lindsay C. Catalla. I am a Sam Houston State University doctoral candidate who is doing research on Filipino American college students in Houston, Texas under the supervision of my Faculty Chair, Dr. Rebecca Bustamante. I am interested in understanding Filipino American community college students experiences and life stories. You have been sent this message because you have shown interest in participating in this study.

Before you proceed, I need your permission to participate in my research study.

By clicking the button below, you acknowledge that:
-Your participation in the survey and study is voluntary
-You are 18 years of age
-Your personal information (name and contact information) will be kept confidential
-Your stories may be included in the research, but real life names will not be revealed
-You have the right to withdraw at any point during the survey and study, for any reason, and without any prejudice.

IF YOU CONSENT TO PARTICIPATING:

1. The survey should take you around 10-15 minutes to complete.

2. You will be asked to move forward in completing the survey in which you will be asked to answer questions about yourself.

3. Upon completion of the survey, you will be sent a confirmation of completion by email.

4. All responses will be kept confidential and your name/identity will not be shared with anyone. If you would like to contact me in regards to any questions throughout the process, please e-mail pcc004@shsu.edu.

5. After completing the survey, you will be asked if you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview.

6. Please note that this survey will be best displayed on a laptop or desktop computer. Some features may be less compatible for use on a mobile device.

IF YOU DO NOT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATING, please click "No" to participating in the study and submit. The survey will automatically end and you do not have to complete the demographic survey. Upon submission, I will send a confirmation email that you have chosen not to participate.

For questions, issues, or concerns regarding the protection of human subjects, please contact the following individuals:
Dr. Donna Desforges, Chair, Protection of Human Subjects Committee. E-mail: psy_dmd@shsu.edu, Phone: 936.294.1178
Sharla Miles, Coordinator, Protection of Human Subjects Committee. E-mail: irb@shsu.edu, Phone: 936.294.4875

Thank you/Salamat,
Pat Lindsay "Pinky" C. Catalla, M.Ed.

* Required

Email address *

Your email

Do you consent to participating in the study? *

- Yes
- No

NEXT

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

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Google Forms

Questions for the Research Study

In terms of your nationality, how do you identify yourself? *

Your answer

In terms of your ethnicity, how do you identify yourself? *

Your answer

In terms of your cultural background, how do you identify yourself? *

Your answer

What language(s) do you feel most comfortable speaking and understanding?

Your answer

How many people live in your household, including yourself?

Your answer

Out of the number of people living in your household, how many generations live in your household?

Your answer

How would you rank your family's socioeconomic status?

Choose

What are/were you studying in college?

Your answer

What is/was your intended certificate or degree?

Your answer

What was your most recent cumulative GPA?

- ○ Below 2.0 GPA
- ○ 2.1-2.5 GPA
- ○ 2.6-3.0 GPA
- ○ 3.1-3.5 GPA
- ○ 3.6 GPA and above
- ○ I do not know

What is your current enrollment status? Check all that apply to you at this moment.

- ☐ Currently in community college
- ☐ Currently in a 4-year university
- ☐ Currently in community college and 4-year university
- ☐ Graduated from community college
- ☐ Graduated from a 4-year university
- ☐ Not in School

Community College Experience

What is the length of time you have been in community college?

Your answer

Did you...

	Yes	No
Graduate from community college	○	○
Transfer out of community college	○	○
Drop/Stop Out of community college	○	○

BACK NEXT

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University Experience

What is the length of time you have been at a 4-year university? (If none, skip to the next section, "Work Experience")

Your answer

Did you... *

	Yes	No
Graduate from the university	○	○
Go Back to Community College	○	○
Drop/Stop Out of the university	○	○

BACK NEXT

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Work Experience

What is your current work status? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Not Working
- ☐ Currently Working Full Time (about 36-40 hours or more per week)
- ☐ Currently Working Part Time (less than 35-39 hours per week)
- ☐ Other: _____

If you do work, what is the industry of your occupation, and what is your job position? (If none, skip to next section "Overall Experience")

Your answer

BACK NEXT

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Overall Experience

Rate your overall experience for each of these areas:

	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Does not apply to me
High School	○	○	○	○	○
Community College	○	○	○	○	○
4-year University	○	○	○	○	○
Working in a Job	○	○	○	○	○

BACK NEXT

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Parent's Educational Background

Where was your mother born and raised?

Your answer

What language(s) does your mother primarily speak?

Your answer

What is your mother's highest form of education?

Choose

What did your mother study?

Your answer

Where did your mother obtain her education?

- ☐ Philippines
- ☐ United States
- ☐ I do not know
- ☐ Other: _____

What is your mother's occupation?

Your answer

Where was your father born and raised?

Your answer

What language(s) does your father primarily speak?

Your answer

What is your father's highest form of education?

Choose

What did your father study?

Your answer

Where did your father obtain his education?

- [ ] Philippines
- [ ] United States
- [ ] I do not know

What is your father's occupation?

Your answer

BACK NEXT

Personal Information

Full Name *

Your answer

For this study, please state a pseudonym (a fake name). This should not be your real name. *

Your answer

Cell Phone Number *

Your answer

Email Address *

Your answer

Gender *

Your answer

Age *

Your answer

End of Survey

Thank you/Maraming Salamat for filling out this survey!

You will be sent an email confirmation of completing the survey.

A copy of your responses will be emailed to the address you provided.

I'm not a robot

reCAPTCHA
Privacy - Terms

BACK SUBMIT

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

It is *[state the date, time, and location of the interview]*. My name is Pat Lindsay C. Catalla and I am a doctoral candidate for Sam Houston State University. Feel free to call me whatever you feel most comfortable calling me: Pat, Ms. Pat, Ate Pat ("Ate" means older female in Tagalog) or Ate Pinky.

I am here with *[participant will state their choosen pseudonym]*. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study on the kuwento/stories of Filipino American community college students. I will be tape recording our interview today. As a friendly reminder, you have the right to withdraw at any point during the survey and study, for any reason, and without any prejudice. We will now begin the interview. Are you ready?

1. Tell me about yourself. What's your kuwento/story?
2. What does it mean to be Filipino American to you?
3. Tell me the story of your educational journey leading up to now.
4. What are your career aspirations? How do your career aspirations fit into your educational journey? Who and/or what influences you?
5. How do your parents influence your educational and career choices?
6. Where do you see yourself in the next 5-10 years?
7. What other topics, comments, or questions, you want to share before we end our interview?

Once again, thank you *[participant's pseudonym]* for your participation. This concludes our interview. After this interview, the audio will be transcribed and I will email you a transcript of our conversation. You will have an opportunity to review the transcript and provide any changes if you wish. Thereafter, I will be analyzing your transcript. Once the analysis is done, I will send you a draft of my analysis for any changes if you wish. Thank you again and best wishes on your future endeavors.

This ends our interview with *[pseudonym]* at *[time stamp]*.

APPENDIX E

IRB Approval

Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
1831 University Ave, Suite 303, Huntsville, TX 77341-2448
Phone: 936.294.4875
Fax: 936.294.3622
irb@shsu.edu
http://www.shsu.edu/dept/office-of-research-and-sponsored-programs/compliance/irb/

DATE:	April 26, 2018
TO:	Pat-Lindsay Catalla [Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Rebecca Bustamante]
FROM:	Sam Houston State University (SHSU) IRB
PROTOCOL TITLE:	*Kuwento/Stories: A Narrative Inquiry of Filipino American Community College Students [T/D]*
PROTOCOL #:	2018-04-38152
SUBMISSION TYPE:	INITIAL REVIEW—RESPONSE TO MODIFICATIONS
ACTION:	APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE:	April 26, 2018
EXPIRATION DATE:	**April 26, 2019**
REVIEW TYPE:	EXPEDITED
REVIEW CATEGORIES:	7

Thank you for your submission of your **Response to Modifications** submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received **Expedited** Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and assurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the consent document.

Please note that this committee must approve any revision to previously approved materials prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure, which are found on the Application Page to the SHSU IRB website.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All Department of Health and Human Services and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Sam Houston State University IRB's records

Sam Houston
STATE UNIVERSITY
A Member of The Texas State University System

Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
1831 University Ave, Suite 303, Huntsville, TX 77341-2448
Phone: 936.294.4875
Fax: 936.294.3622
irb@shsu.edu
http://www.shsu.edu/dept/office-of-research-and-sponsored-programs/compliance/irb/

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. **Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of April 26, 2019. When you have completed the project, a Final Report must be submitted to ORSP in order to close the project file.**

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 936-294-4875 or irb@shsu.edu. Please include your project title and protocol number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,

Donna Desforges
IRB Chair, PHSC
PHSC-IRB

VITA

PAT LINDSAY C. CATALLA

Education

Educational Leadership, Ed.D- Sam Houston State University

Higher Education- Administration and Supervision, M.Ed- University of Houston

Biology, B.S. and Minor in Women's Studies- University of California, Riverside

Work Experience

2009-2018	Lone Star College System
	Supervisor, The Office of Student Outreach and Recruitment
	Interim Assistant Dean, LSC-Greenspoint Center
	Manager/Advisor II, Women's Resource Center
	Recruiter, The Office of Student Outreach and Recruitment
2004-2006	University of California, Riverside
	Manager, Student Life and Activities
	Assistant, Assistant Vice Chancellor/Dean of Students
	Lead Orientation Counselor
	Student Orientation Counselor
	Youth and Community Outreach Program Coordinator

Presentations and Engagements

Catalla, P. (July 2018). Kuwento time: Using narrative inquiry to develop identity and life purpose. [PowerPoint slides] presented at Filipino American National Historic Society 17th Biennial Conference at Chicago, IL.

Catalla, P., Duran, B., Tyson-Ferrol, C. (March, 2018). CAT 5 Preview Day: How to plan a large recruitment event. [PowerPoint slides] presented at Strategic Enrollment Management Showcase at Lone Star College System, The Woodlands, TX.

Catalla, P. (June 2016). Career paths of Filipino Americans across the United States. [PowerPoint slides] presented at Filipino American National Historic Society 16th Biennial Conference at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York City, NY.

Catalla, P. (October 2016). Multigenerational Panel of Filipino Americans. Panelist for at Filipino American National Historic Society, Houston, TX Chapter for Day of Storytelling at Rice University, Houston, TX. Catalla, P. (March, 2016). The keys to being an academic prowess. [PowerPoint slides] presented at Women's Conference at Lone Star College-North Harris, Houston, TX.

Catalla, P., Homes, D., Lue King, K., Korah, A., & Landry, E. (February, 2016). *Where do I belong?: A multi-site campus ecology case study.* Paper presented at the Southwest Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Catalla, P. (October, 2015). Vision board: From dreams to reality. [PowerPoint slides] presented at Student Life LEAD Retreat, Lone Star College-North Harris, Hunstville, TX.

Catalla, P. (October, 2014). Let's make magic: Using leadership to inspire action. [PowerPoint slides] presented at Student Life LEAD Retreat, Lone Star College-North Harris, Navasota, TX.

Catalla, P. (October, 2013). Tag, you're it: Pay it forward. [PowerPoint slides] presented at Student Life LEAD Retreat, Lone Star College-North Harris, Navasota, TX.