

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

Becoming Visible: Oral Histories of Filipino Americans in California

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts in Anthropology

By

Sophia Wiley

August 2016

The thesis of Sophia Wiley is approved:

Dr. Jessica Kim

Date

Dr. Suzanne Scheld

Date

Dr. Sabina Magliocco, Chair

Date

California State University, Northridge

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my family for their continued support and encouragement. Without them, I could not have completed this thesis. In particular, I would like to thank my parents for their guidance and their unconditional love and support. I thank my sisters for dealing with me and being there for me when I needed them. I would also like to thank my extended family because they were my first inspiration for studying the Filipino American community. To my aunts, Ginny, Anna and Genie, my uncle, Tito Tim, and my cousins, Leah, Elie, Max, Ian, and Trevor, I could not have come this far without all of you.

Second, I would like to thank my advisor and Chair, Dr. Sabina Magliocco, for her advisement throughout my three years at CSUN. I remember taking ANTH 516: Ethnography as Narrative my first semester and being re-inspired by this class. This class, and all the others I took with you, continued to inspire and develop me into an academic. Dr. Magliocco, I am immensely grateful for all of your help and guidance throughout the years.

Dr. Scheld, I would like to thank you for your advisement and encouragement over the past couple of years. You have really helped me to develop my thesis as well as to broaden my ideas to think outside of the box. I thank you for your time and hours sitting with me deconstructing my ideas and theories.

Dr. Kim, even though I have not taken any classes with you, I greatly appreciate you taking on the long and arduous task of reading my thesis. I also thank you for taking the time to meet with me and help me brainstorm parts of my thesis.

Lastly, I would like to thank all of my participants for their openness, thoughtful responses, and willingness to participate in my project. Maraming salamat po!

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Abstract

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By

Sophia A. Wiley

Masters of Arts in Anthropology

Many Americans are unaware that Filipinos comprise the largest Asian American group in California. In addition, the 2010 U.S. Census enumerates Filipinos and Filipinos of mixed heritage as a population of 3,416,840, elevating them to the second largest Asian American group in the U. S. Despite this, some Filipino Americans have felt that the community is underrepresented culturally and historically, and they consider themselves an invisible minority (Aquino 2010, Bonus 2000 and David 2013). This thesis project explores this perception of invisibility within the Filipino American community through analyzing the oral histories of Filipino Americans in the Greater Los Angeles Area and the San Francisco Bay Area. My project focuses on the ways that immigrant populations and the second (i.e., subsequent) generation not only maintains its Filipino culture but reinvents and intertwines it with American culture. Furthermore, I explore how these factors play into the construction of Filipino American identity.

I assert that the invisibility felt by some members of the community is complex and some of the answers go beyond the scope of this research. Filipino Americans in California feel invisible or underrepresented for a variety of reasons. These include the Philippines' status as a former U.S. colony and the associated memories of the Filipino American community as subjects of American imperialism. I also argue that this sense of invisibility is, in part, a social construction. It is socially constructed because the Filipino American community is represented in California in certain respects, such as Filipino food. Moreover, for some of the members of the community, invisibility can become a badge of their identity. Through different Filipino American organizations, like FilAm Arts & Culture, the interviewees perform their ethnic identity together as a group. Within this space, they create a sense of belonging partially based on the perceived invisibility of the Filipino American community. As a result, the group's identity is created and maintained (i.e., constructed) by this perceived invisibility.

Finally, I posit that Filipinos occupy a unique ethnic/minority category that causes them to live in a liminal state, which perpetuates the feeling of underrepresentation.

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

I am part Filipina on my mother's side, and this project began because of my personal connection to the Filipino American community. As I will discuss in the native anthropologist section, this research was self-reflexive because it made me consider my position as a researcher studying my own community. Since I wanted to explore how people construct their identities and what influences this construction, it also challenged me to consider how I construct my own personal ethnic identity. I also wanted to investigate whether others in the community felt the same way that I did growing up, which was a sense of identity confusion and a feeling of existing "in between" cultures.

Shortly after I began volunteering at Filipino American organizations, I wanted to investigate why some members of the community felt that Filipinos were underrepresented in relation to other minority groups, like other Asians and Latinos. What many of the members of these organizations voiced was a feeling that other minorities overshadowed the Filipino American community to the extent that they felt their ethnicity to be largely invisible. I also chose to collect the oral histories of the community to highlight the vernacular experience. To address this invisibility, I conducted 25 interviews with Filipino Americans from different cities in California. I acknowledge that their voices do not represent the myriad of Filipino American perspectives in California nor across the U.S. However, I propose that they still provide meaningful insight into ethnic identity construction in the Filipino American community

and provide a starting point from which the ideas of invisibility can be further studied. Additionally, since my research covers a limited scope, there is room for future research among different Filipino American communities across the U.S.

The broader themes of my project include the ripple effects of colonialism, the construction of identity in immigrant communities, the maintenance of culture, and the processes of assimilation. The goal of my research is to contribute to post-colonial studies and studies regarding immigrant ethnic identity formation and the maintenance and acculturation of subsequent generations. In this paper, I argue that Filipinos occupy a special niche because they can be classified with both Hispanics and Asian Americans due to a similar colonial history and shared cultural aspects. Occupying this special niche contributes to Filipinos underrepresentation in the minority community as a whole. In other words, when Filipinos are lumped with other ethnic groups, their immigrant experience is deemphasized.

I also explore such questions as who those Filipino Americans are that feel underrepresented in California, what social and historical processes have shaped their social positions in American society, and how they describe their own ethnic identities. I also explore how in some ways the invisibility of the community is a social construction because there is representation in certain aspects like food. This examination draws from relevant anthropological theories, such theories of public memory, from the history of Filipino immigration to the U.S., and from an analysis of recurring themes. My hope is that this research will provide insight into the Filipino American community because, I

contend, their experience offers an invaluable alternative perspective on the performance of ethnic immigrant identities.

This project's contribution to the field of Anthropology is its focus on immigrant populations' maintenance of culture, assimilation, reinvention of traditions, and construction of ethnic identity. This project enhances the scope of these topics by investigating a segment of the immigrant population that is rarely considered in the scholarly research. Finally, my project is important because it offers a better understanding of migration in the contemporary world by examining why immigrants migrate to new places and how they and their descendants negotiate their cultures and ethnic identities in a foreign place.

Why Oral History?

In *Oral History* (2011), Patricia Leavy defines oral history as “a method of collecting narratives from the individuals for the purpose of research” (2011:4). Put another way, oral history is one method to extrapolate data for qualitative research. Oral history is intangible, but it is also narrative—it relies on the interviewee to generate the story. Therefore, oral history is also informed by the vernacular experience. In other words, as Donald Ritchie explained, it is “time to hand the mike to the people” (2003:13). Oral history can be viewed as a grassroots approach that asks the ordinary person to tell his or her experience. The benefit of oral history is that it deepens our understanding of our own experience and offers a new perspective on larger cultural trends based on someone else's

experience. Every person has his or her own experience and a different interpretation of history. Therefore, each interviewee adds another layer to the story. Oral history is similar to cultural heritage in that it is dynamic, unfixed, and ongoing process (Smith 2006). Furthermore, oral history can inform heritage by becoming a way to validate one's personal identity, nationalism, and/or cultural memory.

Primarily, I decided to use oral history for this research because it provides insight into the vernacular experience. In addition, while there has been research done on the vernacular Filipino American experience (Bonus 2000, Espiritu 1995, Ocampo 2013 and Strobel 1997), it is lacking in comparison to other ethnic groups and does not reflect the multiple voices of the Filipino American population. Although my research does not cover the entire scope of these voices, it does provide perspectives across generations, since the participants were both first and second generation. Additionally, because I wanted the participants to feel comfortable talking with me and to be open about their responses, I asked questions that would allow them to narrate and create a conversation between equals. Oral history diminishes the power asymmetry between the researcher and the subject. As Anna DeFina argued in *Identity in Narrative: A Study of Immigrant Discourse* (2003), narratives allow participants to talk more freely about their experiences. Further, through studying narratives, we can understand collective social representations and ideologies (DeFina 2003:7). Narratives also help us to grasp aspects of self-representation that are not apparent in statistics, through questionnaires, or through sample interviews, allowing for a deeper understanding of the human experience.

The importance of studying specific immigrant populations like the Filipino American community is that it could lead to a better understanding of the factors that help immigrants to integrate into the host society (DeFina 2007:4). This would be beneficial to the Filipino community since little research has been conducted on the group. As DeFina argued, “a focus on immigrants and their identity can also help defeat overgeneralization and stereotyping and show the complexity of immigrant realities and experiences” (2007:3). As some of the participants in this study shared, non-Filipinos stereotype Filipinos in certain respects. For instance, some common stereotypes are that “all Filipino women are nurses” or “Filipinos are good dancers” or “all Filipinos like to sing karaoke.” By researching the oral histories of Filipino Americans, my hope is that some of these stereotypes will diminish and that people will become aware of why these generalizations exist.

In short, oral history allows the reader (and researcher) to gain insight into another person’s reality, hopefully to create some compassion for the other person’s experience. Narrative is central to encoding the human experience (DeFina 2003:17). It also helps us to unpack the layers of our unique cultural upbringing. For the participant, on the other hand, “narrativization is a process basic to the constitution of the self in that it allows humans to make sense of experience and to grasp the self as a whole” (DeFina 2003:17).

As one participant, Edwin, shared in our interview,

It was very nice, definitely, having this conversation with you because it definitely brought up some thoughts that I hadn’t actually thought about being that, again, I definitely grew up in a Filipino family Filipino American family but especially not having the same kind of Filipino American community those kind of I guess thoughts on why it is why it isn’t that we’re represented as much as Californians especially in our

own history, you know. It's interesting how that never kind of came to my mind quite honestly.

In narratives and oral history, there is an element of self-realization that includes an awareness of the individual's place within the group and their own identity. Encouraging self-reflection on the participant's part and that of the researcher, narratives and oral histories allow us to reflect on our positionality and our insider status.

Just as oral history is important to anthropology because it provides an understanding of different cultures, it is important to history because it provides a means of documenting, preserving, and filling in the historical record (Leavy 2011:5). Moreover, "Oral history provides a fuller, more accurate picture of the past by augmenting the information provided by public records, statistical data, photographs, maps, letters, diaries, and other historical materials" (Understanding Oral History 2016). For historians, oral history is an important methodology because it enables people to share their voices regarding what happened, and why, in history. It helps historians to avoid generalizations that stereotype people and to highlight important aspects of group experiences that may otherwise be missing from the public records, like official photographs or census data. In short, for historians, oral history reflects the behaviors and ideas of a particular period that are not often reflected in archival records.

Native Anthropology and Self-Reflexivity

Growing up, it was always hard for me to define my identity. It was even harder for me to define my ethnic identity. My mother is of Filipino, Chinese, and Spanish background while my father is of Northern Italian, Irish, and English background. My physical attributes made it even harder for people to discern where I come from. The people I am with tend to either see me as of Asian descent or as white, depending on their personal experience. Feelings of racial ambiguity, invisibility, and being in a liminal state led me to research the Filipino American community in particular. Not only did I feel a personal connection because I am part Filipina, but I wanted to explore whether others in the Filipino American community felt the same racial ambiguity and liminality. After preliminary research conducted while I was volunteering with different Filipino American organizations, like FilAm Arts & Culture, I discovered that some Filipino Americans feel that their identities are in a liminal state because they are a combination of both Western and Eastern cultures and that their communities are also underrepresented as a result.

As Kirin Narayan eloquently writes, “those who diverge as ‘native,’ ‘indigenous,’ or ‘insider’ anthropologists are believed to write about their own cultures from a position of intimate affinity” (1993:671). In other words, because native anthropologists are part of the culture they are studying, there is an assumption that they have access to the culture’s underlying *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977).

In my experience as a native researcher, I felt that I had a difficult time demonstrating my status as a Filipina, or “native,” anthropologist. In my initial volunteer work at the Filipino American organizations, I was afraid to approach the other volunteers because I feared that they would not think I was an authentic Filipina, or not Filipino enough to be there. For example, I share a section of my field notes with another volunteer at one of the Filipino American organizations:

The volunteer is in disbelief because he tells me, “You’re a white girl though.” In order to convince him, I tell him my father is very pale of English and Northern Italian descent, so this is why I may look whiter to some people. The volunteer is still not convinced. He begins to test how much I know about Filipino culture. He asks me about certain foods. I tell him I only know a few because my mother was raised with more American culture and therefore, my family and I ate mostly American food growing up. The volunteer brushes this off and tests me on whether I know any of the Filipino languages like Tagalog. I respond that I do not know any Filipino languages because my mother was never taught because my grandparents wanted their children to be American. Again, this volunteer seems unconvinced that I am Filipina and he seems suspicious of why this random white girl is here.

This experience and similar ones have led me to explore how we perform our ethnic identities and what constitutes having an authentic ethnic identity. This experience also allowed me to reflect on my position as a “native” researcher and on whether I was truly native enough, because I was only part Filipina.

In “Performing Ethnography in Asian America Communities: Beyond the Insider-versus-Outsider Perspective” (2000), Linda Trinh Vo discussed the outsider versus insider debate and the emergence of insider sociology, or native ethnography. Insider sociology or native ethnography is defined as scholars of color studying their own racial or ethnic groups (Vo 2000:17). Scholars began studying their own communities because of misrepresentation by white scholars. However, Vo argued against the view that insider

ethnography lent the minority scholar more trustworthiness merely because they are already insiders. Vo highlighted the fact that class and gender can also separate scholars from being “true” insiders.

Like Vo, I have experienced these debates and negotiations while conducting fieldwork, especially around the problem of objectivity. During my exploratory research in the Philippines, my assumption, like Vo, was that I would already have the trust of the local Filipinos because I am part Filipina. However, my status as American, middle class, and unmarried further distanced me from the other Filipinos. In reality, I felt that I was viewed more as an outsider and American than as an authentic Filipina. In *Mules and Men* (1935), Zora Neale Hurston argued that while one may be an insider in the community, this does not guarantee that the insider has complete trust or access to the community. As Hurston wrote,

I mentally cursed the \$12.74 dress from Macy’s that I had on among all the \$1.98 mail-order dresses. I looked about and noted the number of bungalow aprons and even the rolled down paper bags on the heads of several women (1935:63).

Hurston was aware that her position as an anthropologist distanced herself not only because of her academic knowledge but also through how she represented herself. Like Hurston, since I am a graduate student and come from a middle class background, I had to gain trust with my participants before the interviews. In short, there are certain experiences that separate the insider researcher, such as education and class.

In *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza’s Story* (2003), Ruth Behar also explores the challenges of destabilizing ethnographic authority and becoming self-

aware of her position as a researcher. Throughout Esperanza's story, Behar reflects on her position as someone having privilege and academic authority. Behar also reflects on the difficulty of negotiating her positioning. Like Behar, I have noticed the challenges of academic authority. Specifically, many of my participants wanted to give me the "right" answer, often worrying that because they are not graduate students like myself that they did not have enough authority to speak about certain topics. Some of my participants also conveyed that their story did not matter.

Further, when I would talk informally with my participants before the interviews, they were often more open to discussing different topics than when I started to record them. I tried to be self-aware in these situations and used jokes or discussed unrelated topics to help my participants feel more comfortable. A few times, I visited my participants at their homes so they could feel more in control, or I would meet them in places where they felt most comfortable. In addition, I tested my questions with family and friends for clarity and to determine if they were too leading. Despite this, like Behar and Hurston, I always encountered the challenge of separating my researcher self from my personal self. I often believed that I intimidated my participants because I was a researcher who had perceived authority.

Another method I used to try to gain access and trust from the community was to share food. As I will discuss later in this thesis, food is important in Filipino culture because it represents so many different ideas. In the chapter "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," from *Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), Clifford Geertz explained a situation

in which he and his wife ran from the police after the police broke up an illegal cockfight. Running from the police along with the other spectators became a sort of rite of passage, one that ultimately gave them acceptance into the Balinese village society. Similarly, my experiences sharing food with my participants and eating the same food gave me access to the group because I was seen as one of them.

At the end of the day, our intention as researchers and social scientists is to discover what people think and do and to understand why (Vo 2000:23). However, there will always be some bias in our research methods. In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, James Clifford (1986) argued that everything is a partial truth because all data goes through an interpretative process and because the researcher's bias will always shape the data. He called these "true fictions." In other words, no research is wholly objective. I argue that being an insider researcher who may have a more subjective perspective than an outsider researcher does not eliminate the fact that all research is shaped by the researcher's experiences and cultural background.

In "Post-Modern Ethnography From Document of the Occult to Occult Document" (1986), Stephen A. Tyler discussed subjectivity as an issue of power, "as symbolized in the subject-object relationship between he who represents and she who is presented" (Clifford and Marcus 1986:127). In other words, the relationship between a researcher and a subject organically creates a power inequality. Therefore, the notion of being an objective researcher creates a divide between "the other" and us Tyler's argument demonstrates that trying to be objective perpetuates the power asymmetry between the

researcher and the subject. Moreover, emphasizing objectivity diminishes the collaborative processes of qualitative research methods like oral history.

Everything is subjective to some respect, and post-modernist theorists (Clifford, Marcus and Tyler 1986) highlight the fact that hard science is not wholly objective. In order to give an accurate account (i.e., our interpretation of an accurate account), anthropologists must be polyvocal, conduct collaborative research with our informants, and experiment with our writing techniques to evoke a dialogue between the reader and the writer. In “The Text Which Is Not One: Dialectics of Self and Culture in Experimental Autoethnography” (2002), Kimberly Lau used the feminist and the postmodern approach of polyvocality to tell the story. Lau utilized this technique to illustrate the multiple identities that someone of mixed ethnic background must negotiate.

Like Lau, I include my participants’ direct quotes in this thesis to present their voices and perspectives directly. My intention is to reflect a collaborative method, one conducted with my participants and with my readers, to allow their perspectives without my commentary to emerge. I used polyvocality to address the inherent power imbalance between the researcher and the informant and to allow different perspectives to be told. As shown in later sections, I directly quoted my participants’ responses for the purpose of incorporating their thoughts and validating their responses as meaningful and important to the research. As the aforementioned postmodernist theorists demonstrated, collaborating and incorporating the researcher’s informants not only enriches the research but gives it a more complete and accurate depiction of the topic. Furthermore,

subjectivity cannot be completely separated from research, even if one is an outside researcher, because, as I have shown above, our previous experiences, our cultural backgrounds, and our upbringings all influence our research and our interpretations.

The Liminality of Filipino Americans

In the next section, I assert that the liminal state of Filipino Americans, who occupy a special niche because they can be classified as both Asian and Hispanic, explained why my participants had difficulty constructing their ethnic identity. In the process, their regional diversity and American colonial relationship is not acknowledged. I apply Victor's Turner's concept of liminality to the Filipino American community, arguing that their liminality contributes to the social construction of their invisibility. In *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969), Victor Turner described the liminal state that occurs during ritual. As Turner explained, when one goes through the process of a ritual, he or she is an "in between" state. This state of liminality is also seen during rites of passage and/or when an individual is going through adolescence (Van Gennep 1960: 94). The "in between" state relates to my participants trying to define their ethnic identity because they are constantly in between cultures and trying to balance two worlds.

Specifically, my participants expressed the view that while they did see their cultural similarities with Asian values, such as filial piety and other cultural traits, they asserted that they belonged more with Latinos. Therefore, I suggest that Filipino American ethnic identity does not fit into traditional categories, such as "Asian American," that had

previously been designated for them by the U.S. Census. Since Filipino Americans do not fit into the Asian American category, this perpetuates their feeling of underrepresentation.

In addition, while all first-generation immigrants are somewhat liminal, based on my interviews, I argue that second-generation Filipino Americans have a more difficult experience with the liminality because they have adopted more of American culture, like the language. In my study, I found that not all second generation Filipino Americans spoke the Filipino language. My second generation participants also had a difficult time identifying as Asian American. As some of my participants described it, they felt they related to or belonged more with Latino American groups because of cultural similarities and religion. The Asian American category can be applied more to East Asian cultures, like the Chinese and Japanese, and Filipinos lie outside this category because of their unique Spanish and American colonial history.

Filipino Americans are in a constant state of liminality in regard to which ethnic group they belong in. For example, when I asked the question, “which ethnic groups do you feel you and other Filipinos are most similar to in regard to culture, values, traditions and beliefs,” many of the participants answered that Filipinos are similar to other Asian groups, but they also believed that they did not fit neatly into the Asian category.

Furthermore, this association with Latinos, rather than with Asians, was due to many of my participants growing up in heavily concentrated Latino areas in the Los Angeles area. One participant, Derek, explained that Filipinos were most similar to nationals of other

former Spanish colonies because of the colonial history and Catholicism. Derek's explanation summarized most of my participants' responses: as a result of the shared Spanish colonial history with Latinos, they identified more as a Latino than as Asian.

On the other hand, due to the Philippines' geographic proximity to Asian countries such as China, Filipino culture is heavily influenced by East Asian culture, as mentioned earlier. Therefore, I argue, since Filipinos are in a liminal state, the Filipino American community echoes this liminality in the construction of its ethnic identity. Although I have not explored whether or not Filipinos in the Philippines also feel this sense of liminality, I posit that it emerges as part of the immigration experience. Many of my participants explained that they live in between the Filipino and American cultures and that they had difficulty negotiating their multiple identities. Lila Abu-Lughod perfectly described this in between feeling as follows:

As someone who moves between worlds, I feel that confronting images I know to exist in the United States toward Arab is one way to honor the kindness they have shown me.....This is the dilemma all those of us who move back and forth between worlds must face as we juggle speaking for, speaking to, and, we are "halfies," speaking from (Abu-Lughod 1993:41).

Like Abu-Lughod's description here, Filipino Americans are "halfies" because of their liminal state. They move between the Filipino and the American worlds and face the difficulty of trying to negotiate these conflicting worlds. While some of my participants felt themselves to be American because they grew up in the U.S., some felt like "the other" in American society because of their skin color or their incorporation of various Filipino cultural traits. As my participant, Genevieve, explained, "When I went back to the Philippines, [other Filipinos] said 'You're not Filipino if you grew up in the States,'

and when I'm out here, I'm not American because my skin color says I'm not American.” Genevieve also commented, “I don't know 'cause like in Southeast Asia Filipinos we stick out like a sore thumb because we're not Asian enough.” Here again, we see how placing Filipinos and Filipino Americans into panethnic categories like Asian limits the members of the ethnic identity from freely exploring their ethnic complexity. In other words, when outside parties such as census, government agencies, or media label Filipino Americans as Asian, it further places them in a liminal state, where they are constantly in between cultures and searching for belonging. This search for belonging adds to their invisibility: because Filipino Americans cannot find an exact ethnic group to belong to, they feel that they are invisible in relation to other ethnic groups.

Additionally, Turner's concept of *communitas* (1969) relates to the Filipino American community since, as I found, some of my participants go through different stages of liminality. For example, the process of decolonization, learning about Filipino history, and situating Filipino Americans within the American public memory is a ritual process. As many of my participants discussed, in college, when they began to take courses in Asian American Studies and learn about Filipino American history, they first became aware of the Filipino contribution to California history. As a result, they began participating in Filipino American student run clubs and organizations and took an activist route to raising awareness of the Filipino American community. The college experience is as a liminal state in which one defines one's opinions about the world and constructs their self and identity.

Based on some of my participants' responses, I assert that second generation Filipino Americans use the liminal space of college to deconstruct their identities as Filipino Americans while creating a *communitas* of Filipino American student organizations and clubs. All of my participants had at least some college education, which is interesting to note because, in relation to the overall population, Filipino Americans are not significantly represented in higher education. I argue that college education is the impetus behind the formation of a stronger Filipino American identity, which includes an awareness of perceived invisibility. Even though my participants were generally (70% of my sample) educated, holding a Bachelor's degree, this is not the case for the wider Filipino American population. Because many Filipino Americans do not hold a college degree, there are limited spaces, outside of college, for them to reflect on their ethnic identity and invisibility. Further, this limited space to construct and reflect on one's ethnic identity has fostered underrepresentation in the community. In other words, if one cannot critically think through and deconstruct the social positioning of one's ethnic group, it makes it harder to feel like one's community is socially and culturally underrepresented.

Mis-categorization of Filipinos as Asian

I also argue that Filipinos are mis-categorized as Asian, and this mis-categorization adds to their feelings of invisibility. Although Filipinos share similar cultural and physical characteristics with other Asian groups, their shared history of Spanish colonization places them with Latinos. Further, because of the Philippine's status as a former

American colony, Filipinos are mis-categorized as Asian. This lumping in with other Asian groups dismisses the uniqueness of Filipino culture, which also contributes to why some members of the community feel underrepresented.

In *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* (1997), Yen Le Espiritu argued that there has been an excessive categorization of nonwhites by whites resulting from whites' avoidance of unfamiliar people, both their diversity and individuality. Therefore, the panethnic categorization of Filipino Americans is a strategy for grouping people with similarities together as a method to avoid cultural differences. Moreover, Filipino Americans are categorized with other Asian Americans by whites due to their cultural and physical similarities. However, as Espiritu notes, "Filipino Americans have been the group most outspoken against the pan-Asian framework" (1997:104). Filipino Americans are the most outspoken because, despite their large population size, they are underrepresented compared to other Asian American groups; as a result, they do not receive state funding or the benefit of outreach groups (Espiritu 1997:106). Espiritu explained that, in comparison with other Asian Americans, Filipino Americans are disadvantaged in the labor market and underrepresented in higher education, so they should be able to obtain aid from the state. However, when Filipino Americans are lumped together with other Asian American groups, their claim on the state is diluted, due to the higher levels of other Asian American groups, like Chinese and Japanese, in the state (Espiritu 1997:107).

In Movement from the Middle: Pilipina/o 1.5-generation College Student Access, Retention, and Resistance (2007), Tracy Buenavista reiterated Espiritu's argument that, since Filipino Americans are lumped into the Asian American category, issues like underrepresentation in higher education remain overlooked. Buenavista posited that because Filipino Americans are considered Asian Americans, the "model minority," their experiences of and access to higher education are viewed as the same or similar to that of other Asian Americans (2007:3). The Filipino American experience is different from that of other Asian Americans, however, because of their neocolonial relationship with the U.S., which has affected how they are racialized as a minority and, despite their categorization as Asian American, treated like other disenfranchised minorities, such as Latinos and African Americans (Buenavista 2007:4).

In short, like Espiritu and Buenavista, I argue that Filipino Americans are mis-categorized as Asian American and that this has contributed to the underrepresentation of the community. Moreover, Filipino Americans are mis-categorized as Asian American because of the American colonization of the Philippines and the current neocolonial relationship that the Philippines has with the U.S. Additionally, the neocolonial relationship that the Philippines has with the U.S. highlights the lack of power that the average Filipino American has as well as their status as a minority.

Power and Post-Colonialism Theories

I assert that the community's lack of power has contributed to its feeling of invisibility. Moreover, I argue, with Foucault, that "power traverses and produces things, it induces pleasures, forms knowledge, produces discourse" (Rainbow 1984:61). In other words, power is the foundation and "the truth" is a projection of power. Foucault further argued that the struggle for power is embedded in academic research and, therefore, dictates discourse. This power imbalance is evident in the feelings of underrepresentation in the Filipino American community. In short, the status of Filipino Americans in the U.S. as a former Spanish and American colony has led to the community's disempowerment. In order to rectify this disempowerment, Foucault argued that one needs to dismantle the power struggle and change the discourse. Therefore, one of my goals, in writing this thesis, is that it will dismantle this power struggle and contribute to the literature and research on the Filipino American community in California.

Continuing this discussion, Edward Said also examined these power imbalances, building on Foucault's ideas and positing that there has been a dominant western paradigm that he defined, applying Gramsci's concept of hegemony (the elite, or the people with power paradigm become the mainstream), as "orientalism." In *Orientalism* (1978), Said analyzed the relationship between the Occident (West) and the Orient (East), a relationship that he argued is rooted in power. Said's *Orientalism* is influenced by Michel Foucault's idea of power and knowledge, which acknowledges inherent power struggles. My argument is that, as a result of this embedded western hegemonic discourse, which is

prevalent in all aspects of American culture, western hegemony ultimately affects the underrepresentation of minority groups, like the Filipino American community. In other words, minority histories and experiences remain underrepresented because there is a preference for the western, or White American, experiences.

SECTION 2

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Now that I have discussed how Filipinos' liminal state and power construction have contributed to their underrepresentation, I will discuss how the history, culture, and diversity of the Philippines has shaped the social positioning of the Filipino American community. As I will discuss later in this thesis, regional differences play a role in the cultural underrepresentation of the community. For example, the fact that the Philippines are composed of many islands and regions has caused some people to identify with their particular region as opposed to just the pan-Filipino category. I will also discuss the history of Filipino immigration to the U.S., through three different waves, and highlight key events in Filipino American history in California. I assert that the history of immigration and these key events have laid the framework for today's status of the Filipino American community.

Brief facts about the Philippines

The Philippines is composed of roughly 7,000 islands and is located in Southeast Asia in the Pacific Ocean. Malay is the dominant racial group in the Philippines (Rodell 2002:1). The major islands of the Philippines are Luzon (the north), Mindanao (the south), Visayas (the center), and Cebu (the long thin island). With the different major islands, there are three distinct groups within the Philippines. Some of the major ethnic groups are the Ilocanos, in northern Luzon, the Tagalogs, in central Luzon (e.g. Metro Manila), and

the Visayans and Cebuanos, from the southern area. Each of these different groups has distinct languages, traditions, and cultural practices.

For example, the people who live in Catabalogan City, located in the Visayas, call themselves *Waray*. Waray not only describes the people, but their language. Waray is similar to the national language, Tagalog, but it has distinct sounds, such as the Spanish “r,” that are indistinguishable to a Tagalog speaker. Furthermore, Waray is drastically different from the language in northern Luzon. Specifically, *Illocano*, one of the languages of northern Luzon, like Waray, has notable differences from other Filipino languages. As some of my interviewees described, in order for an Illocano person and Waray person to communicate, they will most often use one of the national languages, such as English or Tagalog. The different languages of the Philippines demonstrate the regional diversity of its culture and peoples.

Along with the regional diversity, the culture of the Philippines includes a synthesis of Asian and Western cultures and values. The Asian influence is due to the Philippines’ geographic proximity to Asia. In particular, Asian countries like China influence the Philippines. This influence is evident in food such as *shao pao* (pork bun) and certain Confucian ideas, such as filial piety or respect for one’s elders. Western influence, meanwhile, is evident in regard to religion. Roughly 80% of Filipinos identify as Roman Catholic. Filipino culture, values, and traditions have been greatly influenced by Spanish culture resulting from the 300-year period of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines, which will be discussed in detail later. Finally, Western influence is apparent in one of

the national languages of the Philippines, English, and the national education system. American culture, like Spanish influence, has been blended with Filipino culture due to the ongoing American colonialism after the Spanish defeat. Since the Philippines is a melting pot of cultures, it is hard to define Filipino cultural characteristics exactly. Filipino culture is a blend of different cultures, and this blend, I argue, has resulted in some of my participant's having difficulty defining their ethnic identities and describing why they perceived this invisibility. In the next section, I will demonstrate how colonial history has shaped Filipino culture by briefly discussing the history of the Philippines and its different periods of colonialism.

A Brief Philippine History: From the Arrival of Spain to American Colonialism

Led by explorer Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, Spain colonized the Philippines in 1565 and named the islands in honor of Prince Philip of Spain (Crouchett 1982:2). The Philippines was nicknamed the "Pearl of the Orient" because of its strategic location and commercial prosperity (Crouchett 1982:6). The Philippines gave Spain gain access to trade with Asia, opening wider trade routes to the New World, with Manila becoming the center of Spain's galleon trade, which helped to establish Spain's presence in California (Crouchett 1982:13). With Manila named as the capital, the Spanish allied with the Filipino elites and gave them positions of power, like city mayor. Moreover, since the Spanish gave elite Filipinos power, the Filipino elite and Spanish culture and language became the national identity of the Philippines.

In other words, during Spanish colonization, we see the beginnings of a pan Filipino identity. Therefore, I argue, as a result of the Spanish creating the national identity of the Philippines based on Filipino elite culture, it was difficult for non-elite Filipinos to identify with the constructed idea of the Filipino. Moreover, this has contributed to why some members of the Filipino American community feel underrepresented. Some may feel more allegiance to or identification with their region's culture than with the constructed pan-Filipino identity created during the Spanish colonial period, which was also marked by internalized oppression. This period marked Spain's cultural influences on the Philippines as well, such as the beginning of the forced introduction of Catholicism through missionization, by which the Spanish clergy used Catholicism as a tool to control Spain's Filipino subjects.

Further, Catholicism provided a framework for control whereby the Spanish divided traditional living spaces, uprooted the native peoples, and resettled them areas in which Friars controlled them. This resettlement also meant that one could "duly and faithfully attend mass, and respond to a call to arms should them arise" (Francia 2014:69). In other words, the Spanish system was to divide and conquer, using Catholicism as the vehicle to execute colonization. Catholicism persists as the dominant religion in the Philippines and amongst the Filipino American community. Catholic traditions and practices have also blended with Filipino culture to such an extent that certain Catholic practices are now seen as Filipino practices, and there is virtually no separation between the culture and religion. For instance, the festival of the Patron Saint of Catabalogan, Saint Bartholomew, is viewed not just as religious celebration but also as a Filipino event. In other words,

Catholicism, which began as a framework to control the Filipino people, has, over the years, become a central aspect of Filipino culture. As one of my interviewees, Regina, noted, “the Catholic religion has a lot of influence on the Filipinos.” Although Catholicism left its legacy and influence on Philippine culture, there were uprisings and resistance against it from the Filipino people. In 1887, Jose Rizal wrote his anti-Spanish novel, *Noli Me Tangere* (touch me not, or don’t tread on me), to illustrate the unfair treatment of Filipinos by their Spanish colonizers.

This period of Spanish colonial history also helps to explain how the Filipino American experience separates them from other Asian Americans while, at the same time, linking them with Latino Americans. Filipino Americans occupy a special niche, in other words, because they share a shared colonial history with Latino Americans and cultural characteristics with Asian Americans. This Spanish colonial history, and how Filipinos do not fit neatly into ethnic groups like Asian American, further demonstrates Filipino Americans’ liminality. Furthermore, Anthony Ocampo explains that Filipinos and Latinos share (using Cornell and Hartmann’s term) a ‘symbolic repertoire’ (2014:426). Symbolic repertoire refers to the stories, histories, and cultural markers that bond different groups together. In other words, a shared colonized narrative and comparable cultural characteristics, such as a Catholic religion, food, and traditions, connect Filipinos and Latinos.

Spain remained in the Philippines until the Spanish-American War in 1898. On December 19, 1898, it ceded the Philippines to the United States for the amount of

twenty million dollars (Crouchett 1982:21). Spain and the U.S. then signed the Peace Treaty in 1898, and President McKinley issued the “Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation” of the Philippines. Simply put, this proclamation acknowledged Filipinos as free people and the U.S. abolishment of Spanish rule, but it stipulated that Filipinos were incapable of governing themselves. The American occupation of the Philippines not only allowed the U.S. to trade with other Asian countries, but it helped to establish the U.S. as an imperial power in Asia.

At the turn of the 21st century, after about 300 years of Spanish rule, the Spanish-American War, and a brief Philippine-American War, the Philippines still remained under someone else’s rule, and the American period of colonialism illustrated the embedded trend of internalized oppression in the country. Moreover, the years of internalized oppression in the Philippines indirectly affected diasporic groups like Filipino Americans in California. The Americans’ objective was to spread democracy and American values. In order to accomplish this in the country, the U.S. designed the education system in the Philippines. As Lorraine Jacobs Crouchett argued, through education, Filipinos began to understand and adopt American values such as democracy, prosperity, and equality. As a result, the adoption of American values, as well as a shortage of American labor (e.g., farming and professional careers like nursing), propelled many Filipinos to immigrate to the U.S.

In addition, “the U.S. colonial bureaucracy undertook a ‘Filipinization’ process that placed far more state power in the hands of Filipino elites” (Kramer 2006:31). Like the

former Spanish colonizers, the U.S. formed alliances with Filipino elites who were often lighter-skinned *mestizos*, being of mixed Spanish and Filipino background. Moreover, since the U.S. allied themselves with the Filipino elite, they chose their culture and language, Tagalog, as the national language and culture of the Philippines. Like the Spanish, the U.S. constructed a pan-Filipino ethnicity and asserted this imagined Filipino nation, which was previously a group of islands that shared similar physical and cultural characteristics.

The confusion that some Filipino Americans feel about their identity may, in part, be due to the constructed nature of Filipino identity. Specifically, it was an identity created by both Spanish and U.S. colonial powers to reflect their own interests and alliances with elite classes rather than from the existing cultural identities of indigenous groups. The U.S. imagined the Philippine nation through the hegemonic discourse of the Filipino bourgeoisie without considering all of its different regional cultures.

Colonial Mentality

Spanish and American colonial history have shaped the social positioning of Filipino Americans in the U.S., particularly how that colonial history has left embedded effects such as a colonial mentality. Years of Spanish and American colonialism, scholars argue, have caused Filipinos to develop a colonial mentality. A colonial mentality, as E.J.R. David writes, is “a specific form of internalized oppression wherein individuals regard anything of their heritage as inferior to anything of their colonizers or oppressors” (David

2013:303). According to this argument, colonialism has affected not only the country and its people but also the Filipino psyche. This explains why some of my participants expressed that they felt the community was complacent about being at the bottom. As Charlene explained to me that her parents did not care about politics, she added that she felt they had a “crab mentality.” Like the colonial mentality, Charlene stated, the crab mentality is an indifference to politics and anything involving the community. She felt that her parents did not care about issues regarding representation and expressed that she felt some members of the community reiterated this apathy because they were unconcerned with issues like underrepresentation. I argue that this indifference and complacency, as Charlene expressed it, is due to David’s (2013) colonial mentality. In other words, years of colonial submission has shaped the people’s psyche into indifference without their realizing the scope of their colonial mentality.

Leny Strobel posited similar arguments regarding the ripple effects of colonialism on the Filipino American community. Strobel explained that the marginality of Filipino Americans is due to the consequences of the United States’ and the Philippines colonial relationship, its movement of peoples from poor to affluent countries, and political and historical events in the United States. Put another way, American colonialism has affected the representation of Filipino Americans in the United States. This argument addresses part of my question as to why Filipino Americans feel “invisible.” One layer of this “invisibility” is an effect of American colonialism.

The Different Waves of Immigration to the U.S.

Shortly after the American presence in the Philippines began, the First Wave of Filipino immigration began in the early 1900s. Understanding the First Wave provides an understanding of what factors have shaped the social positioning of Filipino Americans, especially how Filipinos were used as a vehicle to promote democracy abroad. The first Filipino immigrants were part of the issuance of the pensionado system in 1903. The pensionado system's mission was to educate Filipino students in the United States so that they would return to the Philippines and implement their new American/democratic skills. In the pensionado system, we see an indirect form of colonialism reflecting ideas epitomized by Rudyard Kipling's (1899) notion of the "white man's burden." The First Wave illustrated the American colonial period and how the U.S. used its colony, The Philippines, as a place to export labor. It was easier for Filipino immigrants to immigrate to the U.S. because they were considered U.S. nationals. As Crouchett states, under the Copper Act, Section 4, Filipinos were under the protection of the U.S. government but were not U.S. citizens (1982:34).

Along with students, Filipino laborers started to migrate to Hawai'i for the sugar plantations and to California's Central Valley to work on the farms. As Gwen recounts,

My father was born and raised in Oahu, Hawai'i. My grandfather moved to Hawai'i (before it was a state) when he was 16 years old. His dream was to go to school in the Midwest. He came to Hawai'i for work, like most Filipinos, working on plantations. My grandmother moved to Hawai'i when she was only 2 years old. I don't know why her family moved from the Philippines to Hawai'i. I can only assume it was the same reason my grandfather did, as my grandmother talks about "living on the plantation" often.

At this time, there was a “Gentlemen’s Agreement between the United States and Japan, which restricted the availability of Japanese workers as a cheap labor force in the Hawaiian fields” (Scharlin and Villanueva 2000:xix). There were other limiting immigration acts, such as the Immigration Act of 1917, which prohibited immigrants from immigrating the U.S who were from Asiatic countries such as China. In other words, there was a demand for labor in the U.S. in the early twentieth century and, with Chinese and Japanese immigration restricted, the U.S. turned to its colony, the Philippines, to address the labor shortage.

Generally, these labor immigrants were different from the pensionado students, as they were uneducated and came from the Ilocano region (the Northern most part of the Philippines). Like past immigrants, they took jobs that no one else wanted, like farming asparagus, which was seen as a very tedious crop to harvest. There was also recruiting in the Philippines for laborers who could work the sugar plantations in Hawai’i. This wave of immigrants highlighted how the U.S racialized Filipinos. Since Filipinos immigrated to the U.S. as nationals and laborers, their status was seen as a minority and similar to a child parent relationship in which the U.S was the parent taking care of its child, the Philippines.

Following the First Wave, the Second Wave of immigration began in the 1940s to 1960s. These immigrants were also laborers as well as any persons who served in World War II and those brought as immigrants through the War Brides Act, which stated that any foreigner married to an American could freely immigrate to the U.S. The Philippines

played a crucial part in the U.S. because many U.S. soldiers were stationed there with local Filipinos who enlisted in the U.S. army. Despite Filipinos playing a crucial role aiding the Americans in the Pacific theater of WWII, their role has not been fully represented. For the most part, WWII in Europe is highlighted with only a brief description of the Philippine efforts. Since WWII is mostly shown from the European perspective, WWII in the Pacific and, in particular, WWII in the Philippines is underrepresented.

Like many immigrant communities before them, Filipino immigrants faced discrimination, racism, and violence. Since there were Exclusion Acts preventing a certain number of Chinese and Japanese immigrants from entering the U.S., an increasing number of Filipinos came as laborers. By 1930, 50,000 Filipinos were living in the U.S. and about 34,000 of those were living in California (Showalter 1989: 342). As a result of this Filipino population boom, anti-Filipino sentiments arose that echoed sentiments against other Asian immigrant laborers like the Chinese, who faced discrimination based on their ethnicity and cultural difference. The Watsonville Riots, for instance, demonstrated the discrimination and prejudice that Filipinos faced during the First Wave of Filipino immigration to the U.S. Watsonville, California is located in Central California. It was one of the cities that Filipino laborers immigrated to in the early 21st century to work on the various farms.

As a result of Filipino men having relationships with white women and other tensions between the Filipino and white community, the Watsonville riots erupted. In Watsonville,

a group of white men ambushed the Filipino dance hall and the ranches and farms where the Filipinos lived and worked. In all of the commotion, one Filipino named Fermin Tobera was shot while sleeping in his bed. Tobera's murderer was never found, and the murder demonstrated the institutionalized racism that was prevalent in Watsonville.

The Watsonville Riots, which demonstrated the disempowerment and inequity that Filipino immigrants faced during the early 21st century, was soon forgotten and buried in the past. This case study also highlighted how certain historical events and processes have shaped the social positioning of Filipino Americans. In other words, the first Filipino immigrants were discriminated against and were categorized as minorities. This discrimination and categorization served to maintain the community's disenfranchised status.

The Delano Grape Strike in 1965 was another pivotal moment in Filipino American history. During the strike, farm workers in the Central Valley united together to fight for higher wages and better working conditions in the field. This event, like the Philippine's role in WWII, has not been adequately represented. As many have argued, in public discourse, this historical event has not included the Filipino perspective. Key Latino figures like Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta are remembered for fighting not only for Latino farm worker rights but also for the rights of all the different ethnic groups in the farm industry. In *Philip Vera Cruz: A Personal History of Filipino Immigrants and the Farmworkers Movement* (2000), Vera Cruz explained how the Filipino laborers began the labor movement. As Vera Cruz recalled, the Delano Grape Strike started on September 8,

1965 at the Filipino Hall in Delano (Scharlin and Villanueva 2000:35). There had been other strikes before this one, but not on the same magnitude as the one started by the Filipinos.

As Vera Cruz wrote,

But this one, started solely by Filipinos, took five years. It was the strike that eventually made the UFW, the farmworkers movement, and Cesar Chavez famous worldwide and it lasted until 1970 when we finally won our workers' contracts with the growers. (Scharlin and Villanueva 2000:36).

Vera Cruz, who was one of the key leaders in the laborer movement, argued that the Filipino role in the Delano Grape Strike and labor movement has not been properly acknowledged. These two events, which tell of the injustices that Filipino Americans have faced, reflect the origins of the social status of the community from its beginning to the middle of the 21st century. These injustices, and the fact that the Filipino perspectives in American history are not highlighted as much as other perspectives, has led some members of the community, and Filipino American scholars, to assert that Filipinos are an invisible minority.

The Third Wave of Immigration was based on the Immigration Act of 1965. This act changed the social landscape for Filipino immigrants, who became part of a "brain drain." In other words, these Filipino immigrants had better education and professional training (e.g., nursing and education) than the earlier migrants, and most of them spoke English. At the time, the Philippine economy could not support its growing population so, in order to find better economic opportunities, Filipinos immigrated not only to the U.S. but also to places with labor shortages, like Saudi Arabia and various countries in Western Europe.

Some Filipinos also immigrated to the U.S. after 1965 for political reasons. In 1972, President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law, the imposition of military power over designated regions on an emergency basis (Rodell 2002). As Genevieve G. explained, My dad said that many people left the Philippines because of President Marco's regime of Martial Law. My family said the Philippines was very corrupt and believed that the U.S. would be a better place to live and raise a family because of its democratic values. Several of my interviewees' parents had immigrated to the U.S. during this period to escape the oppressive power of President Marcos.

Currently, Filipinos continue to immigrate to the U.S. as part of the "brain drain." One of my interviewees, Gliceria, immigrated to the U.S. through a Third Preference Visa, or a Professional Visa. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services defines the qualifications for this visa as follows:

- "Skilled workers" are persons whose job requires a minimum of 2 years training or work experience, not of a temporary or seasonal nature;
- "Professionals" are persons whose job requires at least a U.S. baccalaureate degree or a foreign equivalent and are a member of the professions;
- The "other workers" subcategory is for persons performing unskilled labor requiring less than 2 years training or experience, not of a temporary or seasonal nature. (Employment-Based Immigration: Third Preference EB-3 2015)

The third wave of immigration parallels to the first wave in that there was a shortage of labor in the U.S. and, therefore, the U.S. looked to their colony or former colony as a place to export labor. Many of my interviewees, like Gliceria, shared how they or their parents immigrated to the U.S. due to their profession (e.g., nursing or teaching).

With the Philippines viewed as an unlimited labor source for the U.S., the Philippine infrastructure and economy has suffered. Educated Filipinos are leaving for the U.S. or

elsewhere because there are too few job opportunities, and this exodus creates no support for work on the Philippine infrastructure. The Philippines is not unique in its lack of infrastructure and “brain drain” immigration. Similar patterns are seen in other former colonies, like India and African countries, where the former colonizers sustained the economy and created the infrastructure, leaving the oppressed peoples to rebuild and create their own country when the colonizers left. The colonial experience not only affected the colonized countries’ economies, but it also affected the colonized people’s psyches. The Philippines is a prime example of the long-term effects of colonialism.

Similar to the first two waves of immigration, which set the foundation for the social position of Filipino Americans in the U.S., the “brain drain” has also affected the status of the community. For example, it has affected the perception that Filipino Americans will occupy certain careers. These careers have limited Filipino Americans into specialized professions without room for other avenues to succeed or obtain upward mobility.

How Public Memory perpetuates the perceived invisibility

Along with the history of colonialism in the Philippines, which has shaped the social positioning of the Filipino American community, I assert that the public memory of Filipino American history has perpetuated its feelings of invisibility. Public places that are associated with Filipino Americans in the urban areas of California are few and far between. One reason for this may be the limited spaces to perform one’s ethnic identity

for the Filipino American community (e.g., there is no Filipino American museum in California, an overall lack of cultural representation, and few cultural centers in relation to other minority groups). Pierre Nora (1989) proposed that history is performed in *lieux de memoire* (sites of memory), or certain sites where memory is performed and realized. Moreover, these places of memory construct a sense of belonging and group identity. There are few public places to perform Filipino identity because there are limited museums or cultural centers exclusively dedicated to the community, and this contributes to the perceived invisibility of the community.

In *A History of Asian Americans: Strangers from a Different Shore* (1998[1989]), Ronald Takai illustrated the underrepresentation of Asian Americans in American history by quoting Congressman Norman Mineta of California:

When one hears Americans tell of the immigrants who built this nation, one is often led to believe that all our forebearers came from Europe. When one hears stories about the pioneers going West to shape the land, the Asian immigrant is rarely mentioned (Takai 1998[1989]:6).

Takai argued that Asian Americans, including Filipino Americans, are underrepresented in the larger historical narrative of the United States overall. Takai noted that Asian Americans have been in the United States for more than 150 years, but are still exoticized as “the other” or as strangers. Applying theories of public memory, Takai illustrated how this has dictated representations of Asian Americans. Public memory has masked racial discrimination against Asian American communities and downplayed their contributions to American History, such as the contributions of the Chinese during the Gold Rush.

As Renato Rosaldo discussed in “Imperialist Nostalgia” (1989), imperialist or colonial powers remember their former colonies in a paternalistic manner. In other words, the colonizer or imperialist takes it as his duty to help the poor savages. As Rosaldo suggests in his opening pages, “nostalgia is a particularly appropriate emotion to invoke in attempting to establish one’s innocence and at the same time talk about what one has destroyed” (1989:108). In other words, Rosaldo argued that imperialist nostalgia cloaks the wrongdoing of imperial forces against the indigenous people by projecting the imperialists as innocent. This form of public memory can shape a community’s representation in the present.

As previously mentioned, Buenavista argued that Filipino Americans are underrepresented in higher education. Imperialist nostalgia perpetuates this underrepresentation because the community serves as a constant reminder of American Imperialism. Moreover, one of the reasons the American education system was implemented in the Philippines in the early 21st century was not only to produce a labor force to export for the U.S., but also to establish the U.S.’s innocence. In other words, the U.S. used Rosaldo’s imperialist nostalgia to mask its true intentions, which were to colonize the Philippines and recreate the Philippines as a dependent of the U.S.

In *Little Manila is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California* (2013), Dawn Bohulano Mabalon explored ways in which we remember and forget the history of a community. Dolores Hayden, in *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (1995), was referenced at the beginning of

the book. Hayden asserted that identity is tied to memory (both our personal and social memories) and that urban landscapes are storehouses for social memories (Mabalon 2013:7). In other words, more than representing a section of the city where the Filipino American community gathers, Little Manila embodied Filipino American identity and its greater representation in the Stockton community.

Mabalon discussed how identity is related to our personal and public memory. In Stockton, Little Manila has been re-developed, leaving only a reminiscence of the prominent community of Filipino Americans. There are parallels to Los Angeles' Historic Filipinotown. When Filipinos immigrated to California, many settled in Historic Filipinotown in Downtown Los Angeles. However, over the years, Historic Filipinotown became a poor representation of the Filipino American experience and community. Mabalon argued that because these places embody memories, when they are not remembered or well represented, it reflects the representation of the community, which is why some Filipino Americans feel that they are "invisible." Simply put, there are not enough sites of memory to perform their community values, culture, and identity. This has left some members of the community to feel that Filipinos are an invisible minority. Some of my participants expressed frustration that there was not an adequate museum or cultural center to exhibit Filipino American culture and history.

SECTION 3

METHODOLOGY

Recruitment and Preliminary Fieldwork

To recruit participants, I volunteered at different Filipino American organizations, developing a rapport with members to interview in the future. I also volunteered at these places to gain a better understanding of the role of the organizations in the formation and maintenance of Filipino identity in California. In my dealings with the Filipino community, the themes of invisibility and underrepresentation were recurring motifs, both in public and private settings. Over many different Filipino groups and organizations, members voiced concern that the community remained underrepresented. I will return to this theme later, in the themes section.

One of the groups with which I volunteered was the Filipino American Arts & Culture organization's subgroup, the SaySay Project. The following is a brief description of that group and its mission.

The SAYSAY Project is a community-sourced documentation project by FilAm ARTS to capture the myriad of experiences in the Filipino diaspora through story telling. "Saysay" (pronounced sigh-sigh) is a Tagalog word that has a double meaning: to have intrinsic value and to declare. This project aims to engage the community to tell their stories, and to document and preserve these shared stories for future generations.

The purpose of the project is two-fold:

- 1) To highlight the contributions of Filipinos to U.S. life and culture – from the early waves of migration: labor workers in agriculture, fisheries, and people in military service; to professionals i.e. as nurses, teachers, doctors, accountants, and others.

2) To connect these stories of American experience to the stories in the Philippine (About Saysay 2016)

I began attending the Saysay Project's workshop meetings in the spring of 2014 to participate in a session in which they collected and recorded people's oral histories. After attending the meetings for a few months, I learned of the perceived invisibility felt by members of the Filipino American community. In my notes from one of the Saysay workshop meetings (held in July of 2014), I noted that many of the Saysay members expressed concern over their lack of representation in the community. They felt that the community was underrepresented both culturally and historically.

Some of the Saysay members also expressed the view that non-Filipinos, and even some Filipinos, did not know about key Filipino American historical events, such as the Filipino contribution to the Delano Grape Strike. Some members also expressed the view that non-Filipinos did not know about Filipino culture (e.g., its traditions or expressive forms of culture, like dance). Although, at times, I felt that it was hard for some members to articulate why they felt the community was underrepresented, I later found out that the invisibility felt by the community is complex. It is complex because some aspects of the community are represented, like food, while the culture is not represented in other ways, like history.

I also noted that Saysay members voiced concern regarding the absence of a Filipino library in Historic Filipinotown and over how the stories of Filipino artists, workers, and laborers were overlooked. The members did not go into detail regarding how or where these stories were overlooked, but they were all in agreement that Filipino Americans

were an invisible minority. After attending these meetings and listening to the members' concerns, I began to investigate this perceived invisibility.

I attended several more meetings through the summer of 2014 and then volunteered in October of 2014 at the Festival of Philippine Arts & Culture (FPAC) in downtown Los Angeles as an oral history interviewer. In preparation for FPAC, I attended a few builders' meetings (meetings for the organizations and groups attending FPAC), and these meetings were similar to Saysay meetings. Like Saysay members, volunteers at these meetings voiced their concern over the invisibility of the Filipino American community. As the project director remarked at one meeting, the FPAC board members chose Grand Park, which is centrally located in downtown L.A., as a strategy to create more visibility for the community. The project director remarked that Grand Park's centrality would facilitate exposure for non-Filipinos in the downtown area. At these builders' meetings, I met representatives from a few Filipino American non-profit organizations, like Barrangay LA (an organization for the Filipino LGBTQ community), Sunday Jump (a group promoting Filipino slam poets and artists), and People of Color (an organization promoting cultural and ethnic diversity). The image below was taken at one of the builder's meetings at Grand Park and it showcases the multiple organizations involved in FPAC.



Image 1: FilAm Arts' Facebook Timeline Photo dated August 22, 2014

On the day of FPAC, I volunteered at the Saysay booth for about four hours and randomly interviewed festival attendees regarding their experiences as Filipino Americans living in Los Angeles. I asked questions that the Saysay program intern and staff had developed, including, but not limited to, the following:

How do you retain your Filipino-ness in American life?
What is your favorite thing to receive for pasalubong (souvenirs)?
How are you involved in the Filipino/FilAm community today?
What do you want to see the Filipino/FilAm community achieve in the near/far future?
How can you contribute to these goals?

I also asked questions regarding invisibility. Specifically, I asked my participants, “Do you feel that the Filipino American community is represented?” Like the members of the

different organizations, a few of the people I interviewed reiterated a shared feeling of community invisibility. Some of the FPAC attendees explained that they felt the community was still not represented, despite having a large festival like FPAC. Moreover, the attendees I spoke with explained that non-Filipinos were unaware of Filipino communities. I did not get to delve in deeper into these questions because my time was limited. Therefore, with my own sample population, I asked the participants to explain further. In sum, I interviewed attendees who all reiterated this perceived invisibility of the community with regard to the lack of public knowledge of Filipino American history and culture. The images below are personal photos that I took at FPAC after finishing the interviews.



Image 2: This is an image of the center of FPAC. The festival was organized in different salons or booths. There were booths for other Filipino American organizations, food booths to demonstrate Filipino cooking, and an area for FilAm poetry slam artists. Photograph by the author.



Image 3: Another image of FPAC. This image demonstrates FPAC's central location at Grand Park in Downtown Los Angeles. Photograph by author.



Image 4: Me (in the white shirt) interviewing one of the attendees at FPAC. Photo courtesy of Daphne, SaySay Project intern.

Volunteering at FPAC, I met some of the members from the Filipino American Cultural and Educational Affairs (FACEA). Soon after, I was contacted by the director and attended some of the organization's meetings. Like that of the Saysay Project, their mission was to create greater community visibility. FACEA was different from the Saysay Project because it was a newer organization and its goal was to create a center for Filipino culture and arts. This organization was also different because most of the members were first generation Filipinos, and their goal was to educate the Filipino youth and public about Filipino culture. In addition to attending their meetings, I volunteered with FACEA at the 2015 Asian Pacific Festival in Newport Beach.



Image 5: A photo taken of the FACEA booth at the 2015 Asian Pacific Festival in Newport Beach. Each of the items represents the different cultures of the Philippines. For example, the fabric spread out as a tablecloth represents the traditional weaving pattern of some Filipino cultural groups. Photograph by the author.



Image 6: Another personal photo taken the day of the festival. The girl is coloring a mural that depicts Filipino folk tales. Photograph by the author.

After volunteering for Saysay Project and FACEA, I explored the perceived invisibility felt by some members of the Filipino American community and developed rapport with the members in order to interview them in the future.

I also traveled twice to the Philippines to gain context for understanding the Filipino American community. I traveled in the summers of 2014 and 2015 for a few weeks at a time. Initially, I wanted to interview Filipinos and compare their oral histories with Filipino Americans. However, it became clear that this project would become too large for a Master's thesis; therefore, I decided that interviewing the local community was more feasible. I found that my time in the Philippines was helpful, however, for contextualizing this research more broadly. Specifically, it helped me to understand the indirect and direct effects of American colonialism.

One important effect is the language. English is the national language of the Philippines, along with Tagalog. Everywhere I went, everyone spoke English fluently or had an elementary knowledge of English. American influence was also evident through media and advertising when I visited a mall in Metro Manila that had many of the same stores I would have seen in malls in the U.S., such as Nike, Payless, The Body Shop, and Levi's. Other stores were heavily influenced by American culture. These American and American-influenced stores demonstrated how the Philippines is a U.S. neo-colony, with the colonizer's culture and economic products exported into the Philippines. Moreover, on a deeper level, when I talked with local Filipinos, they seemed fascinated with the U.S., which many viewed as a promised land with many opportunities and possibilities. In addition, American popular culture (e.g., its fashion and music) and its capitalistic values were considered better overall. As one of the Filipina women I spoke with told me, "You're American; you're better than us." This idea that America was better reoccurred in my interviews in the U.S. Many of my interviewees mentioned that, to

succeed, they had to assimilate into American culture and, in some ways, downplay their Filipino-ness.



Image 7: This is an image of *shumai* (Filipino steamed dumplings). The *shumai* was purchased at a 7-Eleven in Metro Manila, which is among the many American chains found in Manila. There were also popular American chains like McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Burger King, and Pizza Hut demonstrating the ubiquitous presence of American culture. Photograph by the author.



Image 8: This is an image of Manny Pacquiao promoting Pizza Hut. Pacquiao is a well-known Filipino professional boxer in the U.S. and the Philippines. Photograph by the author.

Sample Population

My sample population was individuals who resided in California, in different cities of Los Angeles County (Monrovia, Covina, Torrance, Duarte) and the San Francisco Bay Area (San Francisco, Richmond, Oakland, Dublin). I interviewed 25 individuals. Below are charts that depict the participants' demographics and some of their responses. Many of the people I interviewed I met through my volunteer work at the different Filipino

American organizations. I also used snowball sampling, asking my interviewees to recommend people who identified as Filipino American who would be willing to talk to me about their experiences for about an hour. Some of my participants posted on social media sites like Facebook to recruit participants. In sum, I spent four to six months volunteering at different Filipino American organizations to recruit potential interviewees, and then I spent another five months interviewing members of the Filipino American community.

Appendix A represents the 15 questions that I asked the 25 participants. Appendix B presents their demographics and a list of some of their responses. The below pie charts represent the demographics and responses of my participants. In Figure 1, the “hybrid” category represents the 1.5 generation, or individuals who were born in the Philippines and then immigrated to the U.S. as children or before adolescence.

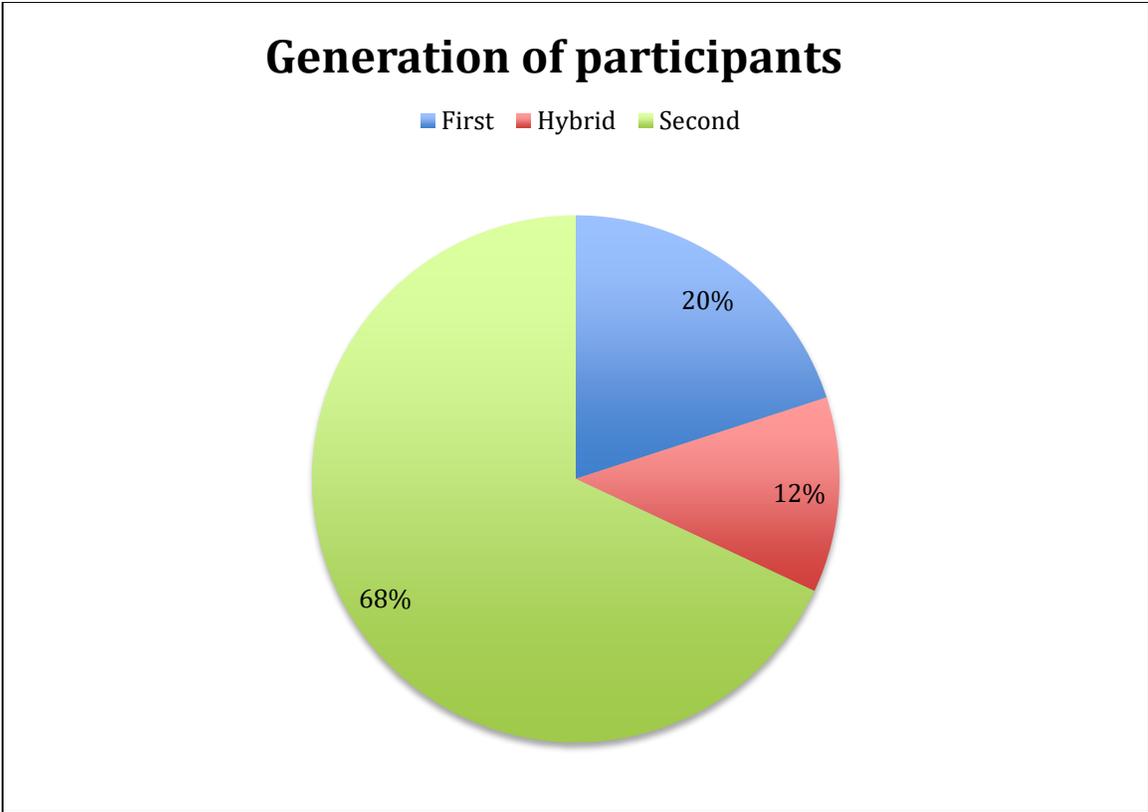


Figure 1: Generation of Participants

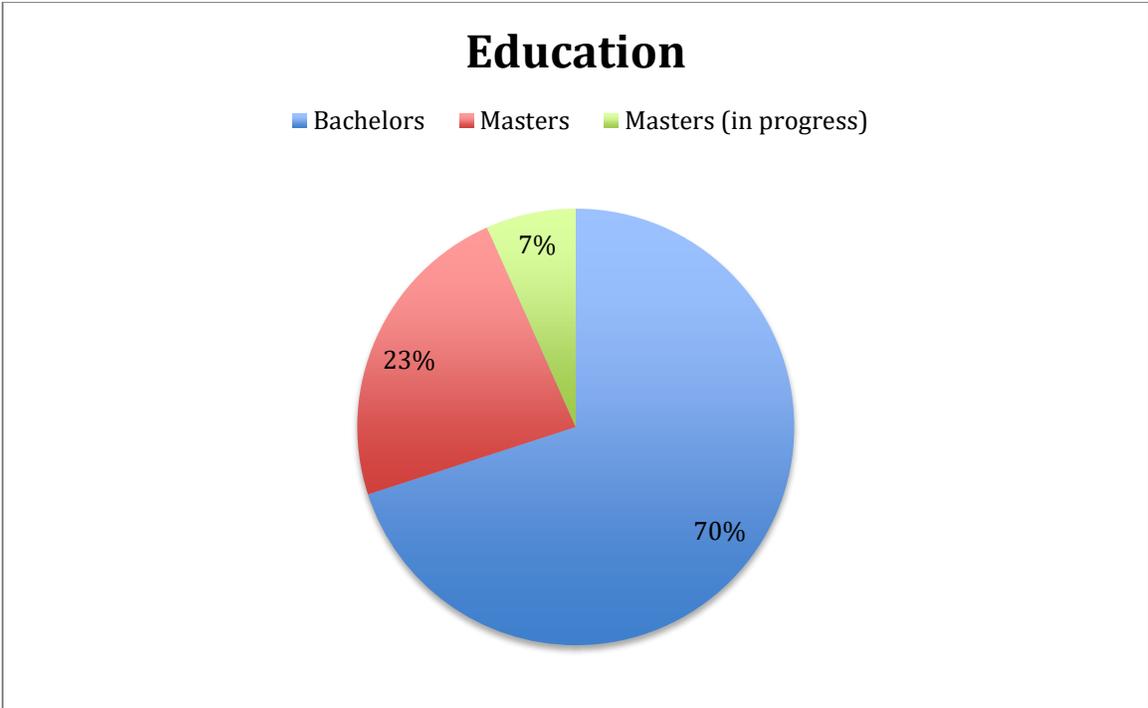


Figure 2: Education of Participants



Figure 3: Participants involved in a Filipino American organization

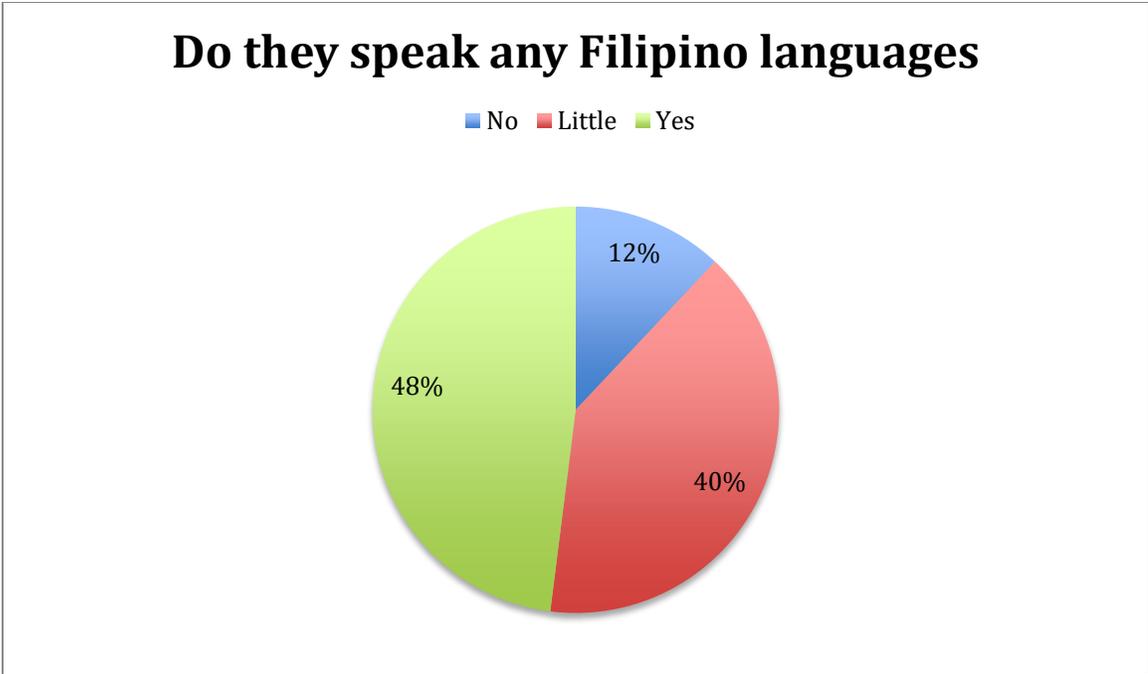


Figure 4: Filipino languages spoken

Responses to whether or not the community was represented

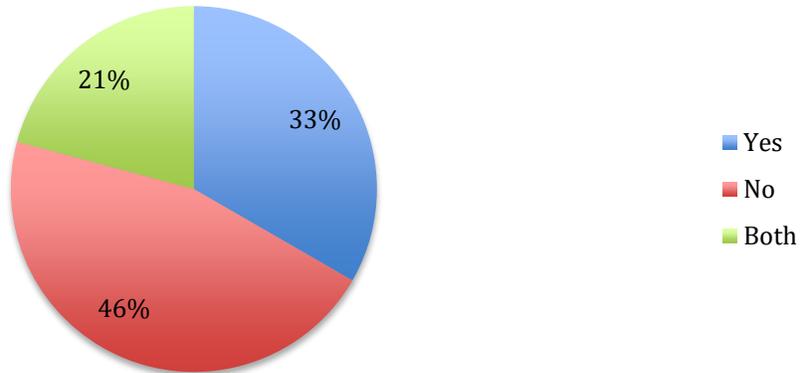


Figure 5: Responses to whether or not the community is culturally and historically represented.

My sample population does not represent the range of perspectives of Filipino Americans in California. As shown above, 70% of my participants had a Bachelor's Degree and 23% had a Master's degree. Therefore, since most of my participants were educated, their responses reflect different responses from those who did not earn a college degree.

Further, I acknowledge that my data is not representative of Filipino Americans because it was small and it only captures one demographic. In the essence of time and funding, I mostly interviewed people who had higher education because these were the people I met volunteering or were recommended to me by previous interviewees. Consequently, my data is skewed because it highlights one perspective. Despite this, there is room for future research to build on my research to capture more perspectives of the Filipino American community in California and across the nation.

In addition, although my sample size does not capture all of the perspectives of the community, it gave a glimpse into some of the Filipino American perspectives in California and further builds on the research done on the community. Further, since my sample size was small, I was able to carry in-depth interviews with my participants. Some of the interviews exceeded the hour and even lasted all day as my participants wanted to get to know me more and understand why I was interested in researching the community. Simply put, even though my sample was small, it allowed me to get to know my participants more and vice versa. It also allowed me to gather information that I did not expect such as the performance of ethnic identity through food, which I will go in detail later on in this thesis.

As I mentioned above, many of my respondents were well educated because they had a Bachelor's degree and/or Master's degree. In comparison with the general Filipino American population, this is not the case. Filipino Americans are underrepresented compared to their Asian American counterparts in higher education. Tracy Buenavista (2007) posited that Filipino Americans are underrepresented in higher education because of their neocolonial relationship with the U.S. Moreover, Filipinos are racialized as minorities in the U.S. and therefore they do not have the same access or upward mobility like their other Asian American counterparts. Although all Asian Americans are racialized as minorities, I argue that the Filipino racialization is different because of the Philippine's neocolonial relationship with the U.S. Filipinos are treated differently from other Asian groups because the Philippines and U.S. have a dependency relationship where the Philippines is dependent on the U.S. for economic support. Consequently,

Filipinos are placed with other minority groups like Latino or African American because of this dependency relationship between the Philippines and the U.S.

Lastly, I selected respondents with at least a Bachelor's degree because I felt their responses were more reflective and/or aware of the perceived invisibility of the community. These respondents also had already been engaged in discussions regarding issues affecting Filipino Americans. As a result of this, I acknowledge that this has affected the nature and quality of my data because it does not capture all of the perspectives of the Filipino American community.

SECTION 4
DATA & THEMES

How Filipino American stories are similar and dissimilar to other immigrant narratives

There were important and reoccurring themes that surfaced during the interviews. In particular, the Filipino immigration experience paralleled with other immigrant groups like other Asian American groups. Like other Asian groups, upward mobility is only achieved through certain careers such as nursing, military and education. Filipinos are similar to other Asian groups because there are only certain avenues where one can become successful in American culture. In other words, like other Asian American groups, Filipino Americans are limited in career paths or economic mobility because the other avenues are occupied by the dominant White American population.

The Filipino American experience is also similar to other Asian American groups because of their shared history of discrimination. As I mentioned in the History & Background section, Filipinos were discriminated against because of their skin color and their perceived threat taking away labor jobs in Central California. As a result, like the Japanese and Chinese immigrants before them, Filipinos were discriminated against because they were the new scapegoat for America's woes at that time.

In addition to Filipinos sharing a similar discrimination narrative with other Asian groups, they are also categorized in the panethnic group of Asian American. Put another

way, Filipinos are considered, in some respects (such as physical characteristics and culture), as Asian American. When I asked my participants if they identified as Asian American, some of them responded yes, but only in certain ways. Some explained that they identified themselves as Asian American on applications and/or questionnaires for work or school, or in a political context. As Daphne said, “in multi-ethnic activist/social justice communities, I also find myself putting my Asian American identity at the forefront,” and as Ted explained,

Politically, I think we’re [Asian Americans], like African Americans, where, well, you know, back in the 1980s or the 1960s, the social civil rights movement just like the African American community was fighting they actually elevated the community.

In other words, identifying as Asian American is used as a political platform. Moreover, identifying as Asian American is a tool to unite the different communities in the hope of reaching a common goal, such as equality. As Yen Le Espiritu argued, “panethnicity results from changes in the political history and/or subjugation” (1997:9).

The panethnic Asian American group results from bonding together because of common injustices and the shared goal of representation. Panethnicity is also a process to claim resources, gain access, and obtain upward mobility (Espiritu 1997:14). In other words, to identify oneself in the panethnic Asian American category creates a macro nationalism useful for achieving larger goals, like access to resources and power.

Despite many of my participants explaining that Filipinos are unique from East Asian groups like Japanese or Chinese, in certain contexts, like politics, they chose to identify as Asian American to gain access, representation, and upward mobility. For example, Joseph works in the social work field. He explained that there were not many Asians in

his field because it was not the stereotypical hard science, like medicine, in which most Asians work. Therefore, since there were only a handful of Asians in his field, they banded together, as a means of support, because they shared common experiences of growing up Asian American.

Filipino Americans as a Minority - How their stories reflect race relations and power in the U.S.

In addition to sharing experiences with other Asian Americans, Filipino Americans shared experiences with other ethnic groups because of their status as a minority. In this section, I will discuss how some of my participants described the ways the color of their skin affected their upbringing. In particular, Chris, who worked at Saint Mary's College (SMC) in the San Francisco Bay Area, described how working in a predominantly white area made him feel like "the other."

For underrepresented groups, ethnicity many not always be voluntary, but it can be coercively imposed (Espiritu 1997: 6). Although one may have been born in California and raised American, one's appearance or skin color still perpetuates an image of the person as the outsider or "the other." There is also the expectation that one will know about one's culture and ethnic background.

Chris explained his experience working at SMC this way:

I have never been so aware of my race before having come here....I was really aware of not being white and then going to some of the local schools as part of my job to you know work with teachers and some of the campuses and just feeling so uncomfortable.

This has informed Chris's sense of his racial identity;

Like I said, I identify less now with like being Filipino American and just being a person of color.... I don't know if that's a conscious shift in my identity, but definitely through teaching, you know, I would identify with our students, our black and brown students, and I think that made a difference for them to have, you know, a non-white teacher.

Genevieve reiterated Chris' response to Filipino race relations in the U.S.:

Me: What do you consider to be your racial identity? Do you consider yourself, first, Filipino or American?

Genevieve: When I went back to the Philippines, 'You're not Filipino if you grew up in the States,' and when I'm out here, I'm not American because my skin color says I'm not American.

Regina has a similar experience feeling of "otherness." In high school, learning about WWII and the Japanese Occupation of the Philippines, Regina remarked, she was annoyed that her teacher could not properly pronounce *Bataan* in "Bataan Death March." Moreover, the teacher glossed over this death march, which killed tens of thousands of Filipinos. Regina explained that this incident made her feel like this part of Philippine-American history was insignificant. She later explained that she believed this lack of acknowledgement was due to an inherent white mentality in education.

Like, it's sad because, like, you think that U.S. history would at least show something being that Philippines – Filipinos did come to the U.S. and not necessarily help, but very much made the U.S. what it is now. Like it's not just Filipinos, it's also other Asians. There's not a lot of background on them. And, like, or, like, how it is with the Latinos who identify with Cesar Chavez or the African Americans who identify with Martin Luther King, there's really not much to be said about, and I think there's – they don't try to find out more about it, like all these other ethnicities have done for America, and they don't put it in history books because of, probably, the White mentality, being that most of scholars are of that race.

Similarly, Aaron described his experience of otherness when asked the question, "Do you have an experience or story where being Filipino made you stand out?" Aaron recalled a

story from second grade in which, because he looked “ethnic” and because his last name sounded Spanish, he was placed in an English as a Second Language (ESL) class. Aaron has also experienced the ambiguous question that many of my interviewees have received: “But where are you *really* from?” This question reflects the micro aggression that some of participants have faced either because they did not look white or because they had a non-white last name. When I was discussing this topic with Aaron, I observed that he struggled with this question, which was reflected in his response to the next question: “Is being Filipino/a a major part of your identity? If so, why? If not, why?” Aaron replied, “That’s what people see.” Even if he identified as American, his physical appearance told outsiders that he was something else (the other). Aaron also explained that, as he got older, by high school and middle school, he had some “internalized racism against other Filipinos.”

In *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (2001), Delgado and Stefancic discussed this White mentality. Critical race theory (CRT) is a collection of activist scholarly thought interested in studying and transforming the relationship between race, racism, and power (Delgado and Stefancic 2001:2). Furthermore, CRT draws attention to how racism is common and everyday and to how our system is based on white-over-color ascendancy, which serves important purposes, both psychic and material (Delgado and Stefancic 2001:7). In other words, Regina, Chris, and Genevieve’s experiences were not uncommon because they are viewed as people of color and the preference for white-over-color affects the lack of representation of minority experiences. Furthermore, the above stories all reflect the constant interplay of power and authority within minority

communities and movements (Delgado and Stefancic 2001:51). In short, at some level, everything is rooted in a power struggle, and those who are disenfranchised and underrepresented are often people of color or minority groups. This contributes to the feeling of invisibility expressed by some members of the community.

Stories of immigration – Better economic opportunity, Military, Teaching and Nursing

Along with my participants sharing similar minority status and experiences of macroaggressions with other immigrant and ethnic groups, their stories of immigration to the U.S. are related to other immigrant narratives. As Merle commented, “It’s because everyone wants to come to America. They call it, the land of opportunity.” Yet Filipino immigration is unlike other narratives because Filipino immigrants did not immigrate to the U.S. as refugees, like Vietnamese or some Central American immigrants.

Furthermore, Filipino immigrants did not face the same challenges as other immigrant populations. Initially, there was harsh discrimination against the Filipino laborers who arrived during the early 21st century, but those who immigrated after the Immigration Act of 1965 experienced a relatively easier time immigrating. This was due to the need for professional labor in the U.S. As Tiongson writes,

The Philippines has been the major supplier of foreign trained nurses working in the United States; at least twenty-five thousand Filipino nurses migrated to the United States between 1966 and 1986 (2013:58).

Along with nurses, there was also a demand for teachers in the U.S. As the following excerpt from my interview with Gliciria explains,

I came here through the third preference visa. This was the visa for professionals to teach English to high school students in Concord, MA. In the U.S., as you know, there were no

professionals before the late 80s because all you need is a high school diploma to get a job, because their high schools at that time could manage chemistry, etc., and that's all you needed training-wise.

Since there were no professionals, the U.S. started to get professionals from abroad and created the third preference visa, so they needed doctors, nurses, and teachers...when we arrived here, our Social Security and green cards were waiting at the port of entry.

Me: Oh ok

Gliciria: That's how this easy it was.

Like Gliciria, many of the interviewees described how their parents immigrated to the U.S. in response to demand for professional labor through a third preference visa (i.e., a visa for professional or skilled workers). Additionally, the interviewees discussed how their parents used different agencies, such as Catholic Charities, to facilitate their immigration.

As Ted noted,

In 1963, mom came in the second wave in the first class of social work. She graduated from UP [University of the Philippines]. Sponsored by the archdiocese of Los Angeles and worked with Catholic charities until she retired.

Aldrex also explained how, after his mother received her Bachelor's degree in the Philippines at the Women's University, she wanted to immigrate to the U.S. for a Master's in Social Work in the 1950s and was able to do so through the help of Catholic Charities, which provided people with resources to immigrate to the U.S. As Aldrex explained Catholic Charities' mission,

It's a wide-based organization that handles a lot of community connected services; you know, providing people with at least resources where they can get things, you know, people where, you know, underprivileged or disadvantaged.

In the “Our Approach” section, Catholic Charities describes their aid to refugees and immigrants as follows:

Catholic Charities welcomes refugees and immigrants to our country, and member agencies help them get settled in their new homes and communities. We help them to find jobs and resources, and to overcome barriers that impede their adjustment to life in the United States. Seeing immigrants and refugees as brothers and sisters, Catholic Charities agencies:

Help refugees resettle in this country by providing interpretation, employment training, job placement, and counseling services.

Offer legal immigration services to clients with family-based cases and with applications for legal residence, deferred action for childhood arrivals, and citizenship.

Offer immigrants and refugees a full spectrum of community services: emergency assistance, childcare, after school programs, senior services, housing, counseling, and more (Welcoming Newcomers 2015).

Moreover, the immigrant experience of post-1960s professional Filipino immigrants could be viewed relatively smooth compared to that of earlier Filipino immigrants, who were uneducated laborers without visas and/or agencies to facilitate their immigration process. Along with a professional visa, another avenue that my interviewees’ parents or grandparents were able to smoothly immigrate through was the U.S. military. Like the professional visa, the military outsourced labor for the U.S. As Joanabelle describes her father’s immigration experience through the military,

In 1985, my father enlisted with the U.S. Navy through the U.S. Navy Philippine Enlistment Program (PEP). Although he still gained his U.S. citizenship through the petition filed by my grandmother, the process was fast-tracked because of his military service. As soon as he was able, he filed a petition for my mother, who he married in 1987. My brother was born on a U.S. Navy base in Guam in 1989, and I was born at the former Fort Ord in Monterey, CA in 1990.

Similarly, Daphne describes her father’s military immigration story,

The story of my parents' immigration starts on my dad's side. My dad is one of twelve children, and, in the 1960s, his oldest brother, Salvador, decided to join the U.S. Navy. He had found a recruitment ad in some newspaper wrapping the *kamote* (sweet potato) that he had just bought at the market. The story goes that after he read the ad, he looked up and saw my dad and his other younger siblings running around without shoes. He decided that if his brothers and sisters were ever going to school, he would have to take the initiative and go to America. He served in the Navy until the 80s, and several of his siblings followed him into the military, including my dad. Each sent money to the Philippines, so that all twelve children eventually earned some kind of college or vocational degree. My dad joined the military around 1984, two years after he met my mom.

Like the professional visa, immigration through the military was another reoccurring theme for my participants. The military allowed them an easier process of immigration to the U.S. and, as Daphne mentioned, a means to support their families.

Filipino immigrant narratives are different from other immigrant narratives because their immigration processes could be viewed as easier or smoother, given the Philippines' relationship with the U.S. As shown through my participant's oral histories, the U.S. outsourced different types of labor (e.g., professional and/or military) to the Philippines. The Filipino immigration experience in the U.S. is also different because, to some extent, Filipinos are assimilated into American culture when living abroad. As Gliciria recalled her education, "All of our [Filipino] history is based on the American curriculum." Gliciria described how, in the Philippines, she learned about American culture and history. She later recalled how she learned the American and British national anthems before she learned the Philippine national anthem. Gliciria commented, "Before I learned the Philippine national anthem, I learned the American and British national anthem. I did not learn the Philippine national anthem until I was in high school." In other words, because of American influence on the Philippine infrastructure, the American

assimilation process begins abroad in the Philippines. The Filipino immigration experience is different from other immigration narratives because it is not as difficult for first generation Filipinos to assimilate to or adopt American culture given that they have already begun this process in their native home. Yet Filipino immigration is similar to other immigrant experiences because Filipinos have also faced discrimination while negotiating multiple identities and being racialized as minorities.

SECTION 5

FOODWAYS

One of the major ways the community is represented in the U.S. is through food, especially the growing popularity of Filipino fusion food. In this section, I examine different symbolic representations of food within the Filipino American community. Particularly, I argue that second-generation Filipino Americans perform their ethnic identities through food. Moreover, I argue that, since some second generation Filipino Americans cannot speak Filipino languages, food allows them to express and maintain their Filipino-ness. The knowledge of Filipino food also authenticates their Filipino identity and creates a sense of belonging to the community for the second generation. Food also reflects years of Spanish and American colonial influence. Lastly, I assert that studying Filipino food is important because it creates a deeper understanding of the many layers of Filipino culture.

Through my interviews, I found that one of the cultural aspects that the members of the community I interviewed felt represented in was through food. Although my participants felt that non-Filipinos did not know enough about Filipino American history or culture, non-Filipinos, they believed, did know about Filipino food. One of my participants, Genevieve, noted the importance of food in the community, discussing how it was one of the ways that she felt the community was represented. In her words, “Filipino food is coming....It’s the new fusion food, or whatever, that’s becoming popularized.” As Genevieve noted, there was new representation through more Filipino fusion restaurants

in Los Angeles, such as Canele in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Atwater Village and Park's Finest in Los Angeles' Historic Filipinotown. At Canele in Atwater Village, to accommodate the local taste and offer a healthier version of the classic *adobo* dish, the chefs offered *adobo* duck salad. The salad includes market vegetables, patis-lime vinaigrette, cracklins, and crispy rice. Park's Finest's website offers "American cuts of meat with a Filipino flavor." Another pop-up restaurant that has garnered popularity is Ricebar in Downtown Los Angeles. Like Canele, Ricebar takes classic Filipino foods such as *pandesal* (sweet bread) and fuses them with California staples such as avocado and kale. Similarly, the Filipino fusion food truck, Senor Sisig in the San Francisco Bay Area, has garnered attention for mixing classic Filipino tastes like *sisig* (pork) with local Mexican American flavors. The famous Senor sisig tacos are the Filipino version of Mexican street tacos, consisting of Filipino pork, onions, lettuce, and cilantro cream sauce. On a recent blog called "The Plate," *National Geographic* noted how Filipino food is the next big food movement.

All of the aforementioned restaurants have transformed classic Filipino foods to accommodate Californian tastes. In other words, these restaurants have sought to blend Filipino cuisine with the California notion of healthier foods to appeal to a broader audience. This trend is most prevalent among second generation Filipino Americans, and it suggests how some second generation Filipino Americans negotiate Filipino and American culture. These Filipino fusion restaurants represent the process of assimilation and how one adapts to both the local culture and to their parents' culture. It also demonstrates how some second generation members both explore their Filipino-ness and

commodify their heritage to fit within the local culture. In short, food gives some second-generation members a platform to represent Filipino culture and synthesize Filipino and American culture.

Although some second-generation Filipino Americans seek to transform traditional Filipino dishes like adobo, there are still restaurants that cater to traditional, or non-fusion, Filipino food. The Los Angeles neighborhood of Eagle Rock is known for its concentration of Filipino Americans, and there one can find traditional Filipino restaurants that try to preserve traditional Filipino cooking without accommodating the perceived healthier Californian tastes.

Food was one of the major aspects of culture that consistently appeared in my data. Food was an important topic of discussion because of its power of symbolic representation, serving as a marker of one's ethnic identity. For example, as many of the participants remarked, eating rice at every meal symbolized one's identity as Filipino. As Katherine Vester writes in *A Taste of Power: Food and American Identities* (2015),

Analyzing representations of food within their specific cultural contexts therefore helps us understand how we become what we are, who is telling us how to be, and where we stand in the food chain (2015:16).

In other words, what one ingests reflects their cultural values and norms.

In my preliminary work, fieldwork, and interviews, Filipino food consistently came up as a topic of discussion. At some of the initial Saysay meetings I attended, there was often Filipino food available for members and staff to eat, such as a typical Filipino breakfast spread of rice, fried eggs, tomatoes, and pork. The act of eating together and sharing

food, as we discussed the Saysay's upcoming events, united the members and created a sense of belonging. It also helped to create a group identity for the Saysay Project and united the members and volunteers. As Brown and Mussell quoted Hortense

Powdermaker writing,

The communal eating of food and customs concerning it may be said to have a double social function: (1) to maintain the cohesion of the society and of groups within it; (2) to determine, in part, the relation of the individual to the society and to the smaller groups within (1984:47).

The social cohesion of Saysay was maintained through eating/sharing food together; as a result, it secured the social bonds between members. Furthermore, sharing food at the Saysay Project demonstrated that all of the attendees held some sort of in-group membership, including myself. These experiences of sharing food with other people gave me access into the group because I was seen as one of them, further underscoring the symbolic roles of food in Filipino culture. Food helped to create a sense of belonging and community while, at the same time, it highlighted who has or does not have access into the group.

Food was also discussed in my interviews when I asked, "How much Filipino culture were you taught/exposed to growing up?" To my interviewees, food was a major part of Filipino culture and the dominant form of non-verbal cultural transmission for my participants (usually the second-generation) who could not speak Filipino languages. Food was a form of expressive culture, a place where they could express their Filipino-ness. It was a space where one could authenticate one's Filipino identity.

John, a second-generation interviewee, invited me into his house to cook traditional Cebuano food from the island of Cebu in the southern Philippines. Although John could

speak a few of the Filipino languages, like Tagalog and Cebuano, he asserted that food was the best representation of Filipino culture. Before we started the interview, he explained to me that food and inviting people over to eat/share food was “very” Filipino. John explained to me that, in order for me to get the real or authentic experience of Cebuano culture, I had to eat Cebuano food. To John, it was also important that I eat with him because sharing and enjoying food with other people was significant to performing one’s Filipino identity. As John divulged, while he was cooking traditional Cebuano food, Cebuanos are known for their barbeque. In particular, they are known for pork barbeque and barbequed fish. In order for me to understand Cebuano culture, I needed to try the food.

Like John, Christina (another second generation participant) explained the importance of food in Filipino culture. Christina felt that, in all other respects than food, her identity was American. She did not speak any Filipino languages, she did not practice any Filipino traditions, and she felt that she identified with American values because she was independent, unmarried, and did not live with her parents. Despite not feeling like a “true” Filipina, Christina said that food was how she identified as Filipino. Christina described that she felt like a “true” Filipino at her family parties, where a mix of Filipino food was served. Like Christina, most of my participants, if not all of them, reiterated the view that sharing Filipino food authenticated one as Filipino. This was particularly true for second-generations who did not know the language and could use food as a way to authenticate their ethnic identity.

Food as a performance of identity

Food was also used as symbolic ethnicity (Magliocco 1993: 108). As Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell argued, “foodways provide a whole area of performance in which statements of identity can be made – in preparing, eating, serving, forbidding, and talking about food” (1984:54). For second generations who relied mostly on non-verbal cultural transmission to perform their culture, knowledge of Filipino food authenticated their Filipino identity. Food also played a role in the maintenance of their ethnic identity. As some of the first generation participants shared, instead of teaching their children the language, they taught them and/or exposed them to Filipino food. Filipino food, rather than language, was seen as the most expressive of culture and the best identity marker of Filipino ethnicity. Unlike language, Filipino food could also be concealed. First generation Filipinos could teach their children about food in the privacy of their homes, but to be fluent in the English language was seen as a measure of success. Simply put, to know English instead of the Filipino languages meant that one could easily transition into American culture and, in return, could achieve some form of upward mobility. Holding onto food meant a way of holding onto culture.

Group identity was also expressed through the performance of food. For example, during some of the interviews, to test my Filipino-ness or in-group status, the interviewees would ask me what type of Filipino food my mom made or which Filipino food was my favorite. The performance of group identity through food also took place during my trips to the Philippines, where I was constantly offered food. During my most recent trip to Catabalogan, located in the Visayan region (southern Philippines), I was expected to eat

at everyone's home, even if I was not hungry. To refuse food in Filipino culture was considered an insult because food has many symbolic meanings. It especially symbolizes hospitality; if one accepts another's food, then that person is accepting the invitation and, ultimately, the person. In other words, if I were to deny all of the food that was given to me, even though I was full, I would be considered rude or unappreciative. In addition, since the Philippines is, in some ways, a less developed country, food is considered wealth. Therefore, giving a stranger or family member food represents a person's economic status. Similar to offering food as an extension of one's hospitality in the Philippines, this was also translated in the second generation Filipino Americans wherein my participants like John invited me to their homes to share food.

Food as a marker of difference

Food was not only discussed as a marker of one's Filipino-ness, but also as representing difference from the dominant, or White, American culture. In other words, Filipino food marked the person as different from the mainstream or "the other." Brown and Mussell note that,

Mainstream Americans frequently use foodways as a factor in the identification of subcultural groups and find in the traditional dishes and ingredients of "others" who eat differently from themselves a set of convenient ways to categorize ethnic and regional character (1984:3).

For example, when Genevieve's brought *adobo* to school, she was embarrassed because she did not have "normal," or American, food. As Genevieve described it,

I opened my Tupperware, and then out of the...all the way in the back some kid was like 'What's that smell?' And immediately, like, they start running around the room, and they smelled my Tupperware. That's it. I was like, 'Oh, my God.' I closed my Tupperware

and shoved it back in my bag. I said, ‘that’s adobo. That’s Filipino food.’ But I remember, I was, like, traumatized.

Genevieve’s story demonstrated how food can represent difference and how food can make one feel like the outsider of a group.

Guenevere also remembered being traumatized because she had different food at school:

Of course, kids are cruel, they make fun of what you eat, so I remember eating a rice ball (my dad made a ball of rice covered with nori, or seaweed, sometimes a spam musubi, which is sort of spam sushi style) for lunch. I felt angry, but didn’t say anything to avoid conflict or confrontation.

Again, we see the symbolic roles of food at play here. Food opens a space for one to assert one’s cultural identity; but, at the same time, it can mark one as different.

Like Genevieve and Guenevere, Charlene told me a story in which people were critical of her “ethnic” food. Charlene described an experience at work in which she realized that fish was an uncommon food for non-Asian people:

When I first started here, mostly white, when it came to food they were very, like, it was like a foreign thing that they couldn’t eat, like people couldn’t bring fish. That was my first experience realizing that there was a big difference, because then they (White co-workers) were, like, very critical about the smell and of people’s lunches and I was, like, I don’t see a problem with it.

In cases like the stories above, Filipino food represented minority status because that food was not considered the norm.

Food as a reflection of colonialism

Along with Filipino food serving as a platform to perform identity while also marking one as different from the mainstream, food also reflects the different periods of

colonialism in the Philippines. Like the U.S., which has recipes, diet, and food influenced by its British colonizers, the Philippines' former colonizers influenced Filipino foods. For instance, the Spanish colonial influence is evident in Filipino dishes such as tomales or lechon (roasted pig). The American colonial influence is evident in foods such as Filipino spaghetti, which is different from the American version of spaghetti because the sauce is sweeter than the American sauce and it usually includes cut up hot dogs, which represent the Filipino version of meatballs. Other examples of American influence are foods like Spam, corned beef hash, and instant coffee. The history of these foods can be traced back to the American occupation period from the Spanish-American War in 1898 to Philippine Independence in 1946. These foods also reflect American culture during the 21st century. At the time of the Philippine occupation, America experienced the Great Depression and the effects of WWII, which included a food shortage and a push to create foods that would last for soldiers. As a result, canned foods like Spam and corned beef hash were invented to last and to feed the soldiers abroad. These particular foods were introduced to Filipinos through American soldiers who were stationed in the Philippines (Aquino 2000:29).

As Filipinos had done before with Spanish food, they blended American food with their own. In time, these American foods became staples of Filipino food culture. As many of my participants explained, a common Filipino breakfast consisted of Spam or corned beef hash with eggs and rice. Through this typical Filipino breakfast, one can understand the American influence and how Filipinos have manipulated non-Filipino food to accommodate their existing diet. Food not only represents or symbolizes one's identity

but also reflects a country's history and, in cases like the Philippines, the history of colonization. In my interviews, Filipino food also reflected the people's ability to adapt to other cultures and to synthesize another culture with their own. Therefore, it is not surprising that Filipinos and Filipino Americans can often assimilate more easily into American culture than other groups: Filipinos are already familiar with American tastes.

Moreover, the study of Filipino reflects Max Weber's concept of the "web of significance." As Geertz summarized Weber, "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be, therefore, not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (Geertz 1973:5). Food is a web of significance because it symbolizes one's culture and its underlining meanings. Consequently, it is important to study these webs of Filipino food. Food bonds, maintains, represents, and symbolizes Filipino culture. Furthermore, as I have shown above, food is particularly important for some of the second-generation because it allows them to authenticate and perform their Filipino-ness.

Finally, food is important because it was one form of expressive culture in which some members of the community felt represented, especially the new Filipino fusion food movement. Although I did not research the Filipino fusion food movement in depth, future research could examine how Filipino fusion affects the second generation or later generation's performance of ethnic identity. As I mentioned earlier, food was a form of expressive culture in which some members of the second generation could perform their

ethnic identity. A potential research question could examine how does the performance of ethnic identity change when the food is fusion?

SECTION 6

ANALYSES

After discovering that food was a form of expressive culture that some members of the community felt represented them, I realized the complexity of their invisibility. Initially, the goal of my research was to deconstruct the shared feeling of invisibility and to give answers to larger questions regarding the role of American colonialism in the Philippines. However, through conducting interviews, I found that the invisibility that had been discussed in the discourse and amongst members of the Filipino American community is more complex and, in some ways, a social construction in itself. It is socially constructed because certain aspects of the Filipino American community are represented in California, such as Filipino food like lumpia (an egg roll with ground pork and vegetables). On the other hand, the community remains underrepresented in regard to history, such as the Filipino contribution to the labor movement in the 1960s in California's Central Valley, where key Filipino players like Philip Vera Cruz and Larry Itilong fought alongside Cesar Chavez in California's Central Valley. Furthermore, the Filipino American community still protests for acknowledgement of Filipino WWII veterans who have not received reparations for their military service. As I mentioned above, the perceived invisibility of the Filipino American community is complicated because it is multilayered, and it reflects the effects of American colonialism in the Philippines as well as contemporary race and ethnic relations in the U.S.

Their perceived invisibility could also be due to the community not feeling unique in reference to the other minority groups, like other Asians and Latinos. As Rick Bonus remarked, Filipinos are often lumped with Asian American and assumed to have a similar history, status, etc. (2000:26). When I asked, “Have you ever identified as Asian American and, if yes, in what contexts (ex. work, school or in relation to other non-Filipinos)?” many of the participants responded that they had answered yes on questionnaires or in school, but they argued that Filipinos were different since they were a blend of cultures. As Gliciria stated, “Filipinos are a mix of East and West. We are eclectic.” As Roger Abrahams explained, in the construction of identity in the United States, we need to demonstrate the existence and uniqueness of one’s culture and one’s folklore (2003:210). In other words, there is a need to establish one’s group as different and separate. However, for Filipino Americans, being a blend of many cultures who lie in a liminal state makes it hard for the group to constitute its uniqueness.

Abrahams further wrote, “Identity invokes a conception of individual and social life that has become ubiquitous but that causes more confusion and confrontation than it designates meaningful social states of being” (2003:198). In other words, identity is found everywhere, but it is hard to understand because it is relational and always changing. Identity also contradicts itself because it longs for a state of being that is invented, relational, and invokes nostalgia. Moreover, the difficulty my participants had trying to construct their own ethnic identities resulted in them feeling underrepresented. They could not clearly define what Filipino culture was in the U.S. because of its incorporation of so many American cultural characteristics, such as American food and

values. This ambiguity about what Filipino American culture is or is not has, in some ways, led to perceived invisibility. In regard to my research question, “How is the construction of Filipino American identity affected by feeling underrepresented and invisible,” one answer is that the underrepresentation further perpetuates a liminal state of identity while, at the same time, it creates perceived invisibility because, as Abrahams argues, the community cannot perform its own uniqueness.

Along with Abrahams’ argument that identity is relational, many of my participants remarked that college was a pivotal moment in which they constructed their Filipino identity. College created a space for them to understand their Filipino culture, bond with other Filipinos, and appreciate their culture. Reynaldo explained that, through taking Asian American courses in college, he began to think critically about his Asian American identity. Specifically, he began to understand the role of Spanish and American colonial history and how it impacted his Filipino identity.

Like Reynaldo, Joseph explained that, through learning about Filipino American history, he came to appreciate and understand his Filipino heritage. In other words, learning this history allowed some of participants to reflect on their identity and to become aware of the ripple effects of colonialism. As Derek described his racial identity, “I sensed it, but I didn’t know how to define it [identity] right. It wasn’t until I got to college, took Asian Am that I found the languages, right, and this empowerment to figure out how to articulate it.” Chris reiterated Derek’s sentiments about college: “That’s the thing, college is really, really when you think about searching for identity and finding meaning. That’s

where we did it a lot.” Ted explained his construction of racial identity in similar terms: “My Filipino identity didn’t come well until college. Because I think what happened in college at UCLA is I took my very first Filipino American history class.” Later, Ted explained, like Reynaldo, that after learning about Filipino American history, he became more connected with his heritage. College, a liminal stage in which one is still defining himself or herself, was when some of my participants formed their Filipino identity. This Filipino identity construction was influenced by what they learned in their classes and their self-realization of the embedded effects of colonialism, such as the colonial mentality. As Daphne commented,

I’ve realized that as proud as I am of being Pilipino, there’s no doubt that growing up in American society has had a deep impact on my identity. I’m referring to the various forms of violence that accompany assimilation and colonization, not just the material privileges of growing up in a so-called ‘first world’ country.

Yen Le Espiritu also discussed how American colonialism has heavily influenced contemporary Filipino American experiences. In short, the identity and experience of Filipino immigrants was situated in the relationship between the United States and the Philippines and its many years of colonial and post-colonial rule (Espiritu 1995:26). Moreover, many of my participants understood this relationship and, therefore, were reflective, realizing at a deeper level why the community was underrepresented.

Food was the most recognizable aspect of Filipino culture. As most of my participants explained, food was how people recognized the Filipino American community. Although non-Filipinos knew about its food, there was still a lack of knowledge of Filipino American history in California. This may be because food is something that can be

commodified and marketed, whereas history cannot. Some of my participants even admitted that they were not interested in the history of the community or that they were ashamed that they knew so little about the history.

When I asked my participants, “Do you think Filipino Americans are represented in California,” their responses were *yes* (33%), *no* (46%), and *both yes and no* (21%). *Yes*, because non-Filipinos knew about the food and, population wise, there are many Filipinos. Besides the numbers, my participants explained, they felt underrepresented in regard to their history. In Ted’s words, “Historically, I think we still need to have our contributions to the history of this country still – I don’t want to use the word validated, but at least acknowledged.” Aaron answered in his response to the underrepresentation question that Filipinos “started the movement [Delano Grape Strike], yet are not properly acknowledged.”

The following is Guenevere’s response to the question, “Do you think Filipino Americans are represented in California?”

I don’t think Filipino Americans are represented enough. I think we’re the forgotten Asian race when it comes to the public eye. I’m not sure why. I think if we want to be more visible, Filipinos have to make it happen. How to do that? I think the arts is one way. Creating our own films, shows, and entertainment to raise awareness. Investing in each other. Supporting the arts and spending money on quality products, entertainment, political, and social current events. I think telling our stories about our diverse multi-faceted experiences is a great way to raise awareness. I notice now that there’s more Indian (from India) actors, comedians, shows, movies, in which they are major supporting characters, if not the main spotlight of media and entertainment, in the last 10 years or so. I think that is happening because of the stories and because poignant, thought provoking films slowly became more mainstream. We have important stories to tell. We have to be the ones to tell them.

Group Organization

Gender or class did not appear to affect the participants' responses with regard to whether the community was culturally represented. The aspect that affected the participants' responses to the question of whether or not the community was represented was their involvement in a Filipino American organization. About 15, or 60%, of the participants were or are currently part of a Filipino American organization. Many of them I met during my volunteer work. In addition, those who were part of different Filipino American organizations, like the Saysay Project or FilAm Arts, were more aware of their cultural and historical invisibility. The interviewees who participated in the Filipino American organizations and were involved in the community explained how they felt that the community was underrepresented. These interviewees were more proactive about learning about their Filipino culture and Filipino American history. As a result, they were more adamant that Filipinos are an invisible minority. Their involvement with these different Filipino organizations can also be interpreted as a performance. As Dorothy Noyes wrote, a group is effectuated by performance (2003:29). Put another way, a group or community is forced together as a result of the performance of its members.

In these organizations, the interviewees performed their ethnic identities together and, as a group, they created a sense of belonging and the common idea of the invisibility of the Filipino American community. For example, Genevieve, who was very active in the community, explained how she felt the community was underrepresented. Genevieve is involved in the Barrangay LA (LGBTQ Filipino community), participated/volunteered at

FPAC, and was well connected within the Filipino American community. She had also studied abroad in the Philippines and obtained her Bachelor's degree there. Her story demonstrated how the group's identity was created and maintained by the perception of invisibility.

In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (2006), Benedict Anderson deconstructed the idea of nationalism by exploring how people create an imagined community through a shared feeling of belonging and comradeship. The Filipino American community was constructed based on a sense of Filipino culture transmitted through generations, interpretations of what it means to be Filipino, and means of maintaining this culture. Moreover, applying Anderson's *Imagined Communities* to the Filipino American community, perceived underrepresentation created comradeship and brotherhood within the Filipino American community, creating sub communities with the intention of making Filipino Americans visible.

Others, like Christina, who was not as heavily involved in any organizations, viewed the representation of the community differently. Christina felt that the community was represented when she was growing up in Gardena and West Covina, where there was always some sort of Filipino festival or event. James Allen and Eugene Turner (1997) state that there is a large concentration of Filipinos who live in the South Bay cities, including Gardena, West Covina, and Carson.

Where one grew up and one's environment, therefore, also affect this sense of invisibility. Some of my interviewees grew up in areas where there were large Filipino populations, such as Eagle Rock, Torrance, and Carson. Charlene recalled the areas she grew up in and how they were heavily populated with other Filipinos, commenting, "I mean, I would probably say I guess I didn't realize how much I was like, you know, surrounded by it all; everywhere I lived there was always a big concentration of Filipino people." Furthermore, she did not realize the extent of Filipino culture that she was taught and exposed to growing up because most of the communities she lived in were predominantly Filipino.

Like Charlene, Merle, who was a first generation Filipino American, noted that she felt the community is represented. Merle answered, "I think so. There are a lot of associations in which Filipinos are represented. I know, early on in my city career, there's this Filipino Americans something association where you can join." Like Charlene's, Merle's environment has influenced her perspective on the community's cultural representation. At Merle's work, there is a large representation of Filipino employees. In short, one's environment, place, and space influence their view of perceived invisibility.

On the other hand, Derek and Aldrex, who grew up in Palos Verdes and Bel Air, were aware that their Filipino culture was different because they were often the only Filipinos. In the following excerpt, Aldrex shared a story of growing up Filipino in a predominantly white area:

There were certain elements of being Filipino American where, going to a predominantly white elementary school, I was always scared to like if I had left over Filipino food for

my lunch. I was always scared to eat it because I didn't want to answer questions of what it is. Even if it was something simple, like chicken adobo.

Derek shared a similar experience growing up in a predominantly white area, which heightened his awareness of his Filipino culture and, later on, its lack of representation.

So there were barely any Filipinos, like one or two Filipino families on the hill. It wasn't something we would show and be proud of. There weren't a lot of great examples to be. There was no...right, there was no Manny Pacquiao, no Bruno Mars. Like, that's my person.

For interviewees, their perceived invisibility is relational because it depends on the person's experience, as noted in the comments above. Those who lived in traditionally non-Filipino areas felt a lack of representation and a sense of otherness, whereas those who lived in predominantly Filipino areas felt that there was representation because there were other Filipino families around them who held similar values and cultural beliefs. In other words, some Filipino Americans who felt underrepresented in my sample were those that participated in group organizations where one can perform one's ethnic identity and can reflect on the social positioning of the Filipino American community. In addition, the other Filipino Americans in my sample who felt underrepresented were those that grew up in predominantly non-Filipino areas feeling that they were different in relation to other people.

Daphne described her view of perceived invisibility as follows:

I was born in a neighborhood in San Diego County that was primarily Latinx, and I grew up outside of Cleveland, OH in a neighborhood where black and white residents were clearly segregated. So, for most of my childhood, it was difficult to find people who *knew* what a Filipino was, much less representations of Filipino Americans. Therefore, when I moved to Northern California, I compared my experience with those of the neighborhoods where I grew up. I think that Filipino Americans are very much represented in California. I don't see many mainstream images of people who look like me, but there are so many more opportunities here to engage with the Pilipinx

community. There's easier access to fiestas, Pilipinx food stores, cultural celebrations, and Filipino student associations.

Daphne argued that, in California, there is cultural representation, but a lack of Filipino American representation in relation to the whole U.S. and the mainstream.

Paulo, considered 1.5 generation because he was born in the Philippines and then immigrated to California when he was about 13 years old, answered that he did not feel Filipino Americans were represented except through food. Paulo also believed that the Philippines did not have its own identity due to the different waves of colonial influence from neighboring countries. Therefore, there was no definitive Filipino culture to represent. As Paulo commented,

[Filipinos] they've always been under the shadows of either a separate country or a separate culture, right. If you look at it, they've only been independent since 1898, and at the same time the Americans actually came over to the Philippines so they never really had their own identity even if their country tried, it has always been occupied by Spanish, Japanese or the U.S. the Americans and I think it's difficult for them to kind of show what they have and who they are, especially to a country it's as vast and great as the U.S.

Similar to Paulo, Edwin argued that the community was not represented in California. As he noted in his response,

I don't know if Filipinos are just, you know, whether they don't have the right people in the proper positions to let their voices be heard, and I guess, you know, maybe to that extent I would say other ethnicities are louder and stronger in voicing their wish to be more equal than, let's say, the state of California.

I think Filipino Americans just seem to assimilate themselves into being American more than anything, as opposed to in terms of representing themselves as an individual community or culture.

Traditionally, when you think of Filipinos, they are doctors, nurses, and business owners and not necessarily in the politics, you know, in the political end. Again, the way the politics are, it's whoever's voice is represented, that voice will be heard.

Edwin affirmed that perceived invisibility was relational to other groups because, in his eyes, Filipinos were less vocal about their opinions. Joannabelle's response reflected a similar opinion:

I personally don't think so. We have few Filipino American representatives in the legislature and you never really see American shows that cater specifically to Filipino audiences. I don't know if that is true up here in Northern California, but I don't really see much representation of Filipinos in Southern California. If there is, then maybe there's more Filipino representation in the San Diego area and some parts of the Los Angeles area, but if we're talking large-scale representation, then I think the Hispanic American and Chinese American populations are better represented.

In response to my research question, "What historical, political, social, and geographic processes have shaped their social position in American society and their social relations with other immigrant populations?" some of my interviewees remarked feeling that even though, population-wise, Filipinos were one of the largest Asian American groups, they were still in the shadows with regards to their history and to Filipino contributions to the U.S. As Genevieve commented below,

It's funny because we're, like, the second largest Asian American community in CA, but there isn't really, like, the issues that affected, like, the whole Filipino Veterans, they haven't been given reparations from WWII.

The Filipino American community, in other words, has been known only in certain respects, such as food, and certain professions, such as nursing, but in other respects, such as history, it remains underrepresented. The processes that have shaped this social positioning in the U.S. are ripple effects of American colonialism in the Philippines. Third preferences visa and the U.S. outsourcing for professional labor have shaped the position of the Filipino American community in relation to other ethnic groups. The assimilation process for Filipinos began abroad because they are trained to eventually

work in the U.S. As Virginia noted, “They [Filipinos] blend in more, are not part of America, they don’t stand out because they are very blended into American society.”

The resulting assimilation process has shaped Filipinos as an immigrant group when they finally immigrated to the U.S. For example, other groups, such as Koreans or Mexicans, tended to create ethnic enclaves to help them better transition into American culture. However, as Allan Aquino wrote, since Filipino Americans have more English proficiency than many of their Asian American counterparts, they tended not to form traditional cultural and linguistic towns like Chinatown or Koreatown in Los Angeles (2010:28). The fact that English is one of the national languages of the Philippines has shaped the Filipino American community’s position in relation to other immigrant groups. The community did not have to undergo the same experience as other immigrant groups because they already understood the language of the U.S.

Underrepresentation due to Regionalism

Additionally, some of my interviewees expressed an idea that the lack of representation of the Filipino American community was due to its regionalism. The Philippines comprises 7,000 islands with roughly 28 different dialects spoken and a variety of traditions and cultural practices, depending on the region. Many of my participants expressed this diversity as a potential reason for the underrepresentation of the Filipino American community. Of the participants, 56% responded that they identified with the region from which their family came. As John explained when I asked him the question,

“Do you think Filipino Americans are represented in California? If not, why? If yes, why and how?” John’s initial response was, “I don’t know.” However, after more prying, John suggested that this lack of representation was due to “so many different islands.”

Moreover, during the course of our interview, John made a point to tell me how Cebuano culture was different from other Filipino cultures. Cebuano is from Cebu, which is an island located in the Visayas, or the middle part of the Philippines. As John explained, Cebuano culture is distinctive because of its food. Cebuano food is known for barbequing, grilling, and roasting a variety of local foods, such as pig and fish.

Like John, Charlene explained how Igorot culture was different from that of other ethnic groups in the Philippines. As Charlene clarified it, Igorot is the umbrella term to describe all the tribes in Northern Luzon (the most northern part of the Philippines). Ocab felt that Igorot culture was very different and separate from the general culture of the Philippines. One important difference was that the Igorot people were not colonized by the Spanish and, therefore, did not share the colonial history or the Spanish cultural influence with other Filipinos. Ocab further explained that there is a misconception that the Igorot people are uncivilized and barbaric. As a result of this misconception, Charlene said, Igorot culture and peoples continually face discrimination within the Philippines, and even within the Filipino American community. Charlene recalled, in high school, sharing with other Filipinos that she was Igorot. “I remember in high school people said, ‘What. You’re Igorot? You don’t have kinky hair’ and, like, literally saying all these stereotypes that Igorots have.” There was still a stigma attached to being Igorot. Ocab explained that

people did not believe she was real because other Filipinos thought Igorot people were uncivilized and only lived in the remote mountains.

As John and Charlene's stories demonstrated, the underrepresentation of the Filipino American community in general is partially due to Filipinos identifying with a certain area in the Philippines, such as Cebu or the Cordilleras (Northern Luzon). Derek and Joseph reiterated this regionalism theme. As Derek responded, "So, I just think some of that is kind of an apathy theme because we're regional, right? We only bond together when it affects us rather than this whole nation.... we definitely hate on each other." Joseph commented that lack of representation was due to regional differences; there are so many differences that it was hard for the community to remain united. Even in the U.S., there are many different organizations and none of them are organized and/or united together to accomplish the common goal of better cultural representation.

Although John, Charlene, Derek, and Joseph are second-generation Filipino Americans, not all of the second-generation participants strongly identified with their family's region of origin. As a second-generation Filipino American, Reynaldo explained that, since he was taught very little about his Filipino culture, he did not identify with his family's region and instead identified as Filipino or Filipino American. In other words, identifying with one's region was not a characteristic of just first-generation and/or second-generation participants; rather, it depended on how much Filipino culture the participant was exposed to and/or taught.

Moving Forward

Despite all of the “no” responses regarding lack of representation, as Ted later commented in his response,

I think it’s a great time to be Filipino American because I think the possibilities are endless. And I think, even though we have a lot of work to do and a lot of education to do, we are best, and something that I think Filipinos have in general is we get along with everybody, and I think using that or leveraging that to make – you know, to give people in our community the most of what we can bring to the fabric of the country is important.

Similarly, many of the respondents had hope that the community was still upcoming and would gain more visibility. Recently, there has been attention toward the community in regard to the acknowledgement of Filipino American history. Rob Bonta was the first Filipino American to serve as an assembly member for the California legislature, in 2012. Bonta introduced Assembly Bill No. 7 to commemorate Larry Itliong’s and the Filipino community’s contributions for equal rights and equal pay for laborers in the Central Valley in the 1960s.

Assembly Bill No. 7 states,

This bill would require the Governor to annually proclaim October 25 as Larry Itliong Day, would designate that date each year as having special significance in public schools and educational institutions, and would encourage those entities to observe that date by conducting exercises remembering the life of Larry Itliong and the contributions he made to the state.

Further on, the Bill states,

(h) The accomplishments and contributions of Larry Itliong should be properly memorialized within the history and culture of the United States of America. Larry Itliong deserves proper recognition for his numerous sacrifices in the name of justice and the suppression of severely inadequate working conditions.

Along with this bill, a middle school in the San Francisco Bay Area was renamed to commemorate Larry Itliong and Philip Vera Cruz:

(i) Larry Itliong’s legacy has been acknowledged in part in the renaming of a Union City middle school, formerly known as Alvarado Middle School. The middle school has been renamed Itliong-Vera Cruz Middle School in honor of the two labor movement heroes. It is the first school in the United States of America to be named after a Filipino American.

As Aaron later commented in his response, “[it’s] getting to be cool to be Filipino.”

SECTION 7

CONCLUSION

Summary

In conclusion, the invisibility of the Filipino American community is complex because some aspects of the community are represented, like its food, but it is underrepresented in other respects, like its history. As I interviewed members of the community, I found that the difficulty of my participants trying to construct their own ethnic identities resulted in them feeling underrepresented. My participants could not clearly define what Filipino culture in the U.S. was about because of its incorporation of many American cultural characteristics, such as foods and values. This ambiguity has, in some ways, led to the perceived invisibility. Filipino Americans are in a liminal state, trying to “locate” their identity. Further, some individuals who participated in Filipino American organizations were stronger advocates of visibility.

Yet, despite this and the new bill for the incorporation of Filipino American history into California public schools, there is still underrepresentation of Filipino American history in California. Many non-Filipinos are still unaware of the Filipino contribution to the labor movement in the 1960s, for example, or the Filipino WWII veterans. In sum, there is public knowledge about Filipino food, but there is a lack of knowledge about the Filipino American contributions to the development of California. As a result, the perceived invisibility of the Filipino American community still persists.

Importance

This research is important because it examines one of the largest ethnic groups in California. Like other minority groups, Filipinos have faced racial discrimination and struggled to negotiate their Filipino and American identities. Although Filipinos share similar experiences with other immigrant and minority groups, the Filipino American experience is unique because of its neo-colonial relationship with the U.S. I argue that the invisibility of the community is largely due to its reminder of American colonialism, which the U.S. seeks to forget. In other words, the U.S. would like to be remembered for its status as a former British colony but not for its status as a colonizer.

Although my thesis does not cover the breadth of Filipino American voices, it is an impetus for other research exploring how Filipino American ethnic identity is performed and constructed in other parts of the nation. In California and the West Coast states, there is a high population of Filipino Americans. Therefore, it would be interesting to study areas in the U.S. that have low populations of Filipino Americans and examine similar questions of representation and how they perform their ethnic identity. The following are potential future research questions:

How is ethnic identity performed in Filipino American communities throughout the U.S.?

Are there different ways in which other Filipino American communities perform their ethnic identities? What factors influence their performance?

How is invisibility perceived by other Filipino Americans in states where there is a low population of Filipinos? Is invisibility heightened?

Suggestions to gain representation

To gain more historical representation, I propose that there should be a museum or cultural center dedicated to Filipino Americans. At a museum or cultural center, the oral histories of Filipino WWII veterans that are recorded as well as the oral histories of Filipino Americans who were involved in the 1960s labor movement could be displayed to demonstrate the Filipino contribution to California and American history. At the moment, there are several organizations working to collect the oral histories of Filipino Americans, like the Saysay Project. There is also the Valour Project: World War II Stories from the Philippines, which seeks to collect oral histories specifically from Filipinos and Americans who experienced WWII in the Philippines. In addition, there are organizations like Filipino American Cultural and Educational Affairs that seek to build a cultural center for future generations and garner more public knowledge about Filipino culture and history.

One approach to building a cultural center or museum could be for these Filipino American organizations to connect with Filipino fusion restaurants. In other words, the organizations could partner with businesses that already have recognition in order to create more visibility for the Filipino American community. At these popular Filipino fusion restaurants, organizers could hold events that serve multiple purposes, such as selling Filipino food and simultaneously promoting and celebrating the rich history of the community.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Research Questions

1. First tell me about your mom's side. Where were your maternal grandparents born or if you do not remember the exact location, please guess the general area e.g. Northern Luzon or The Visayas? What did you maternal grandparents do?
2. Why did you, your parents or grandparents immigrate to the U.S.? Please explain in detail. For example, did a member of your family petition for other members to come to the U.S. or were the job opportunities? Do you know why your family decided to immigrate to California? Please give as much information as you can recall or would like to share.
3. Do you speak Tagalog or any other dialect?
4. Do you identify with the region from where your family is from (ex. Illocono/a or Visayan)?
5. How much Filipino culture were you taught/exposed to growing up? Ex. Foods, culture, music, language, dance, religion, values etc.
6. Do you use the terms Filipino/a, Pilipino/a, or Pinoy/Pinay? If so, could you please explain which one and why?
7. What do you consider to be your racial identity? Do you consider yourself first, Filipino or American? Or is it a combination of the both? Please explain in detail.
8. Which ethnic and racial groups do you feel you and other Filipinos are most similar to in regards to culture, values, traditions and beliefs? Explain why.

9. Have you ever identified as Asian American, if yes, in what contexts (ex. at work, school or in relation to other non Filipinos)?
10. Do you have an experience or story where being Filipino made you stand out? (For example, in school, work or another social setting)
11. What was it like growing up Filipino/a? Do you feel it was huge part of growing up?
12. Is being Filipino/a a major part of your identity? If so, why? If not, why?
13. What do you know about Filipino American history in California? (This is just to gauge what you know, so please feel free write to as little or a lot)
14. What do you know about the Philippines and its history? (This is just to gauge what you know, so please feel free write to as little or a lot)
15. Do you think Filipino Americans are represented (socially, media, culturally and politically) in California? If not, why? If yes, why and how?

APPENDIX B

Demographics of Participants

Female:	15	
Male:	10	
Oldest participant:	73 years old	
Youngest participant:	19 years old	
Mean Age:	36.7 years old	
Where the participants live:	Nor Cal – 6	
	So Cal – 19	
Participants that are involved in a FilAm organization:	15	
Participants that have a Bachelor’s Degree:	21	
Participants that have a Master’s Degree:	7 (with advanced)	
	2 (in progress)	
If participant spoke any Filipino language:	3 – no Filipino languages	
	10 – understand or knew a little 1 or more Filipino languages	
	12 – understands 1 or more Filipino languages	
Immigration through the military: (parent, grandparent or themselves)	7	
Immigration for better opportunities: (career e.g. nursing or teaching)	18	
If participants felt the community was represented in CA:	8 - Yes	
	11 - No	
	5 - Yes and No	