

Easing the Sophomore Slump: The Effect of Family, Ethnic Identity,  
and Campus Climate on Filipino American Students' Experiences  
During Their Second Year of College

Leah L. Panganiban

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Reading Committee:  
Shirley Hune, Co-Chair  
Margaret Plecki, Co-Chair  
Rick Bonus  
Janine Jones

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Leah L. Panganiban

University of Washington

**Abstract**

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Co-Chairs of the Supervisory Committee:  
Professor Shirley Hune  
Associate Professor Margaret Plecki  
College of Education

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to examine how Filipino American family, ethnic identity, and campus climate, combined with the struggles typically associated with the sophomore year of college, affect Filipino American second-year students' perception of their academic and social challenges at one, public research intensive university. Widely termed as the 'sophomore slump', second-year students typically find themselves anxious, depressed, and confused. Internal and external pressures on major and career selection, financial independence, interpersonal relationships, and academic success combine to cause sophomores to disengage from their studies, be dissatisfied with their college experience, transfer to other institutions, and/or completely withdraw from school. For Filipino American students, these issues are intensified due to additional cultural barriers, family obligations, and parental expectations. As Filipino Americans comprise the second largest Asian ethnic group in the United States with the majority being immigrants or children of immigrants, the experiences of this population in higher education becomes an increasing concern. In

this study, there were nine Filipino American college student participants. Interviews were conducted with eight participants followed by a focus group which included an additional student. Findings indicate that family, ethnic identity, and campus climate play a significant role in the experiences of Filipino American students during their second year of college. In addition, the study illustrates that these three influences intersect with one another. Some factors play a more prominent role for particular students in this study than for others. Filipino American students are heterogeneous though they share some commonalities. Implications for research and student affairs practitioners are provided.

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## VITAE

Leah Panganiban was born in Silvis, Illinois. After completing her schoolwork at the Academy of the Holy Names in Albany, NY, she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and Communications from Villanova University. She received Master of Arts degrees in Education and Applied Women's Studies from Claremont Graduate University. In 2016, she earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Leadership & Policy Studies from the University of Washington.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **Statement of the Problem: The Invisibility of Filipino Americans**

Filipino Americans are the second largest Asian ethnic group in the United States and differ from other Asian Americans in many ways. For example, the Philippines is the only Asian country that was once a Spanish and U.S. colony. As a result, present-day Filipinos embody many Spanish cultural influences and are taught English and U.S. history in schools. Yet, Filipino Americans are often termed “invisible” or “forgotten” Asian Americans in today’s society and are not thought of as having a distinct culture or ethnic identity due to their high assimilation into U.S. society. Despite the long history of immigration and settlement of Filipinos in the United States, which I discuss below, there is no extensive research on either their history, contemporary life, or ethnic identity and the implications of these and other factors on their educational expectations in the U.S. The institutional invisibility of Filipino Americans has been connected to the historical amnesia of the U.S. colonization of the Philippines and to the general self-erasure of U.S. imperialism (Maramba & Bonus, 2013).

Like their invisibility in the larger U.S. society, Filipino Americans are an Asian American subgroup that is overlooked in higher education. Overall, Filipino Americans are seen as having a very high level of educational attainment. According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2009-2011 American Community Survey (ACS), 47.9% of all Filipino Americans who are 25 years and older have earned at least a high school degree. Compared to Whites, a higher percentage of Filipinos have earned a bachelor’s degree or

higher (47.9% versus 29.6%). Interestingly, Filipino women have a higher percentage (51.1%) with a bachelor's degree or higher than Filipino men (43.5%).

Upon closer examination, however, it is apparent that these high levels of educational attainment are due primarily to the arrival of the college-educated, post-1965 immigrants, with degrees from the Philippines, many of them in the health care field and often recruited as part of the highly educated and skilled preference group. In contrast, second and third generation Filipino Americans who grew up in the U.S. continue to be underrepresented in higher education and are not achieving the same high educational status as their foreign-born counterparts. According to the 2006-2010 American Community Survey public use micro-sample (PUMS), 49.6% of foreign-born Filipinos have college degrees or higher compared to 36.8% of U.S.-born Filipinos. Furthermore, David & Nadal (2013) state that Filipino Americans born in the U.S. lag behind other American-born Asians (37% versus 53%).

Despite this downward trend of educational attainment, Filipino Americans remain an understudied population within higher education research, which renders their issues and concerns largely invisible. Filipino Americans are usually studied as part of larger racial groups such as minorities, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics/Latinos. Although there are some disaggregated data on Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) college students, they focus mostly on three prominent subgroups: Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Americans. These three groups have a higher number of students in the U.S. higher education system than other AAPI populations.

Data on these groups overshadow other AAPI groups, including Filipino Americans, leading to the perception that all AAPIs are highly educated and academically successful (Nadal, 2013; Vea, 2013).

In this study, I seek to bring more attention to Filipino American educational experiences, and I will specifically examine the academic and social challenges of Filipino American students during their second year of college. First, I provide background information on Filipino Americans.

### **Background: History of the Philippines and Filipinos in the U.S.**

To fully comprehend how colonization is connected to Filipino American ethnic identity and their educational goals and expectations, it is imperative to review 1) the history of colonialism in the Philippines and how Filipinos were forced to identify themselves through the lens of their Spanish and American colonizers and 2) the history of Filipino migration to the United States and the discrimination Filipino immigrants faced in America.

**Colonial education in the Philippines.** During the over 300 years (early 1500s-1898) of Spanish rule in the Philippines, the Roman Catholic Church was a key political player in the Spanish domination of the Philippines. The Church created a racial caste system that separated the Spanish colonizers and light-skinned mestizos (Filipinos of mixed Spanish or Chinese descent) from the indios (dark-skinned indigenous inhabitants of the Philippines). Access to a formal education, particularly higher education, was limited to the Spanish and mestizos of higher socioeconomic status. Indios were taught by Catholic friars. These friars, symbols of Spanish colonial power, were expected to

spread the gospel, pacify the natives, and keep them from uprising (Leonardo & Matias, 2013). Therefore, religious education was used as a colonizing tool to demolish the ‘insignificant’ indigenous cultures and traditions. Filipinos also were manipulated into believing that in order to be “saved” they must be subservient and recognize their culture as inferior to Spanish culture. Described as ‘childlike’ and ‘docile’, Filipinos were seen as intellectually inferior and morally retarded (Buenavista, 2007; Leonardo & Matias, 2013).

The effects of Spanish colonialization on the Philippines are still apparent in present society. For example, approximately 81% of Filipinos are Catholic. Catholic rites, such as All Souls Day, Holy Week, and Christmas are designated as official public holidays. In addition, there are thousands of Spanish words in most Filipino dialects, including Cebuano, Tagalog, Ilocano, and Ilonggo. A Spanish-based creole language called Chavacano is spoken in some communities on the Philippine island of Mindanao (Bautista, 2010).

The Spanish-American War (April 1898-August 1898) between Spain and the United States was provoked by word of Spanish colonial brutality in Cuba. Many Americans supported the idea of freeing an oppressed people controlled by the Spanish. Similar to Spanish colonization, the United States used Manifest Destiny, or the belief that the nation had a God given mission to expand and acquire territories, to justify the “civilization” and occupation of the Philippines. In addition, the U.S. wanted to seize control of the Philippines for commercial opportunities in Asia and feared that if it did not take control of the islands, another power (such as Germany or Japan) might do so (O’Toole, 1984).

The U.S. defeated the Spanish and acquired respect as a world power. Through the Treaty of Paris, Spain renounced claim to Cuba, Guam, and Puerto Rico, and transferred sovereignty over the Philippines to the United States for \$20 million. Therefore, when the Philippines declared their independence from Spain (1898), they were immediately forced into the Philippine-American War from 1899-1902. In those three years as many as 70,000 Americans died and close to two million Filipinos were killed (O'Toole, 1984). American soldiers were ordered to shoot and kill every Filipino over the age of ten. There was even a special gun designed to kill Filipinos, the Colt.45 1902 "Philippine Model" ("Filipino American History," 2015).

The U.S. military forces suppressed Filipino attempts to declare true independence and claimed the Philippines as a colony (Buena Vista, 2007). In U.S. high school history books, this war is labeled the "Filipino Insurrection" and seen as a rebellion against established American authority. Andresen (2013) states that the change in wording from "war" to "insurrection" influences Filipino American students' knowledge construction process of themselves and their family homeland:

It implicitly suggests the idea that the Filipinos had no role in the victory over Spain, the declaration of independence was not recognized by the United States, and the United States liberated the Philippines from Spain. This perspective affects Filipino American identity and psyche by implying that Filipinos are an incapable group of uncivilized heathens who benefited from the 'White Man's Burden' (Andresen, 2013, p. 71).

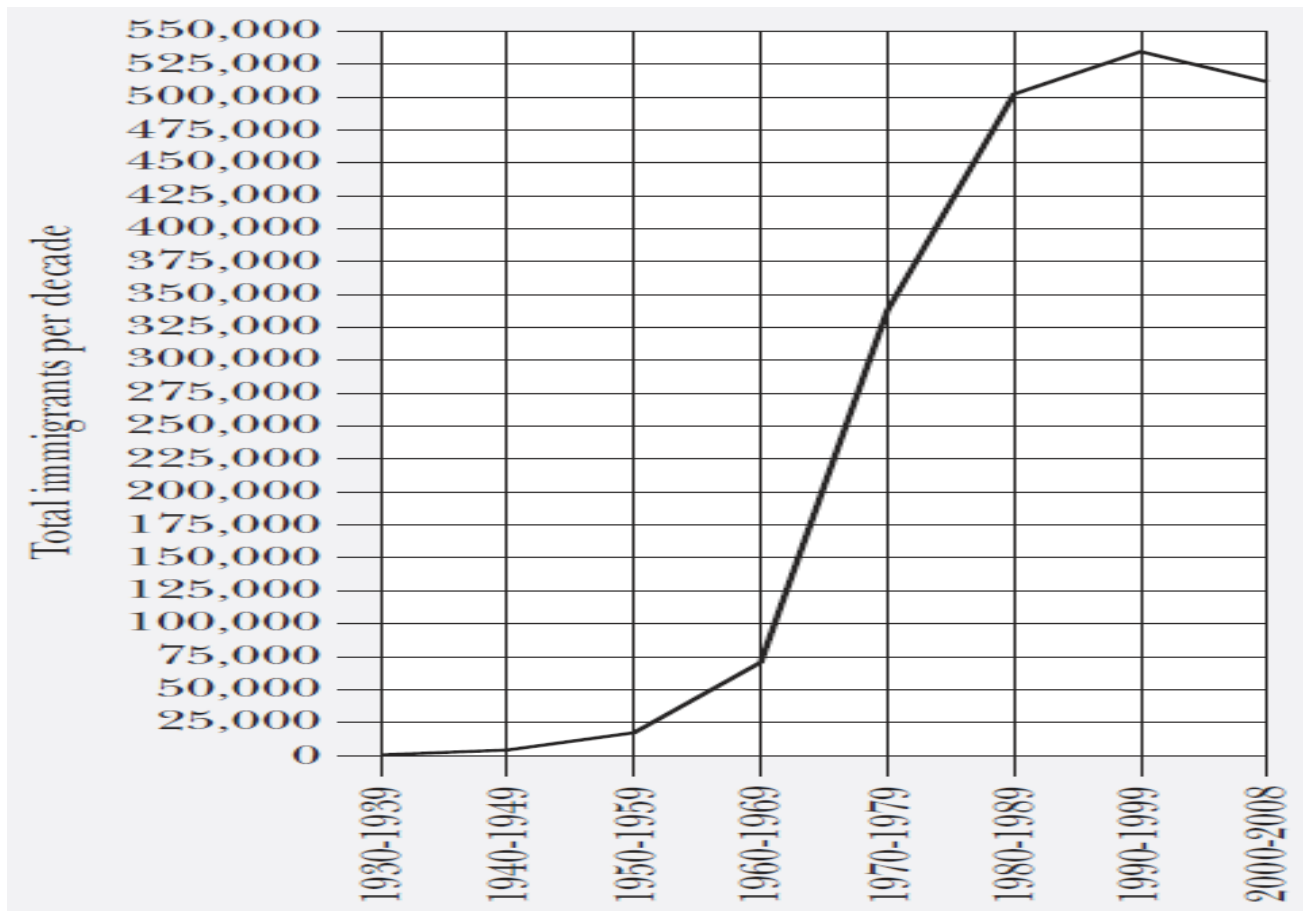
In the founding moments of formal (re)colonization of the Philippines in 1898, the U.S. government initiated a three-pronged approach of pacifying rebels through first,

military subjugation, and second, instantiating civil rule through the establishment of a colonial administrative structure. The third approach included the inauguration of a public educational system that putatively functioned as the fundamental ideological apparatus of control and submission to which Filipino natives were subject to comply. The Philippine educational system used the American system as its model and English as the language of instruction. Within and through this freely accessible and mandatory educational system, Filipino children experienced strictly-defined tutelage from their American teachers on proficiency in the English language, competence in certain trades and skills, and valuation of U.S.-based political and cultural practices and symbols. This colonial education system was viewed as an instrument of assimilation because it taught Filipino youth to regard American culture as superior to any other (Carino, 1987; Espiritu & Wolf, 2001). Therefore, “colonial education became the medium that upheld the oppressive state of a capitalistic enterprise, racist relations, and cultural imperialism” (Leonardo & Matias, 2013, p. 10).

The Philippines was granted commonwealth status in 1935 and independence in 1946. In the late 1960s and early 1970s there was a rise of student activism and civil unrest against President Ferdinand Marcos who declared martial law in 1972. He was eventually ousted in 1986 and the country is now a democracy. During the Marcos years and since, the Philippines has been marked by political instability and hampered economic productivity which have contributed to many Filipinos migrating to the U.S. and elsewhere (Bello & Reyes, 1987).

**Filipino migration to the United States and racial discrimination.** Over the years Filipinos of various backgrounds have migrated to the United States with different intents and purposes. Once in the United States, these immigrants and the succeeding generations experienced education very differently based on their prior educational attainment and the social discrimination in America at the time. I briefly review here the waves of Filipino migration to the U.S. as a foundation for understanding how families and students adapt and identify key scholarship on the matter.

Table 1  
Immigration from the Philippines to the U.S., 1930-2008.



Source: Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2008. Figures include only immigrants who obtained legal permanent resident status. There are no data for Filipino immigration before 1930. Reprinted from Immigration in America. Retrieved from <http://immigrationinamerica.org/497-filipino-immigrants.html>

The first Filipinos came in small numbers to what is now the state of Louisiana in the 1500s on Spanish galleons; it was not until the early 1900s that the Pensionados (students) and Manongs (laborers) migrated to the U.S. in large numbers. From 1906-1934, close to 500 gifted students were selected by the Philippine Government to study in the United States as part of the Pensionado Program. The Filipino participants, mostly men and members of the elite, were brought into the U.S. to undertake educational training in various disciplines and skills at different universities and colleges (Espiritu, 1994). Such a history of schooling brought about the inculcation of beliefs in the supremacy of U.S. White culture, language, and political-economic systems over local or indigenous ones. However, Filipinos were exposed to the harsh reality that despite all the teachings about the American Dream, they were still “little brown brothers” who were inferior to Americans (Buena Vista, 2007; Leonardo & Matias, 2013).

Thousands of Manongs migrated to the U.S. in the early 1900s. “Manong” means “older brother” in Ilokano (a Filipino dialect), and they served as role models for those who followed in their footsteps in search of a better life in America. The Manongs were laborers recruited to fill the growing cheap labor demands in the United States. Most of them came to Hawaii and the West Coast of the U.S. where they worked long hours in the agricultural fields. In the Pacific Northwest and Alaska, they worked in the fish canneries or other low-paying and low-status jobs that were undesirable to White men such as dishwashers, waiters, and bus boys. Many Manongs did not plan to reside permanently in the United States. All they wanted was to accumulate as much wealth as

possible within a short time and return to the Philippines to support their families. However, due to the low-paying jobs they obtained, a trip home was unlikely (Buenavista, 2007).

Prior to the arrival of the Filipinos, many other Asian immigrants, especially Chinese and Japanese, came to the U.S. in large numbers to develop the U.S. economy. As a result, anti-Asian sentiments, activities, and laws to restrict their immigration increased from Whites. The Immigration Act of 1924 was created to prevent people from Asian countries to migrate to the U.S. However, Filipinos were still able to come to the U.S. because the Philippines was an American territory, and Filipinos were classified as U.S. nationals. Once in the U.S., however, Filipinos did not possess the same rights as those with U.S. citizenship. This status is important to highlight as this position marked the racial liminality Filipinos would continue to experience (Ancheta, 2006; Buenavista, 2007).

Furthermore, Filipinos faced racism and other forms of discrimination. For example, White Americans blamed Filipinos for taking their women and their jobs, and therefore imposed laws forbidding Filipino men from marrying White women. Also, many hotels, restaurants, and even swimming pools had signs that read "POSITIVELY NO FILIPINOS ALLOWED" (Ancheta, 2006).

The growing anti-Filipino movements resulted in the passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Act in 1934, which was severely detrimental to Filipino immigration to the U.S. This act granted the Philippines commonwealth status while restricting the immigration of Filipinos to the U.S. to fifty people a year. Formerly American nationals,

Filipinos became “aliens” ineligible for federal assistance and many jobs (Ancheta, 2006). In 1935, the Filipino Repatriation Act went one step further by providing Filipino immigrants with free transportation back to the Philippines. Fewer than 2,200 immigrants took the government’s offer (Liu, Ong, & Rosenstein, 1998).

When the Philippines gained independence in 1946, the immigration quota was raised to one hundred people a year, and Filipinos in the U.S. were allowed to become naturalized citizens. The 1965 Immigration and Nationalization Act outlawed immigration policies and national origin quotas. The dual goals of the Act were to facilitate family reunification and to admit workers needed by the U.S. economy (Kitano & Daniels, 2001; Posadas, 1999). As a result, the Philippines became one of the chief suppliers of immigrants to the United States. Filipinos were eager to leave their homeland for several reasons including rapid population growth and increasing density, increasing scarcity of land, poor national economy, and urban growth (Carino, 1987). In addition, Marcos’ declaration of Martial Law resulted in political uncertainties and caused more Filipinos to consider migration (Bello & Reyes, 1987).

Often termed the “brain drain” where educated personnel move from a developing country to an industrialized nation, many of the Filipino immigrants who came to the United States after the 1965 Immigration Act and especially after the 1980s possessed a relatively high level of educational achievement. Two-thirds of the Filipino immigrants since 1965 have been of the urban middle class and professionals, particularly healthcare professionals (Carino, 1987). Many of the heads of these family households are the parent(s) of today’s Filipino American college students. In regards to this population, Buenavista (2007) stated, “As their parents’ educational attainment and subsequent

second-class status in the U.S. shaped the conditions under which students experienced education . . . college student marginalization and resistance should be understood as vestige of the Philippine-U.S. neocolonial relationship” (p. 5).

The combination of a colonial education in the Philippines historically and a poor economy still leads to Filipino mass migration today (see Table 1). The Filipino population in the U.S. is diverse in several aspects including level of education, socio-economic status, and generation status. Also, Filipinos in the U.S. are from various regions in the Philippines, each of which has its own distinct lingual, religious, and cultural traditions. Despite these differences, however, the commonality amongst Filipinos in the U.S. is the legacy of American colonialism and its effect on Filipino experiences in this country (Buena Vista, 2007).

### **Asian Americans and Filipino Americans in U.S. Society**

In order to examine Filipino American sophomores’ experiences, it is important to understand who Filipino Americans are within the larger, pan-ethnic group of Asian Americans. Asian Americans are persons with ancestry from Asian countries and islands in the Pacific Rim who live in the United States (Hune & Takeuchi, 2008, p. ix). Asian American is a pan-ethnic term for a large number of national groupings with different cultures, sociopolitical histories, and linguistic backgrounds, but who share common experiences of racial discrimination and anti-immigration bias in the United States. In the 1960s, the term ‘Asian American’ was socially constructed in an effort for people of Asian ancestry to transcend inter-Asian ethnic divisions and ally themselves with other underrepresented populations. The U.S. Census adopted the term ‘Asian American’ shortly afterwards (Espiritu, 1992).

In 1977, the U.S. Census created a single category of Asian American and Pacific Islander in part because Pacific Islanders were too few in number to stand alone, and they were assumed to share similar characteristics. While this pan-ethnic identity led to strong coalitions and increased political visibility, it hid the unique needs and concerns of the Pacific Islander community (Espiritu & Omi, 2000). In response to pressure from Asian and Pacific Islander American communities for disaggregated data by ethnic group, in 2000 the U.S. federal government separated out the Asian and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander data. Furthermore, the Census began collecting data on 24 groups of Asian Americans and 24 groups of Pacific Islanders (see Table 2). Filipinos were included in the Asian American category, although some Filipinos identify themselves as Pacific Islanders (Espiritu & Omi, 2000).

Table 2  
Asian American Ethnic Groups Ranked in Order of Population, 2010.

Ethnic Group	Number	Ethnic Group	Number
Chinese (except Taiwanese)	3,794,673	Laotian	232,130
Filipino	3,416,840	Taiwanese	230,382
Indian	3,183,063	Bangladeshi	147,300
Vietnamese	1,737,433	Burmese	100,200
Korean	1,706,822	Indonesian	95,270
Japanese	1,304,286	Nepalese	59,490
Pakistani	409,163	Sri Lankan	45,381
Cambodian	276,667	Malaysian	26,179
Hmong	260,073	Bhutanese	19,439
Thai	237,583		

Source: Reprinted from *Census Data & API Identities*, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.apiidv.org/resources/census-data-api-identities.php>

The growth of the Asian American population over the past four decades is reflected in their presence in higher education institutions. In 1979, only 198,000 Asian Americans were enrolled in a college or university. By 2009, that number had increased to over 1.3 million (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011). The National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (2011) estimates that by 2019 there will be approximately 1.7 million Asian American students pursuing undergraduate degrees.

AAPI subgroups vary greatly in terms of national and ethnic histories, language, religion, immigrant generation, class, education, and socioeconomic backgrounds. For example, many recent immigrants from countries such as Taiwan, India, and China have entered the U.S. with relatively high levels of education. These nations committed abundant resources to building up infrastructures, which was accompanied by investment in their educational systems. They also benefited from U.S. immigration policy that gave preferences to highly skilled and educated persons. Other states such as Cambodia, Laos, Guam, and other Pacific Islands, have suffered from war, colonialism, and economic underdevelopment. Hence individuals from these countries, some of whom arrived as refugees, possess less educational and professional skills (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2008).

Most Asian Americans came to the U.S. during one of the three waves of migration. The vast majority of the first wave (1840-1930) consisted of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino men who helped develop the Western states by building railroads, working in mines and fishing canneries, and advancing the agricultural and forestry economies. Most Asian Americans today, however, are part of the second wave that

occurred after the 1965 Immigration Act, which abolished national quotas based on race and substituted hemispheric caps: 170,000 for the Eastern Hemisphere and 120,000 for the Western, with a limit of 20,000 annually from any nation (Daniels, 2004). This Act ended Asian immigration restrictions, promoted family reunification, and gave preference to health professionals, engineers, scientists, and other educated professionals in fields in short supply in the U.S. Also, another economic preference made it possible for many unskilled workers from Asia and elsewhere to migrate to the U.S. to take low-paying or low-status jobs such as homecare, service work, and as garment workers that American workers did not want. In 2016, the immigration quotas from the 1965 Immigration Act no longer exist. There is an annual quota of 675,000 total immigrants (Rowen, 2015). A third wave of Asian immigrants (1975-1990) consisted largely of refugees who arrived under special legislation. These were the Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian refugees who were displaced due to U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia. Over one million Southeast immigrants came to the U.S. under the 1975 Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act, the 1980 Refugee Act, and the 1987 Amerasian Homecoming Act. Refugees do not willingly choose to leave their homelands. Most of these refugees arrived in the U.S. impoverished and dealing with personal trauma, economic loss, and dislocation (Hune, 2002; Hune & Takeuchi, 2008).

The influx of post-1965 Asian immigrants and refugees, which continues today, has drastically changed U.S. and Asian American demographics. In 2014, Asian Americans were the fastest growing racial group in the United States. In 2010, those who identified themselves only as Asian constituted approximately 4.8% of the American population or 14.7 million individuals (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The Census Bureau

projects that by the year 2050, there will be more than 40.6 million Asians living in the United States, comprising 9.2% of the total U.S. population. Among these are Filipino Americans whose annual immigration quota is over subscribed. Approximately 2,470,000 people are waiting for visas in family immigration backlogs. The wait time for a U.S. citizen petitioning for a brother or sister from the Philippines exceeds 20 years (“How Long Should a U.S. Citizen’s Sibling Wait for a Green Card?”, 2015).

### **The Penalties of the Model Minority Stereotype**

The use of aggregate data to represent the academic performance of all AAPIs is misleading and hides the substantial educational needs of many AAPI students (Hune & Takeuchi, 2008). In particular, the use of aggregate data reinforces the stereotype of Asian American students as model minorities. “Model Minority” implies that Asian Americans are enjoying deserved success in society despite a long history as an oppressed racial minority. As a result, many people believe that Asian Americans are held in high regard and are not discriminated against in education, the public arena, and other institutions. While the extent to which this image has influenced higher education policy and practice is impossible to determine, the perception of many educators seems to be that Asians are “out-whiting” Whites and do not have any serious problems or needs. Due to the model minority stereotype, policymakers and educators are unaware that Asian American subpopulations, including Filipino Americans, face educational challenges (Hune & Takeuchi, 2008).

**Data issues in Asian American education: Quantitative and qualitative.** From the 1960s until today, the authors of numerous articles and books on the model minority have substantiated their claims with statistics and quantitative data on Asian American educational achievements, their movement into high status occupations, rising incomes, and low rates of mental illness and crime. However, upon a closer look such data are either limited in scope or based on aggregate statistics where the plethora of diverse Asian ethnic groups are lumped together into one, large Asian American category obscuring the characteristics of individual subgroups who are different in many ways, including their immigration waves and histories (Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007; Osajima, 1988; Suzuki, 1977; Teranishi, 2010).

Osajima (1988) states that the popular press and researchers constructed the model minority thesis through discursive mechanisms, passages that minimize contradictory information, and the selective use of scholarly research. For example, critiques of the model minority concept were acknowledged but not given a lot of credibility. Also, scholarly research tended to exclude contradictory evidence and therefore studies supporting the model minority stereotype seemed more authoritative. For example, the few real facts about students highlighted in Brand's (1987) "Whiz Kid" article (which claimed Asian Americans were performing better than Whites in higher education) were limited to their point of college entry (test scores, admission rates, and choice of major) and exit point (graduation rates, acceptances to graduate or professional school, or honors garnered) at a few very prestigious colleges.

National statistics have shown Asian Americans achieving success in terms of income and education. The Pew Research Study (2013) stated that 49% of Asian

Americans over 25 years of age have a bachelor's degree. However, these statistics ignore the fact that many Asian Americans obtained their degrees in their homeland before immigrating to the U.S., and therefore their presence is a "brain gain" to the U.S. (Hune & Takeuchi, 2008).

Furthermore, these aggregate statistics do not depict the reality of many Asian American populations who still struggle to attend and complete college (Teranishi, 2010). While large portions of ethnic sub-groups from East Asian (i.e. Chinese, Taiwanese, and Korean) and South Asia (i.e. Asian Indians, Pakistani, and Bangladeshis) have a bachelor's degree or higher as their highest level of education, there are other ethnic sub-groups that are more likely to drop out of high school (Teranishi, 2010). For example, Museus (2013) noted that while Asian Indian and Taiwanese Americans hold baccalaureate degrees at more than twice the rate of the national population (76% and 72%), Hmong, Cambodian, and Laotian Americans hold bachelor's degrees at less than half the rate of the overall population (14%, 13%, and 12%).

In postsecondary education, the model minority stereotype has led to a low priority accorded to Asian American educational equity and affirmative action programs. In addition, the high numbers of Asian American students enrolled in higher education institutions have led college administrators to conclude that Asian Americans are "over-represented" and the cause of "ethnic imbalance" in the composition of student bodies. In fact, some institutions of higher education imposed unofficial quotas on the numbers of Asian students they would admit (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Suzuki, 1989; Teranishi, 2010). Moreover, for over a decade nearly half of all Asian Americans have been enrolled in community colleges, contrary to a public perception that they are primarily in elite

private and public colleges and universities (The National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2008).

Due to data on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in higher education generally being quantified into an aggregate that distorts and misrepresents their subgroups, many Asian American scholars argue for the use of disaggregated data to better understand the specific needs and conditions of AAPI groups. Disaggregated data are imperative for raising awareness about the wide range of social conditions and educational outcomes among AAPIs and helps reduce the extent to which AAPIs are being confounded with others. Educators need this data in order to critically examine the extent to which their schools meet the demands of a competitive global environment and advance principles of equality and justice. Public officials can also better allocate resources to serve those in greater need of educational opportunities and services (Hune & Takeuchi, 2008; Lee, 1996; Pang, Han, & Pang, 2011; Teranishi, 2010; Teranishi, Lok, & Nguyen, 2013; Veal, 2013).

Several studies have utilized disaggregated data to refute the model minority stereotype. The data show that the AAPI population demonstrates a wide spectrum of performance, indicating that ethnic groups have diverse socio-economic characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses (Hune & Takeuchi, 2009; Lee, 1996; Nguyen, Nguyen, Teranishi, & Hune, 2015; Pang, et al., 2011; Teranishi, 2010; Veal, 2013).

In *Disaggregating the College Experiences of Filipino Americans*, Veal (2013) utilizes quantitative data sources to discuss Filipino/a students as separate from the AAPI population. She examines and disproves the model minority stereotype and reveals the complexity of Asian American and Pacific Islander American experiences in post-

secondary education. Through an analysis of 23,000 surveys completed by AAPI students, Veal illustrates how Filipino/a college students cannot be considered a homogeneous extension of their AAPI counterparts. For example, Filipino mothers had higher rates of 4-year college degrees and postgraduate study than the general AAPI sample. However, the positive influence typically associated to the mother's higher educational level is not fully realized due in part to institutional barriers and the lack of support systems (Okamura, 1998).

In summary, quantitative data such as aggregate data on Asian Americans have limitations. Furthermore, disaggregated data by ethnic group are helpful, but also have limitations. Hence, in addition to calling for disaggregated data many scholars of marginalized groups, including Asian American researchers, are pursuing qualitative studies to ensure that the perspectives and voices of their subjects are made visible.

Qualitative data has also provided evidence to contradict the model minority stereotype. Through interviews, focus groups, or other qualitative methodologies numerous scholars have given voice to AAPI subgroups who are struggling to succeed academically, but are overlooked due to the model minority stereotype (Buena Vista, 2007; Chhuon & Hudley, 2008; Lee, 1996; Maramba, 2003, 2008a, 2008b; Revilla, 1993; Suzuki, 1977; Wolf, 1997).

For example, Lee (1996) in *Unraveling the "Model Minority" Stereotype: Listening to Asian American Youth* conducted a year and a half long ethnographic study focusing on Asian American students' racial/ethnic identities and academic achievements at an urban high school on the East Coast (Academic High). Through her observations and multiple conversations with students, faculty, and staff, she found that student

identity is related to achievement. At Academic High, students of Asian descent identified themselves in one of three groups: Korean, Asian, and Asian American. A fourth group, New Wavers, was described by Lee as students who expressed a pan-ethnicity among non-Asians and expressed their specific ethnic identity among other Asian Americans. Students in all of the identity groups were aware of their status as members of a racialized minority group. This awareness influenced their attitudes towards schooling. Both Korean and Asian identified students were academically successful. They attempted to live up to the model minority standards and were reluctant to seek academic support and admit “failure.” Asian American identified students fared well in school and hoped that education would allow them to more effectively fight social inequalities. New Wave students were more likely to be low achievers and did not believe in the connection between schooling and future success. Explanations for their low achievement include negative experiences with authority figures outside of school (which then led to suspicion of all authority figures), feeling low about their chances of succeeding in an intense and competitive academic environment, and tenuous relationships with non-Asians.

Lee concluded that the model minority stereotype silences the complexity of the students’ experiences. Furthermore, her findings suggest that a range of identities can be expressed by individuals who appear to share the same minority status. Asian American students’ experiences and concepts of identity at Academic High emphasize the diversity within Asian American communities.

Lee’s study is an example of how qualitative research methods are able to explore the complexity of human behavior, such as differences within and across racial and ethnic

groups, and generate deeper understanding of people's backgrounds and experiences. She also uncovers how school climate impacts various groups of students in different ways. Drawing upon Lee's findings, qualitative research on Filipino American college students is important because it can allow for a closer examination of concepts, such as ethnic identity, and influences including family culture and institutional practices, while providing students with the opportunity to elucidate full, rich descriptions of their experiences and perceptions in their own voices.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to identify how Filipino American family, identity, and campus climate, combined with the struggles typically associated with the sophomore year of college, affect Filipino American second-year students' perception of their academic and social challenges at one public research intensive university. To gain perspectives and voices of Filipino American students themselves, I conducted a qualitative study with nine Filipino American second-year and third-year college students at a large, public university, using extensive interviews and a focus group.

There has been a plethora of research on first-year students and their difficult transition from high school to college. The recognition of the critical nature of the freshman year has motivated institutions to implement a wide range of programs and services to improve the quality of the first year experience. Less well understood is the experience of second-year students and the unique challenges they face both developmentally and academically. Widely termed as the "sophomore slump," second-year students typically find themselves anxious, depressed, and confused. Internal and

external pressures on major and career selection, financial independence, interpersonal relationships, and academic success combine to cause sophomores to disengage from their studies, be dissatisfied with their college experience, transfer to other institutions, and/or completely withdraw from school (Anderson & Schreiner, 2000; Coburn & Treeger, 1988; Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Graunke & Woosely, 2005). For Asian Americans, and in this case study, Filipino American students, these issues may be intensified due to additional cultural barriers and expectations including those of the model minority stereotype.

Despite Filipino Americans being the second largest Asian immigrant population in the United States (see Table 1) and of long standing presence as an ethnic group in the nation, the number of Filipino Americans earning postsecondary degrees is surprisingly low. There are several possible reasons why this phenomenon is occurring including family pressures and cultural expectations, ethnic identity confusion, and unwelcoming campus climates (Buenavista, 2010; Maramba, 2013; Monzon, 2013; Museus & Maramba, 2011; Nadal, 2013; Ocampo, 2013; Ong & Viernes, 2013). Moreover, U.S. undergraduate students who decide to leave college, in general, often do so during their second year of college.

To find out more, qualitative studies would be beneficial. Given these multiple potential barriers to success, this study seeks to examine Filipino American second-year students' challenges in college and from their point of view. I also aim to bring more visibility to the college experiences of Filipino American students through this

examination of their sophomore year perspectives. In particular, I examine the effect of family, ethnic identity, and campus climate on Filipino American students during their second year of college.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant for four reasons. First, it addresses the invisibility of Filipino Americans in higher education research by focusing on them specifically. As noted earlier, Filipino Americans' educational experiences and their impact on schools and academic communities have rarely been examined. Filipino Americans have typically been studied as part of a larger racial group such as minorities, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders. As a result, the specific experiences of Filipino Americans are lost within a larger context. By studying Filipino Americans explicitly, their experiences can be at the center and foregrounded, and then compared and applied to other minority populations (Maramba & Bonus, 2013).

Second, this study explores three main factors (family, ethnic identity, and campus climate) that may affect Filipino American college students' experiences. Historically, institutions of higher education have mirrored U.S. society's social, political, and economic inequalities (Maramba & Bonus, 2013). By focusing on Filipino Americans and their second-year experiences, the values and practices of higher education can be examined in a different light. Possible inequalities and ethnocentric views and policies can be identified.

Third, this study seeks to shed new light on persistence and retention theory in higher education generally through a case study of Filipino American second-year

students and the role of home culture, ethnic identity, and campus climate in addressing their academic challenges. As an ethnic community, many of them are second generation. The literature on immigrant students, which I explore more deeply in Chapter 2, has predominantly emphasized cultural deficits to explain gaps in educational attainment. In Chapter 3, however, I will discuss how this study focuses on cultural strengths and how familial concepts and ethnic identity can also provide students with multiple kinds of capital to be academically successful.

Finally, the fact that Filipino Americans are the second largest Asian immigrant population in the U.S., but many are underachieving in higher education, implies a demographic imperative to better understand this student population. I seek to share my findings in order that faculty and student services staff, including academic advisers, career counselors, and mental health practitioners, will have better tools to support these students. By doing so, effective outreach and programs can be constructed to increase Filipino American student retention and ensure that Filipino American students have a positive learning experience.

### **Research Questions**

To the best of my knowledge, there have not been any studies that examine how Filipino American cultural influences combined with the struggles typically associated with the sophomore year of college, affect Filipino American second-year students' experiences. The main question being addressed in this qualitative method study is: What

are the academic and social challenges that Filipino American students face during their second year of college and to what extent do they affect their perceptions and actions in terms of the sophomore slump?

In order to address this overarching question, this study will focus specifically on the research questions below.

1. What role does the family play in Filipino American students' academic and social challenges during their second year of college?
2. How do Filipino American students perceive their ethnic identity and how is this related to their academic and social challenges during their second year of college?
3. How does the campus climate, in particular interactions with faculty and staff, affect Filipino American students' academic and social challenges during their second year of college?

Through these research questions, I investigate the influence of family, ethnic identity, and campus climate on this population of students and consider how each component affects Filipino American student retention.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

In the following chapters, I systematically expand on the ideas presented above. Chapter 2 presents the literature that undergirds our collective understanding of the problem addressed in this dissertation, providing context regarding Filipino American families and Filipino American identity development. It also provides the research on second-year students' college experiences and the sophomore slump. Chapter 3

introduces and develops three frameworks, Kevin Nadal's (2004) Pilipino Identity Development Model<sup>1</sup>, Tara Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model, and Tara Yosso's (2006) Stages of Passage Theory, on which the data from this research will be analyzed. In addition, Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the methodology used to address the questions posed in this study, along with the data collection and analytic approaches used. In Chapters 4, 5, and 6 I share the findings of my research questions. In Chapter 4, I discuss the role family played in Filipino American students' perceived challenges during their second year of college. In Chapter 5, I describe how Filipino American second-year students conceptualized their ethnic identity and how this was related to the academic and social challenges they faced. In Chapter 6, I focus on campus climate and how faculty, staff, and peers helped and/or hindered Filipino American students' success. Chapter 7 concludes with a discussion of the findings, especially how they shed more light on the sophomore slump phenomenon, impact persistence and retention of Filipino students, and lead to implications for research and student affairs practitioners.

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<sup>1</sup> A 'P' is used instead of 'F' for Pilipino because the 'F' is seen as a symbol of colonization of the culture. There are no 'F's that occur naturally in any language in the Philippines.

## Chapter 2

### **Literature Review: Filipino American Family, Identity Formation, and College Student Experiences**

This chapter examines the research literature relevant to this conducted study. It focuses on: (a) Filipino American family expectations and pressures (b) Filipino American culture and identity formation (c) Filipino American college student experiences and the effect on retention, and (d) second-year students' experiences and the sophomore slump.

#### **I. Filipino American Family Expectations and Pressures**

Filipino ideology around family includes a great emphasis on hierarchical relations in terms of both age and gender in family life. Filipino children and younger siblings are expected to pay respect to their elders and older siblings, and women show deference to their husbands, older brothers, parents, and parents-in-law (Sustento-Seneriches, 1997). Several studies on Filipino American college student success included interviews with Filipino Americans about their family's influence on their experiences as minorities (Buenavista, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2013; Buenavista et al. 2009; Espiritu, 2001; Maramba, 2003, 2008a, 2008b; Monzon, 2013; Museus & Maramba, 2011; Nadal, 2013; Okamura & Agbayani, 1997; Revilla, 1993; Vea, 2013). The majority of these studies focus on one or more of three main areas: parental pressure to succeed, the possibility of bringing shame (*hiya*) to one's family, and the lack of cultural transmission, which has implications for student ethnic identity (Espiritu, 1994; Espiritu & Wolf, 2001; Maramba, 2003; Revilla, 1993; Strobel, 1996; Wolf, 1997).

**Parental pressure to succeed.** Filipino American students tend to feel intense pressure from their parents to succeed academically. Many Filipino American college students' parents or grandparents are post-1965 immigrants who were taught to strive for American ideals and are financially successful themselves. They are often middle to upper middle class and want their children to achieve the same socio-economic status or higher. Their desire for their children and grandchildren to assimilate to American culture and excel academically is very strong. As a result, Filipino American students often feel that they are pushed to do extremely well in school so that they can make their parents or grandparents proud and bring honor to the family. This pressure, along with family obligations, can cause extreme stress to Filipino American students (Espiritu, 1994; Espiritu & Wolf, 2001; Maramba, 2003; Monzon, 2013; Revilla, 1993; Strobel, 1996; Wolf, 1997).

Furthermore, Filipino American students are not only expected to succeed overall academically, but to choose particular majors that their parents believe will lead to a high income and prestige such as engineering, computer science, and biological sciences. Post-1965 immigrants attribute their own economic stability and success to having earned degrees in these subjects and expect their children to follow suit (Cheng, 1989).

Wolf (1997) noted that Filipino American students often do not rebel or reject their parents' desires for fear of confronting and disappointing them. In addition, students often feel obligated to follow their parents' wishes since they are financially dependent on parents' income. Consequently, Filipino American students who do not excel academically feel guilty that they are failing and not living up to their parents'

expectations. These negative feelings are intensified if students believe their parents have undergone great financial burden and sacrifices so that they may receive an education (Macaranas, 1995; Okamura & Agbayani, 1997).

**Bringing shame (hiya) to the family.** Loss of face has been defined as the threat or loss of one's social integrity, especially as it relates to social relationships and one's social standing. Hence, preserving or maintaining face is a tremendous motivational factor that influences individuals to abide by social mores and avoid others' negative impression (Zane & Yeh, 2002). Researchers have used the term 'loss of face' in reference to this Asian social construct and related mental health issues, such as low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression (David, 2010; Gong, Gage, & Tacata, 2003).

David (2010) examined the potential influence of loss of face on Filipino American mental health help-seeking. He had 118 Filipinos complete several surveys including the Loss of Face Questionnaire (LOFQ). The LOFQ (Zane & Yeh, 2002) is a 21-item measure of the threat or loss of one's social integrity. David found that higher loss of face concerns (LOFQ scores) correlated negatively with psychological openness, propensity to seek help, and indifference to stigma.

Gong, Gage, and Tacata (2003) examined the influence of language and concern with losing face on help-seeking behavior for mental health problems among Filipino Americans. Data from the Filipino American Epidemiological Study (FACES), a survey conducted in 1998–1999 in San Francisco, California and Honolulu, Hawaii, was utilized. Approximately 2,285 Filipino Americans who were 18–65 years of age completed the survey. The researchers found that potential loss of face is an important cultural factor that contributes to the help-seeking behavior of Filipino Americans.

Furthermore, Filipino Americans are more likely to discuss their anxieties and concerns with lay people as opposed to mental health professionals or general medical practitioners.

Abe-Kim, Gong, and Takeuchi (2004) used the FACES data to examine help-seeking for emotional distress among Filipino Americans. The researchers assessed the influence of religious affiliation, religiosity, and spirituality upon help-seeking from religious clergy and mental health professionals. They found that Filipino Americans seek out clergy similarly to the general population, in contrast to the gaping difference between Filipino Americans and the general population in their utilization of mental health services. Filipino Americans are much less likely to seek professional psychological support than general society.

Instead of the term ‘loss of face’, the Tagalog (a Filipino dialect) word ‘hiya’ has been used to describe this social construct in regards to Filipinos and Filipino Americans. Nadal’s (2009, 2013) research focus on the concrete role of hiya on mental health help-seeking behavior of Filipino Americans in the U.S. The study’s findings show that Filipino family ideology serves to keep problems within the circle of immediate kin and hinders Filipino American students from asking for help. The inability to deal with one’s issues without asking for assistance is considered “giving up” and is constructed as a non-successful college student quality. Therefore, Filipino American students often feel they cannot turn to their parents or university academic support services for help.

Nadal (2013) states that many Filipino Americans avoid seeking mental health treatment for fear of bringing shame, or *hiya*, to their family. Filipino Americans may feel pressure to represent their family well and seeking support can be viewed as a sign of

weakness or a disgrace to one's family. When a person has psychological problems, it may be depicted as a result of poor parenting, a bad family system, or a lack of strength. As a result, Filipino American students often continue to struggle academically (and may eventually drop out of college), internalize their problems, and suffer from depression and anxiety.

Although not all Filipino American college students are afraid of bringing shame to their family, 'loss of face' or 'hiya' is often discussed as one of the factors that can lead to Filipino American mental health issues and/or poor academic performance. In addition, Filipino American students might not be aware of this cultural construct and how much it affects their academic and personal lives (Abe-Kim et al., 2004; Gong et al., 2003; Nadal 2009, 2013; Zane & Yeh, 2002).

**Lack of knowledge of Filipino heritage.** Another parental influence on second-generation Filipino Americans is cultural knowledge (or lack of it) and parental expectations for youth in the U.S. Second-generation Filipino American students often express their lack of knowledge of Filipino culture and voice their frustration and embarrassment of not knowing more about their heritage. They state that this is due to their post-1965 immigrant parents wanting them to assimilate into American culture (Espiritu, 1994; Maramba, 2008a; Wolf, 1997).

Filipinos tend not to live in cultural enclaves, but rather live in mostly White middle-class suburban neighborhoods (Espiritu, 1994). Often, second-generation Filipino Americans' only exposure to Filipino culture is the food and occasional community gatherings. Many of them also do not know how to speak any Filipino dialect since their parents choose to speak solely English in the home. One reason Filipinos give for not

teaching their children more about their culture is their lack of time due to professional obligations. In order to financially support their family, many Filipino parents work full-time and at various times of the day and night. As a result, there simply is not enough time to teach their children the language and customs of the Philippines. Other reasons for Filipino parents not sharing their Filipino heritage with their children include the desire for their children to succeed academically and the belief that being American is better than being Filipino (Espiritu, 1994; Maramba, 2008a; Wolf, 1997). As one interviewee in Espiritu (1994) noted: "I want my children to know that they are American. I want them to learn English, to be very, very good in English. I also don't teach my children Filipino history. I don't see what's the point. The Filipinos haven't made much contributions in terms of the world" (p. 256). As a result, many second-generation Filipino Americans do not learn much about Filipino heritage nor do they cultivate friendships with other Asian Americans until they reach college (Maramba, 2008a).

In summary, the research on how parents influence Filipino American college students' success focuses on one or more of three main areas: parental pressure for them to academically succeed, avoidance on the part of students to bring shame (*hiya*) to one's family, and lack of knowledge of Filipino heritage. Many Filipino American students feel intense academic pressure from their parents not only to succeed but to excel in certain areas of study known to lead to an economically stable lifestyle. If Filipino American students struggle academically and/or personally, they are often deterred from seeking academic support and mental health services due to the fear of looking weak and bringing shame to their family. Lastly, second-generation Filipino Americans feel disconnected

from their Filipino heritage and culture. This discomfort may be exacerbated in a college setting where racial and ethnic diversity is commonly discussed.

## **II. Filipino American Culture and Identity Formation**

Many scholars of Filipino American colonial mentality have cited the importance of understanding the role of colonialism in student identity development (David & Nadal, 2013; David, & Okazaki, 2006; Lott, 1980; Nadal, 2004; Santos, 1983). Often, education mirrors society's accepted norms and supports existing systems of social stratification. Historically, both the Spanish and American colonial education systems in the Philippines served to maintain and reinforce the superiority of the colonizers and the inferiority of the Filipino people (Buena Vista, 2007; Leonardo & Matias, 2013).

**Colonial mentality.** Juanita Lott (1980) defines colonial mentality as a state of mind that leads the colonized to tear away from their true selves and believe that they are psychologically and intellectually subordinate and inferior people. The concept of colonial mentality is important to this study because the effects of colonialism and colonial mentality are strongly embedded in Filipino Americans' home culture and everyday lives influencing how they view themselves and raise their children.

David and Okazaki's (2006) Colonial Mentality Scale (CMS) for Filipino Americans conceptualized colonial mentality as a specific form of internalized oppression that "involves an automatic and uncritical rejection of anything Filipino and an automatic and uncritical preference for anything American" (p. 241). Filipino Americans vary in their levels of endorsement of colonial mentality.

The first theme of the CMS scale, denigration of the Filipino self, includes Filipinos feeling inferior, resentful, shameful, embarrassed, or self-hate about being a person of Filipino descent. The second theme, denigration of the Filipino culture or body, is defined as the belief that Filipino culture and Filipino physical characteristics are inferior to those of White mainstream culture. Discriminating against less Americanized Filipinos is the third theme and involves avoiding situations that lead to contact with other cultural groups and striving to become highly culturally assimilated. The fourth theme, tolerating historical and contemporary oppression of Filipinos and Filipino Americans, refers to the notion that colonialization was necessary and/or beneficial to the advancement of Filipino culture and society.

Filipinos now live in a postcolonial age, but the effects of colonial mentality on Filipinos and Filipino Americans are still strong. Leonardo & Matias (2013) state that Filipino Americans must know and understand the Philippines' colonial history in order to learn how it has affected both their group and self-identities:

To be an educated Filipino means to learn about one's coloniality in order to forget it. But the act of forgetting is not just an act of denial. Rather, it is the condition of possibility that makes further learning possible for the postcolonial. The Filipino's search for the self is precisely to abolish it, to become something different from what he knows of himself: the colonized" (Leonardo & Matias, 2013, p. 16).

As noted earlier, colonial mentality attributes everything positive and desirable to the colonizers, in this case, first the Spanish and then the United States, and reinforces the belief that the colonized (Filipinos) are psychologically and intellectually inferior (Lott,

1980). Moreover, Nadal (2013) states that colonial mentality can affect second-generation Filipino Americans. For example, a second-generation Filipino American college student might learn from her parents to desire lighter skin or a differently shaped nose, physical features that more closely resemble colonial masters rather than indigenous Filipino people. These perceptions and desires could lead her to developing an unhealthy identity including self-hatred and low self-worth.

However, Lott (1980) points out that Filipino Americans can choose whether or not they want to subscribe to colonial mentality and try to imitate the colonizer. Macaranas (1995) hypothesizes that third and later generation Filipino Americans who search for their ethnic roots will demand more sensitivity to their historical interests in their education, such as through curricular reform. Specific curricular reform efforts will be detailed in a later section. These efforts show that learning about one's ethnic history and culture can lead to a continual evolution of one's identity.

**Ethnic identity confusion.** Kevin Nadal (2004) notes that Filipino Americans may feel confused about their ethnic identity. They can have various levels of race-related stress because they may experience similar forms of discrimination as other Asian Americans, in addition to other forms of discrimination as a result of being mistaken for another group. In terms of discrimination, many Asian Americans suffer from the "perpetual foreigner" stereotype. They are consistently questioned about their American status and/or told that they "speak good English" despite their being born and/or raised in the U.S. (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Lee, 1996).

Additionally, as some of the general public does not necessarily categorize Filipinos as "Asians," Filipino Americans may experience racialization differently than

other Asian American groups. Filipino Americans are often discriminated against by other Asian Americans, serving as the target of ethnic jokes, being considered as not “Asian enough,” and being stereotyped as uncivilized, unintelligent, and criminal (Okamura, 1998). This discrimination may be due to Filipinos being different from other Asian Americans in a variety of ways. For example, Filipinos are often mistaken for Mexicans or other Hispanic or Latino groups due to their brown skin tone and, in some cases, their Spanish surnames (Ocampo, 2013; Uba, 1994).

Furthermore, Filipino Americans are different from other Asian American groups culturally. Due to Spanish and U.S. colonial rule, the cultural orientations of Filipino Americans are very unique. For example, there is a strong Catholic presence in the Philippines due to former Spanish rule. Unlike East Asians, some of whom who are Buddhist or South Asians, which include Hindus, Muslims, and others, 80% of Filipino Americans are Catholic (Agbayani-Siewert & Revilla, 1995). In this respect, Filipino Americans share many of the same cultural values as Hispanic and Latino Americans (Espiritu, 1994; Nadal, 2013; Ocampo, 2013). Also, Filipinos were taught in English throughout their schooling in the Philippines, and learned the importance of American values, especially its political system. Therefore, Filipino Americans speak English more fluently than some other Asian immigrants and are more accustomed to U.S. culture prior to emigrating (Kitano & Daniels, 1995).

Moreover, Chutuape (2016) discussed how Filipinos are situated in the middle of the black and racial binary. Her research examined discourses of identity that high school students recreate and negotiate to make sense of their racial and ethnic identities. She found that Filipino students were considered the ‘blackest Asians’ because their interests,

such as Step (a type of dancing), were more similar to blacks than other ethnic groups. In addition, some of the youth debated whether Filipino Americans were ‘Asian’ or ‘Pacific Islander’. Socially and politically, Filipinos are often placed under the category of ‘Asian’. However, Filipinos are often more culturally and historically aligned with the Pacific Islanders. Most of the Pacific Islands also experienced a period of colonization by Western European countries.

As a result, Filipino Americans may develop an identity that is different than other Asian Americans. They may feel the tensions of being an Asian American, but oftentimes encounter racism that is different than other Asian Americans. Also, they may even experience discrimination within the Asian American group, leading to a conflict in their racial and ethnic identities. One scholar, Nadal (2004) created the Pilipino American Identity Development Model to understand the unique experiences of Filipinos. The stages are numbered 1-6 and include Ethnic Awareness, Assimilation to Dominant Culture, Social Political Awakening, Panethnic Asian American Consciousness, Ethnocentric Consciousness, and Incorporation. I will explore the Pilipino American Identity Development Model in more depth in Chapter 3.

**Juggling Filipino and American identities.** For many Filipino Americans, it is difficult to claim either the Philippines or the United States as their home. Due to geographical and cultural distance from the Philippines, many Filipino Americans feel that they cannot call it their “homeland” yet the land where they live (U.S.) denies them full access to its privileges, viewing them as perpetual foreigners. Filipino Americans are both Filipino and American yet not fully either at the same time (Leonardo & Matias, 2013).

In constructing their ethnic identity, Filipino Americans explore what it means to be “Filipino” versus “American” and the ways the two ideologies can be fused (Espiritu, 1994; Strobel, 1996). In their desire to learn more about Filipino culture, Filipino American college students often enroll in Filipino history and language courses, become involved in either Asian American or Filipino American student groups, and seek out Filipino faculty/staff role models with whom they can relate. The availability of these resources obviously varies according to each individual higher education institution. At colleges and universities where academic and social resources are more centered around the pan-ethnic Asian American identity as opposed to Filipino American specifically, students may begin exploring their identity through this larger cultural group context (Espiritu, 1992; Hong & Min, 1999; Ocampo, 2013; Okamura & Agbayani, 1987). Espiritu (1994) describes the ongoing construction of ethnic identity as a process of selecting, rejecting, and redefining both “ethnic” and mainstream notions of being Filipino American. To assert a Filipino American identity is to insist the process is multidimensional, and one does not need to choose between being “Filipino” and being “American”.

In summary, ethnic identity plays and will continue to play a dominant role in the lives of Filipino American students. Three of the issues affecting Filipino American students’ educational experiences are colonial mentality, ethnic identity confusion, and juggling Filipino and American identities. These factors, combined with inadequate support and cultural misunderstanding from educators, have often led Filipino American students to view themselves negatively.

### **III. Filipino American College Student Experiences and the Effect on Retention**

The literature on Filipino Americans' postsecondary educational experiences is sparse. Some studies focus solely on Filipino American college students (Buenavista, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2013; Buenavista et al., 2009; Espiritu & Wolff, 2001; Maramba, 2003, 2008a, 2008b, 2013; Monzon, 2013; Museus & Maramba, 2011; Nadal, 2013; Okamura & Agbayani, 1997; Revilla, 1993; Vea, 2013), while others examine broader categories such as Filipino children of immigrants (Santos, 1983; Wolf, 1997; Ying & Han, 2006, 2008); 1.5 or second-generation Filipino Americans (Espiritu, 1994; Ocampo, 2013; Ong & Viernes, 2013) or Filipino American youth, which include Filipino American high school, college, and/or graduate students (Agbayani, & Takeuchi, 1989; Flores, 1998; Maramba, 2013, Nadal, 2004, Okamura, 2013, Ong & Viernes, 2013; Strobel, 1997).

Studies specifically on Filipino American college students' experiences have focused on various factors such as parental pressure to succeed academically, as well as issues of access, retention, and activism (Agbayani, & Takeuchi, 1989; Buenavista, 2007, 2013; Buenavista et al., 2009; Okamura, 2013), socioeconomic status (Buenavista, 2010; Kao & Thompson, 2003; Nadal, 2009; Okamura & Agbayani, 1997), racial discrimination (Buenavista, 2010; Buenavista et al., 2009; Cabrera, Nora, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Hagedorn, 1999; Okamura, 2013; Ying & Han, 2006, 2008), gender differences (Maramba, 2008a, 2008b; Wolf, 1997), regional differences (Okamura, 2013), culture (Ong & Viernes, 2013), campus climate (Maramba & Museus, 2013; Monzon, 2013; Museus & Maramba, 2011), mental health issues (Nadal, 2009, 2013; Santos, 1993), experiences with Filipino American curriculum and pedagogy (Espiritu,

2001), Filipino American ethnic identity (Espiritu, 1994; Espiritu & Wolf, 2001; Flores, 1998; Ocampo, 2013, Okamura & Agbayani, 1997; Revilla, 1993; Strobel, 1993; Wolf, 1997), and mixed-race or mixed-ethnicity identities (Choi, He, Herrenkohl, Catalano, & Toumbourou, 2012; Johnson & Nagoshi, 1986).

For the purpose of this study, I focus in this section on studies that address retention. Okamura and Agbayani (2008) state that Filipinos with a low socioeconomic status often enroll in high schools that do not have the resources to adequately prepare and support students in their pursuit of a higher education. In addition, racial and ethnic discrimination at both institutional and interpersonal levels restrict Filipino American students' access to and persistence in college. Furthermore, Museus and Maramba (2011) note that Filipino Americans who do attend college can face similar retention issues and marginalization as other students of color. Many are unfamiliar with college culture and have difficulty balancing family and school obligations.

**Retention theory.** Retention is defined as the decisions taken towards persistence and completion of the postsecondary goal of students (Tinto, 1987). There are several studies on student retention in higher education, the most seminal of which is Vincent Tinto's (1987) Student Integration Model. This model is based on the belief that successful academic and social integration of students into the university culture is a key indicator of future persistence. Students' progress through the three "stages of passage" of Separation, Transition, and Incorporation. The Separation phase involves students separating themselves from their home communities. The Transition stage is marked by a

period of negotiation between the values of the home community and the college community. The Incorporation stage is when students fully integrate into the university culture.

There is a body of research that has critiqued Tinto's model and argues that Tinto's theory is based solely on traditional, White, middle to upper-class students who enter college directly after high school, and needs to be revised to more accurately account for minority students' cultural characteristics and their need to maintain connections with their prior communities to meet familial obligations (Cabrera et al., 1999; Guiffrida, 2003; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Tierney, 1992). Tierney (1992) believes colleges and universities should foster cultural validation of students from all racial and ethnic backgrounds in order to support their social and academic success. The onus should not be on students of color alone, but rather the institutions of higher education ought to play an integral role in ensuring minority student success. In his view, positive student integration is dependent upon the institution.

Aligned with Tierney are Rendón, Jaloma, and Nora's (2000) notion of biculturalism, in which students of color simultaneously live in two different cultural contexts—those represented by the home and the institution. It is often difficult for underrepresented students to completely disassociate from cultural practices and community. Instead students try to maintain ties to both the home/family and university arenas.

Although colleges and universities have a responsibility to increase the diversity of the student population and create a more inclusive campus climate, Maldonado, Rhoads, and Buenavista (2005) posit that students have agency that must be utilized

during institutional efforts to retain students of color. It is the students who have the experiential knowledge and power to seek the change they want to see within institutions regarding diversity. These and other studies (Fuligni, 2007; Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Tierney, 1992; Yeh, 2004) argue that higher education institutions need to better meet the needs of students of color in order for students' coping strategies to be successful.

**Factors affecting student retention.** There are several studies on minority student engagement, retention, and outcomes in higher education, which have identified various factors that contribute to persistence, including pre-college experiences, cost and financial aid, social and cultural capital, academic major, institutional type, and local context (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Lee, Lee, Mok, & Chih, 2009; Maramba, 2008b; Museus, 2008; Museus & Truong, 2009; Tierney, 1992). However, the majority of the studies that address minority student retention in higher education examine the experiences of African American and Latino populations (Hausmann et al., 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Even studies that include Asian American samples do not address their participants' ethnic backgrounds (Fuligni, 2007; Yeh, 2004). Other ethnic groups, including Filipino American students, are largely invisible to researchers and policymakers. In the few studies that do focus specifically on Filipino American student retention, there are two themes that are the most prevalent: the liminality and invisibility of Filipinos and campus climate/sense of belonging.

*Liminality and invisibility of Filipinos.* Buenavista, Jayakumar, and Misa-Escalante (2009) describe Filipinos as liminal:

We use the term liminality to describe the historical positioning of Filipinos between status as foreigners and colonial subjects, being second-generation college students but not having the benefits of parents who understand how to navigate the U.S. educational system, and status as racialized people of color who are often marginalized by other people of color and Whites (p. 75).

Representative of the historical legacy of invisibility created by the Philippine-U.S. relationship, Filipinos are positioned in the middle of the racial spectrum in education. Most institutions of higher education do not recognize Filipinos as an underrepresented racial minority. Often, Filipinos are placed in the aggregate category of Asians who, due to the Model Minority stereotype, are perceived as being academically successful. However, in reality Filipinos do experience barriers as students of color. This liminality serves as a major barrier to college access and retention (Buenavista, et al., 2009).

Filipino American college students face similar retention and marginalization issues as other underrepresented racial minority students. Many are unfamiliar with college culture and have difficulty balancing family and school obligations. In addition, Filipino American issues in higher education remain obscure, and postsecondary institutions consequently fail to provide the recognition of these issues and invest the resources to address their concerns. In general, colleges and universities continue to reflect the culture of the dominant majority. As a result, Filipino American students feel

an overall lack of attention to and support for their educational wellbeing. This negative perception affects their persistence and attitudes toward higher education (Buenavista, 2007; Buenavista et al., 2009; Museus, Palmer, David, & Maramba, 2011).

*Campus climate/sense of belonging.* Several studies identify campus climate and sense of belonging as central to the persistence and attrition of students of color (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Lee et al., 2009; Museus, Nichols & Lambert, 2008; Museus & Truong, 2009). Maramba and Museus (2011) define the campus climate as “the current attitudes, perceptions, and expectations on a given campus” (p. 93). Campus climate can have a profound influence on students’ sense of belonging, or individuals’ perceptions of membership or cohesion (Maramba and Museus, 2011).

Strayhorn (2012) conducted a comprehensive literature review of all studies on sense of belonging published within the last ten years. Focusing on Latino students, Strayhorn found that “to overcome feelings of marginality and to adjust to the new social and cultural contexts of college, students must be validated and positive, meaningful interactions with others on campus are a key aspect of the validation process” (p. 32). In particular, positive and frequent interactions with diverse peers and faculty predicted Latino students’ sense of belonging in college. In turn, sense of belonging influenced students’ goals and commitments including their decision whether or not to stay in college.

Furthermore, Strayhorn (2012) examined several studies on the relationship between involvement and students’ sense of belonging. He found that there is a positive relationship between involvement in academic and social activities (i.e. student clubs and

organizations) and students' belonging in college. Furthermore, students derive a sense of belonging from socializing with faculty members outside of class (i.e. social gathering at their home and conversing over coffee). Overall, involvement in college allowed students to connect with their peers and faculty, become familiar with the campus setting, and affirm their identities, interests, and values as a member of the campus community. This sense of belonging plays an important role in students' academic success.

Tara Yosso's (2006) research also focused on the effects of a negative campus climate on a specific ethnic or racial group. She addresses racialized myths that blame underrepresented minority students for unequal educational outcomes and redirects our focus toward historical patterns of institutional neglect. Yosso's findings were based on data from multiple research projects. Primary data included individual and group interviews, judicial records, and court filings. She also analyzed secondary data from humanities, social science, and legal studies scholarship addressing the education of people of color. Yosso identifies "stages of passage" that Chicanos/as progress through during their process of navigating through a negative campus racial climate including Culture Shock, Community Building, and Critical Navigation Between Multiple Worlds. I will explore Yosso's (2006) stages in further detail in Chapter 3.

Additional studies on how campus climate affects Filipino American college students have emerged in the last decade (Maramba, 2008b; Maramba & Museus, 2011; Museus & Maramba, 2011). Three themes emerge from these studies: the lack of student, faculty, and staff ethnic representation; the need for Filipino specific courses; and negative experiences with student services personnel.

Dina Maramba (2008b) conducted interviews with Filipino American students regarding campus environment, sense of community/belonging, and feelings associated with being a Filipino American student in a predominantly White institution. Filipino American students expressed distress regarding the lack of Filipino students on campus. As a result, they felt intimidated to share thoughts in class out of fear that no one would relate to their experiences, and they were less enthusiastic about their courses.

Maramba and Museus (2013) noted that Filipino American college students' wellbeing on campus has been tied to Filipino faculty and staff who serve as mentors and role models. However, the number of Filipino faculty and staff has not been reported as on par with the number of Filipino American students. In fact, there is no existing database on the number of Filipino American faculty and staff. Furthermore, Maramba and Nadal (2013) found that the majority of colleges and universities do not have a single Filipino American faculty member at their institution. When an institution has only one Filipino American faculty member, that individual may experience burnout from serving as a mentor for all of the Filipino American students on campus.

Maramba (2008b) stated that students also recognized the need for a more diverse curriculum, specifically courses on Filipinos. At the primary and secondary school levels Filipino American history is not part of the curriculum. Many colleges offer few, if any, Filipino American studies courses and thus they continue the marginalization of Filipino American students' culture and history in education.

For Buenavista (2007), Filipino American students' retention issues were shaped and exacerbated by their experiences with student services personnel. Filipino American

students felt that campus support professionals were unfamiliar with Filipino issues and made students feel as though they did not have grounds to ask for help.

Due to the model minority stereotype, policymakers and educators are unaware that Filipino American students face educational challenges. Filipino students in higher education are subject to the same retention issues as other students of color, but they lack the resources and recognition necessary to access the tools to address their concerns. Liminality/invisibility of Filipinos and campus climate/sense of belonging are two key issues that characterize Filipino American college student retention. Filipino American college student retention issues are shaped by the tension that exists between Filipino American students' sociocultural contexts and that of universities, which remain largely unaware of Filipino American experiences.

**Institutional programs and strategies that support the retention of students of color.** There is a plethora of studies on the retention of students of color in postsecondary education (Bowers, 2011; Buenavista, 2007; Chang & Shek, 2012; Chhuon & Hudley, 2008; Gandara, Orfield, & Horn, 2006; Martin & Arendale, 1993; Moje & Martinez, 2007; Museus, 2008; Museus & Maramba, 2011; Museus et al., 2011; Noel, Levitz, & Saluri, 1985; Park, 2012; Park & Chang, 2009; Park & Teranishi, 2008; Patton & Harper, 2009; St. John, Cabrera, Nora, & Asker, 2000; Tinto, 2000; Wagoner & Lin, 2009). Some studies focus on institutional norms that hinder minority student educational attainment including inadequate psychological counseling, lack of specialized academic support services, and a heavy reliance on part-time faculty who appear inaccessible to students in need of support and encouragement (Bowers, 2011;

Wagoner & Lin, 2009). For example, in *Multiple factors hinder retention of Hispanic students*, Bowers (2011) notes that Hispanic students do not have the network of support that other students do and professors should help organize study groups.

The majority of research, however, highlights institutional programs and strategies that support the retention of students of color, including recruiting more students of color (Noel et al., 1985), specialized orientation and summer bridge programs (Buena Vista, 2007; Noel et al., 1985; Wagoner & Lin, 2009), financial assistance programs (Gandar et al., 2006; Noel et al., 1985; St. John et al., 2000; Wagoner & Lin, 2009), mentoring/tutoring programs (Wagoner & Lin, 2009), student ethnic organizations/centers (Buena Vista, 2007; Chhuon & Hudley, 2008; Moje & Martinez, 2007; Museus, 2008; Museus & Maramba, 2011; Wagoner & Lin, 2009), residential learning communities (Noel et al. 1985; Tinto, 2000), professional development on cultural issues for faculty and staff (Patton & Harper, 2009), hiring more faculty of color to serve as role models (Museus et al., 2011), multicultural advising and counseling resources (Museus et al., 2011; Noel et al., 1985; Wagoner & Lin, 2009), college success courses (Martin & Avendale, 1993), American Ethnic Studies courses (Chang & Shek, 2012), culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy (Museus et al., 2011), and minority serving institutions (Park, 2012; Park & Chang, 2009; Park & Teranishi, 2008). Many of these same strategies have been utilized to support the retention of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) college students in general and Filipino American students specifically.

Two main strategies that have been developed to address the retention of AAPIs are Asian American pedagogy and Asian American student organizations/centers.

*Asian American pedagogy.* Asian American pedagogy refers to the approach to teaching and learning associated with the founders of Asian American studies and activists in the Asian American movement in the late 1960s. Unlike the standard approaches to teaching in the United States, which focus on the transmission and acquisition of knowledge, Asian American pedagogy stresses human liberation. Teachers create learning environments that help people master knowledge to overcome oppression. There are three basic tenets for Asian American pedagogy: connecting history and people's lives, using knowledge to help the community, and self and community empowerment (Omatsu, 2012).

The first tenet, helping students discover the intersection between history and their own lives, is imperative for transforming them into active agents who can make their own history. Practitioners of Asian American pedagogy help students learn how historical events, such as wars and immigration policy, affected their families (Osajima, 1998). The second tenet, using knowledge to help the community, instills within people a sense of duty to gain knowledge and abilities to address the needs facing their communities, such as poverty. Self and community empowerment is the third tenet of Asian American pedagogy. By using their knowledge and skills to help their community, students not only empower communities but themselves as well. They develop leadership, communication, and conflict resolution skills while realizing that they have the power to make a difference to redress unequal treatment (Omatsu, 2012).

One example of Asian American pedagogy used with Filipino American students is Patricia Espiritu's (2001) study, *Collisions, Conjunctions, and Community: How Filipino American Students Experience a Curriculum about Self*. Espiritu, a Filipina

American, taught a college class on Filipino history and culture called Pinoy Teach to undergraduate students (most of whom were Filipino Americans). The class curriculum confronted one-sided perspectives and information about Filipinos. Filipino American history was used as a vehicle to explore the following key concepts: diversity, multiculturalism, civilization, perspective, revolution, imperialism, immigration, discrimination, racism, and ethnic identity. Experiential-based activities and discussions were used to help create an environment where students could explore and share their own ethnic and cultural background, history, and experiences. A sense of community was formed during discussions on controversial issues such as racism and discrimination. Instead of remaining victims to racism and discrimination, the students began to understand that their personal experiences were part of a larger societal problem. During the second half of Pinoy Teach, the college students taught the curriculum they just learned to middle school youth. They became role models to young children and assisted classroom teachers in implementing a multicultural curriculum in their classrooms.

After the class ended, Espiritu (2001) interviewed her students on their experience with Pinoy Teach. Most Filipino Americans students said they gained confidence from knowing their history, and felt more comfortable responding to issues of diversity and conflict. Five out of six students stated that the “ultimate form of empowerment” came from teaching their ethnic history and culture to others. Espiritu (2001) stated, “The act of teaching can be viewed as a social action because it requires individuals to apply knowledge they have learned to change a social environment (learning) for others. They,

therefore, empowered themselves and others through improved self-ethnic knowledge” (p. 129). The students ended the course feeling more a part of a Filipino American community.

*Student ethnic organizations/centers.* Although colleges and universities have a responsibility to increase the diversity of the student population on campus and create a more inclusive campus climate, Maldonado, Rhoads and Buenavista (2005) posit that underrepresented students should be utilized to retain their peers. These students have the experiential knowledge and power to seek the change they want to see within institutions regarding diversity.

Several studies have shown how student ethnic organizations have helped college students of color create a better sense of belonging for themselves on campus (Buenavista, 2007; Chhuon & Hudley, 2008; Moje & Martinez, 2007; Museus, 2008; Museus & Maramba, 2011; Wagoner & Lin, 2009). During the past thirty years, numerous student-initiated organizations dedicated to the access and retention of students of color have been created. An organization is considered student-initiated if it is created, run, and largely funded by students, as well as grounded in a mission of social justice. Museus (2008) stated, “Ethnic organizations facilitate the cultural adjustment and membership of minority students by serving as sources of cultural familiarity, vehicles for cultural expression and advocacy, and venues for cultural validation” (p. 576). In addition, peers from the same ethnic or racial backgrounds often possess the knowledge and empathy necessary to support one another both in and out of the classroom. Yosso (2006) found that counterspaces (places where marginalized students feel a sense of

belonging and support), such as student organizations, study groups, and campus ethnic centers, provide and nurture a supportive environment where Chicano/a students feel their experiences are validated and viewed as important knowledge. Likewise, Chhuon and Hudley (2008) discovered that students involved in the Cambodian Club often banded together and formed study groups and/or shared educational resources. Socially, these students provided each other with a “safe haven” where they all felt accepted and appreciated. Furthermore, Lee et. al (2009) found that minority students perceived that peers did a better job of making efforts to address racial concerns compared to university administration. Chutuape (2016) noted that, while social solidarity is important, Filipino students recognize the significance of the Filipino Club’s role in helping them construct and form a deeper understanding of their identities, or ‘Filipinoness.’

One example of a successful Filipino American student organization is the Filipino Recruitment and Retention Center (PRRC).<sup>2</sup> This student center is the focus of Buenavista’s (2007) study, *Movement from the Middle: Pilipina/o 1.5-Generation College Student Access, Retention, and Resistance*. Through interviews with twelve Filipino college student activists in the PRCC, the author found that Filipino American students experienced a negative campus climate where they did not feel a sense of belonging. These students did feel a sense of belonging specifically at the PRCC, however. In addition to the physical space where Filipino American students could get together with people from similar backgrounds, they had the opportunity to interact with others regarding social and academic issues through several programmatic events and

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<sup>2</sup> See Footnote 1

services. In line with the philosophy of Asian American pedagogy, Filipino American students promoted their educational attainment as a means for achieving social justice for Filipinos in higher education.

It is imperative to note in these studies the influence of peers on students' social and academic success. Students emotionally supported each other throughout their undergraduate academic careers and beyond. Nonetheless, monetary and institutional support is necessary to build and sustain student ethnic organizations.

In conclusion, the literature on Filipino American college student experiences and the effect on retention includes retention theory and the implication for Filipino Americans, factors affecting student retention, and institutional programs and strategies that support the retention of students of color. The focus in retention theories in recent years has been on how traditional theories, such as Tinto's (1987) model, are not applicable to underrepresented student populations. Several studies have examined issues of retention in regards to the broad category of underrepresented students. The few studies that focus specifically on Filipino American student retention emphasize the importance of a campus climate where students feel a sense of belonging. Institutional programs and strategies that support the retention of students of color include Asian American pedagogy and student ethnic organizations, and I will be exploring them further in my study. Given the scarcity of studies specifically on Filipino American student retention, further research is warranted. I now turn to retention as it pertains to second-year students.

#### **IV. Second-Year Students' Experiences: The Sophomore 'Slump'**

The majority of research on college sophomores has been conducted within the last thirty years (Anderson & Schreiner, 2000; Boivin, Fountain, & Baylis, 2000; Coburn & Treeger, 1988; Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Gansemer-Topf, Stern, & Benjamin, 2007; Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Kneiss, 2013; Lemons & Richmond, 1987; Lipka, 2006; Miller, 2006; Schaller, 2005; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000; Toblowsky & Cox, 2007). First year programs and initiatives rarely continue on to the sophomore year. Consequently, sophomores, who as freshman felt completely supported, report feeling neglected and isolated. The idea of a sophomore slump first appeared when Freedman (1956) noted that sophomores appeared to be the least satisfied of all college students. Furr and Gannaway (1982) used the term sophomore slump to describe the uncertainty and confusion of a student's second year. There are three main bodies of literature on college sophomores: student development theory, barriers to success, and institutional programs.

**Student development theory.** Student development theory, specifically Chickering's Theory of Identity Development (1969) and Perry's Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development (1970), have been used as frameworks for understanding second-year student psychological and cognitive development. Lemons and Richmond (1987) explored how four of Chickering's (1969) vectors explain sophomore student issues: (1) developing competence, (2) moving through autonomy towards independence, (3) establishing identity, and (4) developing purpose. In terms of developing competence, the study found that sophomores struggle with the lack of concrete criteria for success due to differing individual, parental, and peer expectations. Difficulties in

gateway or entry-level courses for the major, extracurricular activities (i.e. athletics, clubs, jobs), and interpersonal relationships (i.e. roommates, dating) can cause students to lose confidence in themselves. In developing autonomy, the end product is emotional and instrumental independence. Exacerbated by the lack of institutional support, second-year students are more uncomfortable and often unwilling to break emotional ties with their parents. In addition, the inability for sophomores to finance their own education hinders them from achieving complete autonomy. Without autonomy, students struggle to establish their own unique identity. Therefore, they also shy away from the task of developing purpose. During the sophomore year, moreover, there is institutional pressure to choose a major and career. Second-year students often feel overwhelmed and unprepared to make this decision (Lemons & Richmond, 1987).

In terms of cognitive development, Boivin, Fountain, and Baylis (2000) state that the majority of college sophomores are still in the dualistic position in Perry's (1970) Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development. This theory is a model for understanding how college students come to understand knowledge and the ways in which knowing is a part of the cognitive processes of thinking and reasoning. Many studies view cognitive development as a procession through stages. Perry (1970) proposes that college students progress through a sequence of nine positions of epistemological growth: 1) Basic Duality, 2) Full Dualism, 3) Early Multiplicity, 4) Late Multiplicity, 5) Contextual Relativism, 6) Pre-commitment, 7) Commitment, 8) Challenges to Commitment, and 9) Post Commitment. They move from viewing truth in absolute terms of right and wrong to recognizing multiple, conflicting versions of "truth" representing legitimate alternatives. For example, in the first stage, Basic Duality, college students believe all problems are

solvable and their task is to learn the correct solution. Whereas in stage nine, Post-Commitment, students integrate knowledge learned from others with personal experience, and realize constructed knowledge is an ongoing, evolving activity. Boivin et al., (2000) state that second-year students tend to view the world dualistically in terms of a right choice versus a wrong choice. A key to moving sophomores through Perry's dualistic position to multiplicity is creating programs and services to help them develop a variety of options related to major, career, and life goals.

In 2005, Schaller constructed the first sophomore student development model. This model focused on second-year students' processes of choosing a major. Through a study of nineteen traditionally-aged, second-year students at a mid-sized, private, Catholic college in the Midwest, she identified four stages that sophomores tended to move through: 1) random exploration, 2) focused exploration, 3) tentative choices, and 4) commitment. In random exploration, students lacked overall direction. They were aware that they would have to choose a major, but they made decisions that allowed them to defer the decision-making process. Second-year students in the focused exploration stage, however, were frustrated with their college experiences and worried about their future. These students were exploring one or two areas of interest. During the third or tentative choices stage, students realized they had a new level of responsibility for their choices and aligned their choices with their values. The few sophomores in the commitment stage had an unwavering commitment to one or more areas in their lives.

**Barriers to sophomore student success.** In the past decade, retention rates for sophomores have become an increasing concern for academia. In his research on retention, progression, and graduation at the University of North Alabama (UNA), Luna

(2009) found that the sophomore to junior attrition rate was significantly higher than the freshman to sophomore and junior to senior attrition rates. At UNA, the progression of sophomores to juniors declined over seven percent during a five-year period. On a broader scope, research by the U.S. Department of Education has shown that amongst all students who drop out of college, approximately 67% more do so in their second year than their first year (Lipka, 2006).

The second-year students who stay enrolled in college have shown to be more highly dissatisfied with their institutions than freshman or upper-classman. University life is no longer novel and sophomores are more critical of the limitations of the institution (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006). Also, there are few second-year programs and initiatives, the lack of which contributes to sophomores feeling isolated (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969).

During their second year of college, students face many major life decisions in terms of their sense of self and their future. Three of the main barriers to second-year student success include major and career selection, interpersonal relationships, and family pressure. I will now discuss each of these barriers individually.

***Major and career selection.*** Research on the sophomore slump focuses on the pressures and difficulties that students face during the major selection process. While the freshman year is touted as a time to explore, during sophomore year students are expected to be working toward narrowing down their interests and declaring a major. Many universities force students to choose a major some time during their sophomore year (Bellani, 2007; Coburn & Treeger, 1988; Miller, 2006).

Often, sophomores are simply not ready for the intensified curriculum of their second year. The “gateway” courses to particular majors and career pathways serve to

weed out students who are not academically qualified. Some students have strived towards a particular profession for so long that, when they do not succeed in the courses necessary to achieve their goal, they are devastated. A common example is pre-medicine. Students who fail chemistry and physics are at a loss of what to do and how to search for alternative paths (Anderson & Schreiner, 2000).

The anxiety and uncertainty of choosing a major can cause students' overall grades to decline. Graunke and Woosley (2005) found that sophomores who expressed lower levels of certainty about their major also achieved lower grades. A recent phenomenon has been for students to "stop out" of college and "find themselves." As opposed to continuing to take classes that are neither personally or academically satisfying, students take time off from college to reflect on their college experience thus far and figure out which college and major, if any, is the right fit for them (Coburn & Treeger, 1988).

***Family pressure.*** In addition to institutional pressure to choose their major, many students feel parental pressure to choose particular majors or pre-professional tracks that parents believe will lead to a high income and prestige. For students who are dependent on their parents' income, they often feel obligated to follow their parents' wishes. Sophomores feel guilty if they veer off their parental-directed path since their parents are sacrificing so much money for their education (Coburn & Treeger, 1988; Lemons & Richmond, 1987).

On the other end of the spectrum, some students have the daunting task of paying for their own education through full-time or part-time employment, financial aid, and loans. These students often claim that they do not want to "waste time" and need to

choose the “right major.” Both scenarios cause students a significant amount of stress that can affect their academic success and personal happiness. It is not uncommon that students either transfer to another university of lower cost or drop out of college due to financial pressures and constraints (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007).

**Sophomore programs.** The growing realization that the second year is a potential period of risk for college students led the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition to publish a monograph that explored the sophomore year (Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000). The monograph focused not only on sophomore year issues, but also institutional responses to them. In 2007, the National Resource Center published another monograph on sophomores, this time based on a study exploring the range of programs that U.S. colleges and universities offer sophomores. Findings show that campus efforts are designed to address one or more of five goals: 1) creating a sense of community, 2) fostering social engagement, 3) facilitating faculty-student interaction, 4) encouraging major selection, and 5) career exploration and promoting academic engagement and leadership.

As a result of the National Resource Center 2007 study, Hunter, Toblowsky, Gardner, Evenbeck, Pattengale, Schaller, & Schreinder (2010) constructed five recommendations for sophomore programs:

1. Connect students to faculty and engage them in the learning process
2. Focus sophomore advising on connecting present and future identities
3. Build purpose and peer satisfaction through selective involvement on campus
4. Empower students to navigate the institution’s systems
5. Help sophomores connect their strengths to academic success (p. 56-63).

In addition, Hunter et al. (2010) noted that new programs are not necessarily needed to achieve good outcomes for students. For example, training advisers to help sophomores connect present to future may be adequate to create positive outcomes. Also, the authors cited institutional interventions that can be used to promote student success, such as providing academically related experiences and collaborative learning, tailoring academic advising to meet student developmental needs, and providing students with opportunities to participate in undergraduate research.

Whether it is research on second-year student development theories, barriers to success, or institutional programs, however, it is important to note that the vast majority of studies on college sophomore issues do not examine or address the experiences of underrepresented students. To my knowledge, the only exception is Kneiss' (2013) dissertation on underrepresented students' perception of their second-year in college. While this study defines an underrepresented student as a student who identifies as African American, Latino/Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian or Alaskan Native, however, only students who identified as African American or Mexican American participated. Therefore, there is a lack of research on Asian and Pacific Islander American college sophomores' experiences in general, and Filipino American college sophomores in particular.

Overall, there is a dearth of research on students' experiences during their second year of college. The three main bodies of literature on college sophomores focus on student development theory, barriers to success, and institutional programs. This literature, however, does not take into consideration the effect of students' racial and ethnic backgrounds on their college experiences.

## Summary

Filipino American family expectations, ethnic identity development, campus climate, and challenges associated with the second year of college, are interrelated and deeply affect Filipino American sophomores' college experiences. In this chapter, I have discussed four bodies of literature that connect and ground my study. First, I explored the strong influence that family and Filipino cultural constructs have on Filipino American college students. While parents convey to their children the importance of being academically successful and bringing honor to the family, what Filipino American college students want to learn from their parents is the language and customs of the Philippines. Second is Filipino American culture and identity formation. Filipino American students can be deeply affected by their parents' colonial mentality, yet they live in a postcolonial world. Therefore, many Filipino Americans feel that they are caught in the middle; they are neither fully Filipino nor fully American.

Third are current retention theories and how they are related to Filipino Americans in particular. Similar to other underrepresented populations, many Filipino American college students do not feel a sense of belonging and lack a community of support on campus. Lastly, I explored the "sophomore slump" phenomenon and how the second year in college is often a difficult one for many students. There are so many programmatic efforts geared towards freshman and upperclassmen, that sophomores often get forgotten or ignored.

The literature reviewed in this chapter supports the need for a study of Filipino American students' experiences during their second year of college. This study will explore the salient factors in Filipino American college students' second year experience

at a large, public university. In Chapter 3, I discuss the conceptual framework, methodology, and research design of the study.

## Chapter 3

### Conceptual Framework, Methodology, and Research Design

#### Conceptual Framework

I base my conceptual framework on three theoretical models: Nadal's (2004) Pilipino American Ethnic Identity Model, Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model, and Yosso's (2006) Stages of Passage Model. These concepts emerged from the bodies of literature on student ethnic identity development and student retention, and provide a useful frame for thinking about multiple kinds of identities. I use these theories to guide my analysis of the statements Filipino American second-year students make regarding college life. By situating my work within this theoretical framework, this study is poised to contribute to the literature on Filipino American college students, and provides a deeper understanding of how family influences, ethnic identity, and campus climate shape their experiences.

**Kevin Nadal's Pilipino American Identity Development Model.** Kevin Nadal (2004) studies the distinctive experiences of Filipino Americans. I will utilize the stages of identity within this model as part of my examination of second-year college student retention. I will consider what stages students are at and how it affects retention.

Although the stages are numbered 1-6, Nadal notes that this model is nonlinear and Filipino Americans may advance through the stages in a progressive manner or move back and forth between stages. Also, some people may not progress through all the stages.

Nadal's first stage, *Ethnic Awareness*, usually occurs at a very young age (2-5 years old). Filipino parents will teach their children about Filipino culture through food,

music, dance, and dress. They may also attempt to teach their native language. Children in this stage will have an impartial view of Filipino culture because it is the only culture to which they have been exposed. In the second stage, *Assimilation to Dominant Culture*, Filipino Americans will prefer dominant cultural values over their own. Lifestyles, culture, and physical characteristics of White society are perceived as superior to those of Filipino Americans. Depending on their life circumstances, some Filipino Americans stay in this stage their entire life. The third stage, *Social Political Awakening*, occurs when Filipino Americans realize the social injustice and racial inequality in the world. This stage can be triggered by an experience of racial discrimination or by education (i.e. taking an Asian American Studies class). “. . . this stage occurs when the previously assimilated F/Pilipino realizes that he or she can never rise to the standards of whiteness. The primary result is the abandonment of identification with White society and a consequent understanding of oppression and oppressed groups” (p. 55).

While some of the stages in the Pilipino American Identity Development Model are similar to other identity models (i.e. an individual may assimilate or be ashamed of his/her racial group and may move toward embracing his/her racial group), Nadal's (2004) fourth and fifth stages are specific to Filipino Americans. In the fourth stage, *Panethnic Asian American Consciousness*, Filipino American individuals may highly identify with other Asian Americans and turn to them for validation and support. In regions where there are many Filipinos this stage might not be as significant. They will utilize the Asian American identity for coalition, but not as a term of identity. In regions where there are few Filipinos, Filipino Americans may identify as Asian American for a greater sense of belonging and acceptance into the community. Often, Filipino Americans

in this stage have negative views of White society and are distrustful of White people. In the fifth stage, *Ethnocentric Consciousness*, Filipino Americans become aware of the marginalization of Filipinos as Asian Americans, and are educated on the social injustices and invisibility specific to Filipinos in American society. Therefore, Filipino Americans at this stage will identify with their ethnic group (Filipino) instead of their racial group. This stage can be sparked by a number of experiences including a racially derogatory remark made by an Asian American, reading a book about the marginalization of Filipinos in the Asian community, or watching an educational Filipino movie. Filipino Americans in this stage are often angry at the entire society. They want the Filipino American community to be recognized and understood.

In the sixth stage, *Incorporation*, “The Filipino American will be most satisfied with his or her culture but will be able to appreciate all other racial backgrounds as well, including White Americans and Asian Americans” (p. 59). Filipino Americans in this stage will not view being part of the Asian American paradigm as solely negative. They will advocate for themselves, the Filipino community, and social justice as a whole.

I utilize Nadal’s (2004) model because it focuses solely on Filipino American ethnic identity experiences as opposed to the larger aggregate group of Asian Americans. While not all Filipino Americans may experience some or all of the stages at various times throughout their lives, the model provides common, general stages that many Filipino Americans can identify with themselves or for others. In addition, I chose Nadal’s model because student ethnic identity can play a significant role in Filipino American college student retention.

**Tara Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model.** Tara Yosso's (2005) model of cultural wealth takes into account students' cultural backgrounds and the notion that underrepresented students' cultures can provide various types of support. In this study, I will examine what types of cultural resources Filipino American students rely on during their sophomore year, such as student organizations and family support networks, and its effect on retention.

Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth is in contrast to the work of Bourdieu (1973). Bourdieu (1973) believed that cultural capital could be obtained from one's family or formal education. His theoretical concepts are based on the premise that cultures that are not "mainstream" are deficient. Underrepresented students need to assimilate to White, dominant culture. However, while Bourdieu viewed White, middle class culture as the standard, Yosso argues that deficit approaches to culture are racist and fundamentally ignore the other forms of capital that communities of color possess.

Yosso's conceptualization of community cultural wealth is based on Critical Race Theory (CRT), which recognizes that racism is engrained in the system of the American society. Communities of color have forms of cultural capital that are not recognized and valued by the dominant culture. Cultural capital "refers to the informal social skills, habits, linguistic styles, and tastes that a person garners as a result of his or her economic resources" (Allen, 2013, p. 181). These various forms of capital are dynamic and build on one another as opposed to being static and mutually exclusive. Yosso describes six different types of capital: 1) Aspirational, 2) Linguistic, 3) Familial, 4) Social, 5) Navigational, and 6) Resistant. *Aspirational capital* refers to resiliency and the ability to maintain hope for the future even when faced with barriers. *Linguistic capital* is

understood as the intellectual and social skills acquired from the ability to speak more than one language. *Familial capital* includes cultural knowledge that is shared amongst families and communities. *Social capital* is defined as networks of people and community resources. *Navigational capital* refers to the skillset required to maneuver through social institutions. *Resistant capital* refers to skills acquired through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality.

**Tara Yosso's Stages of Passage Model.** Tara Yosso (2006) also used critical race counterstorytelling, a method of recounting the experiences and perspectives of racially and socially marginalized people, to raise critical consciousness about social and racial injustice. She identifies three stages of passage that Chicano/a students experience during their transition to college. I will examine how the stages in this model apply to Filipino American students and could affect sophomore year retention.

Yosso's three stages of passage are Culture Shock, Community Building, and Critical Navigation Between Multiple Worlds. During the *Culture Shock* stage, Chicano/a students experience isolation, alienation, and discrimination at the university. They face microaggressions daily in both academic and social spaces. In the second stage, *Community Building*, students create safe communities in order to deal with the pain of such a racially hostile environment. During the third stage, *Critical Navigation Between Multiple Worlds*, Chicano/a students incorporate the cultural values of their families and communities into the university. They also utilize their experience and knowledge that they gained from the university to help their communities.

I utilize Yosso (2005, 2006) in this study because her research does not adhere to the notion that communities of color are culturally deficient, but rather that colleges and

universities have historical patterns of institutional neglect toward underrepresented students. I will examine how Filipino American students express the multiple types of capital that their families and communities possess as an aspect of their transition and success during their second year. Furthermore, I will focus on Filipino American sophomores' academic and social experiences on a predominantly White college campus.

In summary, Nadal's (2004) and Yosso's (2005, 2006) theories allow for a more comprehensive and non-deficit perspective to studying the experiences of different racial and ethnic groups in higher education, including Filipino Americans. I will utilize these theories to examine Filipino American second-year retention in regards to 1) the stages of Filipino American identity development students are experiencing, 2) the sources of familial and community support that students rely upon, and 3) the stages of transition and success students are going through. This study explores themes associated with retention and persistence but places issues of multiple identities and prior knowledge at the core of the Filipino American college experiences.

### **Methodology and Research Design: Qualitative Methods Approach**

To address the lack of research and inadequate understanding of Filipino American students' experiences during their second year of college, I utilized a qualitative methods design. The rationale for a qualitative approach for this study is based on the need to generate theory and constructs for a relatively unstudied topic. Wolcott (1994) stated, "...this is the major role for theory to play, not to tell us what we should see, but to make sense of what we have seen in terms of some broader context or issue" (p. 348). The purpose of qualitative research is not to generalize to a large population, but

to provide rich, descriptive data on a single case or small sample of cases. The researcher can summarize and conclude some findings that may be useful to others while not knowing all of the detailed contexts of the readers. Therefore, the researcher is focusing on offering descriptive data—while indicating his or her potential bias—and the reader can decide how to apply, or not apply, this information (Geertz, 1973; Lagemann & Shulman, 1999).

To the best of my knowledge, there are currently no studies on Filipino American second-year students. There is a study on second-year White students (Schaller, 2005), a study on second-year underrepresented students (Kneiss, 2013), and a study on sophomore men and their search for life direction (Bellani, 2007). However, the focus has not been on understanding the unique experiences of Filipino American students. The studies on Filipino American students concentrate on broader time periods and not specifically college sophomores (Maramba, 2003, 2008a, 2008b). Thus, much more needs to be learned about Filipino American students in their second year of college.

Furthermore, qualitative research focuses on learning from the participants about the way *they* experience a setting or process and how *they* interpret what they experience. Qualitative methods allow the researcher to discover and do justice to participants' perceptions and the complexity of their interpretations (Richards & Morse, 2007). In order to more effectively support Filipino American students during their second year of college, it is important to understand students' beliefs and interpretations of experiences from *their* perspective. As Merriam (2009) articulates:

Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experience they

have in the world . . . In contrast to quantitative research, which takes apart a phenomenon to examine component parts, qualitative research can reveal how all the parts work together to form the whole (p. 6).

During their sophomore year, many factors are involved in shaping students' experiences. Qualitative methods allow me to probe the complexity of this process. In regards to data gathering, this study was conducted in two parts: interviews and a focus group.

**Study setting.** This study focused specifically on Filipino American second-year students at a large, urban research university, in part, because the previous studies on sophomore student experiences have been conducted at small, liberal arts colleges. The University of the Pacific Northwest (UPN), a pseudonym, was selected for three reasons. First and foremost, the university has a significant-sized population of Filipino American students from which study participants could be selected and recruited. UPN enrolled approximately 28,560 undergraduate students in 2014, the year the data was collected for this study. Approximately 40% of the undergraduate student population identified as being of racial or ethnic descent. Self-identified Filipino Americans consisted of 1.86% of the student population. Approximately 17.4% of self-identified Filipino American undergraduate students were in their second year of study (C. Kamekota, personal communication, August 15, 2014).

Second, the Pacific Northwest plays an important role in Filipino American history. During the first half of the 1900s, large waves of Filipino immigrants came to this region to work in the fishing and canning industries (see Chapter 1). Third, I work at UPN and have access to students who could serve as study participants.

I chose to focus my study on Filipino Americans in an effort to delve deeper into the experiences and perspectives of a subset of the larger AAPI student population. Filipino American refers to native and foreign-born citizens and permanent residents from the Philippines or who have ancestors from this region. I did not limit the study to only first or second-generation Filipino Americans because I wanted to capture a wide array of perspectives. I did include mixed race students who identify as part Filipino American since they are a growing population and their viewpoints are critical in examining how race affects Filipino American educational experiences.

**Pilot study.** A pilot study serves as a way to test the proposed questions to determine if the questions are appropriate as well as the usefulness of the interview design method (Seidman, 2006). As a pilot study, I conducted interviews from January to March, 2012 with five Filipino American second-year students—two male and three female. I identified potential participants through my personal and professional contacts. Then I asked those students to refer me to other potential participants (Merriam, 2009). In addition, I observed three meetings of the Filipino American Student Association (FASA) on the UPN campus. I audio-taped the interviews and took extensive notes at the student club meetings. I then analyzed the transcripts and notes and coded the responses to develop the emerging themes from the text.

The three themes that emerged from the analysis were parental/family influence, campus community support, and Filipino American identities. On the theme of parent/family influence, the students identified three main concerns: staying close to home, understanding parents' struggles and sacrifices, and the pressure to succeed. Under the second theme, campus community support, the students spoke of the importance of

Filipino friendships and their struggle to connect with faculty and staff. The theme of Filipino American identities included discussions of who is a Filipino American, trying to juggle Filipino and American identities, and Filipino Americans being seen and treated as minorities.

The pilot study helped me refine the methods I used to study the second-year experience of Filipino American students. As a result of the pilot study, I altered the data collection method. I conducted interviews, but instead of observing the FASA meetings, I held a focus group to provide additional in-depth information. Students had the opportunity to discuss and share with each other their experiences as Filipino American sophomores. Furthermore, the questions used for the interview protocol were expanded to address the three themes. I also altered the selection criteria for choosing participants.

**Sampling and participants.** The selection criteria I used for identifying study participants include being an enrolled second or third year student at UPN, self-identifying as a Filipino American, and agreeing to participate in the study. I limited my study to second and third-year students because I felt that they could most accurately describe their experiences as college sophomores. Second-year students are able to discuss their current viewpoints and college experiences, while third-year students are able to provide a retrospective account of their sophomore year.

I purposefully included students who were not active in UPN's Filipino American Student Association. In the pilot study, students who affiliated with FASA more strongly identified with being Filipino than students who did not affiliate. In order to learn how students along the ethnic identity spectrum experienced college life, I selected some participants who were involved with FASA and some who were not.

The sampling for the interviews carried out between January and March, 2014 was both purposive and convenient. The sampling population was primarily identified through personal and professional contacts. Due to the fact that I am currently employed at the university and worked with the undergraduate student population, access to potential subjects for this study was obtained through contacts with faculty, staff, and students. Using the network “snowball” sampling approach, I identified a few key participants and then asked those students to refer me to other potential participants (Merriam, 2009). In addition, I identified potential participants through the UPN Filipino American Student Association website and contacted them directly. Lastly, I visited classrooms where there was a significant number of Filipino American students and asked them to participate in the study. As a result, all of the participants were connected to at least one resource related to their Filipino American identity.

My study sample size was nine students, including five second-year students and four third-year students. I interviewed four male students and four female students in order to obtain gender equity. An additional female student was recruited to participate in the focus group. In previous literature (Espiritu, 2001; Maramba, 2008a), Filipina students have voiced that they face distinct challenges due to their culture’s gender role expectations.

A small sample is appropriate because this study is intended to generate rich descriptions of the experiences of Filipino American second-year college students. In regards to studying cultural influences on people’s thoughts and behaviors, Geertz (1973) noted, “. . . the essential task of theory building here is not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases but to generalize

within them” (p. 20). Table 3 lists the participants, and some individual characteristics, namely each student’s ethnicity, generation in college, class standing, major, and cumulative grade point average.

Table 3  
Participants and Key Individual Characteristics in order of Class Standing

<b>Name*</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Generation in College</b>	<b>Class Standing</b>	<b>Major</b>	<b>Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA)</b>
Ana	Filipino	Second	Sophomore	Biochemistry	3.45
Ben**	Filipino/Japanese	First	Sophomore	Undeclared	3.23
Caroline***	Filipino	First	Sophomore	Political Science	3.66
Paul	Filipino	Second	Sophomore	Civil Engineering	3.52
Tim	Filipino	First	Sophomore	Education	3.08
Claire	Filipino	Second	Junior	Business	3.09
Grace	Filipino	Second	Junior	Undeclared	2.55
Nancy**	Filipino/Caucasian	First	Junior	Social Work	3.80
Ted	Filipino/Caucasian	Second	Junior	English	3.91

\*All listed names are pseudonyms.

\*\*Student transferred to the University of the Pacific Northwest from another college.

\*\*\*Student only participated in the focus group.

There are some similarities across the nine participating students in the study. All of them are second-generation Filipino Americans. In other words, one or both of their parents migrated to the United States from the Philippines, and the students were born and raised in the U.S. One student, Ben, was born in the Philippines but moved to the U.S. when he was eleven months old. In addition, six of the nine participants are “full” Filipino in that both parents are of Filipino descent. One student is half Filipino and half Japanese, and two students are half Filipino and half Caucasian. Also, all of the participants are traditional-aged (18-22 years old) students who enrolled in the university full-time. Finally, two of the nine participants are transfer students. One student transferred from an out-of-state, four-year university and another transferred from an

in-state, two-year community college. Table 4 lists the participants, and some of their family characteristics, including socio-economic status, family relations, mother's occupation, and father's occupation.

Table 4  
Participants and Key Family Characteristics in order of Socio-economic Status

Name*	Socio-economic Status/Class**	Family Relations	Mother's Occupation	Father's Occupation
Ana	Lower-middle	Parents are married.	Small business owner	Military base front desk job
Ben	Lower-middle	Parents are married.	Call center worker	Retired due to disability
Caroline	Lower-middle	Parents are married.	Loan officer	Architect
Tim	Lower-middle	Parents are married. He lives with his grandmother.	Target store employee	Computer data specialist
Claire	Middle	Parents are married.	Hospital patients accounts representative	Mechanic
Grace	Middle	Parents are married.	Nurse	Certified nursing assistant
Ted	Middle	Parents are married.	Postal service worker	Postal service worker
Nancy	Upper-middle	Parents are divorced.	Unemployed	Small business owner
Paul	No response***	Mother passed away.	Nurse	Jail guard

\*All listed names are pseudonyms.

\*\*Students' self-reported socio-economic status

\*\*\*Student did not respond to email inquiry.

Four of the nine students interviewed reported that their family's socio-economic status was lower-middle class. Their parents' occupations ranged from those requiring little to no education (i.e. Target store employee and call center worker) to those requiring education beyond high school (i.e. architect and registered nurse). All except two students' parents were currently married.

**Data collection.** In regards to data gathering, this study was conducted in two parts: interviews and a focus group.

**Interviews.** I contacted and interviewed the full participant sample from January to March, 2014. See Appendix A for the recruitment email script. See Appendix B for the

participant consent form. Students were interviewed during the winter and spring academic quarters which are at the middle and end of their sophomore or junior year. Students were not asked to interview during “midterm” or “finals” week, a time when many of them are full of anxiety and stress and therefore not in the best mindset to thoughtfully reflect on their college experiences.

All of the interviews with students were approximately an hour long. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed afterwards. I took a semi-structured interview approach where the questions are more flexibly worded. Merriam (2009) states that, “This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (p. 90). The interview questions were based on this study’s research questions (see Appendix C). Following the interviews, I contacted the students via email to check facts and gather supplementary data.

The respondents were assured that all of the information shared would remain completely confidential and anonymous. They were told that they could decline participation at any time. Pseudonyms are used when reporting the interview data. In addition, I created a document that connects each student’s unique interview identification number to the respondent’s name and personal contact information. This document is stored separately from the interview data.

***Focus group.*** I also conducted a focus group in April, 2014 in an effort to gather additional rich data. The composition of the focus group and the focus group questions were developed after some initial data collection and analysis with individual interviews. The data indicated that sophomore and junior students previously interviewed would feel

comfortable discussing their college experience together and rich data could be obtained by doing so. Therefore, I invited all eight of the interviewees to participate in the focus group. Only two students responded that they could participate so I invited another Filipina American second-year student to join the focus group. The composition of the focus group was two sophomores and one junior. The focus group discussion lasted approximately one hour. The questions included four of the same questions from the interview and four different questions. See Appendix D for the list of questions.

Glesne (2006) states that focus groups can be a useful way to gather further insight into issues that developed through data analysis of individual interviews and to member check the researcher's developing understandings with participants. Focus groups can also prompt participants to generate new ideas as people explore their experiences and perspectives with each other and serve as an efficient way to gather a larger amount of data. Also, focus group research can have emancipatory qualities where the discussion can give voice to silenced experiences or augment personal reflection. Feminist scholars have hailed focus groups as a collectivistic method that breaks down the power dynamic and dichotomy between researcher and participant, and it offers an empowering environment for participants to contribute to the advancement of a research agenda of social justice (Madriz, 2000).

However, there are limitations associated with conducting focus group research. Facilitating a focus group session can be challenging as the researcher needs to moderate the group conversation, ensuring that no one is dominating the conversation and encouraging everyone to participate. I set up the tape recorder in advance so that I could concentrate on facilitating the focus group session. Also, some people may feel

uncomfortable sharing their thoughts with strangers or offering a lone dissenting opinion. To address this issue, at the beginning of the focus group session I notified the participants that each person's opinions are important, that there are no right or wrong answers, and it is alright and even desirable for disagreement to arise (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Glesne, 2006; Madriz, 2000). To allow everyone to have a voice from the beginning, after I posed the first question I asked each individual to respond.

**Data analysis.** I analyzed the data for themes, constructs, and variables relating to Filipino American second-year students' college experiences. Geertz (1973) defined analysis of qualitative data as “. . . sorting out the structures of signification—and determining their social ground and import” (p. 9). As opposed to manifest content analysis that examines the instances of words and phrases literally, I performed a latent content analysis that examines the interpretive meaning of words and phrases (MacQueen, 1998). Latent content analysis requires coding which involves segmenting text and categorizing them with thematic codes. The coding process is used to develop “grounded theory”, an inductive process of reasoning where the researcher will interpret the meanings that emerge from the data. This approach is most appropriate since the data analysis is not trying to test a particular theory, but rather find meaning in data that could contribute to the construction of a new theory (Borgatti, 2005; Dick, 2005).

Specifically, I started with open coding, which involves analyzing the data line by line to maintain a focus on the Filipino American second-year college students' experiences. During the course of coding, I found several similarities associated with the emerging themes. These statements were grouped together into distinct categories.

Through memo writing, I further refined these categories and gained insight into the relationships between them. I sought to find common elements in order to further understand participants' college experiences.

In order to assure reliability and validity, I employed three strategies that Merriam (2009) describes including member checks, rich and thick descriptions, and an audit trail. After the interviews and focus group were conducted, the participants had the opportunity to review the data based on their interview and/or focus group and check for accuracy. Following these member checks, I used rich, thick descriptions in order to contextualize the findings and describe them in detail. Throughout the data collection, analysis, and writing process, I left an audit trail that tracked the decisions I made regarding the framework, design, methodology, and findings.

**Researcher positionality analysis.** It is important to acknowledge and examine my assumptions and potential biases as the author of this study. I recognize that my experiences as an academic counselor and my cultural background have shaped my perspectives on how I think Filipino American sophomores will articulate the challenges they face during their second year of college.

As an academic counselor, I spend the majority of my time working individually with students in exploring their academic options and creating educational goals and plans. Therefore, when students I interviewed shared their academic and personal struggles, it was difficult for me not to assess the student's situation in such a manner that I could offer advice and guidance. To address this inclination, I purposefully only asked questions related to the study and tried to respond as little as possible. None of the

participants had ever met with me in a professional capacity, which made the distinction between my roles as academic counselor and researcher much easier.

In addition, it is also important to address the issue of my research perspective as a Filipina American studying Filipino/a American college students. Baca Zinn (1979) noted that researchers who are members of marginalized groups may have an “insider” advantage of obtaining more candid responses and picking up subtleties or nuances of the culture. Therefore, it is possible that the participants in this study perceived a sense of trust and were willing to share more detailed experiences than if the researcher was a non-Filipino. However, other dissimilarities such as ethnic, cultural, generational, class, education, and gender differences positioned me as an outsider at times.

I identify as a second-generation, middle-class, mixed race Filipina American. I think being Filipino American allowed me to establish a trust and rapport with the students in a way that elicited honest, descriptive responses. A few students asked me about my ethnic and linguistic background (i.e. Where in the Philippines is your family from? Do you speak any Filipino dialects?) perhaps as an assurance that I am someone who could understand their story. Also, students spoke in a manner that suggested that they thought I could relate and empathize with their situation.

However, at other times I felt like an outsider especially in regards to my academic and socio-economic background. For example, when students shared how difficult it was to transition to the university given the limited academic preparation that was provided to them in high school, I became keenly aware of the privilege I had due to my socioeconomic background and access to a high quality education. Also, students knew that I was a graduate student and academic counselor, and therefore an outsider to

the undergraduate student community. Despite this distinction, students openly criticized the university administration and related policies. My perspective as an outsider allowed me to appreciate their perspectives and remember the importance of their voices in this research.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the findings based on the interviews and focus group. I will present the findings in three categories: family, ethnic identity, and campus climate.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Filipino Parents and Family: Expectations and Supports**

In this chapter, I respond to Research Question 1 and draw from the interviews and focus group to demonstrate how, in their own words, Filipino American students described the roles that their families played in creating and/or addressing perceived challenges during their second year of college. In alignment with previous research (Espiritu, 1994; Espiritu & Wolf, 2001; Maramba, 2003; Monzon, 2013; Revilla, 1993; Strobel, 1996; Wolf, 1997), nearly all of the students reflected that their parents influenced their college experience in multiple ways. The three roles I will focus on are: Traditional Filipino Parents with High Academic Expectations, Family/Parents as a Source of Personal Support and Encouragement, and Family as Potential Teachers of Filipino Culture. In regards to parents with high academic expectations, I will also discuss how Filipino American students have agency and negotiate with their parents as part of their decision-making processes.

#### **Traditional Filipino Parents with High Expectations**

Several of the participants described their parents as ‘stereotypical’ and ‘traditional’ Asian parents who have very high expectations for them in terms of academic success, major selection, and future career. Espiritu (1994) attributed these high expectations to the fact that many Filipino American college students’ parents are post-1965 immigrants who are middle to upper-middle class and expect their children to achieve the same socio-economic status or higher. Below are some examples that illustrate how the participants articulated their parents’ aspirations for them to succeed.

*“I felt the pressing need to follow in the footsteps of my family.”*

(Grace)

**Pressure to choose a pre-medicine/Biology major.** During their second year of college, students are expected to choose (if they have not already) their academic major and start taking the foundation courses in this area. Similar to several other research universities, at UPN the majority of majors have competitive admissions, which puts additional pressure on students to succeed in introductory classes. The most highly selective majors are in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields, which are known to lead to high income and prestige. According to Cheng (1989), numerous post-1965 immigrants who are the parents of Filipino college students migrated to the U.S. with degrees in engineering, computer science, biological sciences, and health sciences. Since they attribute their economic stability to having earned degrees in these disciplines, they want their children to do the same. In this study, seven of the eight participants received explicit messages from their parents to choose one particular STEM field, pre-medicine/Biology. Tim, a first-generation student, said, “Yeah, as far as my family. Filipino family, very stereotypical Filipino family wants you to become a doctor, things like that. They were up for me doing Bio.”

Claire’s middle-class family would frequently comment on the value of a career in health care, “Coming in here, I was thinking medical, pre-med because my parents, of course, they’ve always been medical, medical, medical because that’s all they’ve known. They know that brings great opportunities.”

Two students, Grace and Ana, specifically mentioned how their parents working in the medical field put pressure on them to follow suit. Grace, whose mom is a

Registered Nurse and whose dad is a Certified Nurse Practitioner, decided she wanted to be different by being a doctor.

My mom's an RN. My cousin's an RN. Everybody in my family is basically some kind of nurse. I felt the pressing need to follow in the footsteps of my family. I've always had the idea of like, I don't want to be exactly the same as everybody else. I went in with a mindset, "I'm a doctor. I'm not a nurse." That's what my parents want me to be. I kind of went in with that mindset I want to impress them, "Okay, with the idea of me being a doctor." My mom kind of planted that seed a little bit, and then she kind of grew it. It was like, "Oh, yeah. When I graduate from high school, I'm going to be totally ready for pre-med and do medical school." It was an established dream from middle school into high school.

Ana, a Biochemistry major, was pressured to be a doctor, but she also enjoyed learning Biology. Her mom is a nurse, and she learned about the medical field at a young age:

I think what got me to choose that profession was probably my mom when she was an RN [Registered Nurse]. She used to have books, and I don't know I would just read them. When I was younger I couldn't go out, so I would just read books. Then I got interested in how the human body works, and then I guess I just took that boat and sailed on that.

Six of the students, Ben, Paul, Claire, Grace, Tim, and Nancy, decided to switch to a major other than Biology because they found another academic discipline that interested them more and/or they were not successful in the Biology pre-requisite

courses. For example, Ben was interested in the sciences during his first year of college. However, when he took Chemistry and Physics courses, he did not like the classes so he decided to change majors. Ben stated, “I came here and I just couldn’t do it. I don’t know whether it was how big the class sizes were or how difficult the class was.” He liked studying how people think, so he took some Psychology classes and is now thinking of majoring in Psychology and Business.

Paul, a sophomore, had a similar experience in his first Introductory Biology class:

At first, I wanted to be a Bio major for pre-med. Then I took a Bio class, and then I realized I just didn’t want to deal with that stuff anymore. Then I thought Bioengineering because I do like Math, and I do like solving problems. Then I realized how much Biology you needed on that, so I was just had a realization that I didn’t like Bio at all. I didn’t want to. I can’t do that stuff. Then I thought Mechanical [Engineering], and I thought I don’t like moving things. Then I applied to Mechanical, Aerospace, and Civil [Engineering]. I got into Civil. I can see myself working as a civil engineer more so than any other thing seeing that I would enjoy it more.

Claire was also planning on pursuing the pre-med track because of her parents’ “medical, medical, medical” emphasis until she took some science classes in college and decided she did not like it. She described her process of exploring majors:

I don’t remember how many [science classes] I took, maybe a couple, and then Math. It was really hard, and I didn’t really like studying for it. I explored different things. I looked at Education, and then I looked at Math, but just like

Math I looked at Business. Then I know Business is a lot of opportunities too. I've learned that I wanted to help people. That's why I wanted to do medical school, but then I know I can help people doing non-profit organizations, and I could be an administrative part of that. I thought Business would be a cool thing to do.

Another example of study participants describing their choice not to pursue a pre-medicine/Biology track is when Grace, who is interested in a Political Science major, spoke of her negative experiences in science classes during her second year of college:

I was in pre-med. My freshman year was like, "Okay. This is not too bad. It's kind of miserable, but it's not too bad." Then I go into sophomore year, and I was like, "I really can't do it. I don't want to." It was horrible. That was the turning point, I guess because I went through the different stages of kind of depression. I was just like, "This is not fun." I'm not having fun, and then I fell off that trail. I fell off of school kind of for a really long time. I was doing so far like, "I can't deal with this. I don't want this." It was more of my parents kind of like, "Keep going," kind of thing that made me kind of want to stay on. I struggled really, really hard to keep my parents happy.

In addition, Tim, who was originally interested in Biology and then switched to an Education major said, "I told them [my parents] for the longest time that I was like 80/20, 80% I wanted to become a Doctor, 20% go into Education, but then that eventually skewed to the point where I wanted to become a teacher and pursue Education." Tim said his family was working class until recently when his dad got a

higher paying job. He viewed his Education major as a way into a field where he could help his community.

One part of why I wanted to do Education was just to give back. I was a mentee at Chief [High School], so I was fortunate enough to get support from a bunch of mentors, from amazing mentors. I felt like it wasn't my duty, but I felt obligated in a sense to come back and switch sides and become a mentor. Then I realized that I really want to give back to the community that I came from. I came from this low-income background. I had peers. I just want to give back, in a sense. I felt like the Dream Program [a high school mentoring program] was the perfect way of doing so.

Furthermore, since there are few Asian male teachers, Tim believed working in Education provided him stability and job security.

The field is dominated by pretty much women, White women. And hey, if they're going to diversify their fields, why not have a male who is Asian, who is fresh out of college. So I told my parents, "Hey, in terms of job security, there's a good chance I'm going to get a job. I'll get a job." At the same time, I looked at the statistics. I honestly don't care about the money. Right now I'm in a position that requires me to do 15-20 hours a week, and it's all volunteer, and I love it. I don't do it for the money. I do it because I love it.

Overall, these examples demonstrate that the majority of study participants articulated the parental pressure they felt to pursue a pre-medical/Biology route but ultimately decided to pursue a different major.

*“Mom, Dad, I can’t. I don’t want to be a doctor anymore.”*

(Tim)

**Student agency.** Students often begin to establish autonomy and break ties from their parents during their sophomore year. Lemons and Richmond (1969) found that developing autonomy results in emotional and instrumental independence. As stated earlier, six of the seven students in this study interested in pre-medicine/Biology showed agency and decided to go against their parents’ wishes and pursue a different major. Furthermore, they were thoughtful and reflective regarding the timing and wording of informing their parents of their decision.

Five of the participants, Grace, Claire, Tim, Ben, and Nancy, did not seek guidance from their parents in their major exploration process. Grace, who originally wanted to be a doctor, attributed the fact that she did not discuss her academic struggles with her parents to their strained personal relationship:

In the Filipino sense, they [parents] raise you to be academics and just go, go out into the world and be a person that works. They get you ready to work. There is never in my household at least, there was never that personal aspect of like, “Get to know your child.” I would go home, I would study, and I would cook, and I would do stuff with my hands. I never would talk to them about anything. There was no personal conversation. I think that’s a thing for a lot of Filipino Americans especially first and second generation.

Claire, Tim, Ben, and Nancy did not address their personal relationship with their parents. Rather, they focused solely on how they were afraid to talk to their parents about their decision not to pursue a Biology major because they knew it would lead to

disappointment and disapproval. These students feared bringing shame to their family due to choosing a less prestigious major. Therefore, they purposefully chose not to tell their parents of their decision to pursue a non-science degree until they had fully explored other majors and found which one suited them best. They believed their parents would be more willing to accept their decision if there was already an alternate major chosen as opposed to being completely undecided.

For example, Claire, whose mother and father are both Filipino, chose not to tell her parents about switching from pre-medicine to Business until she knew for sure that Business was the right fit for her. She took a few Business classes but struggled in them. Then she was considering switching to a Math or Education major. However, after talking to her friends and mentor, Claire decided to stick to a Business major. She thought about what she really wanted to do and realized that it was working in business. It was not until then that she told her parents of her decision. She said, “I don’t talk to them when I’m iffy about stuff because they just give me more anxiety about what I want to do.”

Also, Tim, who reported his family as being lower-middle class, chose not to tell his parents that he switched from Biology to an Education major until he applied and was accepted into the Education major. In preparation for his discussion with his parents, he researched how an Education major could lead to a stable financial future. He said,

I was like, “Mom, Dad, I can't. Like, I don't want to become a doctor anymore, I don't want to pursue the medical field anymore.” So pretty much they, it was hard. It was hard to really convince them, but then I knew my statistics. I’m going to

give you every single statistic of why I should go into Early Childhood Education because the market in the next five to ten years is going to skyrocket.

Ben, who also identified his family as lower-middle class, said he was very anxious about telling his mother about his decision to change from a Biology to Psychology major because she was financially assisting him and might disown him:

I was so worried to tell them. Oh my God! It was the most stressful time of last quarter. Last quarter was pretty stressful with the overwhelming feeling of going into debt. "Don't worry. I'm going to find a job after college, and it'll all work out." Scared me. If you think about it, I was the one who made this decision. I'm the one who's financially supporting myself. I'm the one who takes a loan. My parents, my mom gives me a little bit of allowance every week. It's knowing she has that much financial control over me. It's the mere fact of her feeling, like she could disown.

It was not until Grace was not doing well in several of her Biology courses over the course of a year that she finally felt like she had to tell her parents that she wanted to pursue a Political Science major. Grace stated,

I didn't tell my parents that because that would have sounded really, really bad to my parents. I was trying to build up that, "I have to tell my parents I don't want this. I have to tell them because it's really important that they know, that I don't want it." It took me the entire year. I basically had to hit the very rock bottom and drag along the bottom for a while.

Not knowing how to talk to her parents about her decision, Grace sought advice from a Filipino staff member at UPN:

At the end of the day, when I really needed the mom advice, the heavy . . . How do I break it to my parents? I did see Tess [a Filipina staff member]. I talked to her about, “Auntie Tess, I got to tell my parents that I’m probably going to change my major, and I don’t know what to do.” Even though she is not first-generation Filipino American, she’s a mom. I was just like, “How would you take it if your kids came up to you and just said that?” Then she was like, “I would be kind of angry.” She kind of walked me through the process of what the parent would feel. It was really nice to just kind of get that information. I was like, “Okay, I’m not just going to bluntly state my case.” Then we acknowledged the fact that my parents are first-generation Filipinos. They’re from the Philippines and moved here. She’s [Tess] like, “The culture is going to be different. Their reaction is not going to be exactly the same, but generally, this is what happens.” It was really nice to have that insight and how to approach it.

In response to Grace sharing her decision to change majors, her parents tried to dissuade her. Her mother encouraged her to transfer to another school where she could re-take the Biology classes. Grace said,

They [her parents] kind of really wanted me to try again. They were just like, “You know, maybe you should transfer. Go to a new state and see what you can do there. Turn over a new leaf.” I was like, “You know, I don’t want to re-establish myself back in another campus and stuff.” After having that whole talk with my dad, my dad kind of came up to me. He’s like, “You know what, whatever you want to do, you have my support, but make sure that’s something

that you really want to do because we're spending money." He's like, "That's an issue that we just spent two years of money and stuff on you, and you didn't want to do it."

In addition, Nancy, a first-generation college student, never discussed majors with her family. Her small business owner father was already upset with her because he wanted her to attend a community college:

My dad, right before I left to college, there was some tension because at first he didn't want me to go to UPN because of how expensive it was and that made me unhappy. We ended up getting it all figured out and taking a loan, but it still really stressed me out, and I knew there was still that tension there that was unresolved, but we started talking about it more when I came home for Christmas. I got a job, and I realized how much I could actually help pay towards my college and realized that it's not necessarily the parents' obligation to pay for college. I mean, not all families can.

During her interview Nancy shared that she was suffering from depression and benefiting from meeting regularly with a therapist. This experience led to her decision to pursue a career in mental health. She is currently pursuing a degree in Social Work but never asked her father what he thought about her choice of major. Nancy said,

I think he might be a little skeptical because this is just the feeling I get. He's very conservative, and he's not really one to go for the type of policies that social workers advocate for. He knows that I want to do therapy and everything like that, so I think maybe, I don't know, he'll change his mind. We'll see.

These examples illustrate how students decided to approach a difficult discussion with their parents through thoughtful and reflective preparation. Some of them purposefully researched and explained to their parents how their new intended major would lead to a steady income and career. The students showed agency to fulfill their own educational interests but respected the fact that their parents would be displeased.

*“Sometimes I have to go home on the weekends because they miss me.”*

(Ana)

**Making time for family.** In addition to academics, second-year students often struggle with balancing spending time with their family with their interpersonal relationships, extracurricular activities, and coursework. Wolf (1997) found that the pressure to academically succeed combined with family obligations can cause extreme stress to Filipino American students. All of the students in this study stated that their parents, regardless of how far away they lived, wished that they would visit home more frequently. However, at home the students found it difficult to concentrate on their studies. For example, Ana’s family lived two hours away from the university, but they still expected her to come home on a regular basis. When she was at home, she struggled with studying and completing her class assignments:

Sometimes I have to go home on the weekends because they miss me. I have a big family so there’s always something that’s happening in the house and so many distractions I can’t do homework. I try not to go home too much, but sometimes my parents are very, “I miss you.” My parents are also very old-school, so whenever I come home I have to do chores.

In the focus group, Grace, Tim, and Caroline discussed how they wished they had more time to spend with their family. Caroline, whose family lives close to UPN, shared that she struggled with finding time to visit her family:

I try to go home every other week to see my brother and my dad, but I also have to balance time because my boyfriend is at another university. I try to call my grandparents, but I'm also trying to see my friends here.

Claire, a Business major who was doing an internship located close to her home last quarter, said,

I go home every maybe month or so. Last quarter, I went home a lot because I don't even know why. Because my grades suffered from that. Now I learned that I shouldn't go home a lot, every weekend. I never used to do that either until last quarter. I think I visited more last year compared to this year. Mostly because in my internship I had to.

After a typhoon hit the Philippines, Grace's parents, who work in health care, went there to attend to sick and injured family members. As a result, Grace took time off from school and was left in charge of taking care of herself and her two sisters. She said,

My mom was like, "Hey. You need to come home and help with the family." I was like, "Okay." I was able to withdraw for that quarter, stay home, and help my parents out with what they needed me to do. It was just me for about a month with my sisters running our family business and everything.

In short, parental expectations included spending more time with family. Also, in one case, filling in for them by taking care of younger siblings and working in the family business when the parents traveled to the Philippines to help out other relatives. Yet, for

the students, though desired, time with family often felt like an obligation. In addition, it had costs in terms of keeping up with their academic work.

### **Family/Parents as a Source of Personal Support and Encouragement**

In contrast to research that finds Filipino American parents put a lot of pressure on their children to succeed that students interpret negatively (Buenavista et al., 2009; Espiritu, 2001; Maramba, 2003, 2008a, 2008b, 2013), study participants also offered alternative, positive views of their relationships with their parents. Most of the students (six of the eight) viewed their parents as being supportive. Although their parents could not help them navigate college or tutor them in their coursework because they either did not attend college or did so in the Philippines, they were seen as sources of encouragement.

Nancy, who has a tenuous relationship with her father but a stronger relationship with her mother, stated,

My mom and dad have always been really encouraging. My dad went to college but never finished, and my mom never went to college. She got her GED instead. Even today, talking to my mom last night, she's always like, "Study hard. Do your homework." My parents have always really pushed me to do well academically. They have high hopes for me. I remember my dad talking to people like our neighbors, and people that he would talk just saying how proud he was of me and how he saw the determination in me early on. Same with my mom just always being really encouraging and being happy when I would bring home report cards and assignments that I really worked hard on. I guess my family has

played a really big role. Just everyone in general has always been encouraging for me to pursue my dreams.

Also, Nancy's mom has supported her decision to pursue a Social Work major.

Nancy remarked, "My mom is happy for me no matter what I do."

Meanwhile, Ben, who was afraid to tell his mom about his decision to pursue a Psychology major, found that she was very supportive:

I called up my mom, and I told her, "Hey, mom. I'm really not liking where this [Engineering] is going. I'm actually thinking I might fail my classes." She's like, "It's fine. Just retake them. You can do it. I believe in you. You just need to get back into the swing of things." I was like, "No, Mom. I think I'm going to change my major." She was like, "Do what you want to do. I'm not in control of you. I will love you no matter what. I'll support you no matter what." I was like, "This is awesome."

Paul, who is pursuing a Civil Engineering degree, also described his parents as being very accepting and supportive. His mother passed away a few years ago so he spoke of her in the past tense:

I know my mom would be happy with me, and I know my dad is happy with me. I feel like what I'm doing right now does make them happy even though I feel like anything that I would have done made them happy.

Furthermore, Paul feels that his parents provided him with the foundation to be successful in life. He said,

When I think support, I think like when you're growing up, they help you stand up, and I feel like they're the guardrails for you to hold on to when you stand up,

so once you're up, you can hold yourself up. I feel like now they've transformed themselves into just the ground that I stand on, so instead of having a guardrail next to me saying, "Oh, go this way. Go that way," do the rights and wrongs. I feel like they've taken that away from me, so that I can walk by myself and try to figure that out now.

Paul also acknowledged the sacrifices his grandfather made in order to provide a better life for his family:

My dad's father, my grandpa, he came over to the States with his brother. He chose to stay as a farmer, work minimum wage, live in tents that they used to live in Salinas because they didn't have enough money to buy houses, practically homeless for a couple of years with his brother. He worked his butt off to bring my dad, my aunts, and uncles here. I think that's what set up a lot of things and that's why I'm here right now.

Ana, who felt pressured to go home often to visit her family, was in a similar situation. In her case, her parents did not originally support her attending a four-year university. Like Nancy's father, they wanted Ana to join attend a community college and/or join the military so that her schooling would be less expensive:

They were really proud that I got in [to UPN], but my parents are financially unstable, so it's really hard for me to go to school at the University. They did want me to join the military, so I don't have to pay for loans and the military can pay for my schooling, but I didn't want to do that. Then they really wanted me to go to a community college, but I decided to just take on loans and go here for a better education. There are way more resources here than going to a community college.

However, once Ana was academically successful at UPN, her parents became more understanding:

That [her parents not being supportive] was at the very beginning, and then when I got here and when they saw me, that I was really successful. Last year I didn't have much academic problems. I was on the Dean's list every quarter since I was out there. When my parents saw that they were like, "Oh, okay maybe she should just stay at the University." That totally convinced them, and they've been really supportive since. They actually provide me food every other week. They come hand me frozen foods, and then they go to the city to buy food and stuff for my mom's store to sell.

Claire, a first-generation student, views her mother and father's support as mostly financial:

I came from Yakima, and my parents are immigrants from the Philippines. They always say focus on studying, but they don't help me with my school work and stuff because they don't really know much about that. They've been helping me financially. My mom and dad pay for my housing because I live in an off campus house, so they pay for my rent because I can't afford it.

These perspectives highlight the importance of expanding the way we conceive of Filipino parents to include support as well as demands for students' academic goals and choices.

### **Family as Potential Teachers of Filipino Heritage**

Findings from this study demonstrate how the students acknowledged the role their parents played in the teaching and sharing of Filipino heritage. How much their parents shared with them about their cultural background can be linked to the students' ethnic identity. Some of those students who, from an early age, were taught about Filipino culture (i.e. language, customs, food, etc.) identified as Filipino or Filipino American. Whereas some of the students who knew little about their heritage identified with White, mainstream culture. In Chapter 5, I will expand on the influence of Filipino heritage knowledge on education, however, now I will discuss what students say about their expectations that their parents provide them with cultural knowledge. In alignment with Espiritu's (1994) research, some of the parents purposefully chose not to share their Filipino heritage, especially language, with their children because they wanted them to assimilate to American culture and be academically successful. In Chapter 6, I will discuss how students who identify as White are more likely to feel a sense of belonging on campus.

Three of the students, Ana, Ben, and Nancy, said that their parents taught them a lot about Filipino culture.

Ana, whose parents are both Filipino, stated,

I definitely know my family history, the traditions. My parents always cook the food. We're very family-oriented in a way that we always eat meals together. My parents are also Catholic, so I've been to church every Sunday since I was born.

Ben, who is Filipino Japanese, identifies strongly with his Filipino heritage because his mom exposed him to Filipino culture much more than his dad taught him

about his Japanese heritage. Due to his older brother becoming “very White,” Ben’s mother stressed the importance of remembering his Filipino heritage. Ben stated,

She just doesn't want me to lose my Filipino culture, I guess. She can already see I'm becoming very Americanized. She saw with my brother, who just became this . . . he's just very, very, very White. It's hard to explain. He's very assertive, very impersonal, very abrupt. It's kind of intimidating. I'm way more family-oriented, I feel like. The first girl I dated in America, I had to explain like, “It's not a big deal to still be living with your mom after 18 [years old], and not just because of economic reasons.” In America, you move back home, and it's shameful. In the Philippines, you're still living at home 20, 21, 25. It's not a big deal. Family is always first no matter what. Whereas here, it's 18, you get kicked out of the house, and it's like, "Good luck."

Nancy, who is Filipino Caucasian, also said it was her Filipino mother who taught her about her Filipino heritage, “I’d constantly be with my mom, and she really celebrated her identity. I just really enjoyed the culture of being Filipino and the importance of family and friends and having fun and good eating.”

However, four of the eight students, Ted, Grace, Claire, and Tim, wished their parents had exposed them more to Filipino culture and/or taught them Tagalog (a dialect spoken in the Philippines) when they were growing up. They felt disconnected from their heritage and were trying to learn more about it through various classes and on-campus opportunities.

Ted, who found his family very supportive in general, said that his parents did not teach him enough about his Filipino heritage, “I think they really encouraged my

Americanization because they never made any attempts to teach me Tagalog. That's always been English only. They've never encouraged me to become familiar with the language or to learn more about the culture.”

When questioned why he thought his parents did not teach him Tagalog and more about Filipino culture, Ted replied,

They know the better I am with English and the more familiar I am with the culture, the more successful I'll likely be. I'd say that they don't want to make me too foreign, perhaps because they thought it would be an obstacle to my success.

Grace's parents, both of whom are Filipino, also purposefully chose not to talk to her in Ilocano and Tagalog (Filipino dialects) because they believed doing so would help her succeed in school. Grace said,

I'm starting to realize that my parents really wanted me to learn [Ilocano and Tagalog] but because of the education system here . . . My parents spoke to my older sister when she was young [in Ilocano and Tagalog], and then they [the school administrators] put her in ESL [English as a Second Language]. She was in ESL for a few years. My parents basically stopped talking Ilocano and Tagalog to me and around me for a few years, so I didn't learn it.

Furthermore, Grace stated that her parents never really introduced her to the culture of the Philippines, “We did Filipino things like cook, do parties, and do those Filipino cultural social things, but I never knew etiquette wise what to do, and it was like culture shock for me when we went to the Philippines.”

Claire, who chose a Business major over Biology, had a similar experience with her Filipino parents treating her differently than her older sister in terms of sharing Filipino culture and language. However, in Claire's case it was mainly due to a change in their living situation. Claire felt that her sister knew more Tagalog than she did. She said,

It's because when we were growing up, my dad's siblings and everyone lived in the same house. My sister grew up with them, and they always spoke to her more. Then when I was born, everyone left. It was just my mom and my dad and my sister. They didn't talk to me that much.

Claire wished that she knew more about her Filipino heritage. When she asked her mom why she did not teach her Tagalog, Claire learned that it was not because her mom didn't want to, but rather that it was difficult to do so. Claire stated,

I asked my mom. I was like "Why don't you teach me, mom?" She was like it's hard because when they work, they talk English the whole time. When they [her parents] come home, they talk English to each other too, or to us. She said it's just harder because they're always talking English at work and stuff, and there is no one here to talk to [in Tagalog].

Due to financial constraints, Tim lives separately from his immediate family. He lives with his grandmother. When discussing Filipino culture, Tim stated that the only exposure he gets to his heritage is through his grandmother:

My grandma is typical Filipino grandma. She is extremely cultured, I guess.

I mean typical Filipino family. You think of seeing a typical Filipino grandma with the tsinelas, the slippers, and everything like that is my grandma. You can't get any more than that, but at the same time there's a language barrier.

Outside of his grandmother, however, Tim did not feel connected to Filipino culture, “But at the same time, I barely spend time in that house. In that house I sleep. But in terms of being immersed in the culture? It’s rare, it’s really rare.”

The experiences of Ted, Grace, Claire, and Tim demonstrate how some Filipino American students would like to know more about their culture. In particular, the students wished they knew how to speak Tagalog, which they viewed as a key component of being Filipino and, therefore, their identity.

### **Summary**

In summary, Filipino American second-year students in this study held varying perceptions of the roles their families played in their education. Parents were viewed as both a source of stress and anxiety as well as love and support. Family members had high expectations for the students to succeed, but they also provided encouragement and inspiration. For example, one student acknowledged the sacrifices his grandfather made to provide him the opportunity to be raised and educated in the United States. As sophomores, the students were actively exploring and choosing their academic major. While some parents put pressure on their children to choose specific majors, others were open to students’ choosing a major that best suited their interests. Several students showed agency in seeking majors they wanted as opposed to following their parents’ wishes. As a result, these students felt anxiety regarding talking with their family about this decision. These conversations were difficult because the students did not want to disappoint their parents, but they also wanted the freedom to choose non-science majors.

Furthermore, students struggled to balance spending time with their families with their academic and social activities. They knew their parents missed them and felt obligated to go home periodically, but then they had little time to complete their coursework. One student did not attend classes for a quarter when her parents went to the Philippines to take care of relatives. Lastly, students wished their parents taught them more about Filipino culture yet recognized the reasons and difficulties behind why they were not able to do so. Overall, the relationship between these students and their families was revealed to be complex and multi-layered. Parents both helped and hindered Filipino American second-year students' academic success.

## Chapter 5

### Perceptions of Filipino American Students' Ethnic Identity

In this chapter, I utilize the qualitative data to illustrate how Filipino American second-year students described their own perceived ethnic identity and society's perception of their ethnic identity.

#### Students' Perceptions of their Ethnic Identity

The students described their ethnic identity as tied to their home communities, families, friends, interactions with faculty, staff, and peers at UPN, and experiences in wider society. Their perceptions ranged from identifying primarily with White, dominant society to identifying with the Filipino American community. In this study, going to college pushed some of the students beyond their comfort zone and provided them the opportunity to reflect on their ethnic identity. In an effort to learn more about their Filipino heritage, some of the students enrolled in Ethnic Studies courses. As a result of taking these classes, the students regarded their ethnic identity in a different light, which in turn, affected their sense of belonging on campus.

*"I'm Filipino by blood."*

(Tim)

**Identifying with White culture.** Three of the students who had said that they did not learn a lot about their Filipino heritage from their parents claimed they were only Filipino biologically. Tim, Ted, and Claire culturally identified with White Americans as opposed to Filipino Americans, and they knew little about Filipino culture. Tim and Ted

stated that they rarely think about their ethnic identity and the role it plays in their experiences. Since they identify as Americans, their ethnicity is not salient in their everyday lives.

Tim, who lives with his Filipino grandmother, stated,

I'm Filipino by blood; I'm Filipino by supposed culture, by who I live with. At the same time sometimes I just don't feel like I am Filipino, in a sense. I feel like, I guess I consider myself to be really just Americanized. Coming in here [UPN], I didn't really think of me really being Filipino. I knew my blood is Filipino that's how I associate myself as being Filipino American. I'm an American kid, born and raised here. I went to an American school and system like growing up. The thing is that I am so Americanized to the point where I forget that I'm Filipino.

Ted, whose mother is Filipino and whose father is Caucasian, also primarily considered himself American:

I don't personally identify myself with the Filipino culture. Therefore, I feel like I'm not authentically Filipino. Does that make any sense? I don't know. It's hard for me to talk about my own ethnicity because it's almost invisible to me sometimes. Sometimes I wake up, I don't . . . It's not ever really in the forefront of my mind that I'm Filipino American. It's always just been, "I'm American." So I am. It's not just something I really consider in an everyday context. I think what that means for me is that I have . . . I don't know. I feel like I'm lost. Sometimes it does feel like maybe I'm adopting a culture that that's not really my own because I've grown up here.

In addition, Claire, whose parents are both Filipino, identified as racially Filipino but culturally White.

What makes me Filipino is that my parents are Filipino. What makes me American, I was born here, and I speak English. I celebrate all the American holidays here. I don't know. I'm just not used to hanging out with a lot of Filipinos even though I am Filipino, and I hang out with all my cousins. I think it's because they [other Filipino American students] know more about the culture than I do, and I'm not used to it.

Tim, Ted, and Claire are examples of students who do not consider themselves to be “real” or “authentic” Filipinos. They believe the only way they are Filipino is that either one or both of their parents were born in the Philippines. In fact, Ted asked if he qualified to be interviewed for this study given that he identifies culturally as American.

*“I'm proud to be Filipino.”*

(Ben)

**Identifying with Filipino culture.** On the other end of the spectrum, Ben and Caroline proudly identified primarily as Filipino both biologically and culturally. Ben, whose mother did not want him to “forget” his Filipino heritage, was cognizant of the role his ethnicity played in his daily interactions. He shared,

It never really was this process in my head where I just sat down, and I was, "Man, what am I going to identify as?" It was always just like, "I'm pretty much Filipino." I was born and raised culturally, followed a bunch of cultural Filipino ways. My dad had some different things, but they weren't Japanese. They were

Hawaiian. It just meshed together, and I lean more towards Filipino. Me learning Japanese was just for filling this curiosity of mine. I tell people I'm Japanese Filipino, but it's not because I prefer Japanese over being Filipino. It also stems from how my dad's from Hawaii, so he's not really from Japan. He's fourth-generation Japanese Hawaiian. Because of that, it's hard for me to identify as someone . . . the culture of Japan. It's easier when my mom is literally first-generation Filipino. All the culture, all the superstitions, and everything is all Filipino to me.

Caroline had a different experience in that she very rarely was exposed to Filipino culture. However, now that she is in college and learning about her heritage, she strongly identifies as Filipino:

I didn't know anything [about Filipino culture] because I wasn't around other Filipinos. The only time I saw other Filipinos was at my church. I was Filipino one day of the week. Honestly, now I feel I'm more Filipino than ever somehow. I think it's the environment that changed my perspective because when I was at home, there were not many Filipinos. When I was around them, I only heard bad things about them, and of course I took that in, but now I'm in a different environment where there are studies like this, and there are classes about this. There's classes that you actually identify with, and just the existence of those organizations and studies and people trying to learn about this, that means that it's important.

So while Ben and Caroline learned about their Filipino heritage at different stages of their lives, this knowledge helped them feel more closely tied to Filipino culture. As a result, both of them ethnically identified as Filipino.

*“I don’t have to be just White or just Filipino.”*

(Nancy)

**Identifying as Filipino American.** Ana, Paul, Grace, and Nancy acknowledged that they are both Filipino and American. These four students identified some ways (i.e. the food they eat and how they were raised) in which they are Filipino and other ways (i.e. the language they speak and where they were born) that they are American. Espiritu (1994) discussed how asserting a Filipino American identity is a multidimensional process where one does not need to choose between being “Filipino” and being “American.” In this study, four students stated that both cultures are embedded in their ethnic identity and concept of self.

Ana, who learned about her Filipino heritage through her parents, defined what it means to be a Filipino American:

I am Filipino American. Being Filipino American I would have to say you should know your culture, where you come from, like where your parents were born, if they were born in the Philippines, your family history. Then being an American, you were born here, you're so used to American customs.

Paul, who described his parents as supportive guardrails, talked about how Filipino Americans are raised differently than people from other cultures:

I didn't see that strong connection at first [between his Filipino American friends] until we were all done growing up, and now we're here [UPN]. I feel like Filipino Americans are raised a lot different than other people in the United States. That's what will identify a true Filipino American. I feel like I don't want to say other cultures in the United States do this, but I feel like Filipino Americans were born and raised with the idea that we don't want to abandon the people that we love.

Grace, who grew up in Hawaii, discussed the process she went through to discover that she identified as Filipino American:

I had a different experience about trying to figure out what was being a Filipino American. I grew up in Hawaii, so all I saw was brown people. Everyone was the same color, so there was nothing like identity in that way. We learned about Hawaiian culture, so we all thought we were Polynesian. I moved here [Pacific Northwest] when I was 9. I always knew I was a Filipino in some weird way, but I never got it. Moving here, it was weird because I became the brown girl, that was really weird to me. I was like, "Oh, yeah. I'm brown. Okay." I never saw myself as Filipino until I was 9, and my parents were like "You're Filipino." I was just, "I don't know what that means. What is that?" I definitely struggled with identifying as Filipino in a different way because I thought all brown people were the same. As I got older I was like, "I don't really think I'm a Filipino because I grew up in Korea town," so I was, "Oh shit, I'm Asian." Then, "Maybe I'm Korean." I know logically that doesn't make any sense at all, but then I learned about Filipino history and identity from my sister who was in college. I had Filipino pride. I'm proud of my heritage, I'm proud of my culture. I know about

who I am. I had a solid definition going in to college about who I was as a Filipino, but as I continue to live I still find that changing, constantly moving. There's no set definition, but I know that I'm Filipino American, and I'm very happy that I'm Filipino American. You know the concrete definition of who you are because you're going to define it yourself. It's how I did it.

Grace also discussed how she could not identify as full Filipino or full American given society's definition of 'Filipino' and 'American'. She stated,

To me, Filipino American means that you struggled with identifying what you are not only as just like, "Where are you standing in terms of culturally? Where do you belong?" but "Where do you fit in?" but you're starting the idea of your parents really want you to be Filipino, but you can never be fully Filipino. You can never be fully American because you're American Caucasian friends who identify purely American don't count you as American because you are brown. You can't be American, fully American if you're brown because obviously, Americans have to be White. Just kind of figuring out . . . always realizing that in the back of your mind, you can't. You are both, but you can't just be a single . . . You can't be Filipino. You can't be American, but you have to be both. You basically become the bridge between the two identities. That's how I based my life on being Filipino American is that I educate on both the Filipino half, for people who don't know, and then I educate those who don't know about the American half. Then you get stuck in that position of . . . okay. It's what I am. You either embrace it, or you don't. I have to embrace it because it makes the

world a better place for people to understand where I come from. I guess that's what it means for me to be Filipino American is that I kind of bridge the gap between my two identities.

Nancy, who is Filipino Caucasian, discussed how she progressed from identifying as solely Filipino to realizing she could appreciate being both Filipino and American.

When I was younger, I thought of myself more as full Filipino than really American and White. Then growing up I started to realize there was a difference between the two and felt floating in the middle. I just really enjoyed the culture of being Filipino and the importance of family and friends and having fun and good eating. I don't know. As I grew older and more distant with my mother's [Filipino] culture, it tore at my heart a little bit because it was like I really missed the tight-knit community and everything that it stood for. I felt when I was younger that I had to assimilate to one culture, and all of my friends were White, and I was like, "I feel Filipino and I feel White, but which one am I?" I thought it was really black and white. Now that I'm older, I realized that I can embrace both cultures, and I don't have to be just White or just Filipino. I can celebrate different things about my cultures.

Ana, Paul, Grace, and Nancy highlight the various ways students think about their ethnic identity. While Ana and Paul were very matter-of-fact about what makes them Filipino American, Grace and Nancy had more complex perceptions of their ethnic identity. Grace felt like she had no choice. She could not solely identify with one culture, so she had to be the bridge between the two. Nancy thought she had to choose. She is an example of a student who felt she must choose one culture over the other.

*“I want to be more aware, but I don’t know where to begin.”*

(Ted)

**Learning about Filipino culture.** Regardless of how they identified themselves in terms of ethnicity, most of the students shared how they enjoyed exploring and learning more about their ethnic identity through Ethnic Studies classes. For instance, despite not identifying with Filipino culture, Ted, Claire, and Tim (who all identified with White, dominant culture) reported how they are becoming more open-minded and accepting of Filipino culture.

Ted, an English major, discussed how his experience in an Ethnic Studies class, which focused on racism, changed his concept of ethnic identity:

I think that’s when I first realized that I don’t consider myself Filipino because I think before then I was content with bluntly saying, “I’m born Filipino” because that’s where my family is from. Then I began to learn that there is a distinction between what we call race and ethnicity, and that although I am racially Filipino, ethnically I’m not. It really complicated my self-identity, or how I saw myself, because I tend to question things that I took for granted before, or things that I’ve ignored. The fact that I’m culturally different from my parents and what that might mean for myself or my identity as a person. I want to be more aware, but I don’t know where to begin. I don’t know how to ask. I don’t know. It’s something I want to do, or I feel like I want to do, but I haven’t taken any steps towards doing it.

Claire, a Business major, also learned more about her Filipino heritage through an Ethnic Studies class. She spoke about her Filipino History class:

I just wanted to take that [Filipino history class] because I wanted to learn more about the history because I didn't really know a lot. That's the only [Filipino] class I've taken. It was interesting to learn. I remember learning about stuff and talking to my dad and my mom about what I've learned, and they were like "yeah."

Tim spoke of his experience of taking an Ethnic Studies class, but instead of focusing on the content of the course, he remarked on his experience of taking a class with other Filipino students:

Then now coming into my sophomore year, I'm taking Ethnic Studies 340, Race and Education. There are Filipinos in that class, and I sit with all of them. I'm being more receptive. I'm being more receptive about like different cultures, not only just Filipino culture, but just different cultures in general. I don't have this narrow mindset anymore. I'm more open-minded, and my sophomore year definitely helped me progress into being that open-minded mindset, in a sense.

In addition, Caroline described how she is actively seeking knowledge of her Filipino heritage. She stated,

I'm taking Tagalog [Filipino dialect]. I'm part of FASA [Filipino American Student Association]. I went to the Northwest FASA conference, going to events like that I feel more connected than I was ever before, so it's really awesome I guess.

Grace, who identified as Filipino American, first learned about Filipino history and culture through her older sister who took Ethnic Studies classes and shared what she learned with her siblings. Grace said,

It wasn't until high school when I started figuring out what Filipino American meant because my older sister had just started college. This college was really cool. She took Ethnic Studies classes. I don't know. I was just like, "I don't know what Ethnic Studies is. I don't know what that means." She would come home on weekends sometimes and talk to me about what she did in college. She would talk about what she learned and stuff like that. She's like, "There's Filipino American classes at school. Let me tell you about the Filipinos, let me tell you about all different concepts that you don't get in American school because they don't teach it in American schools." I was like, "Oh, yeah tell me." I was like, "Filipino what? What does that mean?" She told me the whole thing about how history and history books in America don't give you this. You are a colonized person, and America colonized you and made you think in this way. The Spanish colonized you, made you think this way. As a Filipino American, you're caught between the two realms of being the colonized and the colonizer because you're both born in America who is a colonizer, and then you're both Filipino descent and you were colonized. I guess that kind of opened that door of like, "What does that mean?" That's how I found out about my Filipino identity, and going, "Oh, that sounds really cool when you look at that, when you research that, let me print papers on it, let me do things." Going into high school that's when I figured out or started figuring out Filipino identity, Filipino American identity. I was like, "This is so interesting. I didn't know about my culture. I didn't know I was colonized."

Whether it was learning more about a social construct such as race, or more specifically about Filipino history and language, or simply interacting with other Filipino American students, these five students illustrate how college classes that are focused on the experiences and perspectives of Filipino Americans can have a powerful impact on Filipino American students' perceptions of their ethnic identity. The students who took classes on Filipino history, language, or social justice issues started to identify more with Filipino culture as well as have a broader understanding of racial and cultural constructs.

### **U.S. Society's Perceptions of Students' Ethnic Identity**

The students shared how others perceived their ethnic identity, and how particular assumptions society made about Filipino Americans 1) contradicted with how they personally viewed themselves and 2) affected how they acted in different situations on campus.

*"I don't like Filipinos."*

(Tim)

**The inferiority of Filipinos.** Ted, Tim, Caroline, and Grace discussed instances where Filipinos were spoken about in a negative manner. The majority of these incidents included their own parents talking badly about Filipinos. Lott (1980) defined colonial mentality as a psychological state that leads the colonized to think of themselves as subordinate and inferior people. Many of these students' parents were raised in the Philippines when it was a U.S. colony, and they grew up learning that Americans were a superior race. Moreover, Nadal (2013) states that colonial mentality can affect second-generation Filipino Americans. This was apparent when students shared how hearing

their parents' comments affected their own opinion of Filipinos. For example, Tim, who identified as Filipino by "blood only" stated,

It's funny because my parents, when they talk about Filipinos, they talk so much crap about Filipinos even though they are Filipino. To be completely honest, coming into my freshman year, I didn't want to join FASA [Filipino American Student Association]. I had this mindset where Filipinos are cocky and annoying, things like that . . . because of my Mom, I don't know. I had this mindset where like, "I don't like Filipinos, no way." But at the same time, I'm Filipino. I'm contradicting myself. Why am I doing this?

In response to this statement that Tim made during the focus group, Caroline shared her own experience:

That's really interesting what you said about how your parents talk crap about other Filipinos because that's exactly what my parents did, and they [the parents] like to not associate with them [Filipinos], and they always talk about other Filipinos like that ever since I was young. I guess that's . . . I just took it in because I didn't know anything else because I wasn't around other Filipinos. My parents had always had marital problems, and they always blamed it on other Filipinos who had gossiped about our family, and so therefore I thought, "What was that? Is that what Filipinos are like?" I wasn't able to ever figure that out because I was the only Filipino girl in my high school. I wasn't ever around that culture. I didn't know what that meant. I started to blame Filipinos for what happened to my parents, which is dumb because that's not what I was suppose to do, but I just carried it with me. They got divorced last month.

Ted, who identified as White, said that his parents did not generally talk badly about Filipinos, but they were very aware of the negative connotations.

They [his parents] associate American with success. Coming from a poor country, I think they, maybe not shame, but they're worried that being Filipino, or maybe they associate being a Filipino with being poor or at least not as successful as American. I think what they felt was anxiety about more financial or at least economic success for their kids. What I'm more concerned about is not so much the financial issue, but the issue of authenticity and culture identity, at this stage in my life at least.

Grace, who identified as Filipino American, spoke of how Filipinos were assumed to be of a lower socio-economic status:

They [high school friends] labeled Filipino as, oh blue collared worker, she could hold my door. That happened to me in high school sometimes, it was really awkward because I knew my position as a Filipino American. I'm middle class. I'm pretty okay. I'm not a blue-collar worker.

In addition, Grace spoke of how her mother viewed light-skinned Filipinos as better than Filipinos with dark skin:

My mom is very much into light-skin Filipinos. When I was little I was crazy dark, or I'm still pretty dark, but I was way darker. She'd [her mother] be like, "You should use this special soap." I'm like, "What is this soap? What does this soap do?" I figured out what it was, and I was like, "I don't want to use that soap" because it was a whitening soap that lightens your skin. My mom has this idea in her head that lighter skin is better.

Three of the four students (Tim, Caroline, and Ted) who disclosed that they had heard negative comments made about Filipinos identified more closely with American culture than Filipino culture. Tim and Caroline mentioned how these comments led to them viewing Filipinos unfavorably.

*“You’re Chinese or Korean or something.”*

(Tim)

**Mistaken for other races.** Tim, Ben, Caroline, and Ted discussed how people often do not recognize and acknowledge their Filipino American ethnic identity. Rather, they get asked the question ‘What are you?’ in regards to their race. Also, people they encountered sometimes tried to guess their ethnicity. Chou & Feagin’s (2008) and Lee’s (1996) research focused on the “perpetual foreigner stereotype” where Asian Americans are questioned about their American status. For instance, Tim, whose parents are both Filipino, said,

It takes them [people in general] four tries to guess who I am. They say, "Oh, I know. You're Chinese or Korean or something." Then I'm like, "Nope, nope, nope. I am a Filipino." "Oh, you're a Filipino?" "Yup." I get that a lot now, especially because of my mustache.

Ben said that he felt he was asked a lot about his ethnicity because he is mixed race (Filipino Japanese), which makes it difficult for other people to racially categorize him.

It’s a very tricky question because I look very islander. I’m okay with that. They [people in general] usually guess Filipino, which is a pretty good guess. After

that, I tell them that I'm a mix, they're like, "Oh God, I really don't know that." I don't know. Like Japanese, Korean, Chinese. That's literally what people think. When you're a Filipino, it's like there's a lot of . . . there's not a lot of information in regards to how Filipinos are. I feel like there are a lot of other movements from the Japanese internment camps and all of the stuff to gain information. Whereas, I still hear people saying, "Oh, you're Filipino? So you must understand Spanish. They're literally the same language." It's like, "No, they're not." We're one of the lesser-known Asian ethnicities.

In addition, Caroline, whose parents are both Filipino, shared how she is often mistaken as belonging to a different race.

Growing up people said, "Oh, you're not a Filipino. You're Filipino? Oh, my gosh." For example, last year I went and got my hair cut and the woman cutting my hair she said, "Oh, are you Vietnamese?" I said, "No, I'm Filipino." She said, "Oh, you're Filipino, but you're pretty." I was like, "Excuse me. You just offended my whole race."

Shocked and confused, Caroline told her parents about the incident. Instead of receiving the empathy and understanding she expected, her parents were happy that she was mistaken as another race.

They [her parents] responded in a way that was proud, "Yeah, you don't look like a typical Filipino." They took pride in that they made a child that didn't look Filipino. I don't know why they think like that or why a lot of parents are, "Oh, Filipinos are bad, and I'm so glad you don't look like that." My dad's like, "Yeah, you did a good job you don't look like a typical Filipino." I'm like, "What does

that mean?” It's not like I could help it, or they can help it. What is a typical Filipino? What does that look like? How my parents reacted to that definitely shaped how I thought of it too.

Ted, who identified as White, shared how others make assumptions about him based on what race they think he is:

I think it's difficult for me, and for Filipinos in general, because the range is pretty wide. One person could see me as somewhere from East Asia or Southeast Asia, and say maybe unconsciously think that I'm going to be a good student because that's how they see me. Somebody else could mistake me for say Latino, and because of that they expect me to do worse. It's hard for me to say because it could go either way. It could go anywhere when people make assumptions based on appearance.

Tim, Caroline, Ben, and Ted demonstrate how Filipino Americans are often questioned about their racial background and mistaken for one or more other Asian races. None of the students were categorized by other people as ‘American’ but rather as a racial ‘other’.

*“Talking through my Filipino side . . . and talking through my American side.”*

(Paul)

**Adapting behavior.** Paul, Ted, and Grace spoke of how they act differently depending on the racial background of the people they are spending time with. They act a certain way around White Americans, which differs from the way they act around other

Filipino Americans. This change in behavior is partially due to the fact that they recognize that people do not view them as typical, White Americans.

Paul, who felt his parents were very supportive of him, discussed how he feels more comfortable being his true self around Filipino Americans:

When I'm interacting with other Filipino Americans, my Filipino side comes out. We can talk a lot easier about the things that we've gone through and the things that we want to go through like . . . not even parties and what not. I feel like when I'm talking through my Filipino side, like talking to other Filipino Americans or people who understand that identity, I feel like I'm closer to them. Whereas when I'm talking through, I guess, my American side, I feel like that's when I'm trying to adapt to everything. I adapt to the people around me because when I'm talking with my American side, I'm talking with my official, my business dialogue because when I see a friend and he's a Filipino American friend, we do like . . . I don't know the term for bro-hug. Whereas if I'm going around with my American side and I'm trying to talk to my other friend, we greet each other with a handshake. There's definitely a dichotomy between those interactions when I'm being Filipino whereas I'm being American.

Furthermore, Ted, who identifies with White mainstream culture, said his ethnic identity shifts and his behavior changes depending on where he is physically located:

When I'm out of home, when I'm out of the house, I begin to identify . . . I feel myself feeling and acting more American than Filipino because I don't have those cultural artifacts or icons or objects with me to remind me of the fact that I'm not what is usually seen as American. I have to acknowledge that what I look like

and the family that I come from isn't a traditionally American family, and I think I have to acknowledge that the reason for that is because there's certain conceptions of what an American is, and they are taught and learned by everyone in the world. Grace, who identifies as Filipino American, discussed how she had to pretend to be White sometimes in order to be acknowledged by others:

I had to force myself to change to fit the White standard, so that I could be heard in that way and have a little bit of power to change something. That's still happening. It's really not fair because I want to be brown. I like being brown. I like being cultured, and I like being Filipino. I don't like being White. I don't like pretending that I'm White when I'm really Filipino. I think just acknowledging that minorities still have a really hard time and not just cater to the whole White idea of whatever they should be. Acknowledging like, "Hey, brown people have power, too. Give us something." Every time we bring an issue up or every time that happens, it feels like it gets shut down really, really fast.

The experiences of Paul, Ted, and Grace show how some Filipino American students feel as if they do not belong in mainstream, White society and how much more relaxed they are in Filipino settings where they can be more themselves. This, in turn, influences their relations with faculty, staff, and students on campus. I will expand on this more in Chapter 6, but these students' statements show the need for a welcoming, safe place on campus where they can be themselves.

## Summary

Overall, the students in the study varied in terms of how they perceived their ethnic identity. Tim, Ted, and Claire who were not exposed to Filipino culture at a young age, identified with White, dominant culture. Ben, who grew up in a strong Filipino community, strongly identified as Filipino. Nancy and Grace spoke of how their ethnic identity changed and expanded over time, and they realized they could be both Filipino and American. Ethnic Studies classes were one factor that led students to rethink their ethnic identity. For the first time, the students were forced to think about and reflect on issues of race, culture, and identity. Before then, some students said they never really thought about these issues and how they affect their lives.

The students in the study also discussed society's perception of their ethnic identity. Both from within and outside of their families, some students were witness to Filipinos being talked about in a negative manner. As a result, these students were upset and confused. They identified as Filipino Americans, yet they were led to believe by other Filipino Americans that they were inferior. Furthermore, although some students identified as Filipino Americans, other people questioned their racial background. Based on their physical appearance, people generalized they were another Asian American group or Latino. As a result, the students felt hurt and invisible in that others did not know anything about Filipinos. Their ethnic identity was not affirmed or supported. Lastly, some students felt that they had to act "more Filipino" or "more American" depending on the context. They did not feel comfortable being themselves in White society. In the next chapter, I will discuss how identifying as Filipino American on a predominantly White campus resulted in some students feeling alienated and unwelcome.

These feelings led to a lack of sense of belonging on campus, which could affect Filipino American sophomore student retention and persistence.

## Chapter 6

### The Effect of Campus Climate on Sense of Belonging

During the first year of college, students are provided with a certain level of support and are able to participate in a variety of programs that aid them in their transition from high school to university life. In their second-year, however, students often feel isolated, lost, and forgotten (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969). They are no longer new to the university, but since they also are often not yet in an academic major there is no designated support for them. As a result, sophomores tend to be more highly dissatisfied with their institutions than freshmen or upper-classmen (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006).

In addition to second-year students, several studies have found that campus climate and sense of belonging are central to the persistence and attrition of underrepresented student populations (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Lee, 2009; Museus, Nichols & Lambert, 2008; Museus & Truong, 2009; Strayhorn, 2012). Strayhorn (2012) found that participation in academic and social activities as well as positive interactions with diverse peers and faculty are correlated to Latino students' academic success and persistence. My third research question asked: How does the campus climate, in particular interactions with faculty and staff, affect Filipino American students' academic and social challenges during their second year of college? In this chapter, I utilize the data gathered through the interviews and focus group to show how Filipino American students described their sense of belonging on the UPN campus. The three main themes I found in the qualitative data include the racial diversity of students, faculty, and staff; relationships with faculty and staff of color; and the role of student ethnic organizations.

### **Racial Diversity of Students, Faculty, and Staff**

One factor that affects students' sense of belonging is identifying with other students, faculty, and staff from the same racial background. Maramba (2008b) found that Filipino American students experienced anxiety regarding the low representation of Filipino students on campus. Furthermore, in most U.S. institutions of higher education there is a significantly lower number of Filipino faculty and staff than the number of Filipino students (Maramba & Nadal, 2013).

*"I don't feel like I belong."*

(Nancy)

**An unwelcoming campus climate.** Three students, Grace, Nancy, and Ana, commented on the difficulty they had transitioning into the university due to its lack of racial diversity. In addition, despite identifying as White himself, Tim commented on the fact that the UPN's student body is predominantly Caucasian. Given that the university is very large (approximately 40,000 students total), the lack of diversity was shocking to him. Tim, whose college friends were from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds, stated,

I barely see Black people on this campus. It's just really weird to me. I look to my good friend, Eddy, who's Ethiopian. He says there's nothing, there's no one that looks like him here, and I totally agree with him. I came to this University for the diversity, and I'm still iffy about it. There certainly are programs here to support

the students that come from the same background as I do, but the thing is there aren't enough people to utilize those resources.

Furthermore, Tim remarked on the lack of faculty and staff of color working at the university:

Actually, I feel like the diversity of faculty and staff, huh. The only diversity I see is at the offices of all the programs that are here to support students of color.

That's the only diversity I see. That's it. In terms of like racially and culturally, I guess. That's it.

In addition, Grace, who identifies as Filipino American and is actively involved in UPN's Filipino American Student Association, addressed the fact that there is a Pacific Islander admissions recruiter on campus but not one for Filipinos:

He [the Pacific Islander recruiter] is Tongan and he gets our culture, but he doesn't live our culture, he doesn't breathe our culture. There's no actual representation for Filipinos or Southeast Asians. We [Filipino American Student Association members] do really wish that there was someone who was Southeast Asian or Filipino who would reach out to the Filipino high school communities. It would be really nice for prospective students to know that there will be other Filipinos on campus. We want to see more Filipinos come to the university. We just don't see enough of that.

Grace also talked about her difficult experiences of being a minority at the university:

What I struggled with my sophomore year was being a minority on campus. I started to realize that this campus even though they label themselves as diverse,

technically, whatever is in place in terms for students doesn't cater to the minority populace as much as it caters to the White populace. That's not only because we don't have money and stuff like that, but it's because I feel like we're brown. We are colored people. I don't want to blame it on the populace of the student body like ignorance, but I don't think [White] students realize how hard it is being a minority. We [Filipino American students] can complain about it, and they'll say stuff about it. They're like, "Oh, you're just complaining." I've heard that from my friend, my friends, or classmates at the time. I just said, "No. It's really not me complaining. It's really hard being a minority because I don't . . . I can't go out there and be like, "Hey, listen to me" with the same amount of passion and power that you guys have. White is the thing, and I had to act White to get my voice heard growing up in a White community rather than a brown community.

Similarly, Nancy, who identifies as Filipino American and transferred to UPN from a community college, talked about her rocky transition to the university and her lack of a sense of belonging on campus:

I felt pretty alienated . . . for a while I was like, "Do I even go here? I don't feel like I belong. I want to go home." I felt, I feel, and I still feel today like I have ties to my culture, and I want to celebrate that. I've been wanting to join the student group for Filipinos, but my schedule--Yeah, it's a barrier to that. I don't know how this would be possible, but if there was some way that I could find Filipinos to connect with and just befriend. I just think that would benefit me a lot. Just having someone that understands your upbringing and understands your culture and your basis in your foundation would be really helpful.

Another example of a student who feels UPN has an unwelcoming campus climate is Ana, a Biochemistry major who identifies as Filipino American. She is one of the few women of color in her classes:

I don't know. I guess when I'm in school I am competing against a lot of people who are male and White, that's how I feel. There's a lot of White males in my class, so being a Filipino American female going through the medical career route, it's lots of pressure. You really have to put yourself out there way more because people tend to underestimate you maybe because of the color of your skin, because of the gender. Sometimes I feel like I have to work harder because of who I am.

Tim, Grace, Nancy, and Ana's experiences demonstrate how some Filipino Americans students feel like they do not belong in the campus community. Due to the lack of students, faculty, and staff of color on campus, it is not apparent to them that their Filipino culture and heritage is understood and appreciated. As a result, they feel alienated and alone.

*"I feel welcome and supported here."*

(Caroline)

**Identifying with campus culture.** Not all of the students in this study had a negative perception of UPN's campus climate, however. Ben and Caroline discussed their positive experiences as Filipino American students at the university. For example, Ben, who transferred to UPN from another four-year institution, said,

I always want to try things. If I didn't do that, I don't know where I'd be. I wouldn't have several pockets of friends. I wouldn't have these groups of people. I think that's one of the main things, finding a home here, because as a freshman you can go to Welcome Week. You can go to Welcome Week as a sophomore, but it's different. You can do the whole new student orientation thing where you play mixers with people. Your roommates are on the same boat as you. It's different when you're a sophomore.

Also, Ben, who identifies as Filipino, views the University of the Pacific Northwest as culturally diverse:

I'm actually really blessed to be here [UPN] because we Filipinos will go to Las Vegas, San Francisco, Portland, Seattle. I don't feel like a minority. I don't feel marginalized. If I were to be singled out, it will be for something not related to being Filipino.

Caroline, who is enjoying learning more about her Filipino heritage through her Tagalog classes, remarked on the campus resources geared towards Filipino American students that she thinks are beneficial:

I feel welcome and supported here. This is a safe place to be a Filipino because I never had that growing up. Having FASA [Filipino American Student Association] is awesome. Also, I don't think other universities offer our language. We have the Office of Minority Affairs. It means that we're visible and have a voice.

Both Ben and Caroline compared UPN's campus culture to other contexts, and they found UPN to be a more welcoming place. They appreciated having other Filipino American students at the university and the specific campus resources designated for them.

### **Relationships with Faculty and Staff**

Maramba and Museus (2013) noted that Filipino American college students' wellbeing on campus has been tied to Filipino faculty and staff who serve as mentors and role models. In addition, Filipino American students may turn to faculty and staff from other racial minorities for support. The students in this study had various experiences regarding their professional and personal relationships with faculty and staff.

*"Everyone [staff] is really hard to approach and you feel like you're wasting their time."*

(Caroline)

**Faculty and staff disconnections.** Due to the large size of UPN, faculty's focus on research, and faculty and staff's busy schedules, Grace, Paul, and Caroline expressed frustration with their lack of meaningful connections with faculty and staff. Grace stated,

They [professors] don't need to help you with your personal problems. I mean, with faculty, I feel because they're professors, it's just like they handle so many other students. They only have so much time. A lot of them do research. I was like, "Okay I can't visit you anymore because you're writing a book." They're just busy doing all these other things.

In addition, Paul, a Civil Engineering major, shared,

What [the topic] he [his engineering professor] taught us, he didn't really have any interest in. I was really hoping for that class to be a good class. When someone is reading off of the slides the whole class, I can't sit there and actually listen and learn. I just felt like just very distant, and they [the professors] were closed off because of just how many people show up to their office that were trying to be their friend because someone told them that that's what they should do.

In regards to staff, Paul and Caroline found academic advisers specifically to be unapproachable and not helpful. Given his race and socio-economic status, Paul was designated as a student who could affiliate with the Office of Minority Affairs (OMA) and utilize their academic advising services. OMA at the University of the Pacific Northwest prides itself on its holistic and developmental approach of working with students. OMA students are often given additional one-on-one time with an academic adviser during their initial school orientation, and they ideally work with their OMA adviser on a regular basis throughout their tenure at the university. Paul, however, chose not to do so because he found his interactions with his OMA adviser to be more transactional than personal.

I kind of connected with her [OMA adviser]. I forgot her name. I've emailed her a few times, but nothing really clicked because it didn't feel like there was any room for us to go about personal relationship like what student and an adviser should have. I just felt like very generic relationship like, "I'm here to do my job, and I do care because you are one of the students I look after," but beyond that there wasn't much.

Caroline, a Political Science major who was not affiliated with the OMA office, concurred,

Everyone [staff] here is really hard to approach, and you feel like you're wasting their time. My freshman year, I never went to an advisor. I didn't want to bother them. For example, when I was trying to set an appointment with an advisor, I had to fill out a form and it said, "What's your name and what is your intent?" Simply having that there implied that I needed to have it figured out before I went there because if not, I would be wasting her time because there's so many other students that need to talk to the advisor also. I think that form just put me off. The only time I saw my advisor was to declare my major and my minor. I don't know them. They don't know me. I wish there could've been an advisor that would have initiated a relationship with me. I love it here, but I wish it could be more personal. I don't think I could go to the academic advisors for personal matters because I don't know them. If I want advice on classes I ask my friends or just look it up online myself because I don't want to bother the advisors because they're always so busy.

Grace, Paul, and Caroline recognize that the faculty and staff at UPN have full schedules and multiple responsibilities. Furthermore, all three students do not feel like they are a priority to faculty and staff, and therefore do not try to meet with them.

*“He’s like a Filipino grandpa that I never had.”*

(Tim)

**Supportive faculty and staff.** Fortunately, not all of the students had negative interactions and relationships with faculty and staff. All of the students, including those who had negative interactions, connected with at least one or two college personnel who served as mentors and sources of support. All of the mentors were either Filipino or another underrepresented minority. For example, Caroline, Nancy, and Paul all listed the Tagalog Instructor, Clarito, as someone they connected with and felt understood them.

Caroline said,

He [Clarito] is so relatable. Everyday, I feel like I’m with him I feel more Filipino, and I like that. I bet other students like that as well. If we can extend those feelings and get more professors that are Filipino and that can teach Tagalog I think that’d be really great.

Also, Paul, who overall felt like faculty were difficult to connect with, said that he appreciated that Clarito shared his Filipino values of family and trust:

We had one lesson where he [Clarito] was talking about family and how the bond between Filipinos are so strong that he’s so willing to leave his partner in the Philippines to take care of his mom in the States because she came here. Now, at that moment, I thought this man understands more about family, trust, and just laws than other people because, I don’t know if I made it obvious, but my mom is not around anymore. When I say my mom was a nurse, she loved to help people

and that's what I felt I've grown up here wanting to help people not because I want to fulfill her dream, but because I've been raised in a way where I see that's where my happiness will come from.

Nancy, a transfer student, also enrolled in introductory Tagalog classes and sung Clarito's praises,

He's [Clarito] an awesome professor. He is so nice. I will go into his office hours to get extra practice. I connect with him there, and he is really easy to talk to.

Besides Clarito, the Filipino Ethnic Studies professor, Leonardo, was mentioned by Tim as someone who served as a mentor, "He's [Leonardo] like a Filipino grandpa that I never had. I love it [the class Leonardo teaches] because the atmosphere is amazing."

In terms of staff, most of the students mentioned having good relationships with academic advisers of color. For example, Ted established a relationship with his OMA academic adviser, Veriglio, who is Hawaiian and Filipino:

I really just turn to Veriglio in the Office of Minority Affairs. My first day at UPN I was told that I was part of a program that helped students from underrepresented groups. I met him on that day, and I think we just immediately clicked. Ever since then, we'd been like just father and son almost. Veriglio's been my saving grace. Whenever things have gone particularly rough, he always manages to pull me out. I think I owe a lot to him. He's the one who helped me discover the JET [Japanese Exchange & Teaching Program]. He's been encouraging me to pursue it. He's the whole reason I think it's possible for me to go there [Japan] to teach English. Ana and Claire both sought advice from a Filipino academic adviser, Lito,

who is a UPN alum and mentor to the Filipino American Student Association. Ana said Lito is her “go to advisor.” Claire described her meeting with him,

I remember coming to him [Lito]. I remember I was just really worried with my grades and stuff. I talked to him, and he was like, “Don’t worry you have a lot of time. You’re only a sophomore.” It was just really nice talking to him. I think I calmed down a little bit. I don’t go to him anymore. I don’t know why.

Furthermore, Ben said his academic adviser, Kayce (who is Cambodian), was his only source of institutional support:

There's my adviser. There's Kayce. That's the first adviser I met, and I still talk to her. I met her during orientation. I still talk to her today. That's it.

Paul, who worked part-time at one of UPN’s cafeterias, had stronger relationships with the chefs he worked with than his academic advisers. The chefs, all men of color, provided a safe place for Paul to share the daily happenings of his academic and personal life:

The chefs there are very helpful to me both for school and my personal relationships with everyone else. I tell them how I’m doing in my classes, and “Oh, I like this person. I like that person as my teacher.” I know they’re understanding, and they listen to me.

Grace, who spoke about how a staff member helped her devise how to approach her parents about switching majors, talked about how university staff are more helpful than faculty. Staff made her feel supported:

I look at school as an institution. Professors help you out academically. Period.

They don't need to help you with your personal problems, but it's actually helpful

for the staff to know what's going on if you're struggling. I figured that out my sophomore year. Just figuring out basically they're here to help you academically, and if you're struggling academically because of personal problems they should know as well. They're actually very willing to help you out. I feel like I can do whatever. I can get stuff done because I have this staff who believes in me. If anything as a sophomore, I just really liked interacting with staff. I felt like it was a whole new playing field for me in college. I felt way more supported through my relationships with staff even though my friends are really supportive. I felt that staff here can give you continued support and professional support. I think that's a really big thing in my sophomore year.

All of the students benefited from having faculty or staff of color serve as their mentors. Whether it was intentional or not, these students sought advice and solace from adults who could sympathize with their situation and understand their cultural values.

*“I feel like there are a lot of resources that I didn’t make use of.”*

(Ted)

**The underutilization of campus resources.** Previous studies have focused on institutional programs and strategies that support the retention of students of color including mentoring/tutoring programs (Wagoner & Lin, 2009) and student ethnic organizations/centers (Buenavista, 2007; Chhuon & Hudley, 2008; Moje & Martinez, 2007; Museus, 2008; Museus & Maramba, 2011; Wagoner & Lin, 2009). The University of the Pacific Northwest has specialized academic advising programs as well as a tutoring center that provide additional academic support for underrepresented populations.

Tim, Claire, Ana, Ted, and Paul spoke about how they did not utilize campus resources geared towards underrepresented students. The reasons why these students did not utilize the resources include the exclusive focus on math and science tutoring, lack of time, needing more personal support, and not identifying as a student of color.

Tim, an Education major, commented on how the Ethnic Tutoring Center (ETC) focused primarily on providing support for math and science classes:

I'm taking education classes. It seems like more of the ETC classes are geared towards like math and science and things like that. So I don't really have a purpose to be there. But when it comes to academic resources? I mean I just ask friends that are around me. I'm taking education classes; they're taking classes with me. Why not ask them? There are a lot of resources out there that I didn't utilize. It was my fault that I didn't utilize them, in a sense. I feel like the programs here, the resources here at the UPN are great especially if you want to get support in math and science.

Claire, a Business major, made a similar comment regarding the ETC's concentration on supporting students in math and science. Also, she was not aware of resources supporting students of color pursuing a Business major until she had already completed the prerequisite classes.

I did go to the ETC a few times, but mostly they don't have anything for business classes there. It's mostly sciences and math. That's where I got help freshman year. I think that's why also I got better grades because the math classes, they have a lot of tutors there. Sophomore year were all prereqs [prerequisite courses] for business classes, and they didn't have that much there. Also, towards the end

my sophomore year when I was already almost completed all the prereqs [prerequisite courses] for business classes, I heard of business tutoring to help students going into the business school. I was too late to be a part of that because I was practically almost finished with all my prereqs. Again, I didn't have help with the prereqs for business courses. That was tough for me because I didn't have the same help like I did with math and stuff, like the general courses.

Ana, on the other hand, said she wanted to use campus resources, but she simply did not have the time, "Yeah. I don't really have time to go to the tutoring center for my subjects, but when I do they're really helpful."

Unlike the other students, Ted discussed his lack of motivation for his coursework. He did not believe there were any resources on campus that could help him with his problem:

I feel like there are lot of resources I didn't make use of. I don't know. I think the only problems I faced with sophomore year were issues of motivation, and I'm not sure what programs you could make to bolster motivation of the students. I think if it's a question of academics you're pretty much covered, but for sophomore year I think the issues are more personal and more a problem of losing interest or at least having trouble with finding motivation. I don't know of any programs that could possibly help with that kind of issue.

Finally, Paul, who identified himself as Filipino by "blood only" said his reason for not using campus resources designated for students of color was because he does not feel that they are appropriate for him:

I feel like, I guess I consider myself to be really just Americanized. Coming in here, I didn't really think of me really being Filipino. I knew my blood is Filipino, that's how I associate myself as being Filipino American. I understand that I could use OMA [Office of Minority Affairs] resources, but I never really utilized the resources because it didn't really seem applicable at the moment. In terms of just general support, I feel I'm fine. I didn't really utilize the support that was given to me.

Tim, Claire, Ana, Ted, and Paul are examples of how campus resources for students of color can be perceived as not useful or applicable by its target population. While the reasons varied, the students chose not to utilize these resources.

### **The Role of Student Ethnic Organizations**

As noted in Chapter 2, several studies have shown how student ethnic organizations have helped college students of color create a better sense of belonging for themselves on campus (Buenavista, 2007; Chhuon & Hudley, 2008; Moje & Martinez, 2007; Museus, 2008; Museus & Maramba, 2011; Wagoner & Lin, 2009). At the University of the Pacific Northwest, the first Filipino student group was established in 1917. That group, then known as the Filipino Club, has evolved into the present-day Filipino American Student Association (FASA). On its university-sponsored website, FASA describes itself and states its mission:

FASA is a safe place for Filipino students and those interested in Filipino culture and history to express themselves, be themselves, and have support in this large and demanding university. The mission of the Filipino American Student

Association at UPN shall be to foster unity and pride among its members and surrounding community through educational, political, cultural, and social advancement (“Filipino American Student Association,” 2015).

Grace, Ana, Caroline, and Ben are members of FASA and participate in its weekly meetings as well as other FASA events. Ana and Grace are on the FASA steering committee, so they are actively involved in the oversight of the student organization. All four students identify as Filipino or Filipino American, and they enjoy the camaraderie and support that the club provides them. For example, Grace states,

I think FASA helps you become more aware of who you are as a person. I find that to be really important now. It's [FASA] part of who I am as a college student and even as a person. It gave me a way in to have friends here. I did a lot of things last year that I probably would have never done or been able to do without the support of a community on campus. Having that outlet of FASA and having the alumni network that I had was really nice to have just to sort out all of the stuff that was going on because if I didn't have that, I probably would have dropped out of school by now. Sophomore year to me was . . . a make it or break it year. It's where you find out whether you're okay or not in the world. I'm okay.

Ana shared Grace's sentiments:

I am the fund raising chair for FASA, so I have to go to officer meetings every Monday, and then I also have to go to the general meetings. I have to go to all of the events. I enjoy FASA. I got involved with FASA from the people that were in it already. There are three people from my hometown that are in FASA, so that

was how I got in. Being with FASA and being one of the leaders and working with other people, it's pretty hard work, but I've learned so much, and we all support each other.

Furthermore, Caroline, who "feels more Filipino than ever," said, "I'm really glad I got to join FASA. It was really nice to see what Filipinos are really like. That was really a personal choice to go to FASA, and I'm so glad I joined because everyone is so amazing and nice to me."

In addition to FASA, UPN has a variety of Asian American student organizations.

Ben, who identifies as Filipino Japanese, described his involvement in an Asian American interest fraternity:

"I'm pretty close to them. They're like another family here, which is great. I've never had a circle of guy friends that I can count on and learn from in my life. It really helped out. I'm literally the only Filipino, and that really bothers me. The founders who started it, there were three Filipinos. Now, out of the house of thirty people, there's me and one other Filipino. Two years ago, the President was Filipino. After that, no other Filipinos. Anyways, because of that, I joined FASA, so I can get back to that side of things. I identify more with being Filipino than actually being Japanese."

Ben appreciated the volunteer work that FASA participates in and gave his perspective as a new member of the student organization:

"I joined partly because they're planning to do a lot of community service. They visit the Legacy House (a local nursing home), they visit the old people, the

manongs and manangs (terms of respect for older Filipinos), at the Legacy House. They do give back which is pretty cool.

While these four students participated in FASA and found it to be beneficial, the other five students did not. Paul, Nancy, Tim, Ted, and Claire chose not to participate in the student organization due to lack of time and/or lack of a sense of belonging. For example, Paul actually joined FASA, but his busy schedule kept from being actively involved:

I've been into a few meetings. I signed up for the membership, so I can give them the \$10 to support them, but I can't really go to the meetings right now because of work, because of just other things like trying to get my homework done, because during those meetings is when I planned out I'm going to sit down and do my homework.

Nancy also cited a busy schedule as a reason for not participating in FASA. In addition, she talked about how she wanted to join FASA, but she felt uncomfortable going to the club meetings alone:

I still feel today like I have ties to my culture, and I want to celebrate that. I've been wanting to join the student group for Filipinos, but I'm so busy. I've heard of the FASA, I think that's what they called [it]. I wanted to join last year, but I just feel intimidated going into a group without knowing anyone. They have their meetings on Thursdays, and I can't make those. It's my hope next year because I know I don't work on Thursdays to actually join the group because I really do miss having a community of Filipinos and people that understand the culture that I grew up in and things that I went through too.

Similarly, Tim spoke of how he wants to join FASA, but at the same time he is resistant to doing so because he feels that he does not fit in with the other students:

I am not involved in FASA whatsoever. I do have a lot of friends that are in FASA, and I do hope to one day join. I always see a general meeting time on Thursday night or something like that, but I usually have a meeting. Eventually I'll go. I'm being more receptive. To be completely honest, coming into my freshman year, I didn't want to join FASA. I had this mindset where Filipino people are cocky, annoying, things like that. At the same time sometimes I just don't feel like I am Filipino in a sense. I don't like to go to FASA meetings or things like that. When all my friends think, "Oh, you should join FASA." I don't want to. I feel like I don't have a belonging, a sense of belonging there. The most Filipino thing I've ever done in my life was probably participate in the Tinikling dance in like sixth grade performance, but that was it.

Moreover, Ted talked about how he thinks FASA and similar student clubs are more geared towards first-generation students:

Freshman year, I joined FASA. I went to a meeting, and I don't know. I just felt like there wasn't something that I was comfortable with or not comfortable, sorry, but it just didn't really interest me. I'm not sure why. I felt a little guilty because I still get the newsletters, but I don't go to their events. I don't know. Sometimes these student organizations tend to appeal to, say, people who have come to the country recently and tend to alienate those who've become nationalized or assimilated.

Claire, who identified as White, did not spend time with Filipino Americans in general, so being involved with FASA did not appeal to her:

I think I'm weird because growing up, there was a big community of Filipinos in where I went to school, but there wasn't a lot in my grade. There was only one of my cousins, and I didn't hang out with a lot of Filipino people growing up.

Coming here, I went to a FASA meeting, and it was just weird to me. I don't want to be mean, but when I go to FASA, to me it just seems like they think they're cool. I don't know. I don't want to be mean, but that's how I feel. I'm just not used to hanging out with a lot of Filipinos even though I am Filipino, and I hang out with all my cousins. I think it's because they know more about the culture than I do, and I'm not used to it. I'm not used to hanging out with other Filipinos.

I think I'm weird because I don't hang out with a lot of Filipino American students, but other Filipino students gravitate to a Filipino community for more support. I know one girl who's actually a family friend. We're cousins, but we're not really cousins. We just say we are. She has the same background and hung out with a lot of Filipino people. Coming here, she ended up joining a Filipino Asian sorority. We differ in that way. Maybe doing that helped her. I think I'm different because I don't gravitate to that. I don't know a lot of people like me. I wouldn't date a Filipino guy because that's weird to me. I don't find other Filipino guys attractive. I wouldn't mind if it changed, but I feel like it's not going to change because I don't have a lot of Filipino friends. The way I'm going, I don't think I'm going to meet other Filipino people. Maybe I will.

## Summary

Students' perception of their ethnic identity did not always correlate with their level of sense of belonging and satisfaction with the campus climate. Some of the students who identified with their Filipino heritage did not feel a sense of belonging on campus and/or were active members of Filipino American or Asian American student organizations. Conversely, some of the students who identified more closely with White, dominant culture felt a greater sense of belonging on campus and chose not to participate in any Asian-interest student groups. However, the relationships between family influence, ethnic identity, and campus climate proved to be multidimensional and complex. For example, Caroline identified as Filipino, but since she grew up knowing little about her Filipino heritage and was used to being in pre-dominantly White environments, she found UPN's campus to be very welcoming. In Chapter 7, I will discuss how factors such as socio-economic status and pre-college experiences affected students' perceptions of their ethnic identity as well as their sense of belonging on campus.

Regardless of how they identified ethnically, however, all of the students had at least one positive interaction with a faculty or staff of color. These interactions and relationships led to some of the students feeling more supported on campus. In Ted's case, through his positive relationship with his academic adviser, he felt more confident in himself and sought out a teaching opportunity he never would have thought to pursue before. Also, the utilization of campus resources for underrepresented populations was not tied to students' ethnic identity.

## Chapter 7

### Discussion and Conclusion

Filipino Americans are often thought of as not having a distinct culture or ethnic identity due to their high assimilation into U.S. society, and therefore are often labeled “forgotten” or “invisible.” Despite Filipino Americans’ long history within the U.S. and the fact that they are the second largest Asian ethnic group in the country, there is a dearth of research on Filipino American students’ experiences in higher education. Therefore, this study was developed in an attempt to investigate the experiences of Filipino American college students. Further, this study was created to expand research on Filipino Americans during their second-year of college, a time when students are more likely to be dissatisfied with their college experience and withdraw from school. Previous research has shown that there are multiple factors that contribute to underrepresented students’ retention and persistence (Fuligni, 2001; Tierney, 1992; Yeh, 2004).

The purpose of this study has been to identify how Filipino American family, ethnic identity, and campus climate combined with the struggles associated with the sophomore year of college, affect Filipino American second-year students’ perceptions of their academic and social challenges. Findings from this research begin to uncover the need to focus on the educational experiences and lives of Filipino American students at this critical time to ensure that they remain engaged as they make important decisions regarding their academic path. This study can begin to shed light on the challenges that Filipino American students are facing during their second year of college.

Based on the need to generate theory and constructs for an understudied topic, I utilized qualitative methods. By conducting interviews and a focus group, I focused on

the centrality of narrative, placing the experiences and voices of the participants central to the study (Richards & Morse, 2007). As a result, I was able to provide rich, descriptive data on a small sample of cases that future research can build upon. Furthermore, there are many factors involved in shaping Filipino American student experiences. Qualitative methods allow me to investigate the complexity of this process.

This study was guided by the following questions:

1. What role does the family play in Filipino American students' academic and social challenges during their second year of college?
2. How do Filipino American students perceive their ethnic identity and how is this related to their academic and social challenges during their second year of college?
3. How does the campus climate, in particular interactions with faculty and staff, affect Filipino American students' academic and social challenges during their second year of college?

The conceptual framework I adopted included Nadal's (2004) Pilipino American Ethnic Identity Development Model, Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model, and Yosso's (2006) Stages of Passage Theory. These theories provided a useful framework for examining multiple kinds of identities. I used Nadal's (2004) model to analyze what stages of Filipino American ethnic identity development students are in and how their ethnic identity affects retention. By using Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model, I was able to explore what cultural resources Filipino American students possess and/or rely upon. Yosso's (2006) Stages of Passage proved useful in investigating Filipino American students' transition to and sense of belonging in college.

Through these theories, I was able to approach this study through a critical lens that examined the role that family, ethnic identity, and campus climate played in shaping the experiences of Filipino American sophomores.

The main findings of this study revealed how Filipino American second-year students perceived their academic and social challenges. Based on the data from the student interviews and focus group, I highlight the themes of family influence, ethnic identity, and campus climate as being the most influential on their wellbeing as second-year college students. Generally speaking, my findings suggest that all three play a significant role in the experiences of Filipino American students during their second year of college. In addition, the study illustrates that the themes intersect with one another. Some themes play a more prominent role for particular students in this study than for others. Filipino American students are heterogeneous though they share some commonalities.

### **Family Influence**

The study participants' narratives strongly reveal that parents and other family members, such as grandparents, played a large role in the participants' experiences during their second year of college. Most of the students said they received both pressure and support from their family to be academically successful. Previous studies on college sophomores (Cobern & Treeger, 1988; Lemons and Richmond, 1987; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007) strongly support this finding. For example, Tobolowsky and Cox (2007) state that college sophomores feel a lot of pressure and constraints from their parents.

Furthermore, previous research on Filipino American college students focus on parental pressure to succeed (Cheng, 1989; Espiritu, 1994; Espiritu & Wolf, 2001; Maramba, 2003; Monzon, 2013; Revilla, 1993; Strobel, 1996; Wolf, 1997). Espiritu (1994) stated that many Filipino American college students' parents or grandparents are post-1965 immigrants who are financially successful themselves and their desire for their children and grandchildren to academically excel is very strong. However, these studies do not discuss how parents are also a source of encouragement and support. This study provides new insight into the complexity and nuances of Filipino American sophomores' relationship with their families.

In particular, students felt pressure from their parents to choose a pre-medicine/Biology track that they believed would lead to high income and prestige. In response to this parental pressure to major in Biology, five students (Grace, Claire, Tim, Ben, and Nancy) feared telling their parents that they were performing poorly in their science classes, and therefore wanted to pursue a different academic discipline. Nadal's (2011, 2013) research focused on how 'loss of face' or 'hiya' kept Filipino American students from seeking mental health treatment. Filipino family ideology served to keep problems within the immediate family. In this study, these five students did not want to talk to their families because of the disapproval and disappointment their parents would feel towards them regarding their decision to pursue a less prestigious major.

How these five students negotiated this difficult situation with their parents depended on their ethnic identity and sense of belonging on campus. For example, Grace and Nancy, who identified as Filipino American and felt alienated on UPN's campus, turned to college personnel for guidance. Grace, who grew up in Hawaii and was very

active in FASA, sought advice from a Filipino staff member regarding how to approach a difficult conversation with her parents; Nancy, who transferred to UPN from a community college, consulted a counselor at UPN's counseling center for emotional and psychological support. The other three students, Claire, Tim, and Ben, identified as White and/or found UPN's campus to be welcoming and did not feel the need to take advantage of campus resources in this situation. As opposed to utilizing these resources, they relied on their network of friends. Previous studies found that Filipino American students relied on the mentorship of faculty and staff of color (Maramba & Museus, 2013). This study offers new knowledge in its focus on the differentiation of experiences between Filipino American students who self-identify as White versus Filipino or Filipino American. Students also identified the important role of peers/friends in their academic progress.

Moreover, the students' socio-economic status affected their approach regarding speaking with their parents about choosing a non-science major. Tim, who lived with his grandmother, and Ben, whose dad was retired due to a disability, identified as lower-middle class and were especially anxious about telling their parents that they planned on pursuing less prestigious and financially viable academic disciplines. As a result, both students waited to talk with their parents after they had fully explored their options and had firmly decided on a major. In preparation for his discussion with his family, Tim researched how he could be financially stable with a career in Education. For the students who identified as middle or upper-middle class, Grace, Claire, and Nancy, they did not approach the topic of finances with their family.

These findings support Lemons & Richmond (1987) research on how second-year students, especially those that are financially dependent on their parents, are more

uncomfortable and often unwilling to break emotional ties with their parents. Second-year students often feel overwhelmed and unprepared to make a decision without their parents' support. Regardless of this fear, however, Grace, Claire, Tim, Ben, and Nancy did eventually tell their parents of their decision and changed majors. These students' agency is an example of developing autonomy, which Chickering (1969) stated leads to emotional and instrumental independence.

In addition to feeling academic pressure from their parents, four students in this study (Ana, Ben, Nancy, and Caroline) wished that their parents had taught them more about their Filipino heritage, including their mother and/or father's native language. While the students understood some of the reasons why their parents chose not to teach them more about Filipino culture and language (i.e. busy work schedule, wish for them to assimilate into White culture), they felt that their parents could have done more. As a result, some students sought this knowledge through Ethnic Studies and Tagalog (a Filipino dialect) classes or by participating in student clubs such as the Filipino American Student Association. In this study, some of the students lacked the cultural knowledge and linguistic capital that Yosso (2005) stated that many underrepresented students possess, but they took the initiative to build this capital through campus resources. I will discuss in the following section how the amount of knowledge that students knew about their heritage affected their ethnic identity and sense of belonging on campus.

Another example of how parental influence impacted students in different ways is how Nancy, Ben, and Paul spoke of how their parents supported their decision to not pursue a Biology degree. Unlike the other students, these three students' parents reinforced the belief that they could be successful in a different academic discipline.

Nancy, Ben, and Paul's parents encouraged them to be happy and said that they would always love and be proud of them. This unconditional support is an example of Yosso's (2005) familial capital, which refers to the social and personal human resources students have in their pre-college environment, drawn from their extended family and community networks. Even when Nancy, Ben, and Paul struggled in their science classes and decided to explore other majors, their parents believed in their abilities to be academically successful. As a result, these students felt more confident in their decision.

### **Ethnic Identity**

In addition to parental influence, the development of the participants' ethnic identity shaped their lived experiences. The students identified themselves as White, Filipino, or Filipino American. As with previous research, students' ethnic identity was influenced by many factors including their home and school environments (Nadal, 2004). In particular, the level of knowledge about their Filipino heritage that the students' families shared with them, campus climate, and additional factors, such as their pre-college experiences and socio-economic status, highly affected students' ethnic identity development. Filipino American students in this study experienced and expressed their ethnic identity in various ways.

Previous research (David & Nadal, 2013; David & Okazaki, 2006; Espiritu, 1992, 1994; Nadal, 2004, 2013; Ocampo, 2013; Strobel, 1996; Uba, 1994) has described the complex nature of Filipino American ethnic identity. Second-generation Filipinos often lack knowledge about their Filipino heritage. In addition to work obligations and lack of time, one of the reasons why Filipino parents do not teach their children about their

Filipino heritage is their own colonial mentality, or belief that they are a subordinate and inferior people to White Americans. Colonial mentality was evident in this study when some of the parents described and talked about Filipinos in a negative and dismissive manner. For example, Grace talked about how her mom prefers light skin over dark skin and encouraged her to use whitening soap. Also, Tim spoke of how his parents led him to believe Filipinos are cocky and annoying, and Caroline shared that her parents were proud of her for not looking Filipino. These findings support Lott's (1980) and Nadal's (2013) claims that colonial mentality is strongly embedded in Filipino Americans' home culture and can affect second-generation Filipino Americans' ethnic identity.

The student whose ethnic identity development most closely aligns with colonial mentality is Claire. Her prior knowledge of Filipino culture and her ethnic identity affected her differently than the other students. She was the only student who identified as White and not only knew little about Filipino culture but expressed no desire or inclination to do so. Growing up, Claire did not have many Filipino people in her community. The only Filipinos she spent any significant time with were her cousins. Therefore, when Claire came to UPN she felt uncomfortable around other Filipino American students and said the students in FASA "thought they were cool" because they knew more about Filipino culture than she did. Also, Claire expressed that she would never date a Filipino guy because she does not find them attractive, which could be interpreted as a sign of self-hate.

Nadal's (2004) Pilipino American Ethnic Identity Model is helpful in understanding the unique experiences of Filipinos. In stage one, *Ethnic Awareness*, Filipino parents teach their children about their Filipino heritage through food, music,

dance, and sometimes language. Since it is the only culture to which they have been exposed, Filipino Americans in this stage will have an impartial view of Filipino culture. This stage typically occurs at a very young age, so it is not surprising that none of the participants' identities closely associated with it.

Claire's identity above correlates with stage two, *Assimilation to Dominant Culture*. She is an example of someone who perceives the culture, lifestyle, and physical characteristics of White society as superior to that of Filipino Americans, and therefore, felt a stronger sense of belonging on a pre-dominantly White campus. Claire expressed no need to utilize campus resources geared towards underrepresented students. Also, she shared no inclination of experiencing the dissatisfaction or confusion associated with the sophomore slump.

Similar to Claire, Tim and Ted were not highly exposed to Filipino culture prior to college and identified as White. However, their lack of prior knowledge of Filipino culture and ethnic identity had a different impact on them. Unlike Claire, these two students became more aware of racial discrimination and actively tried to learn more about their Filipino heritage. Nadal (2004) described this experience as stage three, the *Social Political Awakening*. For example, Ted, an English major, enrolled in an Ethnic Studies because he wanted to become "more aware" of Filipino culture, and he said the class changed his concept of ethnic identity. Tim, an Education major, took a class on race and education that counted towards his degree. He shared that taking a class with other Filipino American students led to him becoming more open-minded and receptive of different cultures.

Caroline also actively tried to learn about her Filipino culture. She spoke about how she felt “more Filipino than ever” once she took a Tagalog class and became actively involved in the Filipino American Student Association. Her ethnic identity development from Nadal’s stage two to stage three was evident. She went from distrusting Filipinos and identifying as White to being proud of her ethnic background and identifying as Filipino. I will discuss in the next section how Tim, Ted, and Caroline’s experiences affected their positive perception of campus culture.

Dissimilar to Claire, Tim, Ted, and Caroline, Ben learned about his Filipino heritage at a young age and identified as primarily Filipino. His closest friendships were with non-Filipino Asian Americans in his fraternity, and he turned to them for validation and support. Ben lamented that there were no other Filipino Americans in his fraternity, but he still felt that his Asian American friends shared similar values and lifestyles. Aligning with Nadal’s (2004) fourth stage, *Panethnic Asian American Consciousness*, Ben utilized the Asian American identity for a greater sense of belonging and acceptance into the campus community. Regardless of his ethnic identity, however, Ben’s previous experiences at a different university seemed to have a larger affect on his perception of UPN, which I will discuss in more detail in the next section.

Ana and Paul’s responses about their Filipino identity correlates with Nadal’s (2004) fifth stage *Ethnocentric Consciousness*, when Filipino Americans become aware of the marginalization of Filipinos and are educated on the social injustices specific to Filipinos in American society. Ana, a Biochemistry major, described her Filipino American ethnic identity in a very simple and straightforward manner. She is Filipino and proud of her heritage, but she grew up in the U.S. so she also identifies as American. An

active board member of FASA, she focused on the strength and solidarity of that student community. Paul, a Civil Engineering major, also identified as Filipino American and discussed how Filipino Americans have different values than people from other cultural backgrounds.

As opposed to Ana and Paul, Nancy and Grace described the nuanced progression of their ethnic identity and how it continually evolves with their life experiences. Nancy, a Social Work major whose curriculum centers on issues of equity and social justice, volunteers her time working with the local homeless community. Grace advocates for Filipino Americans students in particular, and underrepresented students in general, in terms of campus equity initiatives and policies. Both students identified as Filipino American and most closely aligned with Nadal's (2004) sixth stage, *Incorporation*, which is when individuals will advocate for themselves, the Filipino community, and social justice as a whole. Given these two students' level of knowledge and awareness with racial inequality and social injustices on campus, it is no wonder that they felt that UPN's campus lacked diversity as well as adequate support resources for students of color.

Ana, Paul, Nancy, and Grace's strong sense of a Filipino or Filipino American identity is connected to the resources, or familial capital, they utilized through the Filipino American community. Yosso (2005) stated that this form of cultural wealth engages a commitment to community wellbeing and expands the concept of family to include a broader understanding of kinship. Familial capital is nurtured by extended family, which may include immediate family as well as aunts, uncles, grandparents, and friends. In the next section, I will discuss the resources that students utilized on UPN's campus that were centered around Filipino American ethnic identity.

In this study, family influence and ethnic identity interact with one another in different ways for each student. The nature and level of exposure to their Filipino heritage that students experienced often affected their ethnic identity development. I will now describe how family influence and ethnic identity also intertwine with students' sense of belonging on the UPN campus.

### **Campus Climate**

In terms of how campus climate affects Filipino American college students, previous research has focused on the lack of student, faculty, and staff representation; the need for Filipino specific courses; and negative experiences with college personnel (Maramba, 2008b; Maramba & Museus, 2011; Museus & Maramba, 2011). Overall, the findings also concentrated on the complex relationship between family influence, ethnic identity, and campus climate and how they intersect and affect each other in a myriad of ways.

One example is how, due to their previous home and family experiences, students who had different ethnic identities still had similar feelings of belonging on campus. Five students (Tim, Ted, Claire, Ben, and Caroline) found the university to be welcoming and supportive. Three of these students (Tim, Ted, and Claire) had limited knowledge of Filipino culture, identified as White, and had a strong sense of belonging on UPN's predominantly White campus. Ben and Caroline, on the other hand, identified as Filipino, but they were familiar with navigating predominantly White environments. Ben previously attended a university that was less diverse than UPN and provided fewer opportunities to connect with other Filipino students. Similarly, Caroline grew up with

little exposure to her Filipino heritage and had a negative view of Filipino Americans. As a result, instead of feeling alienated or isolated at UPN, these two students appreciated the resources available at UPN for underrepresented students. This finding does not support Yosso's (2006) Stages of Passage Model in that these students did not experience the *Culture Shock* stage, however, it is a good example of the multiple factors that affect students' sense of belonging on campus.

The students who did have more difficulty adjusting to life on UPN's campus all identified as Filipino American and stated that they learned about their Filipino heritage from a young age. Ana, Grace, and Nancy were distinctly aware of "being brown" and not fitting in with the pre-dominantly White student body. This finding supports Yosso's (2006) *Culture Shock* stage, where students experience isolation, alienation, and discrimination at the university. For example, Ana spoke of how she is aware of not only her race but her gender as well. As one of the very few women of color in her science classes, she felt she had to work harder than everyone else in order to prove herself.

In Ana's and Grace's experience, as they became more involved in FASA, they felt a greater sense of belonging on campus. Both students were officers of the club and spent a significant time involved with FASA activities. This finding is an example of Yosso's (2006) *Community Building* stage where students create safe 'counterspaces' to help them cope with a racially hostile atmosphere.

Ethnic Studies or Tagalog classes also served as another counterspace as well as individual interactions with faculty and staff of color. It is important to note that all of the students had at least one positive relationship with a faculty or staff of color. These connections were meaningful and described as familial. For example, Ted discussed how

his academic adviser, who is Hawaiian Filipino, was a father figure to him and has guided him throughout his years at UPN. In addition, Tim referred to his Ethnic Studies professor as “a Filipino grandpa I never had.” Also, Grace met with Tess, a Filipina staff member, to discuss how to have a challenging conversation with her parents regarding her decision to switch majors.

These mentoring relationships were successful in large part because students connected with faculty and staff that they could identify with and whom they felt understood them. For instance, Paul said his Filipino Ethnic Studies professor clearly shared his Filipino values of family and trust. These mentorships are examples of sophomores utilizing Yosso’s (2005) social capital, or networks of people and community resources.

After utilizing these campus resources and social networks though, none of the students spoke of how they used the experience and knowledge they gained from the university to help their communities, or what Yosso (2006) called the *Critical Navigation Between Multiple Worlds* stage. However, it is important to note that the participants were second and third-year students. It is feasible that they, especially the ones already discussing their interest in social justice issues, could have become more involved with the local Filipino community later on in their academic careers.

Also, there were students in this study who were not completely satisfied with their relationships with faculty and staff. Grace, Paul, and Caroline expressed frustration with not being able to connect with more university personnel. Paul and Caroline found academic advisers to be particularly uncaring. This finding ties in with previous studies on second-year college students and the lack of institutional support for this population of

students. College sophomores have shown to be more highly dissatisfied with their institutions than freshman or upper-classman, and they are more critical of the limitations of the institution (Gahagan and Hunter, 2006).

In summary, Filipino American second-year students in this study demonstrated aspects of the sophomore slump. They were in a period of great uncertainty, anxiety, transition, and development in multiple aspects of their lives. All of them respected and loved their parents, yet also wanted to be independent and make their own choices. This attempt for autonomy was evident in the students' decision-making processes regarding choosing a major. Uncertainty and anxiety about major selection is one of the main barriers to second-year student success (Coburn & Treeger, 1988). In addition, most of students were struggling to form their personal, educational, and ethnic identities while also trying to find a community or "home" on campus.

The sophomore slump literature suggests academic challenges that can influence persistence. In this study, regardless of their family's influence, ethnicity identity, or sense of belonging on campus all of the students were academically successful (3.0 GPA or above) except for Grace. This could be due to several factors. In Grace's situation, first, her relationship with her parents was the most strained, and her interactions with them were described as mostly negative. As opposed to other students' parents who loved and supported them regardless of the circumstances, Grace's parents wanted her to transfer to a different school to major in Biology since it was not working out at UPN. Second, Grace was very cognizant of how her ethnic identity affected her college experience. Growing up in Hawaii, Grace was fully aware of how she stands out at UPN

for being brown. She discussed her ethnic identity development process in detail and described the nuances and complexities of identifying as Filipino American. Third, more than any other student, Grace acknowledged and articulated the injustices that Filipino American students face on the UPN campus due to their ethnicity. Therefore, Grace was intensely involved in FASA and saw that community as her support system. Outside of FASA, she did not have a strong sense of belonging on campus. In the end, all of these elements led to Grace's overall dissatisfaction with UPN and her feelings of alienation and isolation on campus, which, in turn, likely contributed to her poor academic performance.

The other students' academic success could be contributed to a high level of familial support and strong connections to campus resources. Some students relied on their peers for guidance while others maintained solid relationships with faculty and staff. Also, many students demonstrated their agency when they explored and ultimately chose majors that interested them.

Overall, the findings indicate that the factors of family, ethnic identity, and campus climate uniquely affected each student's educational experience as a sophomore. By taking a qualitative approach and focusing on the students' narratives, this study was able to capture the nuances and complexity of these three factors and their influence on participants' experiences. Furthermore, this study challenges and expands the current discourse in higher education institutions by bringing to the forefront the voices of students from this understudied and often misunderstood group.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations to this study. First, there was selection bias in that I recruited students for this study mainly through the UPN Filipino American Student Association, Ethnic Studies and Tagalog classes, and professional contacts with faculty and staff. Therefore, the students interviewed had an established connection with at least one on-campus resource. Students who do not utilize university services could experience their second year of college very differently. However, this selection bias also proved to be very informative. If these students, who were utilizing university resources and were academically successful (except for one), experienced challenges during their sophomore year then it is reasonable to assume that challenges exist for other Filipino American students as well and may be more severe for those with less supports.

Additionally, the sample population was restricted to Filipino American second and third-year students from one university. This large, urban, research, pre-dominantly White university has a culture that is very different from some other institutions of higher education. Sophomores at other universities may have dissimilar views on their college experiences.

Another limitation to this study is that all of the students were traditional-aged students. Non-traditional-aged Filipino American students could be at a different stage of their cognitive and emotional development, and therefore might experience their second year of college in different ways. In addition, all of the students were second-generation Filipino Americans. First-generation students might feel more closely tied with Filipino culture and could have contradictory experiences of their sophomore year. Furthermore, all of the participants identified as male or female. Filipino American second-year

students who identify as transgender could have different insights into their college experiences. Also, the participants were not asked about their sexual orientation. It is feasible that this is another factor that could affect Filipino American students' perception of their sophomore year.

Lastly, the interviews were transcribed by a third party funded by the College of Education, which saved the researcher time, but could have potentially introduced unintended errors into the transcription process due to lack of familiarity with the study and specialized terms/abbreviations used by the participants (i.e. FASA for Filipino American Student Association).

### **Implications for Practice**

The overall findings of this study suggest that, while student groups may provide some Filipino American sophomores the support and stability they need, institutions of higher education need to recognize the importance of campus-wide initiatives funded by the university and supported by faculty and staff. Furthermore, colleges and universities need multiple strategies to provide more individualized and strategic support for Filipino American second-year students. This study's findings showed that Filipino Americans have different needs based on their family relationships and ethnic identity. Thus, a single support strategy might not work well for the entire population of Filipino American sophomores.

First, university faculty and staff need to have a better understanding of Filipino American second-year students' educational experiences in order to better connect with

and support them. Continuous professional development workshops that address the needs of this particular population are important for all second-year students.

Given the unique challenges Filipino American sophomores face, the vital role that families play in Filipino American students' lives ought to be the focus of one of the training workshops. Parents can greatly influence students' academic decisions and ethnic identity development. Academic advisers and other university staff could learn to understand and be sensitive to these cultural issues when helping students. For example, academic advisers often encourage students to "find their passion" and "follow their dream" without realizing that this advice is based on an individualistic viewpoint. Filipino culture is more collectivistic in nature. Wolf (1998) noted that academic advisers and counselors ". . . must take great care when addressing these issues by not creating dissonance between the student and their parents but rather helping to find constructive and positive ways where both feel respected" (p. 347).

Another campus initiative could focus on hiring more Filipino American faculty and staff. Some of the students who communicated regularly with a Filipino faculty or staff member said it was because they both shared the same culture, and it was easier to go to someone who would understand them. It is important for students to have advocates and role models with whom they can relate. These relationships lead to students having a greater sense of belonging on campus, which could combat the negative affect of the sophomore slump and issues of persistence and retention.

Specifically, universities should consider hiring a Filipino admissions recruiter. One student mentioned that there was a Pacific Islander recruiter at UPN, but that person could not identify with Filipino heritage and culture. By having a Filipino admissions

recruiter, the number of Filipino students attending UPN would hopefully increase. This is important because seeing other students with whom they can identify can lead to Filipino American students having a stronger sense of belonging on campus, and thus a higher chance of academic success.

In terms of student programs, the pressure to academically succeed and choose a major can lead to internal struggles and anxiety for Filipino American sophomores. However, those challenges may also lead to improved resilience, self-confidence, and resolve, as demonstrated in the stories of the students in this study. What is important is that students feel supported through that time of indecision and confusion through access to academic advisors, career counselors, mental health counselors, faculty, and staff. Currently, UPN does not have any interventions to address the social and emotional concerns of sophomores. Two of the students in this study commented on how academic advisers are difficult to approach and do not have time to meet with them. Universities should consider implementing regular academic check-ins with advisers for students during their second year of college. Moreover, these appointments should be an hour long in order to provide enough time for advisers and students to get to know each other and connect at a deeper level.

In addition to academic advising, campus resources such as tutoring centers should recognize the need for support for Filipino American students who are not planning on majoring in math and science. Two students discussed the lack of academic support resources for social science courses. While the majority of students in this study were academically successful, they also had other support mechanisms in place. Filipino American second-year students with fewer connections might experience more difficulty.

### **Directions for Future Research**

In conclusion, my findings contribute new understandings of the ethnic identity formation and college experiences of Filipino American second-year students. The lack of institutional support often connected with the “sophomore slump,” along with family influence, ethnic identity, and campus climate affect how the students perceive their academic and social challenges. Moreover, these dynamics are reflected in the students’ sense of belonging on campus, which plays an important role in students’ academic success and wellbeing.

The significance of my study is that the issues related to the persistence and retention of Filipino American sophomores are complex. While my findings at times differ from what previous researchers have found, since my study was unique to Filipino American second-year students, the difference in academic class standing may account for distinctive results.

These findings open up new areas for research to understand the experiences of Filipino American sophomores. Given that this study was situated at one, large, public, pre-dominantly White university in the Pacific Northwest, future studies should investigate Filipino American second-year students’ experiences at various types of higher education institutions. To my knowledge, no research has yet to be conducted on this population at small liberal arts colleges or two-year community colleges.

In particular, it would be noteworthy to investigate Filipino American second-year students’ experiences at Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISI). These federally designated colleges and universities, which have been recognized for having at least a 10% Asian American and Pacific

Islander student population as well as a significant percentage of low-income students, engage in a variety of initiatives aimed at increasing access to and success in college for AAPI students (Park, 2012; Park & Teranishi, 2008). As a result, Filipino American sophomores could have distinctively different academic and social experiences at these institutions.

Additionally, this study was based on interviews and a focus group conducted with current second and third-year students during the middle of a single academic year. A longitudinal study could shed further light on how Filipino American sophomores' challenges and experiences ultimately impact their graduation and retention rates and beyond to graduate studies and/or work.

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## APPENDIX A: Recruitment Email Script

Dear \_\_\_\_,

My name is Leah Panganiban and I am a student researcher at the University of Washington. I am conducting a study to examine the college experiences of Filipino American second-year students. This study will allow me to better understand the lives of these students. I would like to ask you to participate in an individual interview and a focus group interview as part of my study.

If you choose to participate, I would like to do a semi-structured interview with you of approximately 60-90 minutes about your sophomore year college experiences including your relationships with peers, family, faculty, and staff; and about any challenges you may have faced and how you dealt with them. For example, I will ask you “How much, if at all, did your family influence your decisions?” Interviews will last no longer than 90 minutes each.

The focus group will take place several weeks after your individual interview and should last about 90 minutes. You will be with 2-7 other Filipino American undergraduate students in this focus group. I will check my understanding of emerging themes I have gathered from individual interviews with the focus group and ask other questions that I did not think of asking during the interview.

If you choose to participate, I will digitally record the interviews and transcribe them myself. Recordings will be saved on a password-protected computer and original and saved recordings will be destroyed within three weeks of the interview.

If you would like to participate, please let me know so that we can find a good time and location to meet. At that time, I will bring two printed copies of a consent form for you to read and sign. I have attached that form here, which gives more information about the study and procedures for the interview.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Leah Panganiban, Doctoral Student  
University of Washington College of Education  
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies  
lpanga@uw.edu, 425-681-7749

## APPENDIX B: Participant Consent Form

### Study of Filipino American Second-year College Students' Experiences

Investigator: Leah Panganiban  
College of Education  
Educational Leadership & Policy Studies  
[lpanga@uw.edu](mailto:lpanga@uw.edu), 425-681-7749

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Margaret Plecki  
[mplecki@uw.edu](mailto:mplecki@uw.edu), 206-543-1836

#### ***Investigator's Statement***

I am asking you to be in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you all the information you will need to help you decide whether or not to be in the study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all of your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." I will give you a copy of this form for your records.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of Filipino American students during their second-year of college. Widely termed as the 'sophomore slump', second-year students typically find themselves anxious, depressed, and confused. Internal and external pressures on major and career selection, financial independence, interpersonal relationships, and academic success combine to cause sophomores to disengage from their studies, be dissatisfied with their college experience, transfer to other institutions, and/or completely withdraw from school. For Filipino American students, these issues are intensified due to additional cultural barriers and expectations. This study will examine the influences in students' lives, the challenges that students face, and ways in which students navigate through their second year of college.

#### **Procedures**

This study will be divided into two components: an individual interview and a focus group interview. An explanation of the two components follows:

- 1) I would like to interview you once about your experiences during your second year of college. This interview will last approximately 90 minutes. For example, I will ask you, "How much, if at all, did your family influence your decisions?" and, "What university policies or programs, if any, do you think would have improved your sophomore year, and why?"
- 2) The focus group will take place several weeks after your individual interview and should last about 90 minutes. You will be with 2-7 other Filipino American UW undergraduate students in this focus group. I will check my understanding of emerging

themes I have gathered from individual interviews with the focus group and ask other questions that I did not think of asking during the interview.

### **Risks, Stress, or Discomfort**

Some people feel that providing information for research is an invasion of privacy. I have addressed concerns for your privacy in the section below. Some people feel self-conscious when notes are taken or interviews are recorded. Another source of possible discomfort is participating in a focus group with other peers. If you feel uncomfortable at any point, you may leave the focus group or choose not to answer a question.

### **Benefits of the Study**

You may not directly benefit from taking part in this research study. One benefit of this study is the possibility of developing new insights about the nature of Filipino American second-year college students' experiences. Another benefit may be the opportunity to reflect on your university experiences. I may use information from this study as a foundation for future studies.

### **Other Information**

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You can stop at any time. Information about you is confidential. I will assign you a pseudonym and code the study information. I will keep the link between your name and the numerical code in a separate, secured location until June 2020. Then I will destroy the information linking your information to the pseudonym. If the results of this study are published or presented, I will not use your name, or any other identifying information.

Government or university staff sometimes review studies such as this one to make sure they are being done safely and legally. If a review of this study takes place, your records may be examined. The reviewers will protect your privacy. The study records will not be used to put you at legal risk of harm.

I may want to re-contact you to clarify information. Please indicate below whether you give me permission to re-contact you. Giving me permission to re-contact you does not obligate you in any way.

If you have any questions about this research study, please contact Leah Panganiban at the telephone number or email listed at the top of this form.

---

Signature of investigator

Printed Name

Date

**Participant's statement**

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later on about the research, I can ask the investigator listed above. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give permission for this researcher to audiotape my interview.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do NOT give my permission for the researcher to audiotape my interview.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give permission for this researcher to audiotape my focus group interview.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do NOT give my permission for the researcher to audiotape my focus group interview.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give permission for the researcher to re-contact me to clarify information.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do NOT give permission for the researcher to re-contact me to clarify information.

---

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_ Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

Copies to: Investigator's file, Participant  
*Consent Form (Fil-Am Students) Version 1 (9-1-13)*

**APPENDIX C: Individual Interview Protocol**

1. Compared to your freshman year, how is your sophomore year going?
2. When you think of what it means to be a successful sophomore, what comes to mind? Do you consider yourself successful?
3. Does your gender make a difference in how you are experiencing your sophomore year?
4. As a sophomore at the University, what have been some of the greatest challenges or roadblocks you have faced this year?
5. What helps sophomores be academically successful?
6. What helps sophomores be successful in other aspects of their lives i.e. relationships with family and friends, career planning, finances, etc.?
7. Are there certain people or places you turn to for help?
8. Describe the influences outside of college, such as friends or community leaders that affect your college experiences.
9. What advice has your family given you in regards to college?
10. In what ways, if any, has your family helped or hindered your academic progress?
11. Describe the process you went through in choosing a major.
12. Is there anything else you'd like to share about what helps or hinders sophomore success at this university?
13. If you or your friends run into roadblocks or challenges, how do you usually go about addressing the problems? Are there certain people or places you turn to for help?
14. What does it mean to identify as Filipino American?
15. Describe the process in which you started to think about your ethnic identity?
16. What's one thing the university could do to make it easier to be a successful sophomore?
17. What role do other individuals or university resources play in helping you be academically, socially, and financially successful?
18. In thinking about this interview, is there anything that you would like to add?

## **APPENDIX D: Focus Group Discussion Protocol**

Welcome, purpose:

- To check my understanding of emergent themes from individual interviews
- To probe into certain emergent themes in more depth

Introductions (go around): Name, year, major, where did you grow up

Ground rules

- Opinions of all participants are important.
- There are no right or wrong answers.
- It is fine if disagreements arise – please be respectful of other’s opinions.
- Confidentiality

Opening question – go around and have each person answer

If you could describe your sophomore year in one word, what would it be and why?

Questions (based on data from individual interviews)

1. As a sophomore at the University, what have been some of the greatest challenges or roadblocks you’ve faced this year?
2. What are your experiences with advisors on campus?
3. As a Filipino American student, do you feel welcome and supported on campus? Why or why not?
4. Why or why not are you involved in FASA (Filipino American Student Association) or another Asian community group?
5. What does it mean to identify as Filipino American?
6. Describe the process in which you started to think about your ethnic identity.
7. What’s one thing the university could do to make it easier to be a successful sophomore?
8. In thinking about this focus group, is there anything that you would like to add?