Re-Envisioning Self and Community: The Experiences of Pilipina American Students With Colonial Mentality and Decolonization

Kristine Angelica Din

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RE-ENVISIONING SELF AND COMMUNITY: THE EXPERIENCES OF PILIPINA
AMERICAN STUDENTS WITH COLONIAL MENTALITY AND DECOLONIZATION

A Dissertation Presented

by

KRISTINE ANGELICA DIN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies,
University of Massachusetts Boston,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2022

Leadership in Education Program
RE-ENVISIONING SELF AND COMMUNITY: THE EXPERIENCES OF PILIPINA
AMERICAN STUDENTS WITH COLONIAL MENTALITY AND DECOLONIZATION

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ABSTRACT

RE-ENVISIONING SELF AND COMMUNITY: THE EXPERIENCES OF PILIPINA AMERICAN STUDENTS WITH COLONIAL MENTALITY AND DECOLONIZATION

August 2022

Kristine Angelica Din, B.S., University of Connecticut
M.Ed., University of Vermont
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Directed by Professor Katalin Szelényi

This dissertation explores the invisibility of Pilipina American narratives in higher education by investigating colonialism and colonial mentality and how they may shape the experiences of Pilipina American undergraduate students in higher education. This study was framed by Pinayism (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005; Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009), Strobel’s (2001) decolonization framework, and the Colonial Mentality Scale (CMS) (David & Okazaki, 2006b). Participants reflected upon their life stories to explore and make meaning of the ways their lives have been informed by events that have occurred and the messages they received from their families, peers, teachers, and communities. Participants also engaged with indigenous, colonial, and Pilipinx American history, to investigate how the knowledge of history and colonial mentality might shape their identities, their academic
goals, and career aspirations. This study also included a Bayanihan community dialogue with the purpose of bringing Pinays together to collectively delve into the ways their narratives are connected, engage in a process of decolonization, and re-envision themselves and empower their communities on their campuses and beyond. The results of the study offer knowledge of Pilipina American students to student affairs administrators and faculty to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of their experiences. Recommendations for practice include providing the necessary support and opportunities for Pinay students to continue their learning, decolonizing, and healing journeys, in order to support their sense of self and belonging, engagement on campus, and academic success.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Dr. Cheryl Ching and Dr. Dina Maramba – I never imagined I could have two Pilipinas on my committee! Thank you for serving on my committee. I am simply in awe of your brilliance. Your wisdom has truly been invaluable, and I am so thankful to be able to learn from the both of you. Simply put, academia is not made for people like us. I give thanks to you for helping to pave the way. Dr. Ching, thank you for helping me to process the times I was feeling stuck. I remember a time when I was feeling overwhelmed and you talked me through my tangled thoughts to help re-center me. Dr. Maramba, your work served as the inspiration for my dissertation study. I am humbled to have you as part of my journey. Thank you for showing me that our stories are important and worthy. Thank you for allowing me to
be seen. I do not think I would have pursued my dissertation topic had it not been for your scholarship. Thank you.

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The students of the Asian American Center at Northeastern University – you were my motivation to start. And the students of Stonehill College – you were my motivation to finish. You fill me with joy.

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bedroom when one of the children woke up looking for me, and the scenarios go on. Thank you for everything. We both didn’t know what we were in for when I started this program, but you willingly supported me from the very beginning of this journey and never made me feel guilty for doing it. You have always believed in me and for that I am so profoundly thankful. Thank you for nourishing me, caring for me when I birthed our children, and for taking on so much so I could achieve a PhD. I love you always.

To my stars, Isla and Myles, my love for you knows no bounds. Thank you for being my inspiration. Thank you for allowing me to pursue this degree, despite all the time it took away from you. I hope you will be proud of me one day when you are old enough to understand that I became a mother to both of you while pursuing a PhD.

To my parents, Evelyn and Bell, I will never be able to thank you enough for all that you have done and continue to do for and with me so that I may pursue and achieve my dreams. This dissertation and degree would have never come to fruition without your encouragement from my earliest years. I know that my path probably did not make sense at times but thank you for trusting me and for believing in me. Just know that I have committed my life to trying to build a better world for all of us, especially your apo. I love you so much. This degree is just as much yours, as it is mine.

To all my fellow Pinay Americans, while battling a world that tries to tell you who to be, may you find healing and liberation in my work. You are enough.

Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat!
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Your memories are colonized. You are born into trauma without an initial understanding of or hermeneutic for your fragmented self and you must work diligently just to explain your own life – to recognize and uncover its connections to your subjectivity.

The ideologies of your family are colonized, and even your own thoughts and actions are colonized, despite your initial unawareness of the systematic forces at work in the simple procedures of your daily life. Being born into a colonized family, you inherit the ideals and learn the narrative of colonization; as you come into consciousness, you are immersed in the promises of each colonizer, from the benefits of Spanish patriarchy, aristocracy, and religious authority to the promises of U.S. education, opportunity, and meritocracy. (Pierce, 2005, p 32)

My story began before I was born. It started generations ago when my ancestors lived on the islands that we now know as the Philippines. I am the daughter of Evelyn Din and Bell Din Jr., sister to my younger brother Andrew Din, partner to Joseph Wong, and mother of Isla and Myles. My mother is from Dumangas, Ilo Ilo, Visayas, and my father is from Santa Rosa, Laguna, Luzon. I am a daughter of immigrants. My parents came to the United States in the 1980s and like many, were confronted with and have overcome enormous physical and emotional challenges over the four decades they have been living in the United States. I did not know that when I was born, or while I was growing up in Connecticut, my mere existence was powerful, radical, and political. I have only begun to explore the first few chapters of my life story. My journey within the last decade has been a period of
unprecedented growth, struggle, and healing. I continue to move through the pain of colonialism, attempting to unlearn the toxicity that has clung to me my whole life.

I remember the smells of my house, the unforgettable scents of rice cooking, garlic searing, sinigang boiling, and fish frying. I remember how loud family gatherings were as my large family crammed into one house to celebrate birthdays and holidays. The sounds of Tagalog and Ilongo producing endless laughter and tsismis, filling the air like music. I remember how my cousins and I slept in one bedroom – any surface was an appropriate place to sleep. I remember, though it never was said explicitly, my family was always proud of being from the Philippines. I saw it in the food that we cooked, in the love and affection we showed each other, and the joy in our spirits. My parents hustled the immigrant hustle, working multiple jobs and long hours to provide for not only my brother and I, but to support our extended family. I remember us opening our home to aunts, uncles, and cousins as they left the Philippines to begin a new life here in the United States. I remember feeling that we had power as a collective and that our family was important to nurture and protect.

I remember what I felt being outside of my home; I was surrounded by Whiteness. I could make the distinction at a very young age. I remember what it was like navigating two different worlds that often felt at odds with one another. I was not able to recognize it then, but I remember that it was hard. My experience in grade school was perhaps a typical one – White and colonized in every aspect. Its grasp was inescapable. We celebrated Christopher Columbus, learned about pilgrims and Indigenous peoples eating together at Thanksgiving, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt was hailed a hero. I never saw myself in the textbooks I read or in the books in my school and town libraries. I remember learning about the horrors of chattel slavery and the mass genocides of Indigenous peoples at the hands of White people,
but as surface-level facts, as though they were only events that unfortunately happened. There were no critical examinations of racism and White supremacy. White people were never held accountable. All their actions, no matter how egregious, were rationalized. I remember believing this.

I remember my brownness feeling more visible in high school, both from my own perspective and the way the world interacted with me. And as I grew into myself, physically, emotionally, and intellectually, I recall the messages I heard or was told. I remember being told to behave in certain ways because that is what girls are expected to do. And as the discussions around college started to increase, I remember being advised that certain professions would be better suited for men because they would be too hard for women to pursue. Specifically, it would be too difficult because of the expectation for women to bear and raise children as though men have no role to play. These messages told me several things about who I was allowed and not allowed to be. There were certain and appropriate paths I could or should take and the assumption was that I must be heterosexual, my partner will be a man, and that I would have children.

I also remember the messages around physical appearance. I remember hearing them, mostly from overhearing aunts chattering with each other or in conversations with peers who shared what their families have said. I was also part of a local Pilipinx American organization growing up and I learned that being brown or morena was not something to be proud of. Despite the vast majority of us being brown skinned, it was not considered beautiful or desirable. It was confusing. For the longest time, I could not understand what the obsession was. I remember that other girls were considered more attractive because of their fair skin and pointed noses. I remember the beauty pageants that Pilipinas would participate in and all
the contestants were light skinned. I even remember a recruiter approaching me to encourage me to apply or participate because even though I am a bit darker than the rest, it was ok because I am beautiful. I politely declined, but it felt like being both brown and beautiful could not coexist. Despite the inundation of these messages, I never aspired to have light skin. But it was damaging, nonetheless. Having light skin was like hitting the genetic lottery. It seemed as though one’s worth, especially for Pilipinas and Pilipina Americans, was intimately tied to a phenotype that none of us had control over.

I remember the expectation of having to excel academically. I had been told from the very beginning that speaking English and doing well in school would be the pathway to success. I was reminded of the struggles that my family experienced and the sacrifices my parents made to provide me the opportunities they were not able to have. I acknowledge it was all said with good intent to motivate me and I am grateful for everything that has been provided to me, but the weight of these expectations was heavy and the effects still manifest today. I never learned to speak Tagalog and Ilongo fluently and to this day, I mourn this loss. Teachers, then and now, often tell multilingual parents that it will confuse children to speak to them in multiple languages. Yet I have seen White children and people be lauded for speaking multiple languages. Whiteness, and performing Whiteness, was acceptable. Anything that was a departure from Whiteness was inappropriate. I put the pieces of broken Tagalog together to engage with my children. I ask my parents to speak with her in Tagalog or Ilongo too. I listen to Tagalog music and watch Tagalog programs to remain connected to the language that means so much to me, yet sometimes I feel like an imposter. The weight is still heavy.
I remember the racism. The memories from high school are easier to recall. Maybe because I cannot forget them. So where are you really from? Do you speak English? Your parents, they are not from here right? You are Chinese, so do you speak Chinese? You must speak Chinese. Do your parents even speak English? I heard Pilipinxs eat dogs, so do you eat dogs? Gross, your food looks like worms. How do you eat rice every day? I went to the tanning salon yesterday and now I am almost the same color as you! You are so lucky; I wish I could be tan like you. Is this your real hair? This is natural? Can I touch it? The comments rolled off their tongues with such ease. The questions made it seem as though I could not be the expert of my own life. To be both exoticized and degraded at the same time was angering and confusing. I remember feeling upset and helpless.

I remember learning about U.S. and European history far too many times. Every single grade came with some variation of White history. There were no opportunities to learn about my community and our history, and if there was any mention of Asian or Asian American history, it was brief and skewed. I was indoctrinated with White history throughout the entirety of my life, but I remember my initial awakening. My first conscious act of resistance was in a world history class when I was a senior in high school. I had selected the elective course thinking that I would be able to learn beyond the United States and western Europe, but we still did not learn about Asia. I vividly remember walking up the classroom aisle and asking the teacher why we would not be learning about Asia and she told me there was not enough time. I could feel the heat enveloping my neck and the sweat gathering in my palms. These words have stayed with me.

I remember the first time I had a Pilipina American instructor. I was an eighteen-year-old college student. It was the first time I saw myself in a course syllabus. It was the first
time I was in a classroom with only Asian and Asian American students. My experience with the Asian American Cultural Center at the University of Connecticut transformed my life. It was the first time I could talk about my lived experiences and others simply understood. It was the first time I could allow myself to feel vulnerable. I could love and appreciate my brown skin and all the joy and pain that came with it. We all took turns sharing our narratives and it was the first time I understood how powerful stories could be. I felt as though our minds and souls were coming out into the light after a lifelong psychological captivity. There was more than enough time for our stories. There will always be enough time and space for our stories.

I also remember the first time I was introduced to Asian and Asian American studies. I was stunned to discover that there were a number of courses dedicated to my community. I remember taking a class on Japanese American history and it challenged all the White history courses I had ever taken. It was incredible to be in an academic space that was committed to centering the stories of Asians and Asian Americans. I had never experienced anything like it. It set me on a path to delve deeper into who I am as a second generation Pilipina American. There was always time for our stories. White people just made sure the time would not be for us.

I remember the sense of community I felt being with other Pilipinx Americans and Asian Americans. But as much as I loved this newly found feeling of belonging, I remember feeling frustrated. I began to grapple with all the messages that were told to me as a child. I wanted to learn more about our histories that were hidden from me. We were more than food programs and dance shows. I wanted to organize. I believed that we as a collective could create instrumental change. I remember as I waded through the last months of college, I felt a
pull towards the field of education, a career that I knew my parents would most likely question, but it felt like a calling. I took a risk, trusted my intuition, and chose to pursue a graduate degree in higher education.

I remember buying my first book on the history of the Philippines. Although I had been highly involved with Asian American student organizations in college, there was so much more that I wanted to unearth. While I had learned along the way that the Philippines was colonized by Spain and the United States and I started to connect the dots of my past, my knowledge was still very limited. I remember what it was like to turn the pages of the history book. I immersed myself into the text, allowing the power of the words to sit with me and connect with my spirit. I moved from one text to the next, peeling away the layers of colonialism, colonial mentality, and the false self I had been occupying. It challenged everything I had ever known about being Pinay. College may have been my rebirth, but this was the beginning of what I consider my re-envisioning and decolonization of self. I began to piece together my individual and family histories and locate myself within my community’s collective history. I was captivated by the stories of resistance and resilience. And the more I read, the more questions I had. Where are the stories of Pilipinx Americans? Who tells our stories? Why is Pilipinx and Pilipinx American history missing from U.S. history books? How different would my life be had I had the opportunity to learn the truth earlier? Did my parents learn this history? How can I provide space for others who want to learn more? How can we re-envision ourselves and our communities to actively heal and reclaim our identities that have been fragmented by the violence of colonialism?

My dissertation study is as personal as it is critical. It is my love letter to my community. From the very beginning of my doctoral journey, I wanted to provide spaces for
Pilipina American students to share their life stories and opportunities for them to connect and engage with each other so they can find strength in community. In the first chapter of my dissertation, I provide details on both the Asian American and Pilipinx American populations in order to present the problem, purpose, and research questions. In chapter two, I present different areas of literature to call attention to the erasure of Pilipinx and Pilipinx American history and the atrocities and consequences of colonialism and colonial mentality. The third chapter outlines how I framed, designed, and implemented my research study. I also discuss how I analyzed the collected data. The fourth and fifth chapters present the study’s findings. I present the narratives of two participants, Jojo and Korinne, to provide readers the opportunity to immerse themselves into their life stories and learn from the richness of their experiences and reflections. Chapter five brings together all the voices and narratives of the other Pilipina American students by presenting the critical findings that describe how colonial mentality has informed the lives of the participants. Lastly, the sixth and final chapter makes meaning of all the students’ stories and their experiences while participating in the study and I offer implications for practice, teaching, and theory. I close my dissertation with a reflection on what I learned about myself through this process and how transformative and healing it was for me.

**Background**

The Asian American population is estimated to reach 40 million by the year 2050 (Maramba & Kodama, 2018). Not only is the size of the population a significant trend to distinguish, so is the diversity of the Asian American community. Further, the diaspora represents at least 48 distinct ethnic groups (CARE, 2010), with the largest three being Chinese, Indian, and Pilipinx. In addition to the number of ethnic groups, it is also important
to note that the Asian American population includes individuals from a vast array of different generations, languages, and cultures, as well as people who are wealthy and those who are living in marginalized and under-resourced communities (Museus, 2014).

The rapid growth in number and diversity parallels the increase of Asian American students in higher education. It is essential for institutions of higher education to acknowledge and respond to this demographic shift that will inevitably shape the composition of campuses and the surrounding communities in the years to come (Museus & Maramba, 2011). However, Asian American college students have been largely ignored or misunderstood because of the historical exclusion from higher education, the lack of sufficient data to understand the breadth and complexity of the population (Museus, 2013; Museus & Kiang, 2009), and what is perhaps the most influential and detrimental narrative – the model minority myth (Maramba & Kodama, 2018; Poon et al., 2016). The model minority myth was coined in the 1960s and, in short, unfairly and inaccurately described the success of Chinese and Japanese Americans’ economic success. However, over the years, the myth seeped into higher education and became a ubiquitous assumption to frame dialogues around Asian American students and their experiences. Poon et al. (2016) argue that the myth is deeply problematic because it is a way for White supremacy to pin racially subordinated groups against each other and it severely limits the understanding of Asian American students. Because of the diversity of the Asian American population and the model minority myth, there is a continuing need to disaggregate data to better acknowledge and understand the unique experiences of the different ethnic groups.

Despite the great diversity of the Asian American population, only within the last decade has a body of research emerged to help shed light on the histories and experiences of
different Asian American ethnic groups, one group being Southeast Asian American (SEAA) students in higher education. The majority of literature identifies SEAA as individuals of Vietnamese, Hmong, Lao, or Cambodian descent (Ngo & Lee, 2007). Unlike many other Asian American groups, the majority of SEAA communities did not arrive in the United States as immigrants, but as refugees and survivors of war and genocide. Because of war conflicts and the subsequent displacement, post-1975 refugees were significantly poorer and less educated than previous immigrants, which directly correlates to the challenges in educational attainment and economic stability they experienced (Ngo & Lee, 2007). Further, disaggregated data reveal that SEAA students are graduating at much lower rates in comparison to the national average and other Asian American groups. Only 14% of Hmong, 13% Cambodian, and 12% of Laotian Americans hold bachelor’s degrees, while the national average is 28% (Museus, 2013). Other scholars have also conducted research to learn more about what factors would help SEAA students be successful in college and have found that having opportunities like ethnic studies programs and spaces outside of the classroom, where students can develop a sense of belonging, can support their success and persistence (Museus et al., 2016).

Another ethnic group that continues to be under-researched in mainstream higher education discourse and in related fields like history and psychology is Pilipinx Americans, despite their longstanding presence in the United States and their status as one of the largest immigrant groups (Nadal, 2009). Similar to SEAA and other Pacific Islander groups, Pilipinx Americans also have a unique history and relationship with the United States that has affected their immigration patterns and livelihoods, specifically, a legacy of colonialism. Pilipinxs are known to be one of the first ethnic groups from Asia and the Pacific Islands to
arrive on Turtle Island, what is now known as U.S. soil, landing in California as early as the mid-1500s. Enslaved Pilipinx people that escaped from Spanish ships formed the very first settlements in Louisiana as early as the 1700s (Lee, 2015). Further, because of immigration history and patterns, information about Pilipinx Americans has predominantly focused on the communities residing on the West Coast (Bergano & Bergano Kinney, 1997). The Pilipinx American community has been considered silent or invisible, which Strobel (2001) believes is not an accident; rather, the U.S. master narratives intentionally constructed it this way.

The complex sociohistorical context that Pilipinx Americans inhabit forms an essential component of understanding their experiences and the current challenges they continue to face. While the Philippine Islands were invaded centuries ago and formal colonial rule has ended, the cultural and ideological shifts due to the subsequent colonization that began in the 1500s continue to affect the lived experiences of Pilipinx Americans in the present day – and little is known about the long-lasting consequences of colonialism (Strobel, 2001). Most notably, the extensive history of colonialism has resulted in colonial mentality for many Pilipinxs and Pilipinx Americans (David, 2013; Strobel, 2001). David and Okazaki (2006a, 2006b) define colonial mentality as the self-perception of ethnic inferiority that is believed to be a unique and specific consequence of colonization. In the case of Pilipinxs, it is the automatic and uncritical predilection for anything American or European and a denial of anything Pilipinx. Some examples include appearance and standards of beauty, speaking English, and an emphasis on the value of U.S. education.

Recent literature provides some indication that colonial mentality is a factor in shaping the lives of Pilipinx American college students. Morente (2015) investigated social factors like colonial mentality, self-esteem, social class, ethnicity, and academic success, and
the influence they have on Pilipinx college students’ perception of their own identities. Themes emerged around physical appearance as well as educational and career expectations. Participants also shared that they learned from their families that lighter skin and a pointed nose were considered to be attractive and their education was a priority in order to pursue a career that would provide financial stability. Ferrera (2011) looked more broadly at second-generation Pilipinx Americans and participants described their family socialization experiences. Some parents seemed to endorse a colonial mentality by providing resources and messages encouraging assimilation while conveying a negative perception about Pilipinx culture. These messages are rooted in colonial history. It is not possible to fully understand the experiences of Pilipinx Americans without placing their history within the context of Spanish and U.S. colonization (Leonardo & Matias, 2013), and I hope to further explore this in my study.

While the aforementioned studies are critical in beginning to describe how colonial mentality shapes the experiences of Pilipinx college students in general, research examining the intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender in Pilipinx American college student populations, especially in the context of colonial mentality, is scarce (Maramba, 2008a; Museus & Maramba, 2011). There is a limited body of literature that explores the academic and professional experiences of Pilipina American students and how colonial mentality, though not explicitly stated, may affect them in unique ways (Maramba, 2008a, 2008b). A few existing studies by Espiritu and Wolf (2001), Maramba (2008a, 2008b), and Paz (2011) center specifically on Pilipina American college students and their experiences as children of immigrants and how influential their families are prior to and during their higher education journeys; however, none include an explicit focus on the potential effects of colonialism and
colonial mentality. Further, there are no empirical studies within the field of higher education that include a focus on Pilipina American students and decolonization. Strobel’s (2001) foundational work looked at the process of decolonization among Pilipinx Americans, resulting in the creation of a decolonization framework based on the themes that emerged and, while the majority of the participants were college students, there was no particular focus on gender.

**Problem Statement**

The Pilipinx American population in the United States has increased to more than 4.2 million (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021) making them the third largest Asian American group behind Chinese and Indian Americans. And more than 400,000 Pilipinx Americans are currently enrolled in higher education, making them the second largest group within the Asian American category (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Further, the Pew Center states that Pilipinx Americans are the fastest-growing Asian American population in the United States (Lopez et al., 2017). Yet, their experiences have rarely been examined or documented despite their longstanding relationship with the United States and their contributions to U.S. society (Lee, 2015; Maramba & Bonus, 2013; Strobel, 2001). This is mainly due to Pilipinx Americans being situated within the Asian American racial group umbrella resulting in an assumed homogeneity of their narratives (Hernandez, 2016). This aggregation must be problematized and investigated, similar to the way the experiences of SEAAs have been disaggregated and explored. This is just one example where research shows there are indeed unique differences among Asian American ethnic groups and serves as evidence that the same must be done for Pilipinx and Pilipina American students.
Further, there are no known empirical studies that directly investigate colonialism and colonial mentality, how those shapes the experiences of Pilipina American undergraduate students in higher education. In addition, no existing studies include a space to engage with history, decolonization, and healing through Pilipina American students’ and collective narratives. Strobel (2001) states the “colonial legacy remains powerful in the imagination and psyche of Pilipinx Americans. Although there have been resistance narratives and movements during this colonial period, the Pilipinx American popular imagination continues to be powerfully shaped by U.S. dominating ideologies” (para. 3). Decolonization is a means to reconnect with the past to understand the present and to envision the future. By engaging in a decolonization process, it “strengthens the cultural connection to the Pilipinx indigenous culture because it is a source of grounding” (Strobel, 2001, p. 144).

This study aims to problematize the invisibility of Pilipina American narratives in higher education and illuminate how colonial mentality may influence the experiences of Pilipina American students. I want to highlight the stories of Pilipina Americans since the intersection of their racial, ethnic, and gender identities, coupled with the influence of colonial mentality, may result in unique lived and educational experiences (Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009). By looking at the rich and complex sociohistorical context in which Pilipina Americans exist, providing participants an opportunity to learn how their stories have been shaped by an extensive colonial history, and acknowledging their lives within the U.S. context, more can be learned about their experiences in higher education and what can be done to support their educational success, decolonization journeys, and healing.
Significance

The findings of this study contribute to education policies and practices so that they may be better constructed to understand and support the Pilipina American student population. My study provides evidence of the complexity of their stories and captures detailed accounts of how colonialism and colonial mentality play a role in shaping the lives of Pilipina American college students. The findings of this study also provide student affairs practitioners and faculty the knowledge, language, frameworks, and tools to challenge the colonial nature of education and create opportunities for decolonization in academic and co-curricular spaces. While the focus is on the participants and the presentation of their stories, the historical literature, frameworks, findings, and implications also help to name and problematize White supremacy and the colonial past of Spain and especially of the United States. I also hope this study inspires Pilipina Americans everywhere, in addition to undergraduate students, to reflect upon their past and present to re-envision their future.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this narrative inquiry is to explore the role of colonial mentality in shaping the lives of Pilipina American students in higher education. This study was framed by Pinayism (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005; Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009) and a decolonization framework (Strobel, 2001). Participants were invited to reflect upon their life stories to explore and make meaning of the ways their lives have been informed by events that have occurred and the messages they received from their families, peers, teachers, and additional communities. Participants also engaged with indigenous, colonial, and Pilipinx American history, to investigate how this knowledge of history and colonial mentality might shape their identities, their academic goals, and career aspirations. This study also included a
community dialogue with the purpose of bringing Pinays together to collectively delve into the ways their narratives are connected, engage in a process of decolonization, and re-envision themselves and empower their communities on their campuses and beyond.

This study is guided by the following questions:

1. What messages regarding identities, education, and career paths did Pilipina American college students receive throughout their lives from their families, peers, teachers, and other communities?
   a. What messages, if any, were rooted in colonial mentality?

2. How do Pilipina American college students make meaning of the messages they received while growing up?
   a. How do the results of their meaning-making processes inform their experiences in college and shape their values, perspectives, identity, and educational and career goals?

3. How do Pilipina American college students understand decolonization? How do they make meaning of indigenous, colonial, and Pilipinx American history?

**Terminology**

This section details the terminology that I use throughout this paper. Due to the long history of colonization, the alphabet, many languages, and dialects have been anglicized. The term, Pilipina/o, emerged as a political choice of self-naming grounded in the third world student movements in the 1960s. Choosing to spell the term with a p rather than an f (as seen in Filipinx/a/o) appears to be a reclamation of the native sound in resistance to the colonizers’ f sound. The f derives from the Spanish who named the islands “Las Islas Filipinas” followed by U.S. colonization, which reinforced the f sound with the anglicizing of
the term to “The Philippine Islands.” Pido (1997) states that none of the seven major linguistic groups in the Philippines have an /f/ sound. In this dissertation, when referring to the population as a whole, I use Pilipinx or Pilipinxs versus Pilipinos. While I recognize that the use of the letter x may be challenging or controversial to some, it is in an intentional effort to be inclusive of all genders and to challenge the patriarchal and colonial history of the term in an intentional effort to be inclusive of all genders and to challenge the patriarchal and colonial history of the term. Tagalog and Ilongo, the languages that my family speak, do not have separate man or woman pronouns, unlike Spanish and English. Regardless of sex or gender identity, there is only one pronoun, siya, that is used. Using Pilipinx is one way to defy the colonizers’ use of /f/ and to acknowledge and honor the fluidity of gender in indigenous language and way of living.

Pinay is a slang term for Pilipina woman. This term is also used interchangeably with Pilipina by Pilipina Americans. Dawn Mabalon (2005) shares that the origins of Pinay can be traced to the early migrations of Pilipinxs to the United States. Pinay has been used by Pilipinxs to denote Pilipinas living in or born in the United States. The term has been in use in Pilipinx American communities since the 1920s and seemed to be reclaimed and politicized by activists and artists in the 60s and 70s. Pinay is a term created by Pilipinx Americans as a way to differentiate their identities and experiences from those in the Philippines.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

_They teach me to erase that brown, subconsciously I lose my crown _
_Til I don’t even recognize the person that’s inside me now._
—Brown, 2017, Ruby Ibarra

The foundation of my study is interdisciplinary, drawing from multiple areas of scholarship, including from the fields of higher education, history, psychology, and social work. My intention is to ground the study within relevant literature in these areas with the hope of displaying how my study can contribute to the existing body of scholarship.

Firstly, I present an overview of history, beginning with precolonial and indigenous Philippine history. I posit that it is critical to include this history because it honors the indigenous peoples and their stories prior to the arrival of the Spanish, and it serves as the counternarrative – the truthful narrative – that is typically absent from mainstream education. While acts of war and violence were enacted throughout both colonial periods, I also focus on two different weapons of colonization, religion and education, utilized by Spain and the United States to manipulate and conquer the lives and minds of Pilipinxs. The colonial history provides insight into why, hundreds of years later, Pilipinx Americans continue to struggle with their sense of self. I then transition into a discussion on colonial mentality – the most insidious consequence of colonization. I explore how it shapes the Pilipinx psyche and how it may inform Pilipina American experiences. Next, I discuss the experiences of Pilipinx
American and Pilipina American students in higher education. I explore empirical studies describing factors that influence their educational experiences while examining if and how colonial mentality is a contributing element. Lastly, different from most studies I have reviewed, I include a short description of decolonizing efforts and the significance of providing Pilipinx American students the spaces and opportunities to reflect and learn to empower themselves and their communities.

**Sociohistorical Context**

In this section, a brief history of the colonization of the Philippines will be presented to contextualize what the land and its peoples have endured over the span of more than four centuries, followed by a discussion on the psychological consequences of colonization, specifically, colonial mentality. Knowing this sociohistorical context is critical in framing the present-day experiences of Pilipinx and Pilipina American students in higher education and it is important to note that what is presented here is in no way a complete historical account.

Maramba and Bonus (2013) argue:

One cannot adequately understand the particular histories and contemporary conditions faced by Pilipinx Americans in education unless one reckons with the specificities of their colonial pasts and presents, their unique migration and immigration patterns, their differing racialization and processes of identity and community formations, their unequal placement in local/global capitalist arrangements, and their multilevel relationships to each other and with dominant as well as other minority groups. (p. xvii)

Through the exploration of significant historical events that occurred during the Spanish and U.S. colonial periods, as well as the examination of their immigrant experiences
in the U.S., the emergence and persistence of colonial mentality among Pilipinx Americans can be more clearly and thoroughly understood. Rimonte (1997) states that too many were invested in barring Pilipinxs from knowing their true selves: the Catholic Church, the United States, and even themselves, rather, the alien in them – Catholic, educated, and English-speaking. The misrepresentation of Pilipinx history has been systematically used to oppress Pilipinxs. Philippine history is rarely present in texts used in mainstream educational curricula, exacerbating the lack of knowledge around the Pilipinx American community and colonial mentality (Andersen, 2013). The erasure of their history denies the reality of what was done to them and bolsters the false and essentialist idea that their struggles only have to do with them and nothing to do with the circumstances they were subjected to (Rimonte, 1997).

**Spanish Colonization**

Pilipinxs and Pilipinx Americans live in a postcolonial period. This refers to the era after 1946, when formal colonial rule by the United States ended. Despite being an independent country for more than 70 years now, the Philippines, as well as Pilipinxs and Pilipinx Americans, arguably continue to suffer from the legacies of colonialism. Colonialism is the system by which Spain and the U.S. invaded and imperialized the Philippines as a foreign colony to forcefully and violently exploit the land and the indigenous peoples. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the archipelago had been inhabited by the indigenous Tao (pronounced ta-o), for many generations. Tao in Tagalog means person or people and is the term used to describe the people that inhabited the land we now know as the Philippines (David, 2013). There is archaeological evidence that substantiates human presence as far back as 250,000 years ago (Francia, 2010). The islands were given its
colonized name, Las Islas Filipinas. Spaniards who were born in the Philippines were called Españoles Filipinos, or Filipinos for short, and those who were born in Spain were Españoles Peninsulares, or peninsulares. Individuals were called mestizos if they had mixed (native and foreign) heritage and those of mixed Spanish heritage were called creollos. When the United States took over, the name was changed to Philippines and the natives were called Filipinos.

The exploitation of the Tao began in 1521 when the famed Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan, who sailed on behalf of Spain, landed on Mactan island. He sought to become the first to circumnavigate the world and find the Spice Islands in Indonesia, but was met with resistance when he landed on Mactan Island. One of the native leaders of Mactan island, datu (chieftain) Lapu-Lapu, and his soldiers defeated Magellan, thus ending Magellan’s voyage around the earth and delaying Spanish invasion and occupation. In 1542, another explorer by the name of Ruy Lopez de Villalobos journeyed to the islands and in 1543 named the archipelago Las Islas Filipinas, after the King of Spain’s son, Felipe (Francia, 2010). However, it was not until 1565, more than 40 years after Magellan’s accidental arrival, when Miguel Lopez de Legazpi of Spain arrived in Cebu (the island adjacent to Mactan) and established the first Spanish settlement. The Philippines was ruled by Spain for 333 years until 1898.

Identifying oneself with the very term Pilipino or Pilipina is also a part of colonialism. It “negates the identification of the native inhabitants who lived on the archipelago before Spanish colonial rule and whom Europeans conveniently labeled as Indios or Negritos” (Leonardo & Matias, 2013, p. 6). It was not until 1572, 51 years after Magellan’s arrival, when the city of Manila (originally known as Maynila) was established by Lopez de Legazpi and was considered to be the “seat of Spanish power in the islands”
The indigenous people resisted Spanish rule for more than 50 years before the Spanish could establish control (David, 2013). This is critical to note because it establishes the fact that the natives did not openly welcome the Spaniards to their lands and resources. Rather, they fought valiantly and sacrificed greatly to protect their communities, their lands, and their ways of life.

Prior to invasion, the indigenous communities were very collectivist by nature. Small villages called barangays (pronounced ba-rung-guys) were led by datus and each barangay operated independently with their own political, social, and economic systems (Nadal, 2009). With the unwelcomed presence of the Spaniards, the Pilipinx ways of governing were disrupted. The Spanish brought their form of centralized government, which valued a central authority figure that exerted power over their constituents, which was counter to the Tao’s beliefs. Further, “they established a hierarchy of a feudal social order with Spaniards born in Spain and the Philippines on the upper caste, mestizos (mixed race Spanish-Pilipinxs) in the middle, and the black-haired and brown-skinned kayumanggi natives in the lowest caste” (Villanueva, 1999, p. 22). These acts, among others, began to build the pillar in which colonial mentality is anchored and would inspire the centuries of colonialism to follow.

Other disruptive consequences of Spanish colonialism include the concepts of gender and patriarchal ideals (David, 2013; Nadal, 2009). Precolonial indigenous Pilipina women often held positions of power, owned property, and participated in trade alongside men (Nadal, 2009). They also became chiefs or held other highly revered positions like healers, shamans, and spiritual leaders. Women were highly valued, and men were often expected to walk behind them to show their respect (Agoncillo, 1974). When Spain invaded the archipelago, they brought with them their beliefs around gender and gender roles,
subordinated Pilipina women, and normalized disrespectful thoughts and behaviors toward them. The subordination unquestionably affected the status of Pilipinas in the Philippines and in the global diaspora (Felipe, 2016).

Machismo can be defined as the Spanish belief in the superiority of men over women. Men were expected to be strong, prideful, and to provide for their families. Alternatively, marianismo expected women to be submissive to men, moral, and pure. In the writings kept by Antonio Pigafetta, an Italian who joined Magellan on his journey, he recorded countless details of the voyage including behaviors of indigenous women, particularly their attitudes regarding sex and sexuality (Francia, 2010). Virginity was not esteemed by the native women, rather they thought it to be an embarrassment. It was not prized and coveted, which was contrary to how the Spanish perceived it, in accordance with Catholicism. Sexual pleasure was equally important for both partners, meaning that gratification was not simply to satisfy only male desires. The Catholic and patriarchal Spaniards found this to be utterly disturbing and unacceptable. Sexually independent women were viewed as abominations and their sexual desires being seen as equal to men was completely unimaginable (Francia, 2010). Gender equality, in any sense of the term, was not a Spanish value and throughout the centuries of colonization, they successfully spread Catholicism, thus erasing the indigenous values around gender, replacing them with patriarchal ideals in which men hold singular power and significance (Francia, 2010).

Along with new governing structures and gender roles, a new religion was thrust upon the Pilipinx people. Prior to Spanish arrival, many of the indigenous peoples had a spiritual belief system. The many gods they worshipped were inspired by their ways of life and environment, like Lalahan or Lakampati, the goddess of harvest, or Agni, the god of fire.
There was also one supreme God that was believed to have created humanity and the universe, Bathala (Agoncillo, 1974). Magellan is known to be the first person to introduce Catholicism to the Pilipinxs. When he arrived, he erected the first cross and gave the natives the first Santo Niño (a statue of baby Jesus), both of which still exist today in Cebu City. The Spanish ultimately used religion as a weapon of colonization, erasing indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices and convincing the indigenous Pilipinxs into believing that Spanish ways of life were superior (Constantino, 1975). Religion is often considered the first form of colonial education imposed on the native Pilipinxs with Spanish friars being the first teachers. The term colonial in and of itself implies a construction whereby the colonizers are the holders of power while the colonized are the objects of power (Memmi, 1965). The friars were charged with spreading the gospel, claiming that in order to be saved, the natives must denounce their culture and convert to Christianity, thus accepting that their own traditions were inferior to the Spanish.

The Spanish spread the idea that their humanity was of greater worth than that of the Tao and consequently constructed the idea and perception that Pilipinxs were passive and helpless. The Spanish, in enforcing their authority through the islands, burned the Pilipinxs’ written manuscripts, removed the power of the datus, destroyed the wooden diwatas and anitos and replaced them with statues of European-looking angels and saints (Villanueva, 1999). Freire (1992) asserts that religion prevented the Tao from addressing the unjust systems that oppress them by accepting them as their destiny. “Under the sway of magic and myth, the oppressed see their suffering, the fruit of exploitation, as the will of God — as if God were the creator of this organized disorder” (p. 48). Freire viewed religion as an
instrumental force in forging the false consciousness that has become embedded in the Pilipinx psyche.

Further, the overwhelming majority of present-day Pilipinxs in the Philippines, Pilipinx Americans, and Pilipinxs around the world are Catholic. This example is indicative of the long-lasting effect of Spanish influence on the Pilipinx people and culture. Over the centuries of Spanish colonization, the natives lost their indigenous values that were central and authentic to their identities. They internalized a sense of inferiority and, by accepting their own inferiority, the Pilipinxs inadvertently participated in the creation of their own colonial mentalities (Leonardo & Matias, 2013). The continued denigration of the native peoples performed by the Spanish laid the foundation for colonial mentality to arise (Villanueva, 1999), which also helped to pave the way for the next foreign power, the United States, to continue with the colonization of the Philippines in 1898.

These effects of colonialism continue to live on today as Pilipina American students have shared that they are often treated differently from their brothers and other male relatives (Maramba, 2008a). They are not allowed the same liberties, are monitored more closely, and are expected to care for and be involved with the nuclear family in ways that are not expected of Pilipino men (Heras, 2007; Maramba, 2008a). Though not explicitly stated in more recent studies, this may be evidence of contemporary manifestations of colonial mentality as experienced by Pilipina American students. As explored in this section, when Spain occupied and colonized the Philippines, they brought with them their beliefs around authority, government, gender, and religion, among many others – most of which were counter to the Tao’s way of life. In the following section, the continued colonization by the U.S. will be discussed.
U.S. Colonization

In 1898, after a short but bloody conflict, the Treaty of Paris was signed to end the Spanish-American war. The treaty required Spain to relinquish the Philippines to the U.S. What is not included in mainstream history books is that prior to the Treaty of Paris, the Pilipinxs successfully revolted against Spain, reclaimed control over the region of Luzon that houses the capital of Manila, and declared their independence (David, 2013). Because of this, the transaction between Spain and the U.S. was illegal. Agoncillo (1990) also states that when the Pilipinxs were on the verge of victory over Spain, the United States and Spain collaborated and staged a mock battle where the United States won. General Emilio Aguinaldo, a revolutionary general and the first president of the Philippine republic declared war on the United States when it was discovered that the battle had been a farce. As they did with the Spanish, the Pilipinxs resisted U.S. forces, but ultimately the violent conflict ended with the United States gaining control of the Philippines.

The Philippine-American War was the result of the first colonial endeavor of the United States outside of the mainland and it is hardly remembered or even mentioned in U.S. history books (David, 2013). To justify their presence and control, U.S. President William McKinley coined and utilized the idea of “Benevolent Assimilation,” or as Rafael (2000) called it, White love, to convince the American people and legislators that it was a moral duty to occupy the Philippines. He spoke at length about how Pilipinxs were uncivilized savages who were simply unfit to lead themselves and must be helped (David, 2013). The U.S., much like their colonial predecessor, used this patriarchal and demeaning concept to establish the superiority of the American ways of life over Pilipinx values and traditions (Rafael, 2000). While the conflict formally ended in 1902, the Pilipinxs continued to resist.
the U.S. military forces throughout the period that is now known as The Pacification Campaign that lasted until 1913. About 1.5 million Pilipinxs died during this 11-year time period, motivating scholars to view this as a genocide.

It is important for Pilipinx Americans to learn about this conflict and time period because it helps with locating the source of colonial mentality (David, 2013). The immense amount of loss – of human life, cultural identity, ancestral lands – that occurred during the Philippine-American War, the Pacification Campaign, and the instatement of U.S. education, is a sobering reminder of how colonial mentality formed its roots in the psyche of Pilipinxs.

The U.S. government realized that in addition to military force, they needed to employ an additional method to invade the Philippines culturally and socially. Similar to how Spain utilized religion as the first form of colonial education, the U.S. government, in addition to violence, also used education to colonize the minds of the Philippine people. Constantino (2002) believed that U.S. colonial education tactics and policies in the Philippines were the most effective weapons of war. By taking captive the minds of the Pilipinxs, they could reconstruct the Pilipinxs’ perception of self. Colonial education in the Philippines “became the medium that upheld the oppressive state of a capitalistic enterprise, racist relations, and cultural imperialism” (Leonardo & Matias, 2013, p. 10).

The creation of the Pensionado program and the Thomasites were two ways that the U.S. employed colonial education in the Philippines. In 1901, the U.S.-run Philippine Commission transported roughly 600 White men and women teachers called Thomasites to the Philippines with the purpose of educating Pilipinxs about the superiority of the Unites States and molding them to conform to the norms and hegemonic practices of U.S. education. The Thomasites were charged with establishing a public school system and train Pilipinx
teachers to learn English and absorb U.S. values. With the Americanization program, the schools and the curricula were created with the United States as the focal point. Classes were required to be taught in English and the focus of curricula was on U.S. history, culture, art, literature, customs, and ideals (Pomeroy, 1974). Consequently, indigenous history and Philippine culture were erased and over time, Pilipinxs began to readily accept and embody everything American. The ways they dressed, spoke, and behaved all became rooted in U.S. ideals, while simultaneously erasing their Pilipinx identities (Andersen, 2013).

In 1903, the Pensionado Act gave rise to a program, and a wave of immigration, that was created to implement U.S. education. The program’s goal was to “generate highly trained, U.S.-educated Pilipinxs who embodied American ideals” (Leonardo & Matias, 2013, p. 10). One hundred and four students were selected and sent to attend U.S. colleges and universities to learn Western ways of living and governing. Those who were selected to be Pensionados were typically wealthy and came from families of influence so that they can return to the Philippines and utilize their positions of power to establish U.S.-modeled systems and structures of government (Hernandez, 2016). The United States used education as a form of social control, but painted the perception that their colonial education efforts were with good intent. The Pensionado program with its proclamation of U.S. ideals forced Pilipinxs to grapple with the duality of their existence (Leonardo & Matias, 2013). Through U.S.-sponsored education, Pilipinxs adopted the perceived superior form of Western education and convinced themselves of the inferiority of their own ways of living and learning (Constantino, 1970). The Pensionado program most likely created a skewed version of what life in the United States could be like and Pilipinxs perhaps began to internalize that
the U.S. way of life was superior to their own. By the time U.S. teachers left in 1950, the U.S. model of education was firmly in place (Strobel, 2001).

Implementing the English language was another form of colonization and Americanization (Andersen, 2013) and it became the foundation of colonial education in the Philippines (Hsu, 2013). English is still the primary language used in government, business, and education; the schooling system was changed to emulate the U.S. education system (i.e., the structure of middle and high school); and college degree programs have been designed to be more marketable to U.S. or Western jobs (David, 2013). Striving to be visible and to be accepted by the United States continues to be the underlying impetus behind everything. Colonial education contributed to the establishment of the Pilipinx diaspora and, to this day, Pilipinxs find themselves struggling for a sense of self and belonging. Centuries of the internalization of U.S. and European standards has made it challenging and confusing to discover or create an authentic identity that Pilipinxs can be proud of.

During the time of formal U.S. colonization between 1898-1946, Pilipinxs occupied a unique and complicated position – they were considered U.S. nationals until 1938 (David, 2013). This meant that they could travel freely between the Philippines and the United States. However, it is important to note that the status as a U.S. national was different from having U.S. citizenship. Pilipinxs were not given citizenship status, which meant they would not have the rights or legal protection that U.S. citizens have, and this resulted in yet another reason to perceive Pilipinxs as lesser than. This time period also marked another wave of Pilipinx immigration. Pilipinxs began migrating to the United States in larger numbers between 1910s-1940s, which mainly included laborers and non-sponsored students. Most of the Pilipinxs migrating to the United States were young men to join relatives and friends who
had already become laborers on farms in California or in canneries in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska (Lee, 2015). As the numbers of Pilipinxs grew, they were increasingly seen as problematic. By the 1930s, they “were increasingly characterized not as the ‘little brown brothers’ but as another ‘Asiatic invasion’ that was worse than the Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian ‘invasions’ that had preceded them (Lee, 2015, p. 184). The life they encountered in the United States was wrought with racism and violence. The late 1920s and 1930s in California were marked by numerous incidents of violence against Pilipinxs enacted by White people, which included stabbings, beatings, riots, and even a bombing of the Stockton Filipino Federation of American Building.

Following the Watsonville riots in 1929, when 400 White men attacked a Pilipinx dance hall, a number of organizations warned the U.S. government of the dangers of having Pilipinxs in the United States. Interestingly enough, Philippine nationalists in the Philippines collaborated with the U.S. government to create a compromise. When the Philippine representatives appeared at congressional hearings, they strategically presented their arguments, stating that by excluding Pilipinxs, the U.S. would potentially stain its global reputation. The negotiations culminated in the Tydings-McDuffie Act in 1934, officially known as the Philippine Independence Act. With the passage of this Act, Pilipinxs were no longer considered U.S. nationals, their status was changed to aliens, and only fifty Pilipinxs were allowed to immigrate to the United States per year. The Act granted the Philippines status as a commonwealth as well as independence after a period of ten years (Lee, 2015).

In an effort to rid the country of undesirable Pilipinxs, the U.S. government introduced the Pilipinx Repatriation Act in 1935, stating that Pilipinxs who were born in the Philippines and living in the United States could return to the Philippines, all expenses paid –
but they could never return to the United States again. The U.S. government thought they were cunning enough to trick the masses with the new Act, believing that if they painted repatriation as positive and with good intent, Pilipinxes would follow suit. It was not the case. Only 2,190 Pilipinxes out of 108,260 chose to return to their home country through the repatriation act (Lee, 2015).

The last official wave of Pilipinx immigration occurred after the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965. This wave consisted mainly of professionals like nurses, doctors, and engineers, representing a stark contrast from previous waves of immigration (Nadal, 2009). Most of the Pilipinxes coming to the United States were college educated and many were recruited to work in hospitals and manufacturing companies all over the country; and since they were in careers that typically secured a higher income, Pilipinxes were settling in suburbs and away from Pilipinx neighborhoods like Manilatowns. These types of ethnic enclaves began to disappear and they began to establish different organizations to create community (Nadal 2009).

Pilipinxes and Pilipinx Americans have endured centuries of struggle, yet despite it all, have displayed incredible resilience to survive in a place that not only colonized their home country, but also permitted abuse when they arrived in the United States, particularly throughout the 1900s. The following sections will explore how the history of colonialism, racism, and White supremacy continues to shape the Pilipinx and Pilipinx American experiences in the present day, even though formal colonial rule ended more than half a century ago.
The Perpetual Aftermath

More than 80 years after the passage of the Philippine Independence Act, the effects of Spanish and U.S. colonialism continue to thrive today (Hernandez, 2016). Not having access to learning one’s history is akin to an incomplete puzzle. Further, Pilipinx history that is “free from colonial tutelage and its distortions remain elusive” (Leonardo & Matias, 2013, p. 5). While what has been shared in the previous section is just a glimpse into the breadth and complexity of Philippine and Philippine American history, it is imperative to learn and understand what occurred during Spanish and United States colonization in order to grasp the contemporary issues that Pilipinx Americans continue to grapple with today. During Spanish colonization, Jose Rizal, who is revered as the national hero of the Philippines, in his work *Noli Me Tangere* (1886), compares the Spanish presence to a cancer that made the Philippines sick. What he would not live to see is that the cancer that he so fittingly named would continue to spread and infect the following generations of Pilipinx Americans. Generations have inherited this “cancer of the mind that subjugates their true sense of culture, identity, and history (Leonardo & Matias, 2013, p. 4). U.S. textbooks tell narratives from a U.S.-centric perspective, intentionally suppressing the stories and perspectives of Pilipinxs, particularly those of the precolonial natives, the Tao.

Though Pilipinxs established communities in the United States as early as 1763 in St. Malo, Louisiana, little is actually known about Pilipinxs and Pilipinx Americans and even less information and resources are available in libraries and higher education institutions (Cordova, 1983; Nadal, 2009). The invisibility of the Pilipinx American community in U.S. history books has resulted in the stereotyping, homogenizing, misunderstanding, and erasure of their experiences (Andresen, 2013). For generations, the Spanish and U.S. conquest of the
Philippines has been depicted as benevolent, and the imposition of Catholicism and European and U.S. culture as the work of heroic missionaries, conquistadors, and military powers. In actuality, the Pilipinxs were victimized, and the continued “denial of this past has been the source of crippling confusion about Pilipinx identity…” (Rimonte, 1997, p. 41). Leonardo and Matias (2013) write:

Almost every Philippine historical event that occurred for the past century occurred mainly in relation to the United States. Therefore, it is important to understand that the United States shaped the plight of the Pilipinx Americans. By acknowledging the Philippines’ colonial history, one can then understand how the current social structure, plight, stereotypes, identities, and development of colonial mentality among Pilipinx Americans are extensions of that history. (p.12)

Despite having been granted independence in 1946, Pilipinxs continue to uphold doctrines learned during the extensive period of colonization (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2013). As a result, Pilipinxs and Pilipinx Americans have been forced to continue to identify themselves through the lens of their Spanish and U.S. colonizers (Leonardo & Matias, 2013). Many Pilipinx Americans perceive their identity, phenotype, values, and traditions as lesser than, while striving to act and become more like their colonizers. After hundreds of years of colonial rule, the mindset that continues to significantly shape Pilipinx American lives, but has not been deeply investigated in higher education research, is colonial mentality.

**Colonial Mentality**

The most pervasive, insidious and, arguably, the longest-lasting effect of Spanish and U.S. colonization of the Philippines, is colonial mentality. David and Okazaki (2006b) conceptualize colonial mentality as the specific psychological consequence stemming from
the centuries of colonization under Spain and the United States, resulting in the automatic and uncritical preference for anything Spanish or American and rejection of anything Pilipinx. Colonial mentality is a specific form of internalized oppression and refers to the psychological condition when individuals hold onto negative ideologies and beliefs about themselves and their ethnic group, which are then reinforced and institutionalized within and by society (David, 2013; David & Okazaki, 2006a, 2006b). Strobel (2001) defines colonial mentality as a state of marginal consciousness, which lacks the critical awareness of the forces of power and domination that has and continues to shape the minds and attitudes of the oppressed. It is perhaps the most insidious consequence of colonization – the people’s histories are erased, rendering them unable to think independently for themselves, causing a rejection of one’s true and authentic self (David & Nadal, 2013; Memmi, 1965). Internalized oppression is a common phenomenon among a variety of oppressed racial and ethnic groups (David, 2013) and presenting a few cases helps to provide a greater picture of how prevalent this form of oppression is (Ferrera, 2011).

The impact of slavery and other forms of oppression on Black and African Americans, the colonization of Puerto Rico, as well as the historical trauma of the genocide and displacement of Native Americans, all parallel the effects of colonialism (David, 2013). Research by renowned scholars like Tatum (1994) among many others has shown that these different forms of past trauma have caused behaviors in the Black community like self-destruction, delinquency, high crime rates – all connected to the history of slavery, which continue to shape society and limit African Americans’ social mobility and healing from a tumultuous past. Perhaps more similar to the Pilipinx experience is the experience of Native Americans. When Europeans arrived, they sought to destroy and re-envision the culture of
the indigenous peoples via boarding schools, displacement, and genocide. McBride (2002) asserts that the extensive history of violence and oppression leads to the disastrous loss of cultural identity and spirituality and, in the present day, it continues to cause cultural isolation and the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes that influence dysfunctional behaviors such as substance abuse and domestic violence. It is also believed that oppression is passed on inter-generationally, further preventing Native Americans from learning and understanding their history, causing a cycle of inferiorization. Lastly but not exhaustively, Puerto Rico, like the Philippines, was also colonized by Spain beginning in 1493 and was also relinquished to the United States as a result of the Treaty of Paris in 1898. The experiences of present-day Puerto Ricans are strikingly similar to Pilipinxs. Varas-Diaz and Serrano-Garcia (2003) found that Puerto Ricans also experience feelings of identity confusion, shame around their cultural identity, and a sense of inferiority.

However, the colonial psychological experiences of Asian Americans, and more specifically Pilipinx Americans, have gone largely ignored despite their recent and extensive histories of colonization (David, 2013; David & Okazaki, 2006a, 2006b; Strobel, 2001). While other countries like India, Korea, and parts of Southeast Asia also have experiences with colonialism, the Philippines seems to emerge as a country that has been uniquely affected primarily due to the length of time of colonialism along with the breadth of influence among Pilipinx people and its migrants to the United States over time (Fererra, 2011). Further, given the widespread nature of historical oppressions and the salience of internalized oppression, scholars and practitioners must increase their knowledge around the colonial past of different ethnic groups in order to more deeply understand how colonialism
continues to define individual and community experiences. The following serves as an exploration of colonial mentality and how it has shaped the Pilipinx American experience.

**Colonial Mentality and Pilipinx Americans**

Pilipinx Americans are a neocolonized people because they continue to uphold beliefs learned during the period of colonization (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2013). To better understand colonial mentality and its effects on Pilipinxs and Pilipinx Americans, it is necessary to learn and understand the classic colonial model and how a land and its people are exploited through this process. The stages will be described in relation to the Pilipinx experience.

Fanon (1965) details four stages of colonialism that colonizing forces employed. In the first stage, the colonizer purposefully and forcefully enters into a territory that is knowingly not their own, with the intent to exploit the land’s resources and people. In the case of the Philippines, both Spain and the United States invaded the islands despite the strong resistance from the indigenous people. The second stage is when the colonizer imposes its own culture; belittles, appropriates, and destroys the indigenous culture; and begins to recreate the culture in the vision of the colonizer (David, 2013; Halagao, 2010). In this phase, Pilipinxs were made to believe that European and U.S. standards and ideals were superior and, consequently, were forcibly brainwashed to forgo their own indigenous ways of living. An example of this is the Spanish’s use of Catholicism and the Americanization of Pilipinx school systems by the United States.

The third stage of colonialism is characterized by the depiction of the colonized as uncivilized savages who must be tamed and refined by the colonizer. This is when and how the oppression is rationalized and deemed necessary by the colonizer. Pilipinxs were viewed as incapable of caring for themselves and were made to believe that they needed Spain and
the United States to uplift and save them. The three stages ultimately lead to the fourth and final stage of colonialism, when “political, social, and economic institutions are designed to benefit and maintain the superiority of the colonizer while simultaneously and persistently subjugating the colonized” (David, 2013, p. 55). This can be clearly seen with all the uses of physical and psychological forces to overpower the Pilipinx and with the establishment of new systems of government, language, religion, and education – all of which continue to exist today.

The work of distinguished postcolonial scholars like Fanon (1965), Memmi (1965), and Freire (1970) all contend that there are three types of effects of colonialism on the colonized. The inhumane treatment and subjugation over a significant amount of time result in 1) accepting and internalizing the inferiority that has been imposed by the colonizer, 2) developing an intense desire to shed their own culture and heritage and the urge to emulate the colonizers, and 3) rationalizing the oppression as necessary while feeling gratitude toward their oppressors. Having explored the history of the Philippines through the lens of colonialism, it can be understood how centuries of oppression have shaped the lived experiences Pilipinxs and Pilipinx Americans to produce a colonial mentality.

Pilipinx American scholars in fields like history and psychology have identified colonial mentality as a defining factor of the Pilipinx American experience (Andersen, 2013; David 2013; Lott, 1976; Strobel, 2001). Although internalized oppression is the term that is often used in literature, colonial mentality is the term used in scholarship that is focused on Pilipinxs and Pilipinx Americans because it has become more visible and familiar in the community (David, 2013; David & Okazaki, 2006a; Root, 1997). Colonialism and the resulting cultural imposition and disintegration have contributed to the Pilipinx identity crisis
Further, Pilipinx history is absent from history books and curricula and, when it is present, it is often presented in an inferiorizing and U.S.- or Euro-centric manner, which also contributes to the community’s identity crisis, convincing Pilipinx Americans that their culture is inauthentic and not worthy of pride. Without any significant visibility or opportunities to learn their histories, many Pilipinx Americans unknowingly live with a colonial mentality (David, 2008; David, 2013; David & Okazaki, 2006b; Strobel, 2001).

David and Okazaki (2006b) developed the Colonial Mentality Scale (CMS) as a theoretical way to measure and study colonial mentality among Pilipinx Americans. Prior to the creation of the scale, there had been no systematic investigation of colonial mentality and its potential connection to the psychological experiences of Pilipinx Americans and, more specifically, their mental health. The CMS is comprised of 36 different items that are believed to be common manifestations of colonial mentality among Pilipinx Americans. Emerging from a study using data from over 600 surveys were five different subscales or types of manifestations which were divided into two categories – covert and overt manifestations.

The covert manifestations include the 1) internalized inferiority or deficit perceptions of being Pilipinx and 2) cultural shame and embarrassment. The overt manifestations that emerged were 1) deficit perceptions of physical characteristics, 2) within-group discrimination of other Pilipinxs, and 3) colonial debt or the tolerance of oppression. Some examples of covert manifestations are the belief that U.S.-made products are better than those that are Pilipinx, and the claim to be of mixed heritage (Spanish, Chinese, American, etc.) in an effort to appear less Pilipinx. Overt manifestations often appear as the desire to look and behave more White, the discrimination against other Pilipinxs who are less “American,” or
the appreciation of colonization (colonial debt) and tolerance of contemporary oppression and discrimination. While the CMS has been created and used in the field of psychology, it can potentially be adapted and used in a way to measure colonial mentality in students in higher education to explore if and how it informs student experiences.

**Colonial Mentality and Mental Health**

What has been presented here strongly suggests that a colonial mentality produces a deep disconnect with or rejection of one’s identity, adversely affecting mental health (David, 2008; David & Nadal, 2013; David & Okazaki, 2006a, 2006b; Nadal, 2009). Statistics have shown that Pilipinx American adolescents have had one of the highest rates of suicide ideation in the nation (President’s Advisory Commission on Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders, 2001). Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that 45.6% of Pilipina American adolescents have experienced suicide ideation, which is the highest percentage among all ethnic groups (as cited in Agbayani-Siewart & Enrile, 2003). In another study that utilized the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale, 30% of the national sample of Pilipinx Americans experienced depression, which is significantly higher than the rate of depression in the general U.S. population (between 10% and 20%) (David & Okazaki, 2006b). Tuazon (2013) reports that Pilipinx Americans are among the least likely to seek support for mental health and wellness and that they utilize mental health services less than any other Asian American group.

David (2008) theorizes that colonial mentality negatively affects enculturation, ethnic identity, individual and collective self-esteem, and mental health. It was discovered that 29.8% of the study’s 248 Pilipinx American participants of varying ages, education levels, and socioeconomic backgrounds, experienced depression and that colonial mentality was
associated with “lower levels of enculturation, negative evaluations of one’s personal and
ethnic group characteristics, negative sense of belonging in and attitude toward one’s ethnic
group, and more depression symptoms” (p. 123). The results of this study strengthen the
theories that historians and scholars have presented regarding the negative impact of
colonialism and colonial mentality on Pilipinx Americans’ mental health and wellness.

In a more recent study, Tuazon (2013) also explored colonial mentality, enculturation,
and acculturation as possible indicators of mental health help-seeking attitudes. Results
showed that Pilipinxs with colonial mentality were less likely to seek mental health support.
Three different predictors of help-seeking attitudes emerged: interpersonal norms,
educational attainment, and acculturation. It was found that colonial mentality correlates with
interpersonal norms, which substantiates David and Okazaki’s (2006b) work supporting the
argument that “socialization triggers the development of colonial mentality when
interpersonal norms are passed down from generation to generation” (Tuazon, 2013, p. 85).
This also suggests that perhaps the most effective interventions would be those that focus on
empowering Pilipinx Americans to mitigate their sense of cultural inferiority and foster
positive attitudes towards others.

The correlation between mental health and mental health measures provides clear
evidence that colonial mentality is necessary to consider when striving to understand the
Pilipinx American experience. The findings of current research signal an urgent need to
investigate the mental health of Pilipinx Americans in psychology and how it translates to
related fields like higher education to document how trends have changed and what practices
can be implemented to meet the needs of this student population.
Immigration and Generation

Based on the extensive history of colonization and the emergence and continued resilience of colonial mentality, it can be speculated that this psychological condition not only has a negative impact on mental health, but can also be passed on from one generation to the next through socialization, continued experiences of oppression, and ignorance (Bustos-Choy, 2009; David, 2006a, 2013; Halagao, 2004; Lott, 1976). Colonial mentality is conceptualized as an individual-differences variable whose presence and persistence among Pilipinx Americans may vary greatly. By utilizing methods like interviews and surveys, there is evidence that supports the idea that colonial mentality is prevalent among this population, no matter the generational identity (David & Okazaki, 2006a, 2006b, 2010). Lott (1976) associated the widespread presence of colonial mentality among Pilipinxs and Pilipinx Americans with their continued oppression within the United States and the likelihood that immigrant Pilipinxs may have brought the psychological condition with them from postcolonial Philippines.

In a more recent study, David and Nadal (2013) conducted the first empirical research project of the legacy of colonialism in the Philippines and how it plays a part in Pilipinx psychological experiences prior to emigration to the United States and its influence on Pilipinx American immigrants’ mental health. Their findings suggest that immigrants in fact experienced cultural denigration in the Philippines prior to their arrival to the United States, which can lead to the development of colonial mentality. The study also found that Pilipinx American immigrants may bring colonial mentality with them when they come to the U.S., and that after moving to the U.S., colonial mentality may continue to affect their mental
health. These findings also provide strong empirical support that the immigration experience must be understood in the context of colonialism.

From this study, a question to examine is how colonial mentality might influence subsequent generations of Pilipinx Americans. Since the findings from David and Nadal’s (2013) studies suggest that colonial mentality can be acquired prior to arrival in the U.S. and can be brought when immigrants relocate, it can be inferred that U.S.-born Pilipinx Americans may also be influenced by colonial mentality. Halagao (2004) found that without opportunities to learn Philippine history from a non-colonizer lens, second-generation Pilipinx Americans are more likely to believe false notions of history, like believing that Spain civilized the Tao, or that the Philippines wanted to rid themselves of Spain because they preferred U.S. rule.

Ferrera (2011) also investigated the experiences of second-generation Pilipinx Americans and the intersection of colonial mentality, family socialization, and ethnic identity formation. One of the main findings related to the enculturation style of their parents and its influence on the participants. According to the participants, some parents seemed to have “endorsed colonial mentality, provided more resources and affirming messages that it is good to assimilate…and further, have transmitted a negative perception about Pilipinx culture” (p. 84). Ferrera describes this process as constrained enculturation – the limited or strained level of enculturation of Pilipinx culture among their children. This pushed the participants to more strongly align with an American identity. However, interestingly enough, it was also found that participants showed a resistance to colonial mentality as well.

Ferrera (2011) shares that cultural portals, or “points of access to Pilipinx culture” (p. 84), served as opportunities for the participants to learn more about their Pilipinx history and
culture. The experiences with cultural portals encouraged the participants to critically reflect on their own identities and challenge colonial mentality. It is fascinating to examine the dissonance between the generations – might this be indicative of a greater desire to reconnect with Pilipinx identity, which would be a departure from what the parents’ generation places value on? This study was able to capture the participants’ interest in seeking out ways to access information and this desire is perhaps not as explored in more recent literature.

The study included participants of different genders; however, it did not specifically denote any specific differences among the genders. What differences would emerge if there had been a specific focus on Pilipina Americans? While this study lies within the field of social work, considering the participants were all second-generation Pilipinx Americans between the ages of 18-22, the findings certainly overlap with traditionally aged students in higher education and can help to tell a part of the Pilipinx American college student narrative around what they may be experiencing in terms of colonial mentality, identity development, and what they may be in search of when pursuing institutional support and services.

**Pilipina Americans and Colonial Mentality**

There are even fewer studies that have a primary focus on the experiences of Pilipina Americans (Felipe, 2016). Their narratives are unique not only because they experience marginalization on the basis of their race, sex, and gender (among other identities), but also because these identities are connected to the sexist and racist ideologies that emerged during the colonial time period. Referring to the earlier discussion on colonial history and the ideologies Spain and the United States injected into indigenous Philippine culture, it is possible that Pilipina Americans have internalized colonial mentality, affecting the way they see themselves as well as how they perceive racism and sexism.
Bustos-Choy’s (2009) study highlighted the negative impact of colonial mentality on Pilipina Americans in business in that they tend to be invisible and underrepresented. Participants expressed feelings of not being seen as executive-level “material” despite being told that they were hard-working. Additionally, participants shared that they often did not speak up or share their opinions, especially to upper-level managers, because of a fear of authority. They opted to be nonconfrontational, submissive, or passive, which Bustos-Choy concluded was a result of colonization. In another study, Lehman (2009) found that colonial mentality negatively influenced the way Pilipina Americans perceive themselves and their bodies, especially when coupled with negative parental feedback. This finding provides additional evidence that messages from parents are particularly influential and that there is potential for colonial mentality to be passed intergenerationally.

Felipe (2016) conducted a study that aimed to examine Pilipina Americans and the relationship between colonial mentality and their experiences with sexist and racist oppression. It was found that one-third of the 143 participants demonstrated some level of colonial mentality and that internalized inferiority was the most significant factor. This finding suggests that:

continued experiences with racist and sexist oppression lends to internalizations of inferiority. Its repetition underscores the degree to which Pinays hold devalued identities as women of Pilipinx heritage... it is possible that repeated exposure to oppression, whether based on gender, race, or in combination, contributes to the development of negative internalizations about cultural identity... Pinays may embody the stereotypes imposed on them and move about the world accepting false notions of insignificance. (p. 29)
While this is only one recent study, the results confirm how colonial mentality, coupled with experiences of racism and sexism, scaffold an internalized sense of inferiority which, as it has been discussed, can undoubtedly affect mental health. Though the literature that has been reviewed up to this point exists primarily outside of the field of higher education, it has shown that colonial mentality is indeed a defining factor of the Pilipinx American lived experience. Colonial mentality affects mental health, it can and has been passed intergenerationally, and it convinces Pilipina Americans to embody a sense of inferiority. This leads me to be curious about the manifestations of colonial mentality in Pilipina American college students and how it might shape the way they may experience higher education. There is a growing body of literature that focuses on the experiences of Pilipinx and Pilipina American college students (Maramba, 2008a; Maramba, 2008b; Museus & Maramba, 2011, 2013; Ocampo, 2013), but there is a dearth of research investigating how colonial mentality might influence their identities, sense of agency, mental health, and how they experience and navigate higher education.

**Pilipinx and Pilipina American Student Experiences in Higher Education**

After having explored the sociohistorical context and how colonial mentality affects Pilipinx Americans, this section will discuss recent and relevant literature on Pilipinx Americans in higher education and highlight the need to investigate the unique experiences of Pilipina Americans. It is important to note that while there has been a growing body of literature on the Pilipinx American experience in related fields like psychology (David, 2013), scholars argue that in higher education, Pilipinx Americans are still largely invisible within the discourse (Halagao, Tintiangco-Cubales & Cordova, 2009; Hernandez, 2016; Maramba & Bonus, 2013; Museus & Maramba, 2011).
Empirical evidence suggests that ethnic disparities in education and differences in experiences warrant the further examination of Pilipinx American students in higher education (Museus & Maramba, 2011). Their experiences have rarely been investigated despite the community’s rapid growth in the United States. This is most likely due to the homogenization of the Asian American racial category and the incongruence of the experiences of Pilipinx Americans with pervasive stereotypes like the model minority myth (Hernandez, 2016). The model minority myth, a damaging stereotype rooted in White supremacy that emerged in the 1960s (Petersen, 1966), wrongly assumes that the experiences of all Asian American groups are all the same. The myth wrongfully implies that Asian American students are all academically talented and successful and because they are thought to be high-achieving, they do not require support or resources (Museus, 2014; Museus & Kiang, 2009). This overarching assumption erases distinct narratives that define Asian American ethnic groups. For Pilipinx Americans, this has created and reinforced a lack of acknowledgement and understanding around the community’s experience, particularly its extensive colonial history. Being incorporated under the Asian American umbrella often means that their colonial linkages to higher education and how colonial mentality affects them are ignored (Hernandez, 2016).

Maramba (2008b) reports that Pilipinx American students feel invisible on campus and their experiences and identities are either lost or overshadowed by the larger Asian American category or generalized with other students of color. Additionally, Pilipinx American students have described feeling that campus services are not helpful because administrators lack the empathy, awareness, and sensitivity to be understanding of their narratives and experiences. Additional existing literature shows that many Pilipinx
Americans also prefer to adopt an ethnocentric Pilipinx identity versus aligning with a pan-Asian American identity (Nadal, 2004). This is again primarily due to the historical and social differences relative to other Asian American communities (Nadal, 2009).

Alternatively, more recent research has theorized that Pilipinx Americans have been more closely associated with Latinx and Black students, especially in environments where the percentage of Asian American students is high (Ocampo, 2013). Oftentimes, East Asian Americans perceive Pilipinx Americans as not Asian “enough,” pushing them to feel invisible in their own community or to associate more closely with other students of color (Buenavista, Jayakumar, & Misa-Escalante, 2009; Ocampo, 2013). This experience of being caught in the middle of racial and ethnic identity spectrums of not being Asian enough, but also not being a person of color or White, has constructed Pilipinx Americans as liminal students of color (Buenavista et al., 2009).

The struggle to create an identity also connects to the lack of a sense of belonging on college campuses. Museus and Maramba (2011) were interested in learning more about whether Pilipinx American students are pressured to forgo their connections to their cultural heritage and how this loss of connection might influence their adjustment to college and sense of belonging on campus. The authors defined connections to cultural heritage as the “extent to which Pilipinx American participants maintained connections to their cultural heritages” (p. 242). They measured this by posing survey questions that asked whether or not they could talk with family or friends about school and whether or not they could talk with non-Pilipinx friends about their family and culture. It was found that Pilipinx American students, similar to other racially minoritized students, feel pressure to assimilate to dominant campus culture, which typically refers to White culture and is incongruent to their values.
Consequently, it is harder to adjust and feel a sense of belonging. Pilipinx American students who were able to feel connected to their cultural values found it easier to adjust to their campuses and, ultimately, achieved a greater sense of belonging. Also, second-generation participants experienced the highest levels of pressure to assimilate to dominant culture. However, it is not explicitly reported what specific values the students desired to remain connected with or if there were aspects of White culture some participants perhaps were more willing to accept – which can possibly be argued as a manifestation of colonial mentality. There is an opportunity to expand upon these findings and investigate what cultural values are important to Pilipinx American students and how those values potentially connect with colonial mentality.

Many empirical studies on Pilipinx American students have mainly focused on investigating campus climate, cultural identity, and belongingness, but there is a growing body of research that reports colonial mentality as an influence on identity. Morente’s (2015) mixed-methods study sought to examine Pilipinx college students’ “perspectives on internalized colonial mentality, collective self-esteem, ethnic identity, social class, and academic success” (p. 6) and how these factors might influence their perception of self. The significant themes that emerged from the interviews were: colonial mentality, ethnic identity, language, kapwa (fellow beings), minority, education, and collective self-esteem. Regarding colonial mentality, the researcher mainly reported on the findings around physical appearance. The participants shared how they received messages from their family about what are desirable physical traits, particularly light skin and a bridged nose. Participants shared not feeling good enough if they were not light skinned and by becoming darker, they were losing not just their beauty but also their self-worth. Having a bridged nose was
idealized and if individuals had a flat nose or Pilipinx nose, family members often made
comments to point out this flaw and how to fix it. It was found that this type of messaging
began early in life, which participants internalized as they aged.

The obsession with features like light skin and bridged nose certainly is rooted in
history dating back to centuries of colonization. In addition to findings around physical
appearance, the participants also indicated that they felt pressure to pursue specific academic
majors and careers like in the medical field or engineering because they were told they would
be pathways to financial success and stability. The participants felt as though they could not
disagree with their parents’ hopes and dreams and if they brought up their own ideas or other
passions, their parents would be displeased. When taking gender into account, Morente
(2015) briefly shares that from the quantitative data collected from surveys, Pilipina
American students had higher GPAs and actually displayed lower levels of colonial mentality
relative to the Pilipino American participants. Morente believed this could be due to the high
level of parental expectations that had been set for the women. The participants shared in
interviews that they were often compared to other family members as a way for parents to set
standards of success.

It is critical to consider colonial history and colonial mentality to better understand
the Pilipinx American population and their experiences in higher education. Further research
that investigates colonial mentality and its manifestations among Pilipinx American college
students would complement the current body of literature and provide more clarity around
the complexity and uniqueness of their stories. Additionally, this would help with the
construction of appropriate institutional support and resources so that Pilipinx students can
feel more connected with the campus community and a sense of trust with staff and faculty members.

**Pilipina American Students**

Though the majority of existing literature focuses on Pilipinx Americans as a whole, an emerging body of research has shown differences between the experiences of Pilipina and Pilipino American students (Espiritu & Wolf, 2001; Paz, 2011; Maramba, 2008a). Different gender expectations are placed upon Pilipina Americans and those expectations influence the way they pursue and navigate higher education. Espiritu and Wolf (2001) found that Pilipinx parents tend to have higher academic expectations of their daughters, which pushes them to be more ambitious and higher-achieving than their brothers. However, parents simultaneously expect their daughters to stay closer to home to help care for their families, even if their daughters wanted to attend more competitive or prestigious schools that were farther away from home. This pressure is also not present for Pilipino American men.

Maramba (2008a) conducted a study to further understand the influences that affect Pilipina American students’ college experiences. Significant themes that emerged from the study were the expectation for daughters to attend a college that is close to home, to acknowledge and understand their parents’ struggles and sacrifices, and to do well in school because a successful career would be the most appropriate way to repay them. The findings overlapped with Espiritu and Wolf’s (2001) study, where it was also revealed that these types of messages were yet again expected of Pilipina American women and not men. The study further demonstrated that Pilipina American students are in constant negotiation with their home environment and their lives in college. Paz (2011) sought to dive deeper into the specific elements of college life that are affected by parental influence. In this study, Pilipina
American students were most influenced by their parents when it came time to select a major and create career plans for post-graduation. The participants shared that although they made academic and career decisions for themselves based on their own passions and goals, they also strongly considered their parents’ hard-working behaviors, immigration stories, and the desire to make their parents happy.

The gendered expectations that Pilipina American students shared could possibly be results of colonial mentality. The extant literature presented here, both within and adjacent to higher education, substantiates that Pilipina Americans are socialized differently by their parents and families and they internalize messages and values that tend to govern their decisions and damage their perceptions of self. When these inferiorized perceptions of self are compounded with racist and sexist experiences, their mental health suffers. Highly defined gender roles and patriarchal ideals were infused into the Philippine culture during Spanish colonial rule (Francia, 2010) and research has suggested that this mindset, which could include ideas around gender, can be passed from one generation to the next (Choy, 2009; David, 2013; Lehman, 2009; Strobel, 2001).

With the preceding in mind, my study aims to investigate the linkages to colonial mentality and how it manifests among Pilipina American college students to more fully capture their narratives. Reflecting upon my academic journey thus far leads me to ponder – might colonial mentality encourage or prevent Pilipina American students from pursuing certain majors, careers, or opportunities on campus? How does colonial mentality interfere with how Pilipina American students view and accept themselves and other Pilipinx Americans? What systems, spaces, and policies – or lack thereof – embedded in institutions of higher education reinforce colonial mentality in Pilipina American students? Would
Pilipina American students behave differently if they did not receive such messages? Or, what might change if Pilipina American students were able to examine the root of these messages?

**Decolonization Efforts**

The literature explored and discussed so far has articulated Philippine history, the root of colonial mentality and a number of its effects, and the experiences of Pilipinx American and Pilipina Americans in higher education. This final section presents select studies or literature that have served as an inspiration to include a decolonizing aspect and framework into my study. In addition to an exploration of the experiences of Pilipina American students, I intend for my study to provide an individual and collective opportunity to learn and engage with history, draw connections to participants’ lived experiences, and disrupt colonial mentality. Leonardo and Matias (2013) write:

To be an educated Pilipinx means to learn about one’s coloniality in order not to forget it. But the act of forgetting is not an act of denial. Rather, it is the condition of possibility that makes further learning possible for the postcolonial. The Pilipinx’s search for self is precisely to abolish it, to become something different from what they know of themselves: the colonized. (p. 16)

In her foundational work, Strobel (1997) conducted a study with the purpose of examining the process of decolonization with post-1965 Pilipinx Americans who identified with having experienced a decolonization process. Using participatory research and the Pilipinx method, pagtatanung-tanong, participants engaged in interviews, journal-writing, informal dialogues, and a day-long dialogue. Eleven generative themes emerged from the data: 1) the affective content of decolonization, 2) the power of naming and telling, 3) the
role of language, 4) the need for Pilipinx cultural and historical knowledge, 5) the role of memory, 6) the process of imagining the Pilipinx American community, 7) the process of building community institutions, 8) the generational responsibilities, 9) educational expectations, 10) the gender issue, and 11) the role of Pilipinx spirituality. One finding that also motivates my study is what Strobel labeled as the gender issue. She states that Pilipinx and western systems construct women’s roles and identities and the Pilipina American experience as molded by concepts of gender, race, class, and indigenous concepts. While the in-depth exploration of gender was outside the scope of her study, Strobel establishes that it is important to consider in future endeavors. The themes also contributed to a decolonization framework that I will be utilizing in my study and the details of the framework will be discussed in chapter 3.

Scholars have continued to contribute to decolonization efforts and pedagogies, one example being Pinoy Teach. While it does not exist in its original form any longer, its impact continues. Pinoy Teach was created by Halagao and Cordova in 1996 and is a program aimed at addressing the absence of Pilipinx Americans in social studies curriculum in middle schools. The authors described Pinoy Teach as a transformative approach that “encouraged critical thinking, perspective-taking and inquiry” (Halagao, 2010, p. 500). Pinoy Teach wanted to provide students the space, tools, and resources to challenge history so that they could make sense of their own stories. And after a number of years facilitating Pinoy Teach, Halagao and Cordova recruited college students to serve as mentors and teachers of the curriculum. They believed that college students could nurture future generations while participating in their own decolonizing journeys through implementing Pinoy Teach.
The college students were prepped by participating in a course taught by Halagao and Cordova and then they were charged with implementing Pinoy Teach over the course of 10 weeks in different middle schools. Halagao (2010) surveyed the college students to learn of the impact of facilitating Pinoy Teach and from the findings, offered her own perspectives on what a decolonizing pedagogy could and should be: 1) a space to think critically of one’s history, 2) activities that promote feelings of self-love, empathy, and anger, since a mix of emotions are natural and part of the decolonization process, 3) an academic and social space for people to unite and fight oppressions, 4) a curriculum that teaches skills like critical thinking and public speaking, and 5) a space that includes a social-action component to foster leadership, activism, and empowerment. While this is an abbreviated description, it is clear that space for learning and decolonizing is essential for Pilipinx Americans to search for and re-envision themselves.

A new generation of Pilipinx American scholars are complicating the notions of racial and ethnic identities in the United States and a visible decolonization movement is underway (Strobel, 2001). And as knowledge becomes more widespread and available, spaces to access information and community have also begun to emerge and gain momentum on virtual platforms like social media. There are a number of accounts on Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter that provide a range of information, including knowledge on indigenous history and ancient languages. There are also more opportunities to connect with other Pilipinxes to build community, whether it be through supporting small Pilipinx businesses, organizing protests here in the United States and in the Philippines, learning Tagalog and other Pilipinx languages, purchasing merchandise created by indigenous peoples in the Philippines, or sharing photos and recipes of food and other Pilipinx traditions.
Another countermovement that has begun making waves over social media is the confrontation of the idolizing of light skin. #MagandangMorenx, which loosely translates to brown is beautiful, emerged within the past few years, calling for brown-skinned Pilipinxs everywhere, in particular Pinays, to be proud of being morenx. Colonialism taught Pilipinxs to aspire to have light skin, adore those who have light skin, and inferiorize those who do not, including oneself. The countermovements in scholarship and on social media show that Pilipinxs and Pilipinx Americans are challenging colonial mentality, striving towards decolonization, and celebrating and honoring indigeneity. Scholarship on decolonization and the countermovents on social media have served as noteworthy sources of inspiration for me as I imagined the type of dialogues I hoped to have with participants, and the following chapter presents how I chose to conceptualize, design, implement, and make meaning of my study.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

So let it be known, if you don't already
Pinays have always been part, and parcel, if not, imperative
And critical to the struggle
Filipinas are no strangers to wielding our own power
Of all the privileges that exist in this world,
None of which you may be a benefactor of
There is at least one you bear
And that is the privilege of having been born a Filipina
Your DNA contains building blocks made from the
Mud of over 500 years of resistance and survival
And when you are ready, sis, we'll be right here.
—Us, 2017, Ruby Ibarra, Rocky Rivera, Klassy, Faith Santilla

This chapter presents a restatement of the study’s purpose, the research questions, the
details of the study’s design, and how the collected data will be analyzed. The use of life
story interviews – within the larger qualitative methodology of narrative inquiry – will be
discussed as the technique for data collection along with the utilization of a timeline as a tool
to aid in the interview process. Additionally, trustworthiness, reflexivity, and the study’s
limitations will be described.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this narrative inquiry is to explore how the colonial history of the
Philippines, Pilipinx American history, and the resulting psychological condition of colonial
mentality play a role in shaping the lives of Pilipina American undergraduate students. While
I will be gathering the participants’ stories, I also intend for this process to be an opportunity

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for the participants to learn about history and the complexity of their identities in an effort to decolonize their narratives. This inquiry aims to further our understanding of the unique experiences of Pilipina Americans, offer ways to develop decolonizing and liberating opportunities and pedagogies, and provide recommendations for institutions to more adequately serve this population.

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What messages regarding identities, education, and career paths did Pilipina American college students receive throughout their lives from their families, peers, teachers, and other communities?
   a. What messages, if any, were rooted in colonial mentality?

2. How do Pilipina American college students make meaning of the messages they received while growing up?
   a. How do the results of their meaning-making processes inform their experiences in college and shape their values, perspectives, identity, and educational and career goals?

3. How do Pilipina American college students understand decolonization? How do they make meaning of indigenous, colonial, and Pilipinx American history?

Research Design

Conceptual Framework

As I reflected upon my approach to the design of my study, particularly after having pored over pages of literature and reflecting upon my own narrative and journey, my intuition kept bringing me back to storytelling and decolonization. I found myself contemplating, how can my study encourage yet challenge Pinays to think deeply about their
identities and their stories of arrival? How can I create a space where they can reflect upon how their stories connect with each other? How can we as a community of Pinays confront colonialism and White supremacy to reclaim our narratives? How do we put together our identities that have been fractured by colonial mentality? This study was framed and guided by the concepts of Pinayism (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005; Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009), decolonization (Freire, 1970; Strobel, 2001), and the Colonial Mentality Scale (David & Okazaki, 2006b). Here I provide the details of each and why they were appropriate for informing the study’s design.

**Pinayism**

Pinayism, sometimes referred to as Peminism or Pinay studies, was created by Tintiangco-Cubales (2005). Pinayism delineates a specific space to honor the Pilipina American experience at the intersection of racism, sexism, imperialism, decolonization, consciousness, and liberation (de Jesus, 2005; Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005). The Pilipina American experience is complex and often marginalized, lost, or forgotten, mostly due to the history of colonialism and its long-lasting ramifications (Nadal, 2009). The legacy of colonialism has caused Pilipina Americans to continue to suffer from the effects of colonial mentality, shaping the way they are able to make sense of their own histories and identities (de Jesus, 2005). Pinayism is not simply the Pilipinx version of feminism or womanism, it is not about one single epistemology, nor does it have one static definition. Rather, Pinayism defines a space for and with Pilipina Americans, rather than trying to fit them within the continuum of Black and White. It is intended to be a revolutionary act by looking at the multiplicity of what it means to be Pinay (Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009). It theorizes the Pilipina American experience in ways that challenge feminism and even Asian
American feminism and identity development models that do not distinguish Pilipina perspectives (de Jesus, 2005). Pinayism aims to look beyond race and gender to examine the complexity of the intersections where ethnicity, class, sexuality, spirituality/religion, educational status, age, place of birth, diasporic migration, citizenship, and love cross (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2013; Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009).

Tintiangco-Cubales also describes Pinayism as a pedagogy that aims to develop the capacity of Pinays to confront global, local, and personal challenges that face them and their communities. Pinayist pedagogy strives to uncover the challenges that Pinays face, while creating plans to pursue and create social change for the betterment of their lives both individually and collectively. It also strives to mentor, reproduce, and create a community of Pinayists:

Pinayist praxis is a process, place, and production that aims to connect the global and local to the personal issues and stories of Pinay struggle, survival, service, sisterhood, and strength. It is both an individual and communal process of decolonization, humanization, self-determination, and relationship building, ultimately moving toward liberation. Through this process, Pinays create places where their epistemologies are at the center of the discourse. Pinays also represent Pinayism through critical cultural production of art, performance, and engaged scholarship that expresses their perspectives and counternarratives. (Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009, pp. 179-180)

Pinayism has the potential to connect colonialism, colonial mentality, and liberation via authentic storytelling and the discovery of self-love.
Decolonization

When a number of countries, including the Philippines, declared independence from their colonizers after World War II, decolonization movements and literature began to emerge and uncover the epistemic and psychic violence of colonial discourse (Strobel, 2001). As Strobel (2001) noted, “Psychic violence refers to the effects of colonization on the emotional and psychological make-up of its victims; epistemic violence refers to the effects of colonization on the processes of knowing and understanding reality” (p. 53). Strobel (2001) defines decolonization as the process of reconnecting “with the past to understand the present and to be able to envision the future” (p. 143). The process of decolonization strengthens the connection to the Pilipinx indigenous culture as a source of grounding. It also promotes the cultural and spiritual connection to one’s kapwa (fellow beings), making it possible to identify with one’s people and history despite differences across identities. Colonialism attempted to, and in many ways succeeded, in erasing indigenous languages, social systems, and identities. Decolonization, then, is a reconstruction of the authentic and indigenous narrative, largely through memory. Strobel (2001) also describes decolonization as an open-ended healing process that provides hope for a new way of seeing. It is a process that is both individual and communal. Strobel states that there is a healing power in the woundedness brought on by colonialism, and by conjuring memories, individuals and the community can rewrite themselves – to then rewrite the world.

Strobel’s (1997) study in the 1990s on the post-1965 Pilipinx American immigrant experience engaged eight participants in a decolonization process throughout the course of a year. The eleven themes that emerged from the study informed the creation of a decolonization framework that is inspired by Freire (1970) and has three stages: 1) naming,
2) reflection, and 3) action. The naming stage occurs when a Pilipinx American is able to recognize the impact of colonialism on their identity. The reflection stage is characterized by when one is able to think critically about how colonialism has affected their life and that of their community and develop the agency to create change. Lastly, in the action stage, one commits to giving back to the Pilipinx American community, supporting others in their decolonization journeys and encouraging the community to confront and dismantle colonial mentality together.

Strobel (2001) defines the decolonization framework in the following way:

**Naming**

- To decolonize is to be able to name internalized oppression, shame, inferiority, confusion, anger.
- To decolonize is to acquire cognitive knowledge about Pilipinx culture and history.
- To decolonize is to understand the meaning of “loss of cultural memory” and its consequences.
- To decolonize is to understand how the loss of language affects Pilipinx identity.
- To decolonize is to heal the self, heal the culture.
- To decolonize is to name the oppressor and the oppressive social structures.
- To decolonize is to recognize the orality of Pilipinx culture.
Reflection

- To decolonize is to develop the ability to question one’s reality as constructed by colonial narratives.
- To decolonize is to develop critical consciousness that can understand the consequences of silence and invisibility.
- To decolonize is to understand the need to recover one’s cultural and personal memory.
- To decolonize is to understand the generational gap as being constituted by historical realities that shape each generation’s experiences.
- To decolonize is to understand the ideological struggles within a multicultural context and the relationships of power within these struggles.
- To decolonize is to understand the need for connection with the parent culture.
- To decolonize is to ask: Where do I go from here?

Action

- To decolonize is to decide to give back to the Pilipinx American community.
- To decolonize is to learn to question.
- To decolonize is to support and become involved in developing community institutions.
- To decolonize is to take leadership positions in moving the Pilipinx American community toward visibility and empowerment.
- To decolonize is to tell and write one’s story, that in telling and writing, others may be encouraged to tell their own. (p. 148-149)
Utilizing this decolonization framework is appropriate for this study because I intend to engage with participants so that they may feel the courage to share and reflect upon their stories. I intend to support them in naming colonial mentality and how it has shown up in their lives; reflecting on how colonial mentality has affected them and their communities; and acting to tell their stories and empower others to do the same. Strobel (1997) describes decolonization as a necessary process in order to develop a healthy cultural identity and notes that the critical consciousness that emerges is able to then understand the social and political implications of one’s positionality in society. While I hope for the participants to delve into their memories and share about the people, environments, and experiences that have influenced them, I also hope that their experience as a participant in this study is one that is decolonizing and liberating.

Having briefly explored Pinayism and Strobel’s (2001) research and decolonization model, I believe there is a natural synergy between the two. I applied the central elements of Pinayism as the overarching lens to construct the study while I utilized the decolonization framework to frame and guide the data collection and analysis processes. Pinayism demarcates a unique and necessary space for the Pilipina American college student experience against the dominant narratives of racism, sexism, colonialism, and the struggle for decolonization, consciousness, and liberation (de Jesus, 2005). At the same time, my goal was to guide and encourage participants to name, reflect, and act in ways that are most meaningful and authentic to them. Core to both Pinayism and decolonization is the idea of an individual and communal process moving through healing and towards liberation. I desired to create reflective spaces and dialogues to encourage Pinays to dive deeply into the beauty and complexity of their own stories and decolonize their narratives by engaging in Pilipinx
and Pilipinx American history and confronting colonial mentality, while making meaning of their memories and learning their role in the greater Pinay community. Utilizing Pinayism and the decolonization model allowed me to design a narrative inquiry that intentionally centers Pilipina American students and co-create a decolonizing counterspace for them to explore both individual and community stories and confront colonial mentality to mend the memories that have been split. The following sections more specifically describe how the conceptual framework informed the study’s design and the data collection and analysis processes.

**Colonial Mentality Scale**

The Colonial Mentality Scale (CMS), though it is not utilized in the same manner as Pinayism and Strobel’s (2001) decolonization framework, is invaluable with analyzing data and producing findings. The CMS was developed by David and Okazaki (2006b) in an effort to measure colonial mentality among Pilipinx Americans. They wanted to explore and understand the psychological impacts of colonial mentality and, based on their research to create the CMS, the authors found that colonial mentality can be conceptualized and measured via five different factors that emerge in Pilipinx American thoughts and behaviors. The five factors are within-group discrimination, physical characteristics, colonial debt, cultural shame and embarrassment, and internalized cultural/ethnic inferiority. The first factor, within-group discrimination, is illustrated by the tendency to discriminate against Pilipinxs who are perceived to be less-Americanized; physical characteristics is defined by the belief that Pilipinx traits, like brown skin or a shorter bridged nose, are less desirable than White physical traits; colonial debt is the feeling of gratefulness that Pilipinx Americans may have for colonization and believing as though something is owed or must be repaid to the
colonizers; cultural shame and embarrassment is feeling ashamed by one’s Pilipinx identity and/or culture; and internalized cultural/ethnic inferiority is when Pilipinx Americans view their Pilipinx culture as lesser than in comparison to the U.S. or European cultures.

Working in tandem within the context of discovery (Reichenbach, 1938 as cited in McAdams, 2012), I utilized the CMS throughout the data analysis process and while crafting the findings of the study. Given that I wanted to learn more about how colonial mentality informed the lives of Pilipina American students, the five factors helped to lead me through the analysis phase by providing specific language and structure. I did not want to rely on my own lived experiences or knowledge and understanding of colonial mentality to analyze and draw connections to the CMS from the dialogues I had with participants. The five factors of the CMS provided the specific language, structure, and examples for me to utilize when analyzing the data. I first began my analysis by reading through the interview transcripts very broadly to familiarize myself with the data and then as I repeated the process, I more carefully and purposefully analyzed the data for participant language, behavior, and experiences that aligned with the CMS’ factors.

Narrative Inquiry and Life Story Interviews

Narrative inquiry is defined as a collection of stories told by individuals to shed light on their lived experiences. Creswell (2012) offers five defining elements of narrative inquiry: 1) capturing the life experiences of a small pool of individuals; 2) engaging in the research problem and questions through interviews; 3) situating each of the participant’s personal experiences through individual stories; 4) drawing and analyzing linkages between the ideas presented through each of the interviews; and lastly 5) engaging participants in the research. More specifically, I intended to use life story interviews as the method of narrative inquiry.
Life story, a form of narrative inquiry, portrays an individual’s entire life thus far, the circumstances that may influence an experience, and the lived experiences (Denzin, 1989). Cole (2001) provides three defining purposes of life story research: 1) to advance the understanding of the complex interactions between individuals’ lives and the institutional and societal contexts in which they are lived; 2) to provide voice to the lives of individuals, particularly those that have been silenced, unheard, ignored, and oppressed; and 3) to convey individuals’ stories through their own words.

The life story interview is an appropriate narrative inquiry approach for this study because it respects and centers the storyteller and the meaning that is carried within their stories (Atkinson, 2002). As Atkinson (2002) noted, “Storytellers are the first interpreters of the stories they tell. It is through their construction of their realities, and the stories they tell about those realities, that we, as researchers, learn what we want to from them” (p. 124). Atkinson (2002) describes a life story to be “a fairly complete narrative of an individual’s entire experience of life as a whole, highlighting the most important aspects…and enables us to see and identify threads and links that connect one part of a person’s life to another” (p. 126). He goes on to describe that a life story narrative highlights the most significant influences, experiences, and themes in one’s lifetime and can be just as valuable as an experience for the researcher as it is for the person telling their story. Additionally, the telling of a life story can help participants reveal their role or position within their environment or society (Cohler, 1993) and gain a better sense of self by better understanding their past and present.

The life story method strongly connects with both decolonization and Pinayism, since many of the core tenets of Pinayism include those of liberation and self-love through
authentic storytelling and the recognition of the multiplicity of the Pilipina American experience. Further, as previously mentioned, decolonization is a “process of reconnecting with the past to understand the present and envision the future” (Strobel in Root, 1997, p. 63). By applying Pinayist and decolonial lenses, typical boundaries of life story interviews can be transcended to explore farther into the past and the future – before and beyond the life of the individual. Root (1997) writes, “The traumas associated with colonization that lasted almost 400 years scarred us all, regardless of our nativity, language, class, or gender. Trauma fragments and fractures the essence of our being and self-knowledge; it disconnects us from each other” (Root, 1997, p. xi). By utilizing the life story interview approach, my hope was that participants would be able to reflect, share, reclaim, and re-envision their stories. Telling stories allowed the individuals, and the community, to be heard, recognized, and acknowledged (Atkinson, 2002). And different from the expectation of life story interviews, I intended to also share about myself and the different defining moments of my life so that the interview space felt more dialogical versus a formal interview. I thought that this would be important because the decolonization and Pinayist frameworks place a significant emphasis on community and how a shared history impacts the creation of the individual and collective narrative as well as healing and liberatory processes (de Jesus, 2005; Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005; Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009).

While purposely framing the study in order to encourage participants to reflect and tell their stories is paramount, it was also important for me to pay attention to the ways in which colonial mentality had shaped their narratives, beginning with their experiences as children through their years in college. The CMS and its five factors provide the structure and language to be able to recognize if or when the thoughts and actions of the participants,
and the influential individuals or communities they interacted with, were behaving in ways that were rooted in colonial mentality. By asking participants to reflect and share their past and present experiences, coupled with utilizing the CMS to analyze our dialogues, I believed I captured a richer and more complete account of the role colonial mentality had played in their lives, and more specifically, in their experiences in higher education. Strobel (2001) shares that "The story of the self contains the narrative of the nation. To tell one’s story is to allow the fragments of consciousness to be sutured and healed so that the Pilipinx story can be told in its wholeness" (p. 70). I hoped for the interviews to be a decolonizing space, one that helped participants to name colonial mentality and make meaning of the past and the relationship with their self in the present – and future.

**Sites**

Two different sites were selected for this study: Sea University and Elite University. I chose these two universities to be the sites of my study because they both have departments that serve Asian American students and support Pilipinx and Pilipinx American student organizations. Additionally, Sea University is a public Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI), while Elite University is a private and predominantly White institution. Sea University is a significantly more racially diverse community than Elite University and enrolls approximately 17,000 students. Elite University’s population is slightly smaller, with a total of about 13,000 students, but is more selective. Professional staff members at both institutions supported me with recruiting participants. Extant scholarship on Pilipinx American college students has often focused on the West Coast so I intentionally chose two sites in New England because I wanted to specifically capture the experience of Pilipina American students attending schools within a
pre-dominantly White region. I also had initially planned to interview participants in-person and on the campus of the institution they are enrolled in but due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted virtually.

**Participant Sampling**

I employed criterion sampling (Creswell, 2012) to recruit Pilipina American undergraduate students. Criterion sampling was an appropriate method to recruit participants for my study because each individual needed to fulfill specific criteria in order to participate in the research study. I was interested in participants who self-identified as Pilipina American, currently enrolled as undergraduates, were between the ages of 18-22, and identified as second-generation immigrants, meaning that they were born and raised in the United States while their parents and/or primary caregivers are immigrants. In the recruitment materials (Appendix A), I did not explicitly state colonial mentality as the primary focus of my study because I did not want participants to potentially think they needed to have in-depth knowledge of the concept and I hoped for it to emerge throughout our dialogues. For this reason, I framed the study by sharing that I wanted to engage with participants who were interested in storytelling about their upbringing and educational experiences, Pilipinx and Pilipinx American history, and decolonizing experiences.

I requested the support of the professional staff members who work in offices that support Asian and Asian American students at both institutions. They helped to publicize my study since they were connected to the Asian American and Pilipinx American student communities. I had hoped to recruit and interview ten participants, five from each site. I asked the staff members distribute recruitment materials such as flyers, physical or electronic, within their Centers and office spaces and to send an email invitation to any
appropriate listserv as well as to the Pilipinx/Pilipinx American student organizations at both institutions. I also personally reached out to the student organizations to introduce myself and my study. Since my recruitment timeline occurred over the summer, I was not able to attend any student organization meetings since they were not actively meeting. At both institutions, my recruitment materials were posted to websites, bulletin boards, and/or social media platforms. The flyers that were distributed displayed a brief description of the study, the criteria required to participate, the level of commitment required to be a part of the study, incentives, and my contact information if they had any questions or were interested in becoming a participant. Due to the pandemic, I did not meet any of the students in-person.

Students who were interested in participating in my study were prompted to email me. I requested each student to complete a screening form (Appendix B) that asked them to share demographic information (i.e., race, ethnicity, gender, pronouns, religion) and academic information (i.e., year in college, their major(s) and minor(s) or interests, career interests). After reviewing the information collected, I invited individuals to participate via email. By having participants fill out a screening form first, I was able to invite students that represented a diversity of experiences. Since I was able to secure a funding source, I was able to provide each student a total of 75 dollars in Target gift cards in three increments of 25 for participating in the study. Each participant received a 25-dollar gift card to Target after the first interview, another 25 dollars following the second interview, and 25 dollars at the conclusion of the community dialogue. Once participants confirmed with me their willingness to participate, I began to schedule the interviews accordingly.

While I had hoped for 10 participants, five from each site, I was only able to recruit seven participants total, six from Sea University and one from Elite University (Table 1).
had not anticipated how challenging recruitment was going to be. I employed snowball sampling to recruit more students, I asked those who were already committed to participating to encourage other individuals or peers they know who may also be interested in participating in the study. I also asked my colleagues at the two institutions to reach out to individuals and encourage them to connect with me. I sent several email reminders and followed up with my colleagues to repost or reshare my study’s details. After about five months and after I felt that I had exhausted my efforts, it was decided that seven participants would be suitable for my study. Interestingly, a handful of the students who were interested in participating identified as 1.5 generation students. 1.5 generation students are those who had been born in the Philippines and immigrated to the United States before they were 13 years old. The study’s description must have resonated with them and given that they had arrived as young children and spent their formative years in the United States, it was determined that they would be eligible to join my study. Another observation to note is that there was significantly more interest at one institution, Sea University, versus the other.
Table 1

Description of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Year in College</th>
<th>Immigrant Generation</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>Senior</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Exercise Science</td>
<td>Sea University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korinne</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>Sea University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vanessa</td>
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<td>Nursing</td>
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<td>Management</td>
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<td>Mila</td>
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<td>Nursing</td>
<td>Sea University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Community Health</td>
<td>Elite University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection and Analysis

Pre-Interview Reflection

After I scheduled an interview date and time with a participant, I provided the following reflection questions prior to the first to our first meeting to support each participant in preparation for our conversation:

1) What does it mean for you to be Pilipina American or Pinay?

2) What has contributed to your understanding of your racial, ethnic, and gender identities?

While I did not request that the participants record their reflections, I did offer it as an option because it may have been helpful for them with remembering their thoughts or with preparing for the interview. Providing the participants with reflection questions hopefully helped to center their thoughts and helped to shape the space that I strived to create. In
addition to providing the reflection questions, I also shared with the participants that our first conversation would be guided by the creation of an individual timeline.

**Individual Interview One and Timeline (90 Minutes)**

Each individual interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. The first interview was guided by an interview protocol (Appendix E) as well as a timeline activity, which essentially was a visual representation of the significant events in the participants’ lives (Adriansen, 2012). As Adriansen (2012) noted, “The timeline method increases our possibilities of seeing events and perceptions of these events within contexts of wider life experiences… we live many lives and by using the timeline method… we can make room for these different lives, for the different stories and their contexts” (p. 43). Inspired by Pinayism, I also believed that this tool was a creative and critical way of expressing one’s narrative and perhaps would allow me to see the events throughout participants’ lives: how they have come to be and who they hope to become. It was also important to note that calling it a timeline may unintentionally imply linearity; however, it was meant to be a method to engage participants in constructing and making meaning of their stories, not to simply capture them chronologically (Adriansen 2012). As we moved through the dialogue, I prompted the participants to recall the responses they already shared in an earlier part of the interview to make connections throughout their life stories.

I understood that sharing with me may be a vulnerable process considering I was a complete stranger and there was a power dynamic between myself and the participants, so I was hopeful that a timeline could be a tangible item to help the participants express themselves. I also hoped that the timeline activity could help the participants set boundaries around what they were comfortable with sharing but, in the same vein, I hoped it would also
serve as a source of courage to reflect critically and share elements of their narratives perhaps in new ways that were unfamiliar to them. While I did not create my own timeline because I wanted to keep the focus entirely on the participants, in an effort to build trust, I shared about myself and my experiences as a fellow Pilipina American and former college student. When appropriate, I shared about my own different life moments and how they have shaped me, and my openness encouraged participants to share more about themselves. I thought that it would be important for me to be vulnerable because working through the potential trauma of colonial mentality can and should be a communal process.

I came prepared with an interview protocol outlining a list of predetermined questions to guide us through the timeline activity and interview. The questions intended to create a more natural and conversational feel. I also had sub-questions that served as additional prompts as a way to encourage each participant to share more about their story. Also, based on their responses and the direction of our conversation, I offered comments and asked follow-up questions to seek clarity or further our conversation. The interview and timeline activity focused on exploring and making meaning of participants’ stories with their families, peers, and experiences in educational and community environments, particularly the messages, behaviors, interactions, and traditions they learned and experienced. I was curious to learn more about how colonial mentality may have been introduced into their lives and how it may have persisted throughout their childhood, from birth to present, and how it may have informed their perception of self and others. Further, it is also important to acknowledge that the creation of individual stories may begin even prior to the participants’ birth, meaning that the timeline can begin even before the date of their birth.
I originally hoped for in-person interviews, but since that was not a possibility, all the interviews were conducted virtually. As guided by Adriansen (2012), I utilized the whiteboard function on Zoom to create their timeline. Prior to beginning our conversation, I shared my screen so that the participant could see the whiteboard. I began by drawing a horizontal line down the middle and as the participant and I engaged in dialogue, I constructed their timeline. Since they were able to watch the process, I welcomed them to provide their thoughts and I edited when necessary. As they responded to the questions, I asked them to share around what year the event(s) occurred or what age they were and mark them on the timeline, in an effort to visualize the multiplicity of stories within their life. I chose to be the one to draw the timeline because I preferred that the participants focus on their responses and our conversation rather than potentially creating a burden to be placed on the participant to learn how to use the whiteboard function or the aesthetics of the timeline. I did not want it to be a distraction, which would have disrupted the original intent of the timeline. Every interview was audio-recorded, and each participant was given a pseudonym.

As seen in the protocol (Appendix E), I began the interview with asking about the participants’ family story – prior to their birth – and then our conversation dove into their early childhood through the present day, and into the future. As we traveled through their life story, I posed questions asking them to reflect upon the responses that they already shared and marked on the timeline and how different moments may have influenced them to evolve over time. For example, I asked the participants to share messages they received in their early childhood years, I indicated it on the timeline, and when we discussed high school or college, I asked them to think back to their earlier memories to see if or how the messages changed or evolved as they aged. I hoped that by having the visual of the timeline, participants were able
to revisit the different life moments and experiences during the interview, especially if they remembered new or different details or wanted to draw connections between life events that contributed to their understanding of their identities.

While conducting this was a new experience for me, I have facilitated similar activities with a number of Asian American college students, having asked them to reflect upon the events and people that have shaped their lives. With the proper preparation, I found that the timeline activity and the accompanying conversation was incredibly rich. The participants were open and authentic and I felt extraordinarily privileged to learn about their stories.

**Individual Interview Two (60-90 Minutes)**

After having dedicated the first interview to learning the participants’ stories, the second interview focused on engaging in a dialogue centered on Pilipinx and Pilipinx American history. Like the first, the second interview was also audio-recorded. During the first interview, I had not explicitly name colonial mentality; however, in the second interview (Appendix F) I spoke more specifically about it, especially if it had not yet emerged. Not only does naming colonial mentality align with the study’s frameworks, it was important to me because I wanted to be able to engage in potentially difficult conversations around how this condition may have shaped the participants’ lives. In addition to conversing about colonial mentality, I also introduced the concept of decolonization as written by Strobel (2001) to explore what the term and process meant to them. Different from the first interview space, which focused on their stories, I want to offer excerpts of literature and history (Appendix G) to the participants as an opportunity for them to explore the origin, history, and
manifestations of colonial mentality and what this all may mean for them, their life story, their educational experiences, and the greater Pilipina American community.

I saved each participant’s timeline and reintroduced it into the second interview and though it did not serve as the anchor the conversation, it was meant to help the participants if needed with connecting literature and history to their lived experiences. For example, one passage was taken from a Philippine history book describing how the ways of life and behaviors of indigenous women were perceived to be immoral and unacceptable by the Spanish. Having the timeline available allowed for the participant to draw, if any, connections between the colonial narratives and their life experiences. Similar to the first interview, I strived to create a space that felt like a dialogue as opposed to a formal question-and-answer format. As the participant responded to my questions, I asked follow-up questions and shared my own reactions, hoping that we were able to share knowledge and learn from each other’s experiences. It was important for me to also be prepared to share my own reflections and experiences in an effort to build trust and connectedness with the participants. In alignment with the frameworks of decolonization and Pinayism, I desired to be in community with each of the participants so that we could collectively (de)construct our life stories and work towards liberation through the exchange of narratives and knowledge.

**Bayanihan Community Dialogue (60-90 Minutes)**

Bayanihan, a Tagalog word that translates to the spirit of community, is a term I grew up hearing often. I specifically can recall different events that our local Pilipinx organization hosted and using the word bayanihan as part of the name of the gathering or to help shape the energy of the space. I found a lot of meaning through my experiences with other Pilipinx and Pilipinx Americans and my hope is that by holding a community dialogue with the
participants, they too were able to experience a feeling of bayanihan. Drawing inspiration from Pinayism and Pinayist pedagogy, I invited all the participants to dialogue with one another in a group setting. Tintiangco-Cubales and Sacramento (2009) write that the creation of communities that both humanize and liberate Pilipina women is central to Pinayism and that spaces of Pinayist pedagogy become places of healing for both facilitator and student. Holding a group space for Pilipina Americans hopefully allowed them to connect their personal life stories to a greater, maybe even global, community life story. The goal for the Bayanihan community dialogue was to allow the participants to connect with each other and their narratives, develop a sense of collective power, gain further inspiration to move through their own decolonization journeys, and commit to empowering others and giving back to their communities.

The participants did have the potential to know each other but, operating under the assumption that they would all be meeting each other for the first time, I anticipated that it might have been a challenge to facilitate a group dialogue if the participants were not comfortable with being open with each other. To help with the potential discomfort or anxiety, I started with centering the conversation on their experience of being a participant thus far, followed by reintroducing the excerpts of Pilipinx and Pilipinx American history that had been discussed in the second interview. I thought it would be helpful to return to something familiar to ease into the dialogue, but thankfully, the participants were energetic and engaging. The Bayanihan space was intended to be an incredible and unique opportunity for storytelling, learning, growth, decolonization, and liberation. I asked the participants to honor each other’s story by not sharing the narratives outside of the Bayanihan, space but
encouraged them to lead boldly with what they had learned about themselves and their community from the conversations that had taken place.

Regarding the overall flow of the dialogue, after reintroducing myself and thanking the participants for committing time to gather as a community, I shared the purpose and goals of the space as well as elements of Pinayism to frame the space. I described to the participants that even though I had guiding questions (Appendix H), I hoped for our time together to be a free-flowing dialogue where each participant had opportunities to share. I wanted the focus of the dialogue to be on their stories, building connections with each other, and naming the strengths of our community as Pinays. I also strived to be cognizant of how often participants were sharing to ensure that those who were more introverted could also have the opportunity to contribute. As the researcher and facilitator, I acknowledged that there was a power dynamic, but I too participated and shared about myself when appropriate and answered any questions the participants had.

Data Management and Analysis

All individual interviews and community dialogues were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. I used Trint, a transcription service, to transcribe each audio file. As soon as I was able to after conducting an interview, I tried to organize and begin analyzing data so that I could continue to familiarize myself with the data and prepare for upcoming interviews. I kept a notebook with field notes, a written record that accounted for my notes, memos, and questions. As encouraged by Terrell (2016), starting analysis early helped with identifying other topics or questions I wanted to potentially explore in the subsequent interviews. I continued to write my own reflections as I reviewed transcripts and throughout the duration of the study, I took notes to track any initial emerging themes or ideas and
formulated any sub-questions I wanted to ask in the following interviews. This iterative process allowed me to have a more thorough understanding of the data. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain, “Without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in sheer volume of material that needs to be processed” (p. 197). When all the interviews had been completed, having already done a preliminary review, even if brief, of the data throughout the entirety of the data collection process, it helped me to feel more comfortable and familiar with the data prior to further analysis. Further, it also helped me to decide how I wanted to present the findings.

**Three-Dimensional Space Approach to Restorying**

To present the findings of this study, I decided that in addition to a thematic analysis I also wanted to present the narratives of two participants, Jojo and Korinna. I wanted to highlight their rich stories so that readers have the opportunity and privilege to experience their narratives more fully and intricately. I want readers to learn more nuanced details of their stories, how colonial mentality may have informed their lives, and how they engaged in decolonizing experiences. Restorying is the process of gathering stories, analyzing them for key elements, and then reconstructing them to place them in a chronological sequence (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). I felt that restorying was an appropriate analysis approach because when the participants were recalling memories, I noticed that it did not occur linearly, and restorying provided me the guidance and structure in order to present their narratives in a more seamless and robust manner.

To best capture and present the fullness and richness of the participants’ narratives, I drew from Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) three-dimensional space approach when organizing and constructing their stories. As suggested by the name of the approach, it has
three aspects: interaction, continuity, and situation. The interaction element looks at both the personal and social, and by reading the transcripts I noted their personal experiences as well as the ways they engaged with others. The aspect of continuity is critical for narrative research. It refers to the past, present, and future experiences within the narratives. In this approach and in the context of my study, peering into past to remember earlier moments and feelings, followed by connecting them to the present-day experiences, helped participants to look forward to what the future may be. Lastly, situation looks at the context, time, and place situated in physical settings with participants’ points of view.

_Narrative in the Context of Discovery_

In addition to presenting Jojo and Korinne’s narratives in chapter 4, chapter 5 will illustrate the findings of the thematic analysis. In the context of discovery (Reichenbach, 1938 as cited in McAdams, 2012), researchers investigate narrative accounts for patterns, themes, and images to understand and interpret the lives of the participants. A particular phenomenon is explored in detail in order to develop new ways of describing and understanding the phenomenon (McAdams, 2012). The phenomenon to be explored and interpreted is typically a “set of psychologically rich and detailed autobiographical stories derived from interviews of people who present some type of problem or question for the researcher” (p. 17). The researcher’s intent is to engage with the research problem or question(s) by examining the participants’ stories in depth in order to discover psychological themes that are drawn from extended passages from the transcripts. McAdams compares the process of discovery as similar to grounded theory methods in the sense that the themes are “grounded in the data of the texts themselves” (p. 18).
This method of analysis resonated with me and how I had envisioned examining the experiences of the Pilipina American students I interviewed. I initially approached each of the transcripts with openness, curiosity, and without specific boundaries so that I could organically discover themes that were striking, reoccurring, and revealing (Alexander, 1988 as cited in McAdams 2012). After several rounds of reading each of the transcripts and taking note of emergent key findings, I then applied the five factors of the Colonial Mentality Scale (CMS) (David & Okazaki, 2006b) to focus my analysis. The five factors are: within-group discrimination, physical characteristics, colonial debt, cultural shame and embarrassment, and internalized cultural/ethnic inferiority. Within-group discrimination is characterized by the tendency to discriminate against less-Americanized Pilipinuxs; physical characteristics is defined by the belief that Pilipinux traits are less desirable than White traits; colonial debt is the tendency to feel grateful for colonization and feeling as though something is owed to the colonizers; cultural shame and embarrassment is defined by feeling shame toward the Pilipinux identity or culture; and internalized inferiority is when Pilipinuxs view their culture as lesser than in comparison to the United States. I wanted to gain a more concrete and deeper understanding of how colonial mentality surfaced in the life stories of the participants, and the CMS’ factors provided structure, direction, and a method to organize the study’s findings. Since it was my hope to also provide an opportunity for the participants to not only be able to name colonial mentality, I utilized the decolonization framework (Strobel, 2001) and the three stages, Naming, Reflection, and Action, to guide and capture how participants acknowledged and grappled with their identities, their reflections and reactions to engaging with new literature, and the ways they took action to resist colonial mentality.
Establishing trustworthiness for qualitative studies is a function of four different factors (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility ensures that the study’s results are believable from the perspective of participants in the study (Terrell, 2016). There are a number of ways to establish credibility and I did so by member checking and reflecting upon my commentary as the researcher. I shared a draft of the findings chapters with all of the participants so they could provide their thoughts on whether or not my interpretations as the researcher represented their narratives accurately and authentically. I also shared the two narratives with each of the respective participants for their feedback. This is important because even though the interviews and community dialogue were audio-recorded and transcribed, I needed to ensure that what was said matched their intentions and my interpretations. While I did receive responses from half of the participants, I did not receive any feedback requesting that I adjust the chapters.

Transferability is defined as the extent to which the results of the study can be transferable to other participants and institutions (Terrell, 2016). I am clear and descriptive regarding the details and boundaries of the study, such as, but not limited to, the number of participants, site information, the data collection methods, and results. I took extra care with interpreting and reporting the findings and discussing the implications so that readers will have an apt understanding and be able to apply the study and its results to other contexts in ways that make most sense to them.

Dependability refers to the replicability of the results if the study were to be repeated “in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants” (Shenton, 2004,
p. 71). Similar to establishing transferability, I carefully detail the frameworks that inform the study, the data collection methods, how data were managed and analyzed, and my reflections throughout the duration of the study.

Lastly, confirmability refers to the importance of my findings reflecting the participants’ experiences as closely as possible (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). It is important for me to present “an account of the participants’ worldviews as honestly and fully as possible” (p. 53). As I mentioned, I shared drafts with the participants for them to review. And since my study is designed with three interview spaces that are constructed differently, I hoped that this would allow for a level engagement and relationship-building between the participants and myself in order to gain a more holistic understanding of their experiences versus just one interview. I engaged in my own ongoing reflection process around my most salient identities as a second-generation Pilipina American. I acknowledge that I have shared identities with the participants, which may provide the opportunity to build trust and connection, but it may also be a source of bias. I strived to be thoughtful around how this would affect how they engaged with me and how I interacted with them. I am still learning how colonial mentality has defined, and continues to define, my life, and I aimed to be thoughtful with the questions and responses to ensure that I did not sway participants in any particular direction and that they are able to share their stories authentically.

**Limitations**

As with any study, there are limitations. The study was geographically and institutionally limited. I recruited participants from two different four-year institutions in the state of Massachusetts within the New England Region of the United States. Space and location certainly play a role in shaping Asian American students’ experiences (Chan, 2018).
and with Massachusetts being a predominantly White state, it likely shapes the institutions and the ways the participants process and navigate their identities and experiences in both institutional contexts. While having two institutions may be considered a limitation, the findings still provide insight into the educational experiences of Pilipina Americans in specific educational contexts. As mentioned, only one student at Elite University participated in the study, and while the institution as a whole was not a main focus or element in the study, it is still important to note the imbalance between the number of participants from each university. Additionally, not every individual who has roots in the Philippines or the archipelago will identify as Pilipinx, and all communities are affected by colonialism differently, namely Indigenous communities (David, 2013). There were no participants in this study that identified as Indigenous. This could have been due to a variety of factors, but I recognize my own positionality as a researcher and that how my study was designed likely did not draw interest from Indigenous individuals in the same way it did for the students who did participate in the study.

I also acknowledge that some of the experiences that the participants shared may not have been a result of colonial mentality or the participants may experience varying levels of consciousness around colonial mentality. They shared challenges that shaped them, but not all were likely due to colonial mentality or there may have been a lack of awareness around the concept. An example could be if a participant chose not to share about the difference in gender roles and expectations between herself and a sibling or relative because she did not find it to be an issue or perhaps attributed it to something else. As I noted in the literature review, the lives of many Pilipinxs and Pilipinx Americans can be shaped by colonial mentality without recognizing it. Even with the study’s elements to support participants to
reflect critically, like the timeline, interview questions, and history excerpts, I know that there may still be gaps in their learning and awareness and my own understanding of colonial mentality.
CHAPTER 4
LIFE STORIES

Island woman rise, walang makakatigil.
—Us, 2017, Ruby Ibarra

What motivated me from the very beginning of my doctoral journey was the desire to center Pilipina American student stories. Since the narratives of Pilipina American students are often forgotten, misunderstood, or neglected, and because what is known about us is described through the lens of the colonizers, I take this chapter as an opportunity to elevate their voices and honor their life stories. In this chapter, I present the narratives of two participants, Jojo and Korinne, to allow for readers to experience a richer, fuller, and more nuanced understanding of their stories and the context in which they are told.

My study is framed by Pinayism (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005), Strobel’s (2001) decolonization framework, and the CMS (David & Okazaki, 2006b). Pinayism carves a space to honor the Pilipina American experience at the intersection of racism, sexism, imperialism, decolonization, consciousness, and liberation. Inspired by Pinayism and linking it with the decolonization framework, it was my hope to provide the participants the unique and intentional opportunity to share their stories in a way that they never had before. I aimed to guide us through conversations that were informed by the stages of the decolonization framework (Strobel, 2001): Naming, Reflection, and Action. I utilize the three-dimensional
space approach to restory and present Jojo and Korinne’s narratives. This approach, coupled with how the study was conceptually framed, supported me in weaving together the participant’s past experiences, with their current reflections, and vision for the future. And while Jojo and Korinne’s experiences cannot be seen as reflective of all Pinays, I believe their stories are able to convey the complexity of the Pilipina American identity and student experience, especially when considering how other facets in addition to race and ethnicity, gender identity and expression, religion, and colonial mentality cross. I chose Jojo and Korinne’s narratives for a number of reasons, but most of all, it aligned with the narrative approach used in this study (Atkinson, 2002), and I wanted to present two different narratives that highlight their unique journeys and their experiences with family, educational spaces, colonial mentality, knowledge of history, and decolonization.

I chose Jojo’s narrative because she identifies as gay and Catholic, which challenges the conservative and oppressive foundations of Catholicism. She is a 1.5 generation Pilipina American and a senior in college and she talked about her how her family has been supportive of her career goals and queer identity. Jojo also talked about her Pilipina American identity in an intentional way. I felt that she was curating her identity in a way that has allowed her to be purposeful with which values she wanted to ascribe to, no matter if they are considered Pilipinx or American. She is also the singular participant who shared that a close friend that she grew up with identifies as Igorot and through that relationship, Jojo had been able to have a different understanding of identity, indigeneity, colonialism, and colonial mentality. Jojo also described her love for her family and how they serve as a motivation to succeed in her career. Korinne’s and Jojo’s stories are quite different from each other. Though Korinne is also 1.5 generation, she came to the United States when she was
about nine years old, she was primarily raised by her mother, and she also has a brother whereas Jojo has three sisters. Korinne also talked about her relationship with and perspectives of religion, and that she identified as atheist, and that this was a result of her questioning Catholicism among many of the other beliefs that had been presented to her throughout her childhood. When talking about her experiences in college and a sense of community, Korinne was one of the participants that shared that she did not get involved with other Pilipinx students and there were times that she did not want to focus on her Pilipina identity. I was also drawn to the way Korinne named or grappled with colonial mentality even if in subtle ways, but she was also very forward about questioning the status quo and believing that our future as a community can actually be different from generations past. Her resistance felt significant to me given that when Pilipinxs are discussed in literature, the dominant narrative is around how we have been colonized, with no substantial mention of how Pilipinxs have resisted.

The Life Story of Jojo

Jojo exhibited a calm, captivating, and vibrant energy throughout our conversation and it felt apparent to me that she entered into our space with an open and curious mind and heart. While Jojo has spent the majority of her life in the Boston area, she was born in the Philippines and moved to the United States when she was just two years old. Jojo’s mother is a registered nurse and her family’s immigration to Massachusetts was sparked by her securing a job. They coincidentally moved into an apartment complex with other Pilipinx families, where many of the mothers were also nurses, and Jojo became friends with the other children and families.
Jojo talked about the opportunity to move to the U.S. due to her mother’s career and becoming a part of the Pilipinx community in their apartment complex and feeling lucky and a sense of gratitude to have experienced a significant life-changing series of events alongside others who were navigating similar challenges. Curious to know more about her entrance into her awareness and understanding of her identities, particularly because of her young transition from the Philippines to the United States, I asked her if she could recall some of her earliest memories. Jojo vividly shared that when she was two years old, she began to notice the differences between herself and others and what this recognition felt like for her:

I realize, like, all these people [the Pilipino families in the apartment complex] all look like me, like our parents speak the same language. We always have parties together. That was when I was probably like two. That's what I remember being aware of. And also, when I went to elementary school, I look different from the other kids and I realized, I also speak a different language than them and everything and trying to pick up English, which was pretty easy because I was still two. But I did have to learn English still. And I came into the U.S. not knowing any [English] and just knowing Tagalog... And I definitely forgot a lot of Tagalog. I still speak it, but it's very Americanized, which is kind of embarrassing because I have the American accent…So that's, that's when I remember oh, I'm Filipino, I'm different.

It is pretty incredible that at such a young age, Jojo began to have an understanding of herself by recognizing the similarities with the families who also lived at the apartment complex, but when she started attending school, she also started to notice differences. When I asked her more about her racial identity, she spoke about the complexities of her life
experiences and how the unique nature of growing up in the United States shaped her Pilipino identity:

So [I] definitely [identify as] Filipino American, I was born in the Philippines and then came to the U.S. when I was two years old, so I think the American part definitely comes from me being raised here and culturally being a little more American than Filipino just because I was raised in that environment. But I'm still very attached to the Filipino side in the sense that, my parents speak Tagalog to me, make me know certain things about my culture, like, have me visit the Philippines every few years, I feel very attached to my family in the Philippines… So also, culturally, I think my values are split pretty half and half between American values and Filipino values, because I value both pretty equally. There are some Filipino cultural values that I think are really good and some American values that I think are really good. And I try to combine them because I feel like in both cultures there are more negative aspects of the culture that I try to steer clear of. Like, for example, in the Philippines, it's kind of homophobic, I'm gay, so that, that kind of means a lot to me. At least I'm lucky that my parents are accepting of it. But a lot of my friends' parents, my Filipino friends’, parents are like not accepting of that. So I steer clear of cultural values that, that I don't see as positive or uplifting and also some other aspects of Filipino culture that I think just are not in line with who I am.

Jojo also described situations where her mannerisms aligned more with U.S. cultural norms. For example, she noted:

A lot of my cousins say, oh, Jojo, you're too straightforward. If you were in the Philippines, you would easily offend someone by saying that. So, that's where my
American side comes in because I'm very, very straightforward and to the point. And I guess in the Philippines, people tend to be different, not everyone of course, but that's just [inaudible] the trend, I guess so yeah those are sort of the more negatives.

I found her reflection to be incredibly relatable, thoughtful, and intricate. This curation of identity as a Pilipina American really struck me and left me wanting to dive a bit deeper into the question of – how did this all come to be? From her lived experiences, Jojo decided that she would not ascribe to the elements of both Pilipino and American cultures that did not align with her authentic self. When I asked Jojo about her sources of learning, she, perhaps not surprisingly, said that while growing up, her family was the most influential when it came to her understanding of Pilipinx values, and her learning of American culture and values mostly came from her peers. Jojo talked about how her parents emphasized caring for each other and in particular for her younger sister, and Jojo being the middle child, her oldest sister was also expected to care for both younger siblings. And in addition to caring for their family in their household, there was also a clear expectation to extend support to their family living in the Philippines:

They would call [family in the Philippines] every week to see how everyone's doing. They would tell me to, they would get me on the phone and be like, talk to your grandma. And I was like, hi [lola]. Definitely things like that taught me to value family and just how my parents really gave their all for me and my siblings, like my mom worked night shifts and really struggled. They struggled to build wealth. Well, we're not wealthy, but they struggled to, just because we came here [to the United States], like without a car or anything. So, we relied on our friends for that. So [I saw] just how they really worked hard for me and my sisters. And now we have a house
and everything and seeing how they kind of built their life from the ground up to get
to where they are, for the sake of their kids and, left their family behind. So we could
have better lives. I was like, wow, that's, as I got older, I was like, wow, that was a
very big sacrifice they made for their kids. So it made me want to value family too
and to give back to my parents, like when I'm older…

At multiple points during our conversation, Jojo shared with me how appreciative she was of
her parents. Jojo spoke lovingly about her mother and father who worked countless hours to
support their family. She, like many of her Pilipinx peers, felt thankful and indebted to their
parents and it was evident that being able to care for her parents is a significant form of
motivation for her to succeed in college and in her career. And interestingly, from what Jojo
shared with me, it seemed as though there was a mutual and negative perception of American
culture among her Pilipinx friends when it came to caring for aging parents:

[My] Filipino friends, I think growing up, we kind of developed the same kind of
mindset where we all really wanted to succeed in our careers so we could provide for
ourselves and our parents when they grow old. One thing we don't like about some
aspects of American culture is some, some families kind of just like throw their, their
parents and their elderly into retirement homes and let them just sit there 'til they die.
And like, I think that's really sad. And I would never want to do that to my parents
and neither would my Filipino friends. We all really love our parents and love them
for all the sacrifices they made. So we want to have good careers, provide for them.
So I think I get that from my friends too, because they're all very motivated and
school and like in work and everything. And it's nice being around people who think
like that. Yeah. So they shape that about me.
However, Jojo also talked about values that she perceived to be American that she thought to be positive and that she learned from her friends:

I think American values, I mainly got those from my friends. Yeah, it's hard to think off the bat what American values I have. But like, I just know that American values also teach you to think individualistically, follow your dreams, do the job you want…

Like people always say, follow your dreams, do what fulfills you. And that's how I am now… Just like the individualistic side and being able to speak straightforwardly, again, I don't know if that's actually American. From what I've heard, it seems like it.

And while Jojo did not distinguish the racial identities of all of her peers, it is from her social circles where she learned of the possibility to focus on herself, which is seemingly perceived as inherently American, versus having a prioritized focus on family or community.

Jojo also shared with me that she identifies as a woman and gay and the way she has expressed her identities has leaned toward being more masculine than feminine. Throughout her childhood, she remembered that she would cry when her mother wanted to tie her hair because Jojo thought it would be too girly. Jojo also recalled her mother asking why she would not wear dresses, but Jojo preferred to wear pants because they had pockets and they felt more boyish. She also liked to play with her peers who were boys as well. She often felt out of place and would question herself given her varied gender expression and because her interests were often at odds with what girls and women are socialized to enjoy. But now, much like how she approached her Pilipina American identity, she liked that she felt an affinity for both the masculine and feminine, that she did not need to fit into a norm. Further, Jojo talked about her two sisters and how she noticed the differences between their upbringing versus another Pilipinx family with three sons. Jojo and her sisters often got into
quarrels with their father about how restricted they felt and now, as adults, her father had become more open about why he was so strict with them, noting that because they were girls, he was afraid that they would be in harm’s way. However, he was not as clear about what the dangers were and why.

Jojo mentioned how Pilipinx culture is homophobic, which I know is mainly due to how devoutly Catholic many Filipinos are, and when I asked her about her religious identity, she told me that though she did question her faith when she was grappling with her sexuality, she nonetheless, still identified as Catholic and had faith in God:

[I] have faith in God and everything, which also helps me because I like to pray and stuff especially when I feel lost in life and unsure or really hurt about something. I feel it's very soothing for, for me to pray to God and just have somewhere to have this feeling that there's some sort of guidance in my life, even though it doesn't feel like it sometimes.

Further, Jojo talked with me about her parents and how supportive they have been, especially knowing that being gay is not always accepted by Filipinos as a whole:

My parents aren't hardcore Catholic. Like I said [earlier in our conversation], my dad said, oh, I'm Catholic, but I'm also educated because when I was asking him, wouldn't you be hesitant to accept my sexuality, since you were educated in priesthood and everything? And he is like, no, I'm Catholic, but, again, I'm also educated and I know where to deviate from those beliefs and in order to be a good human being and just accept people as they are. So I really appreciate that about my parents. And, but they definitely do encourage me to have faith in God…
I was overjoyed to learn that her parents, particularly her father who had spent some time in seminary, loved her and supported her to be her truest self. And while she was able to say that she had a relationship with God, it was not always easy to find spaces where she felt like she could exist authentically and nurture her religious identity. She shared with me that though she attended a church in her town, she had negative experiences with a student-led group on campus:

I did join this [Christian] club at Sea University, Christians on campus. I don't know if you've heard of it, but I, we did Bible studies and stuff. And we talk to each other about our Christian faith. And then I made friends with the people and I realized that they believe that being gay was sinful. So it was kind of tough for me emotionally being in that kind of environment where I realized that these people who I thought were my friends, well, I think they still would be, I think they're still good people. But just the fact that they believe that something outside of my control is sinful and something about me is sinful, that was pretty hurtful… But I still really do believe in God and want to see the relationship between homosexuality and Christianity differently as I grow up.

Jojo’s relationship with her Catholic identity had evolved over time and, at the time of our interview, she remained positive and hopeful about envisioning a different future for Catholicism and sexuality.

I was also interested in learning more about Jojo’s experiences in academic spaces, particularly any formative classroom moments or individuals that helped to shape her understanding of herself. Reflecting on her years as a young student in grade school, similar to what she shared about her peer group and learning Filipino and American values, it was
not necessarily her teachers or the curriculum that were informative, rather it was the realization that she felt different from others:

I feel like I don't, I don't think my teachers really contributed to me feeling my sense of identity as a Filipino. I just went to school because I thought it was because it was something I had to do. I definitely like school, definitely formed a lot of [my] personality and my habits and everything. But I don't think it affected my identity as a Filipina, maybe my friendships with kids in school, because that's where I kind of realized how I was different from them, and how our parents raised us differently and the different culture values.

But when we began conversing about her high school experiences, Jojo recalled a memory of an English class assignment that allowed her to reflect on her story and identity. Her English teacher asked Jojo and her class to reflect on a childhood memory and select a photo of that memory and describe what was happening. Jojo chose a photo of herself when she first arrived in the United States as a two-year-old, when she was living in the first apartment. In the photo it was snowing, and she was wearing a winter coat. In describing the photo, Jojo shared:

I reflected on what I felt in that moment and coming to the States for the first time and how it was really hard on my grandmother when I left because she had been raising me that whole time. It was only two years but she grew very attached to me because she knew me as a baby, and my aunt too. So, in that picture, I think I still had some of those feelings because it was still fresh in my mind. In the essay I mentioned how my mom told me this story that I personally don't remember. But she remembers quite clearly when, when we were flying to the States to move here and we were
leaving the Philippines for good, like I said, and I called my grandma, before we got on the plane. And I said to her, in Tagalog, Lola, when are we, when are we going to go back to your house to take me home? And then my grandma cried because she was like, oh, they're moving, and I didn't realize we were going to be gone. Assignments like that made me reflect on my past and everything and what it meant to come to the States and everything and all the emotional attachments and difficulties that came along with it and just how my teachers kind of made me feel comfortable with my identity.

In addition to talking about how the assignment was a unique opportunity for her to reflect and share about moving to the United States, Jojo went on to talk about the racial and ethnic diversity of her high school environment and how the context likely influenced her teacher’s attitude and pedagogy:

> My classes were diverse, there are other Asians and other ethnicities. And they [the teachers] treated us all equally. And, of course, they, they kind of encouraged us to speak about our heritage and feel comfortable with ourselves and not judge each other because Lowell is pretty diverse. And I went to Lowell High, so it's, there's four thousand kids at that school and they're all different races. So our teachers were very understanding of different family issues, cultural needs and things like that. So yeah, I guess that's how my educational experiences affected my sense of identity and my culture.

I really enjoyed listening to Jojo speak of this specific memory from high school. During her recollection, I could feel the sense of affirmation she experienced from engaging in this assignment and it made me think about the significant role teachers can play in identity
development. I asked her if she learned about Pilipinx or Pilipinx American history throughout her lifetime as a student and she noted that there had only been brief moments of the Philippines being mentioned and, whenever it occurred, she experienced a fleeting feeling of excitement and longing to know more:

[The Philippines was mentioned] only through brief, brief stories and world history and in whatever ways Filipinos affected American history because [in] world history I learned that story of Magellan [who had] navigated the world. And then he, he came to the Philippines and I think he died there. And there is a cross there dedicated to him now. I learned about how the U.S. tried to annex the Philippines and how, well, I don't exactly know what happened, but I just know they tried to take over and everything. And in world history, I also learned a little bit about how the Spanish conquered the Philippines, but nothing too in depth about Indigenous cultures and how the Philippines was before the Spanish came over because, that's something I don't know anything about. One of my childhood friends is Igorot, which is Indigenous Filipinos, before the Spanish came. They lived in the mountains, which is why I, they weren't able to be conquered by the Spanish. So, I kind of hear about Indigenous culture through her, which is really interesting. But other than that, I don't think I really got a good picture of Filipino history and colonialism from school... I was always kind of sad that I didn't know more about my country's history or anything about the Philippines, even as it is now a place where things are. I didn't know about Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao until my friend told me a year ago, I didn't know that's what the islands are called.
It was evident that Philippine history was not a significant presence in Jojo’s curriculum and not a priority for her teachers, and the limited knowledge she acquired beyond a classroom setting was from peers. Her friend who was Igorot provided an additional perspective since not all of the islands were invaded by outsiders and Indigenous populations continue to exist yet are typically overshadowed in conversations and in literature about the Philippines, oftentimes as though they are communities of the past. Jojo’s experience in college was very similar to high school, meaning the opportunities were nonexistent and learning was self-led:

I didn't see many classes that really taught about [or] that emphasized Filipino culture. … I did write this paper in my freshman English class about mental health and Asian women. And Asian women tend to not seek treatment for their mental health. And there are some things I discovered in that research about Filipino women specifically. Like how they're pressured to be both successful in their career and in their family life. So there's that pressure to do both roles, which are very demanding. So when they fail to find a balance between career and family, they may develop depression and anxiety. So that's one area where I was able to find a little bit more about [the] Filipino, the Filipino American experience. But other than that, there were no classes I could take on like our culture or anything specifically…I wish I could have taken a course on, Filipino American history [while] growing up at some point, I wish there was something like that available so I could know more about where I'm from and everything.

Jojo shared that she would have taken courses if those opportunities actually existed in college, but the lack of options in addition to the rigidity of pursuing a science degree
prevented her from exploring courses outside of her plan of study. I was also interested to know if the student organization was a place where Jojo could go to get connected with fellow Pilipinx students and explore or learn about herself and the community. Unfortunately, the student organization was not what she hoped for or what she needed, and she did not end up becoming an active member of the group. I am glad she was able to decide for herself that it was not the place for her. It also goes to show that sharing similar salient identities does not always mean that a space will be able to provide for everyone. If not for classes or the student-led spaces, it seemed like there were no viable options to pursue.

I wanted to know more about Jojo’s experience and her thought process when choosing her major or potential career path, given that there is often a pressure to pursue certain jobs, mainly those that presumably are lucrative to provide financial stability. She shared that she wanted to seek a career in healthcare, having been influenced by her mother who is a nurse and that becoming a physician was her initial goal. But with some additional thought, she decided that physical therapy would be a more viable career and would require less schooling while still providing an avenue for her to financial stability and to help others. However, her feelings began to change as time progressed during her college experience. Jojo realized that her interests and passion were actually in business and finance, but with the academic demands of being a science major, she felt committed to completing the degree. Deviating to another major did not feel like a possibility. Since it was too late to switch, Jojo pursued other ways to learn about her interests. She read numerous books about investing, finance, and real estate and also talked with individuals in the field.

Inspired by a text that she read that encourages seeking those who are knowledgeable and successful in her field of interest, Jojo told me of a time when she called a Pilipino real
estate agent, a person she did not know, to seek their perspectives and advice. After leaving a voicemail, to her surprise, the real estate agent called her back. As Jojo noted: “So it's like, it's things like that where you never know what'll happen when you reach out to people and a lot can happen when you just ask and take the initiative. And so I like doing that. I like finding out more information about business and finance things and all the things I can learn when I seek that knowledge, like through books or mentors and just the nature of investing.” Despite feeling nervous to call someone she did not know, she pushed through the fear. I appreciated her willingness to take charge of her learning, her courage, and vulnerability as well as her naming her desire to pursue a different path. And since she was pivoting careers but was initially interested in a career in science or medicine, I asked Jojo if her parents had expected her or pressured her to pursue a career in healthcare. She shared:

   My parents, they didn't force any kind of career path onto me, which could happen to other Asian kids, like I know some whose parents wanted them to do a certain career. But my parents were always like, “do whatever makes you happy.” ... I want to pursue what I want, and I value my independence too. And as much as I value what my parents want, I still want to do what's best for my life as long as it's not harming them, of course.

   Her parents placed trust in her to figure it out for herself and I could feel Jojo’s sense of gratefulness and appreciation for her parents’ support. I felt joy in that moment, knowing that Jojo was free to be in pursuit of her dreams. Jojo also asked me about my own story since I had briefly mentioned that I too graduated from college with a degree in science, but did not end up applying to medical school. She was also curious to know what made me change directions, how it felt, and how I navigated my decision-making processes, especially
now that I was many years beyond college and well into my career. I told her that I get this question a lot, particularly from Asian American students who are experiencing a similar crossroads like Jojo. And like Jojo, when I realized that perhaps science or medicine was not for me, I felt committed to finishing the degree program because I was past my second year of college and, if I were to change majors, it would have extended my stay past the traditional four years and my scholarship would not cover past that. My then 18-year-old self did not or could not imagine another path beyond science or medicine, but my unexpected and transformative experience in college allowed me to envision the possibilities. I shared with Jojo that it felt very scary and ambiguous to chart a completely different path but, deep in my gut, it felt right. I was following what I was passionate about and what felt would be the most meaningful for me. I told Jojo that I did not have everything figured out then and to this day, I am still figuring it all out. When our conversation began, I could not have predicted how our narratives might overlap given that Jojo and I were strangers to one another. Jojo so openly shared her story with me and we connected over our shared affirmation and encouragement of each other to pursue what we are truly passionate about.

Lastly, I asked Jojo what makes her feel proud. After pausing to reflect, her poetic response expressed a love for her authentic self, her family, and community:

I'm proud that I can call myself an Asian American and like how I said in the beginning, I can pick and choose the best aspects of both cultures…because I identify as both Filipino and American. So I can kind of choose the good parts, or what I think are the good parts of Filipino culture, and take away and not adopt the toxic parts that I, I think are negative, and same thing with the American culture and just integrate them both. I'm proud that I consider myself kind of brave because of how I came out
and everything… I was really scared to come out [to] my parents. But now that I did, my life is so much better. So I'm proud of how I came to terms with that part of my identity. I'd say I'm proud that I learned to really recognize my parents and all that they do for me and my sisters. And I'm proud that I’m the kind of person who can appreciate that and have this really, really strong desire to give back to them because I really love them and want to take care of them when they're old… I'm also proud to be, or at least what I think to be, I'm proud that I'm a good sister, I'm proud that, my little sister looks up to me. I can be that kind of role model for her to model after and be responsible and everything and mature…I'm really proud that I value relationships and my Filipino relationships, especially I still treasure my childhood friends and make the effort to stay in touch with them and staying in touch with them helps me stay grounded [in] my Filipino identity…And I just love seeing them at Filipino parties and bonding over the culture and everything and our struggles. And I'm proud that I still stayed in touch with my Filipino culture, even though it can be a lot of pressure in America to conform to a lot of the American values and kind of abandon the Filipino values. I'm proud I still really value my family and my heritage.

All that Jojo has experienced in her life has contributed to who she is now and how she will continue to write her life story. As our dialogue came to a close, we talked about our futures, both as individuals and as a community. Jojo noted:

I think it's interesting to see how this new [Pilipinx American] generation will grow up and how it'll differ, how it'll differ from our upbringing. Like second generation. One point five generation…I feel like it's really nice that we can pass on these things
to them, that we learn from the mistakes of our parents and previous generations, and
kind of do our best to have them grow up in a more open kind of environment.
I wholeheartedly appreciate Jojo’s reflection on the possibilities of the future, that we have
the potential to be different from the past. We do not have to accept what has always been
and that we have the opportunity to shape our futures. In many ways, it was the same for me
since even though I did not have the chance to take courses on the Philippines or Pilipinx
American history, what feels different now is that students have other ways to seek learning
and community.

I offered the opportunity for Jojo to ask me questions and she wanted to know more
about my experience as a mother raising children. She was interested to know more about
how I intend to raise them and if it will be different from my upbringing. And I think this was
the first time I shared about my experience as a mother with a younger Pinay. Her question
felt like such an incredible opportunity for me to reflect, allowing me a moment to think
about how motherhood has changed me and how I hope to raise my children. I shared with
her that I am figuring out motherhood day by day. Every time I feel like I am getting into
some kind of groove, I am confronted by new challenges. I strive to be critical and
intentional with everything I do and say to and with my children. And I also acknowledged
that my capacity to be intentional with my parenting style is an incredible privilege. I have
the knowledge and resources to talk about race, power, privilege, feminism, and the list goes
on. Like Jojo, I too want to confront the toxic values that have been passed on
intergenerationally so that my children have the freedom to be themselves. Our conversation
was rich, and I appreciated our time together.
The Life Story of Korinne

Korinne shared with me that she was excited to be a participant particularly because she had never seen a study quite like mine. While she had seen a variety of recruitment emails arrive in her inbox, she was immediately intrigued by my study’s specific focus on Pilipina American students. She had wanted to learn more about Pilipinx history, and it was meaningful for me to hear this from her. In a way, I felt affirmed in my decision to pursue my dissertation topic. Her wit, honesty, and sense of humor livened our conversation and speaking with her was energizing.

Korinne identifies as a 1.5 generation Pilipina American, having been born in the Philippines and moving to the United States when she was nine years old. Her family is from Bataan, Philippines and they immigrated to the United States after her aunt and uncle had relocated ahead of her and her family and they petitioned for their arrival. Korinne had just completed the fourth grade when she moved to Massachusetts with her mother and brother. When I asked her about what it was like to move across the world at such a young age, especially since she was old enough to remember, she shared memories of her mother and the emphasis that was placed on remaining grounded in her Pilipina identity:

I guess on my mom's side, I didn't grow up with my dad, really just my mom, and I feel she was always very like, don't forget where you came from and who you are. And I think she meant more the values that we hold, regarding family and stuff, and she was really serious about not forgetting how to speak Tagalog.

She described feeling pressured to hold on to certain values and behave in certain ways that were considered acceptable in Pilipinx culture, even if she wanted to act in the opposite manner. For her it was like a continuous push-and-pull between adjusting to a whole new
life, wanting to become comfortable in the United States, and trying not to lose a sense of
groundedness in her Pilipina identity. I completely related to this struggle. I know that the
push-and-pull can be difficult to navigate and understand especially as a young child, and I
appreciated how candid and honest Korinne had been with sharing her challenges. The
(re)negotiation of her identity was a theme that ebbed and flowed throughout her narrative.

I learned through our conversation that Korinne’s mother was one of the most
significant and influential figures in her life. However, because of the generational difference
between them, there were several moments when it was difficult to navigate her identity as a
Pilipina growing up in the United States. Korinne’s perception of self was influenced by her
mother and grandmother and she enthusiastically shared memories of when she was a
teenager. In high school, her mother adamantly countered Korinne’s desire to cut her hair
because she “always had something to say about how I look, like a lot of moms do, and she
was very much concerned about what other Pilipino people would think about it too.” She
also recalled how she was told that she should not spend too much time outside in the sun to
prevent her skin from becoming too dark. Her grandmother would go as far as telling her to
make sure she scrubbed her knees and elbows either to lighten them or prevent them from
getting dark, in response to which Korinne would assert, “I’m just brown. It’s not dirt.”

From a young age, and throughout her life, Korinne was educated on beauty
standards and was told that light skin is ideal and more desirable than being brown or too
dark. I appreciated the way she would retort, stating that her brown skin is just that – it is
skin. She was not willing to accept what she was told, nor was she going to strive to have
light(er) skin. And though I knew that she was not calling her own skin dirty or comparing it
directly to dirt, it was still difficult to hear her even make the connection between brown skin
and dirt. Colonial mentality convinces us that the way we look, especially if we are
considered to be too dark or too brown, is an issue to be addressed or ashamed of. I had
responded to Korinne by saying that mothers or family members do not necessarily realize
how harmful their words can be and I asked her how or if it affected her. Korinne replied:

Yeah. I think for a while, it kind of [negatively] affected me, but eventually, I was
just kind of like, that's just my mom, but I remember when my mom, it was most
damaging when it was other people that would say things, and mom would either just
defend them or just not say anything about it. I'm like, that was really rude.

Korinne continued on to say that it was typically different titas (aunts) who would
openly say rude comments and Korinne’s mother would not permit Korinne to respond for
fear of being seen as rude and disrespectful. I find that the issue here is that the messages,
especially if they were rooted in colonial narratives, were reinforced because they went
unchallenged. This emphasized to Korinne that Pilipinx think and believe in certain values
and expectations, like wanting to be light-skinned. It also stressed that having an opposing
perspective and wanting to speak up – especially as a young girl – is unacceptable. But
despite the seemingly omnipresent nature of the colonial messages, when she was able to,
Korinne would consistently question what she was being told by her mother, to the point
where her mother would label her as being “too American,” even though that is what Korinne
was led to believe was the end goal:

Yeah I feel like, I don't know, I feel like in general, [Pilipinx] people really gaslight
you about it because they're like, well, why are you questioning it [the way things
have been]? And you're like, why not? You act like I'm crazy for wanting to know
why things are the way they are. And then it's weird because, they kind of go, they're
mad at those same values. My mom is, well, you [Korinne] question things because you're so American now. And I'm like, but I thought you wanted me to be American. I thought that was the goal, because [to you] it's better… I think she had a fear that I would turn out like an American, [but] I didn't even really know what she meant by that either.

Korinne’s reflection struck me because there did not appear to be only a dynamic of having to remember what it means to be Pilipina, but also an expectation to also assimilate into dominant U.S. culture because it is considered superior. However, we cannot be too American because too much independence or autonomy would also not be ideal. To be Pilipina meant to accept the status quo, not ask too many questions, and remain obedient at all times, even in the face of conflicting values and expectations. Meanwhile, U.S. culture was seen as rule-breaking and self-centered. From all that Korinne shared in our conversation, there seemed to be a narrow definition of Pilipina that was accepted and enforced by her mother and others, and the struggle with wanting to be her own individual was influenced by her coming of age in the United States. It felt to me as though exercising some level of control is what is wanted when trying to mold or define Pilipinas and their behavior.

Korinne also delved into stories about her brother and the differences in their relationships with their mother. I felt especially connected to her narrative because I too have a brother and I could easily relate to her stories, the expectations, and the family dynamics:

Growing up, my mom has treated my brother better, and I feel like that's a prevalent Asian thing, where I feel like he got off so much easier. So my mom has always had such a soft spot for my brother, so he was used to that.
Korinne’s mother was stricter with her and held her to different standards in comparison to her older brother. While her brother made rash decisions, like purchasing a motorcycle without his mother’s input or permission and unexpectedly becoming a young father at the age of 18 without much consequence from their mother, Korinne was expected to do well in school, attend college, and choose a reputable career like nursing. She also felt more restricted and sheltered when she was in high school. She was not permitted to have the same level of freedom and autonomy relative to her sibling. She also felt that the expectations were completely different and while she asserted that this was an “Asian thing,” it most likely stemmed from her mother’s socialization in the Philippines, as well as her lived experience as a single mother and her perception of how Pilipinas should behave in comparison to how boys are allowed to behave. The entire time she spoke of her family dynamics, I nodded along in agreement because it all felt incredibly familiar. The gender element certainly adds a level of complexity to how Pilipinas are supposed to behave. Korinne had already shared that growing up was difficult because of the many restrictions placed upon her, but when the gender difference was added, it created another layer, or boundary, of how she was expected to behave.

In addition to her mother, Korinne’s lola, or grandmother, also served as a significant influence on her, especially with the formation of her religious identity. She recalled instances of going to mass when she was a child in the Philippines and her lola would bait her with crackers so that she would attend mass and remain quiet during the service. Korinne reflected upon the expectation to become a practicing Catholic:

I feel like, I think Catholicism is deeply rooted in fear in general, but the way it was shown to us by our parents was very aggressive and it was just like, well, if you do
this, you're going to go to hell. And I was like, that's aggressive. I thought God was supposed to be loving or something. Why does he want to send me to hell for these little things? And so I think my main relationship with it was that. I was just scared of those things and then I think as I was studying more, I was just kind of less inclined to really believe in it. I've just more, I've just always been more of a science person, not that you can't believe in science and then not believe in God. I just found more comfort in not believing in it because it was just freaking me out.

The discussion around the feelings of fear or discomfort was striking. My mind immediately went to how Catholicism was brought to the islands by the Spanish and was utilized as a form of control. The way Korinne talked about religion caused me to pause and think about how instilling fear can be seen as a part of the legacy of colonialism and colonial mentality, even if religion is not explicitly mentioned in the colonial mentality scale or literature in general.

However, growing up in the United States instead of the Philippines allowed Korinne to question and even reject Catholicism altogether:

I was thinking about it [religion] and I have been, I've discussed it before with my cousin, I was talking about it the other day. And I feel like, because I now would define myself as an atheist…And I think, religion, how it's presented, is so very spiteful, and it's just to get you to not do things and the more I reflect on it, I myself don't really want to live by religion. But I see why people would and I'm like, I think of it in a way where I feel like if you guys [religious individuals] just calm down a little, maybe there will be more followers because you present it in a way that is really intimidating.
Korinne shared with me that she identifies as atheist now despite all the familial attempts to keep her interested and engaged in Catholicism. It was pretty clear that Korinne wanted nothing to do with a religion that rests upon a foundation of rules and fear mongering and to hear her reflect on her religious identity development encouraged me to also to stop and think about my own relationship to my Catholic identity. Her decision to be atheist told me that even though her family tried to shape her into a religious individual, she was willing to act against the influences and make a bold decision for herself and who she wants to be.

I asked her if this journey with her lack of a Catholic identity caused any tension with her family and she shared:

Thankfully that wasn't much of a point of contention with me and my mom, but that's [because] I just don't talk about it. Mom will be like, you need to pray and I'll [sarcastically] be like, sure. So it's just something I'm not too focused on. I feel like if I get married, I'll just get married in a church partly to appease my mother. That's a loss I'll take, I don't mind. But I don't think religion has much of an effect on me, in my life.

To my surprise, Korinne’s mother seemed open to her not having a salient Catholic identity, granted, Korinne said that they do not really talk about religion. It was also an interesting observation to hear her say that she would be willing to get married in a church to appease her mom, which told me that despite not having an affinity for Catholicism, a part of her still would want to make her mother happy. And given all the rigid expectations and the constant push and pull that was shared earlier, Korinne was still willing to make certain decisions because she cared about what her mother wanted.
After hearing about her immigration story, how her relationship with her family has changed over time, and the impact it all had on her development from childhood to adulthood, I wanted to lean more into a conversation about her educational experiences both in the Philippines and in the United States. English is the language of instruction in the Philippines and when she arrived in the United States, Korinne was required to take an English test and was also placed into the fourth grade, despite having completed it already in the Philippines. When I asked about whether or not she had the opportunity to learn about Pilipinx history in grade school when she was still living in the Philippines, she shared that she could not recall learning anything substantial despite being in the Philippines:

We did, but I remember close to none of it. I remember names, like I remember Magellan. He did something at one point. Maybe Rizal, but I don't even know. So like, which is why I wanted to do the study because I've always been like, oh, I should learn about our history more. And then, I never just got to it. And then I was like, I think I should, now maybe I'll learn something, because I don't, I don't remember anything about it, and then I just started learning American history from the get go and everything after that is so focused on the West, Western society, and Western history. And then I'll hear about the Philippines once, oh, that's cool. And then that's it. Whenever I heard about Pilipino history, we were just getting colonized. And so, I felt like that definitely shaped my world on what Pilipino history was, where I was like, oh, I guess we must have just been real submissive because we just got colonized a lot. But I had heard, or read certain things here and there where I was like, no, I'm pretty sure we put up a bit of a fight, but I just never got in there, reading more about it. But I think that was the main thing I would remember about Pilipino
history is that we got colonized a lot. I feel it, because my last name is [redacted], so I feel like a lot of people think I'm Spanish and I'm like, well, we got colonized. So that's why my last name sounds really Spanish.

I do not know what type of response I was expecting but I think I had hoped that perhaps being in the Philippines, maybe her experience would have been vastly different from mine. But not only did it seem that our educational experiences were similar, what really took me by surprise was Korinne’s emphasis on colonization. In my experience growing up in the United States, typically, when the Philippines was mentioned in a textbook or course, it was usually given a minor role tucked within the widespread and popular narrative of Ferdinand Magellan’s voyage to circumnavigate the earth, which was cut short due to his death in Mactan, an island adjacent to Cebu. But Korinne’s account showed a particular focus on colonization without any nuanced discussion of the conflict and resistance of the Indigenous peoples residing on the islands. Centering colonization denies room to learn about the authentic history of the people and the land prior to Spain’s unwelcomed arrival and since this was the dominant historical narrative, what does that mean for how we as Pilipinas see ourselves?

It was very disheartening to learn that Korinne’s learning experience was bound so closely to colonialism, as though the islands did not have an identity or story before Magellan. I have often thought about the impact of the lack of opportunities to learn about the history of the Philippines and my conversation with Korinne was an example of how we as a community are sometimes unable to separate ourselves from the identities of the colonizers, which to me continues to enable colonial mentality and the narratives inherent to it. Korinne also acknowledged a present-day manifestation of colonialism — her last name.
Like many people from the islands, she carried a name that others are often confused by, which prompted her to clarify the likely origin of her last name. The repeated occurrence of having to explain her last name also is a reflection of what others know - and do not know - about the Pilipinx community and history. And because of the limited opportunities to learn about her community, Korinne expressed a desire to learn more about the truth:

I feel like I definitely want to learn more about the indigenous inhabitants of the Philippines. I feel like I have always kind of thought that was interesting and their mentalities on how they lived before they were colonized. Because, I don't know, there's just, I wonder so much about it.

Our discussion had sparked Korinne’s curiosity to think more about indigenous communities and who they are. I appreciated her new and growing interest in learning more and it was our discussion that helped her to think more openly about the Philippines and more critically about how education systems can filter what we know and what we are able to learn.

Along with her experience in the classroom, I was curious to know more about other aspects of her educational experiences, and what emerged were her experiences with her peer groups and how those relationships or dynamics informed her identity. When I asked her about her peers and community, she shared that her friends were all White, and between then and now, she wished she had a more diverse circle of friends:

I really changed parts of myself just to fit this narrative. I remember in high school, all my friends really were White. And then, I was the token brown friend and they would refer to me as that and then I look back at it now and I'm like, that was so weird…Not even just [having more] Filipino friends, [now] I wish I had more friends of color. I just feel like the experience, like they understand certain experiences better
than my White friends would understand. Especially now, I feel like that conversation has been just, like being a person of color has been more in the ‘view of things.’ There are things that I'm just realizing now are like, wow, it's so crazy that I let myself be treated that way, or I go back and I'm like, oh my God, those are definitely microaggressions. And I'm like, I can't believe I just didn't know or if I thought it was just ok. And I feel like my White friends wouldn't quite understand or they tried to, but they just don't fully get it.

Looking back at her experiences throughout childhood and high school, Korinne was the sole Pilipina in her homogenous peer group(s) and while she appreciated her friendships, she acknowledged that there was difficulty in relating to each other given the difference in racial identities. And, though she did not recognize it then, she reflected while speaking and she named the problematic nature of the microaggressions she experienced and endured. I was sensing that she felt disappointed and maybe even slightly embarrassed and I completely related to her experience. I too know what it feels like to have a lot of White peers and feeling like I had to accept microaggressive behavior in order to be accepted into White spaces.

I then went on to ask Korinne if her experiences with peers changed after coming to college or if she had gotten involved with the Pilipinx student organization on campus and she replied:

No, I never got involved in that stuff, but that's partly because I didn't get involved in any college clubs. But I [also] had this weird phase where I was, it's not that I was like, I'm not Filipino, but I was very much like I just don't want to focus on it [being Pilipino] because I felt like there was just so much you're Filipino kind of focus or
narrative on me where I was just like, yeah, there's so many other things about me that I think are just as important.

I had not anticipated feeling this so deeply. Why did she feel shame? I asked her more about why she felt like she did not want her Pilipina identity to be or feel salient and Korinne said to me that it was mainly due to her experiences with microaggressive comments or behaviors, and that many people made a lot of assumptions about her based on her perceived or actual racial and ethnic identities. Being surrounded by White people and colonial narratives, it is not surprising to me that Korinne did not want anyone or even herself to fixate on her Pilipina identity. The limited opportunities to be in community with other Pilipinas or to learn about history likely plays a role when it comes to self-love and self-acceptance. When an identity has been a source of pain or shame, not wanting to associate with it almost seems like a normal or rational reaction.

Throughout our time together, it appeared to me that Korinne, though with her bold personality and witiness, displayed a thoughtful and vulnerable side of herself. Not in the sense of weakness, but more so a side of her that was open to telling her story, sharing about the hardships she had encountered, and acquiring new knowledge about herself and the Pilipina community. Despite having grown up with a lot of White people, grappling with a religious identity, and feeling at odds with different family expectations and dynamics, Korinne wanted her future to be different in terms of her relationship to her identity and her understanding of self and history. I found this to be incredibly inspiring. When we conversed about the future and what we imagine it to be for ourselves both individually and collectively, she shared:
Well, yes, I feel like I don't hold a lot of traditional Filipino values now, but I don't think that's a bad thing either. It's a good way to kind of step out of the toxicity of what was handed down to us, because if you really think about it, I mean, it depends what part of your Filipino identity you want to go by…. which history are you deciding to subscribe to? And I would much rather choose a history that's not harmful for future generations…[and] I definitely don't blame our ancestors, no one asks to be colonized. But then, I think it's perpetuating the toxicity of the effects of being colonized, and I think that is our fault. It does not have to be that way anymore. And I feel like it's up to the newer generations to be better for the sake of each other.

Throughout our dialogue, Korinne shared thoughts that I perceived to be attempts to intentionally disrupt colonial mentality and this is what I admired most about Korinne. Because despite not having any intentionally designed spaces or opportunities until her participation in this study to reflect on her life story and how colonialism may inform her present-day life, Korinne still questioned elements of colonial mentality. At one point Korinne said, “My mom [says] well, that's how it is. And I'm like, it doesn't have to be. And she can't even conceptualize that.” Korinne had an understanding that having feelings of shame, or being treated differently because of her gender, or learning from her mother and family what is expected of Pilipinas – it can all be re-envisioned even if others like her mother were unable to see a different path forward. Further, it was significant to note that Korinne did not place blame on those who came before us. I perceive all of us to be survivors of colonialism and now as a community we have more opportunities to step into our own agency and say that what we choose to believe in does not have to be harmful to ourselves and others.
As we neared the end of our conversation, I felt incredibly privileged to learn with and from Korinne and as we talked more about who she is now, especially as a Pilipina American in college, she shared a number of things that she felt proud of:

I am proud that I'm going to college. I feel like that's something like many of us are proud of. I'm proud to have a home in the Philippines, I'm real happy about that, we just got a new house. And my mom had such a thing about it. I remember she, she set it as I want to have something in my life, like I want to see that I've built something. And so we're having a house built in the Philippines and my mom's plan has always been to go back home. And so I'm proud about that. I think that's really awesome. And I want my mom to go home [to the Philippines] because I know that is where she'll be happy.

I thought her reflection and our rich conversation tied together so beautifully as it all came to a close. Korinne spoke so lovingly of her mother and it meant a lot to me to hear her describe what her relationship with her mother is like now because as Korinne shared, it had not always been easy. It is exceptionally difficult to be a 1.5-generation immigrant child who had been transplanted into an entirely different place, who was then expected to learn how to survive and thrive with little to no guidance. Korinne had shared that though she sometimes felt great pressure from her mother to finish school and become a nurse, she also felt her mother’s pride and knowing that meant the world to her. Her dreams are not only hers, but of her mother’s and her family’s.

**Summary**

By restorying and presenting Korinne’s and Jojo’s stories, I hope to have provided a more detailed understanding of the Pilipina American student experience. I wanted to be
intentional with presenting two stories to convey the fullness and complexity of students because our narratives are hardly part of the higher education discourse. The participants take us through their journeys and along the way, they shared how colonial mentality emerged in their lives, the lack of learning opportunities to learn about Philippine history, how they grappled with understanding their Pilipina American identity, and their hopes for their own futures and the future of Pinays. Through the presentation of the Jojo’s and Korinne’s life stories, they also help to outline the critical findings presented in chapter 5. In the following chapter, I present the additional findings and bring in the rest of the voices and stories of the participants. I hope for the reader to learn more about the Pinay experience, not only about challenges they encounter, but also the ways they resist colonial mentality to reimagine the future.
CHAPTER 5
CRITICAL FINDINGS

The data collection process and the analysis of findings presented in this chapter were conceptually framed by Pinayism (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005) and decolonization (Strobel, 2001) frameworks and were also guided by literature on colonial mentality, specifically the Colonial Mentality Scale (CMS) (David & Okazaki, 2006). Specifically, Pinayism is the worldview that guided both data collection and analysis and is reflected in all aspects of the discussion of findings in this chapter. The Pilipina American experience is complex and often misunderstood, mostly due to the history of colonialism and its long-lasting legacy (Nadal, 2009) and Pinayism aims to define a specific space for Pilipina Americans to share, honor, and celebrate their experiences at the intersection of racism, sexism, imperialism, decolonization, consciousness, and liberation (de Jesus, 2005; Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005). With a Pinayist lens as my compass, I was able to center the students’ stories and illuminate their experiences with colonial mentality and decolonization. Life story methodology allowed me to capture a more detailed, nuanced, and complete picture of the participants’ experiences and to explore how their lives may have been informed by colonial mentality and their reflections on decolonization. Therefore, both the CMS and the decolonization framework directed me as I interpreted findings more specifically related to how the participants lived, approached, and processed their experiences and goals in the context of
colonial mentality. The data I used were the individual interviews that focused on the participants’ life stories and our dialogues on the passages. Prior to our first meeting, I asked each participant to reflect on their narratives and I offered two questions to help guide their reflection: 1) What does it mean for you to be Pilipina American or Pinay? and 2) What has contributed to your understanding of your racial, ethnic, and gender identities? In addition, prior to our second meeting, I shared passages that centered on three different topics: 1) indigenous concepts of gender, 2) colonial mentality, and 3) colonial education. In the interviews, participants were asked to share their memories about their families, communities, and educational experiences, and their reactions to the passages.

Thematic data analysis was guided by the context of discovery method (Reichenbach, 1938 as cited in McAdams, 2012), where the accounts were analyzed for patterns and themes to understand and interpret the lives of the participants. The researcher’s intent in this approach is to engage with the research problem or research question(s) by examining the participants’ stories in depth in order to discover themes from extended passages from the transcripts (McAdams, 2012). As I repetitively reviewed the transcripts, I approached all of the participants’ stories with openness and curiosity to see what themes would emerge. To focus the analysis approach, as reflected in the four themes presented, I utilized the factors of the Colonial Mentality Scale (CMS) (David & Okazaki, 2006b). These four themes included 1) Rigid Expectations, 2) Repaying the Sacrifice, 3) If We Learned About the Philippines, it was Not About Us, and 4) Barriers to Community and Belongingness. I wanted to capture how colonial mentality emerged in the lives of the participants and the five factors helped with providing language and behaviors to look for. The five factors are: within-group discrimination, physical characteristics, colonial debt, cultural shame and embarrassment,
and internalized cultural/ethnic inferiority. Within-group discrimination is characterized by the tendency to discriminate against less-Americanized Pilipinxes; physical characteristics is defined by the belief that Pilipinx traits are less desirable than White traits; colonial debt is the tendency to feel grateful for colonization and feeling as though something is owed or must be repaid to the colonizers; cultural shame and embarrassment are defined by feeling shame toward the Pilipinx identity or culture; and internalized cultural/ethnic inferiority is when Pilipinxes view their culture as lesser than United States or European cultures.

In the last three themes based on individual interviews, including 1) Making Sense of and Resisting Colonial Mentality, 2) Self-led Agency to Learn: Countering Colonial Mentality, and 3) Who is a Pilipina?: Piecing Together A Fractured Identity, I turned to the decolonization framework to guide my analysis. Strobel’s (2001) framework, inspired by Freire (1970), is a three-stage model: Naming, Reflection, and Action. As I examined the data, I paid close attention to the different ways the participants named colonial mentality; how they reflected upon their identities and the effects of the ongoing damage done by colonial mentality; and how they acted in resistance by asking critical questions, engaging in behaviors to counter colonial mentality, and re-envisioning the ways we as a community can evolve.

At the end of this chapter, the findings for the Bayanihan Community Dialogues are presented. From our conversations as a collective, three themes emerged 1) Naming Colonial Messages and Loss, 2) Reflecting Upon the Past, and 3) Taking Action for the Future. Similar to the last three themes for the individual interviews, I relied on the decolonization framework to lead through the analysis process. The participants discussed their shared experiences around a sense of loss while reflecting on their pasts. However, despite the
difficulty of acknowledging the pain of colonial mentality and its ongoing legacy, they turned
toward each other to imagine what a different future could look like for themselves as
individuals but also as a community of Pinays.

Through my analysis of the individual interviews, I found that messages and
influences rooted in colonial mentality surfaced mostly from experiences with family, the
manner in which participants learned about the Philippines in educational settings, and the
challenges encountered when seeking a community of Pilipinx peers in college. I also found
that despite the many difficulties the participants experienced throughout their lives, there
were also instances when they questioned and challenged colonial mentality. Here I present
passages from participant narratives that express their understanding of their Pilipina
American identities, their experiences with how colonial mentality shaped their stories, how
they have named and resisted colonial narratives, and their engagement with decolonization.

Rigid Expectations

Participants shared a variety of messages they received while growing up and I drew
the connections between those messages and the CMS factors of physical characteristics and
cultural/ethnic inferiority. Within this theme, participants discussed how their families or
communities conveyed expectations around how they should present themselves, specifically
on the way they dressed and behaved. Further, the messages I observed told me that there
was a more nuanced experience with colonial mentality. I found that the messages were
rooted in colonial influences like Spanish ideas of gender, machismo, marianismo, and
Catholicism. However, the scale’s factors on physical characteristics and internalized
cultural/ethnic inferiority, as depicted by David and Okazaki (2006b), do not explicitly
account for specific identities like gender and gender expression, sexual orientation, and
religion. The scale and factors measure colonial mentality more broadly to capture the experiences of Pilipinxes as a whole but, in doing so, is unable to provide a more detailed picture.

The sources that emanated these messages related to rigid expectations were mainly family and community members. When asked if there were any particular values that their family had placed an emphasis on, participants discussed that their parents often talked about expectations regarding behavior and physical appearance, especially where gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and religion intersect. What I was curious to know more of is how or where parents or family were deriving these messages and how participants made meaning of the messages. Similar to what Jojo discussed regarding expectations with appearance and the accompanying assumptions, Mila, a junior majoring in nursing shared:

When I was younger, I didn't like wearing dresses and definitely the prejudice against people who are other than people who are not straight. So my mom would always be like, are you going to be a tomboy? Or something of that sort. So then I always hated wearing dresses just to spite her.

Mila’s mother emphasized the specific ways she was supposed to look in order to avoid appearing as or being perceived as a “tomboy,” which in Pilipino terms equates to a queer identity. To wear a dress signaled heterosexuality and femininity, values that are rooted in homophobia and traditional gendered expectations, all of which stem from Spanish colonial values and serve as the standard for Pilipina behavior. I consider this aspiration to align with both factors of cultural/ethnic inferiority and physical characteristics because whether
parental or family figures were aware of it or not, chasing the colonial ideals of machismo and marianismo were the goal.

Teresa, a second-generation Pilipina American and senior majoring in community health, also shared similar messaging that she had received from her parents:

My parents definitely ingrained in me this idea of, well, first of all, like heteronormative, obviously they always expected me to marry a Filipino man. This idea of women not having sexual freedom. As a kid, my mom was always like, no sex before marriage, that kind of thing…And I was never allowed to have boys over at my house. The rule was no boys in the bedroom. No boys in the house.

Teresa was candid about the strict and heteronormative nature of the values and expectations that were defined for her by her parents. And her use of the word “ingrained” indicated to me that this type of messaging or dialogue came up often and consistently throughout her life.

Jojo, Mila, and Teresa described the narrow ways of how Pilipina Americans were expected to act specifically in relation to boys or men, identifying colonial values related to gender as superior.

Another participant, Astrid, a second-generation Pilipina American junior majoring in nursing, more specifically connected a lot of the gender-related expectations and ideal behaviors to religion and noted that religion was indeed the driving force behind the definition of a Pilipina. When Astrid and I conversed about familial values, gender, and the expectations of women, she shared about Catholicism’s influence on conservative behaviors:

So they [my parents], we still practice a lot of [the] culture and that is still trying to be enforced on me. And yeah, so what they do is, my parents grew up in a conservative way in the Philippines, because my mom grew up in an environment where courting
[while dating] is still a thing, and my grandmother was so strict, like if I wear a cropped top in the Philippines, she would call me out on it and say that I'm not supposed to wear that. I would say dressing up conservative is Filipino culture. [And] I think that's more if you're the Catholic Filipino with an old school grandma who [says], don't wear that type of stuff…Because that's how they were raised. Their whole entire foundation is on Catholicism, it just influences the way they want me to dress and how they want me to behave [and] how to follow rules.

Religion was a consistent presence in many of the conversations about the messaging around behaviors and it was clear that these expectations spanned generations. And while the facets of Catholicism may not have been as blatant in every conversation between the participants and their parents or their families, it very much informed how the participants learned about themselves.

While the primary focus of the conversations was on parental or family influence, going beyond immediate family emerged as a significant space that also provided additional messaging around expectations related to appearance and behavior. This allowed participants to understand that their interactions with immediate family were not unique to their household but were more widespread. Teresa was able to understand that her family’s values were more ubiquitous because of her lived experiences with other families and children with whom she grew up. In our conversation, she talked about her barkada, her community beyond her parents and sisters, and recalled memories of when her parents convened with the parents of other children to specifically discuss their expectations of their children, namely, their daughters:
Yeah, seeing these values in not only my family, but reflected in five other families as well, helped me to understand that these are not just my family's thing, but could be a cultural thing. Like this is what Filipinos do…The parents had a committee meeting when we were kids. And my mom [recently] sent me this text, which was the notes from their parent committee meeting from when we were kids. And essentially it's a list of expectations for the girls... “The easiest girls are those with low self-esteem.”

“Advise our girls to not be afraid to say no.” “Urge our girls not to run after the boy, quote unquote.” “Do not be merry.” “Keep the girls’ school schedules as busy as possible.” “Minimize the breaks during which they could potentially be with the boys.” “Do not underestimate girls’ sense of guile, determination, ability to get around any restrictions we may impose on them.” It goes on… I think that just reading this list really, I don't know, it really elucidated the roots of a lot of the kind of unsaid expectations that I felt growing up as a Pilipina.

During the interview, Teresa was able to process and make meaning of her life experiences and acknowledge that these expectations were consistent throughout her life, even up to the present day. The rigid and limiting definitions of girls and women were not only enforced by her parents, but also by others that were regularly present in her life. The list outlined by Teresa emphasized what mattered most to them and my interpretation of the list tells me that the expectations were actually about control, and that our behavior and who we must grow up to become are defined in relation to boys and how we are perceived by others. After Teresa recited the list, I even asked her, “Well where was the list for the boys?” The absence of one is exceptionally telling of who gets to define their lives more freely and who does not. Pilipino boys are seemingly able to exist without specific boundaries while
Pinays must follow certain rules in order to produce and uphold ideal behavior. During formal colonization, the Spanish brought – and forcibly embedded – their ideas on machismo and marianismo, and the experiences shared by the participants very much thread together the legacy from colonial times to their lived narratives.

The participants who had brothers spoke of related and more tangible experiences. Whereas Teresa was one of three daughters, Rose, a junior studying management, had a brother like Korinne and Vanessa, and when I asked her if she perceived to be treated differently from him, she answered with an immediate and unwavering response:

Yes. 100 percent. Let me tell you Kristine, it's like a complete 180, dude…Because I don't know. It's so unfair. I don't know if it's because he's a boy or if it's because he's younger. It's just so unfair. Because with me, I was brought up strict [by my parents].

While Teresa shared the list and her own lived experiences as a daughter, Rose and others spoke of their experience living with or having a brother, and the clear preferential treatment their brothers received. Parents and other adult figures offered no substantial explanation as to why they, as young Pinays, were expected to behave in very specific ways. What participants shared provides evidence that the inequity between genders does exist and the ideals that they learned from their families or communities were colonial values – not indigenous ones. And when considered through the factors of the CMS, physical characteristics and cultural/ethnic inferiority, they are undoubtedly connected to the colonial ways women and girls were expected to look, conduct themselves, and how they were supposed to be treated by others, which was a far departure from the way some indigenous communities were.
Repaying the Sacrifice

A theme that had been woven throughout several conversations was the significance of discipline and working hard to achieve academic, career, and financial goals as the appropriate way to repay parents for their perceived or actual sacrifices of uprooting their lives from the Philippines and immigrating to the United States. I took notice of how the participants spoke of their majors and intended career aspirations and how many of them described the ways their parents supported them. I also noted parallels between what parents said to the participants and how the participants behaved and made college- and career-related decisions and I interpreted the language used as being rooted in colonial mentality, specifically the factor of colonial debt. Evidence of colonial debt includes the unquestioned belief of being lucky or feeling thankful for the opportunity to be in the United States and then feeling indebted to the United States for all that has been presumably provided.

Participants conveyed that their parents continued to serve as substantial influences on their major and career choice as they entered and progressed through their collegiate journeys. Both Astrid, a junior and biology major who hoped to become a physician, and Vanessa, a junior and nursing major, shared that their parents’ professions influenced their decisions to choose healthcare. Astrid talked passionately about her pursuit of a career in medicine and that both of her parents had studied to become physicians even though they did not end up practicing in the United States. She said that while her parents did not really apply pressure to choose medicine as her path, they still had very high expectations of her to achieve. Similarly, Vanessa chose to pursue nursing because her mother was a nurse and she was interested in the career. She too did not feel pressured, but she did note that she saw a number of her cousins choose nursing because of pressure they had received from their
families. Mila also chose nursing not because she was pushed by her parents or anyone else, but because she was interested in it. For Teresa, while her parents had hoped that she would pursue medicine as a career, it was her experience of not being able to talk about her mental health with her parents that inspired her interest in community health and for the focus of her senior thesis to be on mental health and wellness.

Although the participants were thankful for their parents’ support, the notion of colonial debt was palpable as they discussed their career aspirations further. Specifically, a number of participants emphasized the sacrifices of their parents and exhibited feelings of indebtedness toward them. Jojo, as was described in her narrative, talked earnestly about wanting to give back to and care for her parents because of all the sacrifices they made in order to provide for her and her siblings. Teresa also shared similar sentiments:

I think they know I'm grateful, but I don't think they understand the indebtedness that I feel that's constantly in the back of my mind, this idea of how can I repay them for everything that they gave me. And I feel like a lot of the things that I devote my time to are informed by that idea of “will my parents be proud of me or will they approve of this?”

Teresa often reflected about how her decisions may or may not affect her parents and how she could repay them for all that they had given her. Korinne described the bravery and sacrifice it took for her mother to fly across the world to make a life for herself and her family and she wanted to help her mother and family with their new home being built in the Philippines. Similarly, Mila shared specifically about her mother who came from the Philippines after she married Mila’s father, and was deeply thankful for the chance to live and work in the United States.
This recurring rhetoric around gratefulness and repaying a debt that is perceived to be owed overlaps with strikingly similar language that describes colonial debt, which is one of the factors of colonial mentality that is measured through the CMS. The thoughts or behaviors around feeling grateful to their parents who had moved to the United States to provide a “better” life suggests that though with honest and heartfelt intentions, there is a learned or inherent assumption to be thankful to the United States and that life in the United States is more favorable than life in the Philippines. And because of the family’s challenges with immigrating and re-establishing a new life, participants felt indebted to their parents for the life they had been given in the United States. I absolutely relate to this experience because I too think about how my parents immigrated to the United States in the 1980s in pursuit of the proverbial “American Dream.” And until I began speaking with the participants and combing through our conversations, I had not realized, nor had I made the connections that perhaps this desire or need to repay my parents is also correlated with the inexplicit colonial debt we learn, feel, or enact.

**If We Learned About the Philippines, It Was Not About Us**

During our interviews, I asked participants about their academic experiences and whether or not they had learned about the Philippines, indigenous history, Philippine history, or Pilipinx American history in their education. From the way they described their emotions and experiences they shared, I was able to make visible how the education system attempts to insert ideas of colonial debt, cultural shame and embarrassment, and enforce a sense of internalized cultural/ethnic inferiority, three factors of colonial mentality measured on the CMS. Perhaps not surprisingly, participants learned extremely little about the history of the Philippines throughout their journeys as students. When the Philippines did emerge in a
lesson or two, it was hardly about the archipelago or the people. It was also typically taught by White teachers and the content was about the islands being the accidental destination that served as the impetus of colonization, as though the islands had no history or significance prior to European landfall. Mila shared that she would hang on to every moment that the Philippines was included, but then was quickly let down with the lack of attention paid:

So I would never learn about anything of the Philippines and of the few times that it's mentioned in textbooks, and I could probably count the amount of times on one hand, I clung to that information, and I was like, this is how my country plays a role in it, in the U.S. history, or this is a little tidbit or sliver of who I was, the other side of me.

Mila grew up in a predominantly White town, having attended predominantly White schools. When speaking with her, she described the history that she learned as U.S.-centric and Eurocentric. It is clear that she yearned to know more about history because it would have meant that she could learn more about herself and her identity. Teresa felt a similar excitement when the Philippines was mentioned in class and, additionally, she remembered feeling a sense of pride:

Yeah, I remember getting so excited as a kid when I would see the Philippines mentioned in a textbook, [I’m] like, yeah that’s me. Yeah, in a movie we were watching in class, I remember once they mentioned the Philippines and then everyone looked at me and I actually felt good about it. I mean, I was kind of proud. I was proud. I was like, they know that I’m Pilipino and I’m proud to be Pilipino. And it was a little weird, but I did like those moments where I saw myself in in the content of the classes that I was learning. [But it was] very rare. Very, very rare.
Whenever Teresa saw herself reflected in the text or film, it cultivated a sense of excitement and pride. However, the absence of history, or the presentation of an incomplete history or a Eurocentric/U.S.-centric history, arguably enables colonial mentality and can induce an internalization of cultural/ethnic inferiority or cultural shame since the students are moved through their education without ever having a real and honest opportunity to learn about themselves. What and how we learn can shape the way we see ourselves.

In my interview with Vanessa, while we had been conversing about our experiences in history classes and the lack of information we received as kids, I expressed that it was disappointing that the extent of discussing the Philippines was not even really about the Philippines. To this, Vanessa responded with, “It was [about] what America did [to the Philippines], and if we’re going to speak on American history, the Philippines is very much relevant to it.” Vanessa actually learned a lot of history from her grandfather and her uncles, so it was disappointing for her to be in class(es) and to witness teachers quickly and lazily glaze over the Philippines as though the country and the diaspora held no real significance, when she knew exactly otherwise. I could feel the struggle in the participants’ experiences. When time is not invested into their learning of their own identities, I think it really informs the way they can value – or devalue – themselves. Rose recalled a memory when the Philippines was brought up in class:

I'll never forget, when I was in grade school, I think I was around [the] sixth grade or fifth grade. We did have this topic in social studies about when the U.S. came to the Philippines. And I kind of remembered it a little bit because they talked about it and I felt a sense of pride in myself, like, oh yeah, that's my people. But it was a brief topic. It was a paragraph about, or a sentence of, oh yeah, they [the United States] came to
the Philippines and, you know, they helped the conquering, you know, that they kind of got them [the Spanish] out and I’m just like, ok, that's it? You know, they didn't really, that's where I'm kind of like, I wish they talked about it because I feel like with Filipinos, we're so mixed…Because people are always like, oh, why are you guys like this? And it's because [the] Spaniards conquered us…And I wish that we talked about it a lot because honestly, I, when it comes to Filipino culture and all that, I can ramble because I feel like not a lot of people know how complex we are.

Like Mila and Teresa, Rose felt excitement or pride when the Philippines emerged in a lesson or class, but she also noted that what was learned was colonial history. In every single interview with each participant, Ferdinand Magellan was named. I too can vividly recall the very few times the Philippines made a fleeting appearance on a textbook page or in a lesson, it was always in the context of Magellan’s attempt to circumnavigate the globe. If not Magellan, as Rose also noted, what I learned about was villainizing Spain’s colonial agenda and the United States “liberating” the Philippines. U.S. history lessons have been tactically written to glorify the United States while simultaneously demonizing Spain and Japan in an effort to position the U.S. military and government as heroic and to legitimize invasion and colonialism. This type of rhetoric enables the feeling of indebtedness to the United States, which is an expression of colonial debt.

**Barriers to Community and Belongingness**

Coming to college, the majority of the participants expressed an excitement to search for a community of Pilipinxs and Pilipinx Americans. College was where most participants sought spaces that had not existed for them previously. Throughout their lives, their academic environments lacked meaningful opportunities for identity exploration, to learn
history, and spaces to find community, but entering college encouraged them to delve into the possibilities for themselves as individuals and as a collective. When the participants and I discussed identity and community, one type of space that came up in every interview with each participant was the on-campus Pilipinx student organization. What is presented here provides a glimpse into the participants’ experiences in student organizations. Interestingly, I was presented with mixed experiences. Student organizations were able to provide some of the participants with the space and resources to find community and feel affirmed in their identities. However, others were left feeling excluded and, in those cases, I drew parallels to the CMS and the factors of within-group discrimination and internalized cultural/ethnic inferiority.

Mila did not grow up alongside many Pilipinx people or Pilipinx Americans, so arriving at college presented her the new opportunity to seek and find community:

I was so excited at the possibility of having another Filipino friend since I never had any in my hometown. I really wanted to get to know them [fellow Pilipina nursing students] so I would hang out with them and try to sit next to them in class and we now text and stuff and hang out. So that was definitely something I pursued heavily, probably in an odd way, but it was motivated through my desire to actually grasp at straws and connect and make those relationships between other Pilipinos who might relate to me since I never had that relationship before.

I admired the joy in Mila’s energy as she talked about meeting other Pinays in college. It was apparent that creating these meaningful connections was important to her and her experience in college since it had been very limited throughout her childhood.
Mila continued on to share that though her involvement with the student organization was minimal and she had felt apprehensive at first, she ultimately felt welcomed by the other members, and that was where she met new Pilipinx friends. Astrid spoke fondly of the organization and had already known a few of the Pilipinx students involved in the group before she went to college. When she arrived on campus, she joined the organization and was able to transition more easily because of the existing prior relationships. Astrid felt like she was able to connect with and relate more closely to the other students in the student organization, unlike with her White peers from her high school years and earlier:

But with Filipino friends, you feel more intact with them. It's just you already have this mutual understanding of, ok, my family's like this and all that stuff… we just know how the culture is, I feel more with my Filipino friends, especially at Sea University I feel more at home… it's like, it's like I feel like I'm related to them or something, it's like as I said, I feel more at home. It's a home-y feeling.

Astrid felt that she was able to exist more authentically with her peers in the student organization, which was a stark contrast to what it was like when trying to relate to White peers. She appreciated not having to explain herself or not having to worry about whether or not others would be able to relate to her experience since a mutual understanding already existed.

On the flipside, Teresa grew up with her close-knit barkada and she also shared that she sought out a Pilipinx community because her community at home was important to her, and she hoped she would find one when she moved away to college:
I definitely was seeking it out [community]. I was seeking it out because of my barkada at home and not having one when I came here was hard. So, I mean, there are a few of them here, but not having that dynamic of being family was hard. So, I would say that I definitely sought it out.

Oftentimes it is thought that students who come from predominantly White spaces are the ones seeking affinity the most, but learning from Teresa’s narrative, leaving a familiar community behind is also very difficult, particularly if finding or creating a new one is an uncertain possibility. She named this as a dynamic of being a family, and since she was accustomed to having that network of support around her, not having it or not knowing whether she would find something similar was difficult. Teresa provided a different reflection when our dialogue led to the student organization on her campus. She described the space as feeling like home, but also a place where she can “relax and be yourself [which] gives the energy to be able to be in the other places where you don’t necessarily feel at home [on campus].” She indicated that not every place on campus provides the same comfort as the student organization does, and she went on to talk about how she did indeed have the opportunity to learn about herself and her identity:

My involvement with the group has given me so many opportunities to think about identity. We host book talks… I think book discussions have been a really accessible way for people to talk about complicated topics and also to bring in outside expertise, so we had a book discussion about the short story collection called In the Country by Mia Alvar, and she was able to come speak to us, which is really great… [We also had] poetry discussions and food nights and also just having to lead a certain, or be a leader in the space I think allows me to verbalize things that have been kind of
percolating in my head for a long time, so it's been really, it's been very, very lovely. And the group is very important to me for giving me a community… [and] we have continued to make this an educational group other than just like a social group.

Teresa spoke of how the organization space was very much about education as well as being a social group so that members could enter and find others to relate to and befriend, but also learn and make meaning of their identities and experiences. This case shines a light on the potential a student-led space can have. It can be a place that both centers affinity and a place that grapples with challenging topics around identity and colonial mentality.

However, this feeling of home was not experienced by all. As noted in Jojo’s narrative, the student organization space was not for her, and Vanessa and Rose felt similarly. Rose described the space and the members to be quite cliquey and unwelcoming:

I actually tried to join the Filipino club at Sea University and I even felt really unwelcome… Filipinos tend to be more groupies, and I don't really like that…they just stay around each other, but then they're not really as inviting in a way. I went to the group, to one event for the Filipino club, and I thought it would be nice because I thought they would be welcoming. But everybody is in their own little social circle in the event, and I'm like, what? [It felt] very cliquey. And then, you know, everybody was only friends with people that spoke their dialects…I'm just like, where do I go? Because I only know Cebuano and not a lot of people know Visaya. Yeah. So that's another thing where I'm like oof… I mean [I] definitely [wanted] to be a part of the community and kind of get a sense of belonging. But then I felt like most of the people that were in the club were really Filipino. They probably came here for school
and for, you know, I just felt more American when I went. Yeah, that's where I feel left out.

Vanessa’s experience was much like Rose’s. At home, Vanessa had found community with other Pilipinx people and when she came to college, she hoped for a similar type of comradery. She was able to meet her roommate at Orientation who was also Pinay, and she took comfort in knowing that they were going into a shared experience together. They were able to connect through their overlapping identities, but then Vanessa had the opposite experience when she tried to get involved with the student organization. She felt ostracized, which even caused her to question her identity:

When I'm with them, sometimes I could see the difference between me being Filipina American and then them being a little more traditional coming from the Philippines, [that] kind of Filipino. So I feel different there sometimes… they even kind of like separate out who's Filipino American and who's Filipino. And so, sometimes I'm like, do you really want to do that…it kind of takes away from the togetherness. I want to learn from you, [and] you could also learn from me…It also makes you question your own identity, am I not Filipino enough? Because I have a little hint of American? I'm very much Filipino. Sometimes, I'm not even going to lie, sometimes, especially, you know, I can understand Tagalog, but I can't really speak it. And so, sometimes all they do is speak in Tagalog. And so I'm like, man, where do I insert myself in this conversation? You know, are they even considering that I'm part of the conversation? And since I don't even speak it, you know.

For both Rose and Vanessa, it was surprising and jarring to enter a space hoping to meet others and find a community only to be met with an unwelcoming and unfriendly
environment. While some had positive experiences, others’ involvement – or lack thereof – caused them to unexpectedly question their Pilipina identity. Factors of the CMS that aligned with much of what was shared were the dynamics of within-group discrimination and internalized cultural/ethnic inferiority. One of the factors that the CMS measures is the perception or belief that less Americanized Pilipinxes are viewed more negatively than those who have assimilated, but what I noticed was that the assumed differences, or the privileging of some elements of Pilipina identities and the exclusion of certain individuals, caused a divide and prevented students from building relationships or finding a sense of community, which is colonial in nature. For example, some students did not feel as though they were Pilipina “enough” to belong and engage in the student organization space, especially if they did not speak a language like Tagalog, fluently. The gatekeeping of culture and identity contributed to a lack of cohesion among the Pilipina and Pilipinx students and enabled problematic assumptions and behaviors. It also appeared that the feelings of discrimination influenced a feeling of inferiority or lack of worthiness and it did not feel fair that fellow students could decide, whether intentionally or not, who got to belong and who did not. And, as presented earlier, colonialism created and enforced a hierarchy that intentionally privileged some and simultaneously marginalized and oppressed others. While the dynamics that emerged in the student spaces slightly deviated from the description of within-group discrimination, I assert that the colonial history of the stratified social order informed the way the students were or were not included in the student organization space. The participants felt they were unfairly othered because they did not fit into a more narrowly defined Pilipina identity.
Making Sense of and Resisting Colonial Mentality

While I primarily focused on exploring the ways colonial mentality manifested in the lives of the participants, I also discovered that participants were able to name colonial mentality and, in many cases, they acted against colonial mentality. As I read and re-read transcripts and continuously saw how participants learned new knowledge, asked questions, reflected on their experiences, and pursued answers, I felt as though the decolonization framework’s stages of Naming, Reflection, and Action (Strobel, 2001) came alive. The Naming stage happens when an individual is able to identify the impact of colonialism on their identity and their life. The Reflection stage occurs when one is able to think critically about how colonialism has affected their life and that of their community and develop the agency to create change. In the Action stage, one commits to giving back to the Pilipinx American community, supports others in their decolonization journeys, and encourages the community to address colonial mentality together.

What is presented here provides evidence that participants did not accept the colonial narratives at face value despite growing up with those messages all around them. Even as young girls, many, if not all, of the participants indicated that they did not buy into a colonial mentality, but were not necessarily able to begin to make sense of it all until they were participants in this study and had the opportunity to talk about their life stories and learn more about history. Though not all of them had heard of colonial mentality before participating in the study, they could nonetheless distinguish and name behaviors that were colonial in nature. They were able to express and reflect on their concerns, questions, and frustrations, and react against colonial mentality, particularly counter to cultural shame and embarrassment and internalized cultural/ethnic inferiority. These findings clearly reflected
the Naming and Reflection stages of decolonization (Strobel, 2001) while the Action stage was less evident, and this is due to the time participants spent recalling memories to see if or how they could draw connections between colonial mentality and their lived experiences. Importantly, these stages are expressed in the findings in relation to both participants’ experiences prior to this study and in the context of our interviews.

When asked about her experience with fellow Pilipinx people, Vanessa talked about how she never really felt shame, but did notice when others felt embarrassed about their identities, and questioned why or how others felt ashamed:

I remember in fifth grade, I kind of wanted to bring my own school lunch and so I would bring Filipino food and I wasn't really ashamed of it, really. I just wanted to eat. So, yeah…I don't point fingers, but, you have to consider, is it because the parents didn't really teach them that stuff or something happened, like in the kid's childhood, where they grew up, where they had to swallow their traditions and not even be proud of it. I don't know… I noticed meeting people in college, other Filipino people, it’s like you meet some Filipinos who are kind of ashamed of being Filipino [and] are not really wanting to engage with others.

One of the hallmark traits of colonial mentality, and a factor that is measured on the CMS, is feeling or expressing shame in one’s Pilipina identity. Several participants reflected on this type of shame, including Vanessa. From a young age, she felt grounded in her identity and could name when others were feeling shame or noticed behaviors and attitudes that she perceived to be harmful or problematic, sometimes even pointing them out to others, including her mother, by saying “that’s so colonial.” This was illuminating because I had not necessarily anticipated participants to have clarity around what they deemed harmful when it
came to colonial values. Just like how Jojo strived to align herself with the identities she felt strongly about and to shed the toxic ones, Vanessa could differentiate what she felt were significant versus what she considered to be negative or harmful.

Meanwhile, my conversations with Rose served as the very first time she heard of the term colonial mentality, but like Vanessa, she also had an awareness and understanding of it:

It’s my first time hearing it [colonial mentality], but it made sense. You know, like when they described it [in the readings that were provided], I was like, oh, we have a term for it?...So yeah, that's what I saw [and] I was like, wow, you know, that's so true, that is so true that there's so many Filipinos that have colonial mentality. I think that's why I don't really like being around that many Filipinos because they have this ideology that's ingrained in them and it just doesn't sit right with me.

It is important to note that while Rose had not known the precise language around colonial mentality prior to our dialogues, she was still very much aware of the beliefs and behaviors associated with it. Knowing that this was the first time for her to learn about the term, colonial mentality, and more about the psychological phenomenon, helps to gauge where students were in their awareness. It also serves as a reminder that she and others may have a clear awareness despite not knowing the exact language. With the introduction of the term, followed by reflection and our conversations, Rose was able to put language to and name her experience and observations, and it helped her to process, reflect on, and understand her own feelings around why she had had difficulty with engaging with certain Pilipinx individuals. In our conversation, she felt very strongly against the problematic behaviors that having a colonial mentality perpetuates, and it is unfortunate that that drove a wedge between her and others, ultimately preventing relationships and a sense of a community to be formed. Not
only can colonial mentality directly inform individuals’ lives, but it can also affect the way individuals interact with each other, depending on one’s embodiment of the mentality or not.

Korinne also talked about colonial mentality from a similar perspective, but emphasized how prevalent it was to the point where it seemingly existed like the air around us:

It's so ingrained that it's unquestioned. It's not even a mentality or it's not colonial mentality. It's like ‘the’ mentality. Just like how you think and feel. And I feel like it's really most questioned by those of us who moved here.

It was interesting to hear Korinne refer to colonial mentality as “the” mentality, as though to her it was the standard, and to think or behave differently would be a deviation from what is considered the norm. Her understanding from her experiences was that most, if not every, Pilipinx person has some degree of colonial mentality and that moving away from the Philippines then provided her a critical opportunity to question it. Korinne was able to describe how Pilipinx people ascribed to colonial ideals by recognizing how they would shame oneself or others, or privileging White features, and more.

When I asked participants more pointedly about the differences between generations, especially as daughters, Vanessa shared:

I feel like that's something we as Filipino Americans, have to grow up with Filipino parents who are very embedded in the ways. And so, there's this bridge that's, you know, you have to find the middle. But then you [are] also like, even if you try to educate them, sometimes it's harder because they're so used to [their] ways being how it's always been.
Vanessa thus acknowledged that a divide between the generations exists but thought about the possibility of creating a middle ground despite the difficulties that inevitably come with those types of conversations. Teresa felt differently and shared that, sometimes, for the sake of her relationship with her mother in particular, she would rather not try and build the bridge that Vanessa referenced:

For me, it's like, whoa, they really grew up in a different era. My parents grew up in a different place… I feel that my parents are very set in their ways. And the messages that they were telling me as a young adolescent kid have been pretty consistent, pretty conservative. Yeah, I don't think I've seen any growth, which is scary to say out loud. I kind of gave up with my mom. Honestly, I don't think it's worth the emotional labor to try to have these conversations [and I’m] going to protect our relationship as mother and daughter and try not to spark any conflict.

Both Vanessa and Teresa named how entrenched their parents and their generation were in their beliefs and ways of life – the majority of which are rooted in colonial Spanish and U.S. values that arose due to colonization – and that seeing alternatives is likely not a possibility. Friction often occurs between generations and for Vanessa, Teresa, and the others to resist, question, or educate can be futile due to how long their parents have been indoctrinated and the accompanying unwillingness to change.

As the participants were sharing their stories, each came to different realizations and moments of clarity at different points during our conversations, and one that recurred was that no one had ever asked them about their life story, nor did they ever have an intentionally constructed space to reflect, make meaning of their narratives, and really name and grapple
with colonial mentality or the colonial messages that have informed their lives in order to heal. Rose shared:

Honestly, as we're talking about this, I’m realizing a lot of things… I'm looking back and I'm like, I was questioning, or you know, I was never, I think I always had questions, but I never really tried to acknowledge it, that I had some questions about my culture.

Similarly, for Teresa, our conversations were the first time she ever verbalized some of her thoughts and experiences. She told me:

All your questions were so, they really made me think about things that I hadn't really said out loud ever, which I really appreciate… Yeah, I think putting, I don't know, just putting labels on things in that way is really useful. There's so much utility there… and I appreciate you for creating the space for me to do this thinking.

Both Rose and Teresa sincerely appreciated being able to process their identities in the interviews and what it means to be Pilipina American. And until they had the time to reflect and a proper space to process, they both were unable to acknowledge the questions they had pondered over the years. What they shared indicated to me that though Pilipinas may not always be actively seeking a space, if it is built for them, they will come.

Some participants, like Astrid, talked about their appreciation for the interviews because they were able to learn information they never knew:

I think it's like if I didn't do this interview with you, Kristine, and if I didn't read about this, I think I would still have no knowledge of Filipino culture. I think after this interview with you, I can actually have a better, I actually have knowledge now of what my culture is really about. Wow… Filipino culture is not something a lot of
people look into, but definitely needs a lot more attention. And I think what you're doing is amazing. I think it's a great way of sharing the culture with other people.

Astrid was incredibly grateful to learn more about her Filipina identity and culture, especially because she had not had other opportunities to do so prior to her involvement in the interviews. For her, it was about discovery and she left our conversations feeling more grounded in her understanding of herself. She also emphasized the importance of highlighting our history and community given that we are hardly recognized in mainstream curricula.

Mila felt a shared experience to Astrid, but also noted that our conversations were important not only for learning history, but also for challenging colonial narratives:

I'm glad you're having this sort of research study to share information and ways to have such conversations, because I feel like the target population that you are interviewing could just as easily, like I said earlier, coast through without asking questions and just accept the American wisdom… And then it just, kind of with time and generations, erases what we used to be.

I appreciate Mila sharing this sentiment because she thought not only about herself and her learning, but also about how our discussions also took aim at countering colonial mentality and the harmful values that have been passed on over time. Strobel (2001) wrote in the Naming stage that to heal the self is to heal culture, and when the participants described how meaningful our conversations and the study in general were, it felt like a decolonizing and healing process. The Reflection stage became apparent as they shared and processed new realizations about how colonial mentality had shaped their lives. The Action stage, however, was less distinct here. The interview process and the questions I offered encouraged the
students to reach back into their memory bank which produced a more natural connection with the Naming and Reflecting stages. Though, these stages are critical with setting up individuals to move into taking action.

If we are able to have more spaces focused on learning, decolonizing, and healing, then there is the possibility and hope that history can be preserved and passed on in a more truthful and meaningful way. Not having the opportunities, especially when we are younger, to help with making meaning of all our experiences enables the persistence of colonial mentality. I am glad that by being a participant and contributing to my study, the students were able to have a meaningful and decolonizing experience – one that is unique from any other space they experienced before.

**Self-Led Agency to Learn: Countering Colonial Mentality**

While reviewing my conversations with the participants, I also explored any efforts that more specifically countered colonial messages and colonial mentality. The previous section presented how the participants came into their awareness and understanding of colonial mentality, whereas here I discuss how the participants took action to counter colonial mentality. As presented in Strobel’s decolonization framework, behaviors like recognizing colonialism, or questioning how colonialism has affected one’s life, are all part of the decolonizing process. And what surfaced was that participants were self-motivated to engage in decolonizing actions, reflecting the Action stage of the decolonization framework. What I noticed is that a more specific way participants countered colonial mentality was to seek information on their own. Since learning about the Philippines or Pilipinx American history was nonexistent in school, instead of accepting the dearth of information, participants displayed the curiosity and agency to go forth and learn on their own. This was a powerful
expression of engagement in decolonizing action. They independently sought information elsewhere. For some, it was through family, while others utilized school assignments or projects, and yet others joined an opportunity offered by their community. As I think back to my own experiences in school, I remember feeling a range of thoughts, including, is this all that I get to know or learn about my community? I think there were moments where I swayed between feeling the same excitement that participants shared, but also questioning the legitimacy or worthiness of our history. Referring to the CMS, one factor describes Pilipinx individuals feeling shame and embarrassment and another factor is characterized by feeling inferior to U.S. or Spanish culture, but the actions of my study’s participants suggest that they were not exactly experiencing what I had felt but, rather, were acting counter to colonial mentality. It is also important for me to note that the actions presented in this section are behaviors that occurred prior to their involvement in this study. As youth prior to the college experience, the participants were already engaging in action to counter colonial narratives.

Rose and Vanessa both had family members that were either interested or well-versed in history and served as a resource for them to nurture their interest. Vanessa’s grandfather was a history teacher and so she had the opportunity to learn from him and her uncles. As a result, she grew up feeling like she was surrounded by conversations on the Philippines and its history. Because of this knowledge shared with her family, Vanessa remembered being able to name how lacking her classes were in school, and how she knew so much more than what was offered. She had taken AP U.S. History in high school, and though her instructor had good intentions and was more progressive in their pedagogy, she was left feeling dissatisfied, and she would ask her family members for more information or she took it upon herself to look up answers. Similarly, Rose described herself as curious and noted that her
father was a history junkie and because of his interest, he was able to tell her more about the Philippines:

He's really like a history junkie. And he always knew, he kind of explained to me, a little bit of Pilipinx history. You know, he talked about Jose Rizal and wanting to always go to the Magellan Cross or [where] Lapu-Lapu [was] and all that… I think my family was really in touch with our culture, so we had questions, they just talked about it... I think a lot of Pilipinxs are really passionate about, you know, what's his name, [when] MacArthur came. They, let me tell you, they look at him as their savior. You know?… Most of the people, especially my dad, he always, you know, they talk about, oh my God, they came in, you know, the Spaniards left because of him, and we were free…if my dad wasn't such a history junkie, I don't think I would have known [much]. But I've always been really curious about my culture and just trying to understand it more. Yeah, it's always just been something I've been curious about.

Rose’s father was thus able to tell her about different historical moments and his stories ranged the gamut. Interestingly and not surprisingly, like what is typically discussed in school, the presence of the U.S. was highly valued by Pilipinxs. Rose named General MacArthur, a well-known U.S. military leader during World War II, and she talked about how popular he is among Pilipinxs and how he is often seen as the one who “helped” the Philippines. Though he is known for his role in the Pacific during World War II, it was interesting to learn from Rose that she had been taught that he liberated the Philippines from Spain.

Another way the participants learned about the Philippines was through their creative and action-oriented engagement in school assignments, but not assignments that were
specific to the Philippines. Similar to Jojo’s experience, Mila utilized assignments to further her own self-guided learning:

It was a project where you have to make a presentation about a certain country. One of my other friends and I did the Philippines and I had a traditional dress-type thing shipped in with all the flowers and the see-through type top thing and the bandana on top. And then we made lumpia and we made that presentation. And that's the first instance where I self-motivated. It was self-motivated learning of the Philippines on my part. And then in high school, I had another project and we had to take a picture that was meaningful to us or could help hold some sort of message and write a paper about it. And I ended up taking a picture of my cousin and we're only a couple of months apart. She's also female, but the only difference is that she lives in the Philippines. I live here in the U.S., but other than that, a lot of our lives are very reflective of one another.

Mila was always interested to learn more about her identity and took it upon herself to make meaning of her experiences and also share about her culture and narrative. She, like other participants, saw value in her experiences and wanted to share it with others.

In another representation of action through learning, Teresa actively sought opportunities to learn about her Pilipina American identity, all of which were not part of her formal schooling experience:

I didn't do too much thinking about my identity as a Filipino American in my school setting, I would say that mostly my family, and external educational opportunities were more formative for me than the school setting, at least before college…I did take this language course over the summer in eighth grade, [a] Tagalog language
course...I was 13. I would take the bus to this random community center an hour away and spend a few hours every Sunday learning Tagalog and [it] was really awesome for me. And I know how much I liked that experience [and it] made me want to continue to develop my understanding of my identity as a Filipino. So my junior year of high school, I interned at the Natural History Museum and worked with their Filipino collection. So we were working to help digitize a lot of the artifacts that they had in the world. But I guess from that experience, I met a lot of really cool Filipinos and academia as a 16-year-old. So I guess those two experiences were formative...[Now] in college, it's been really awesome to be able to be the person that I looked up to in those spaces as a young person...It just reminds me of how important it is to, at least now, I mean, still now to continue to pursue education outside of the formal setting and take it in your into your own hands... that the institutionalized forms of education aren't always right.

Like her fellow Pinays, Teresa did not have adequate opportunities to learn about history and she searched for knowledge elsewhere and the spaces that she found were transformative for her.

Who is a Pilipina?: Piecing Together a Fractured Identity

I felt extraordinarily privileged to hold space with each participant as we grappled with our identities, trying to make sense of who we are. While much of my study’s focus has been on colonial mentality and the ways it informs the lives of the participants, I offer this section to highlight how the participants actively engaged in the readings and in our dialogues in a decolonizing manner to really question their identities and histories.
The participants and I talked at length about identity during our time together and what emerged time and time again, particularly after reading the passages provided for the second individual interviews, was the feeling of loss of identity due to colonialism and colonial mentality. One of the readings that I shared, titled, Betwixt and Between Colonial and Postcolonial Mentality: The Hidden Curriculum of Colonial Education and American Benevolence (Leonardo & Matias, 2013) described how colonial education was weaponized and fundamentally redefined the Pilipinx identity and diaspora. The quote that closed the passage, which was also particularly moving for the participants was, “There exists no box to check, because the box was originally placed there for them [Pilipinx people] and not designed by them. Yet in realizing this, they also now have the opportunity to redefine their identity” (Matias as cited in Bonus & Maramba, 2013). This quote really challenged the participants yet provided clarity for them to think more deeply and critically about how the role of colonialism and colonial mentality played in their understanding of themselves.

Teresa described seeking identity as a constant search. She asked the questions, “What is the origin? What is the original Filipino like? What is the true Filipino?” Mila wondered similarly, saying that no one really knows what an “authentic Filipino is” and also presented the question, “What exactly am I yearning for?” It is hard to want to know more about oneself when it all feels amorphous and unknown. Jojo also shared:

Being educated on the background of it [colonization] just makes me think how it was forced on us. And that’s why I think the way I do, and it shaped my life so much. It's really hard to come to grips with everything… colonialism enforced the sense of both, a new identity was forced upon us. But also Filipinos became more resistant to it and
wanted to oppose it as well. So where is, where is our true sense of identity? I really
do question, what does it mean to be Filipino?

Astrid offered a very similar reflection:

But otherwise with the whole colonization thing, that was just a mind-blowing
moment for me. But at the same time, I feel like the U.S. should have not really
interfered with it because, of course, the culture is so confusing now. Where do we
stand in terms of our own culture?... What is a real Filipino at this point?

These quotations reflect a deep struggle with searching through the past, accepting who we
are now, but would that mean we are accepting colonial ideals? Jojo, who is gay but has a
salient Catholic identity, struggled with knowing the religion’s colonial roots and
homophobic ideals, while Astrid named how confusing it can all feel when talking about
identity and our history. Vanessa asked more specifically:

They [the authors of a reading] kind of talk about how the Filipinos, they were taught
that their culture is obsolete, and they have to conform to the American or Western
cultures. And so, who are we now without our colonizer[s]? It's so embedded in our
history.

While Teresa, Mila, and Jojo wrestled with the idea of authenticity and whether or not it is
even possible to reach the innermost and truest layer, Vanessa framed our community in an
almost symbiotic-like relationship – can we even exist separately from our colonizers? Is that
even a possibility? And what does this mean for our psyche if Pilipinas see themselves as a
byproduct and not an independent entity?
Beyond questioning, Rose expressed anger and frustration upon reading the passages, mainly around the destructive nature of colonialism and the possibility of returning to what once was:

We don't really know, our sense of belonging, because of how many people have conquered us and that is so true. I felt such a deep connection to that [reading]. And it was just a bit frustrating that it's so hard to really go back to your roots because of all the people [colonizers] involved.

And because it is presumably difficult or even impossible to go back to our roots, she continued to share:

A lot of us have accepted it [colonial mentality]. Yeah, I think we also can't really go back [before colonization] because I think a lot of us have just accepted it…I feel like this sense of identity was, it's gone. In a way, they, we kind of just picked up other people's culture and turned it into our own [but it] was not actually ours. Yeah, that's where I kind of feel a little bit ashamed anyway, because I can say that this is my culture, but it's only my culture because of the people that took over our country, you know? Yeah, it's pretty rough.

Talking with Rose and the other participants and supporting them to process the range of emotions really resonated with my own journey of learning and unlearning. Lamenting the loss of identity can feel overwhelming especially when it feels new and unknown, but being able to recognize the problematic nature of colonialism is a critical part of the decolonization journey.

Moving beyond the sense of loss and seeking new knowledge are also a significant part of the journey and every student was explicit in their interest in learning more
indigenous history, especially after having been introduced to just one short passage on indigenous people living in Mactan before Spanish colonization and then being able to draw connections to their current lives. In this way, my interviews with the participants made way for the possibility of future action. The passage described equity among genders – a far cry from Spanish and U.S. colonial ideals. Women could “own property, engage in trade and industry, and often holding high positions in society such as a babaylan, who were regarded as the healers, shamans, wisdom- keepers, philosophers, and spiritual leaders of a balangay. Women were deeply respected and valued by the indigenous Tao, and it is even customary for men to walk behind women in order to show respect” (Agoncillo, 1974 in David, 2013, p. 11). After reading the passages, Teresa shared:

I [had] a sense that colonialism had something to do with the patriarchal structure of the Philippines, but honestly, didn't really know how that looked. So that was cool to see how the women would be followed by the men and be respected in that way. [It] really, really struck me.

After having read the passage that focused on women and gender, Teresa’s suspicions were confirmed, and she was shocked to learn about how different society had been. It was stunning to the participants to learn that the gendered expectations that we see or experience in the present day are in contrast to what it once was, and it frustrated them. This reaction was shared by all the participants, which speaks to how limited our collective knowledge of indigenous history is. This one sliver of history whetted their appetite and indicated to me that they had a deep interest in learning more. It allowed them to imagine differently than before.
In addition to learning about colonial gender norms, Mila wanted to know more about different elements of indigenous society, like their forms of education:

I’ve only grown up in Western education systems, and this is just my lack of knowledge, I want to know what non-Western education systems look[ed] like or what it used to look like in the Philippines or in those little pockets of Indigenous tribes and villages that we were talking about earlier. Did they focus so much on book knowledge or was it more practical knowledge?

Looking into the window of the past prompted Mila to think, if the concepts of gender are so different now, then what was the rest of society like? And since we also discussed colonial education and how the United States transformed the Philippines’ educational systems, how did indigenous communities educate one another before colonialism? Questions such as these ended up leading to more questions. And of all the participants, the only one who had a broader grasp on indigenous ways of living was Jojo, not because she learned material in school, but because she had an Igorot friend, and she was able to have conversations with her about identity and history. Jojo sharing about her relationship with her friend also helps to provide the visibility and advocacy for and with Indigenous individuals and communities. Indigenous peoples are not relics of the past, despite what colonial narratives try to convey.

From questioning who we are as Pilipinas, through experiencing feelings of shock and frustration, to interrogating how our realities were constructed by colonial mentality, participants then also wondered – is it even possible to decolonize? What does it even mean? Mila talked about decolonization as:

[It’s a] kind of untangling the intertwined [like what] we talked about, distancing ourselves or at least being able to separate what used to be American influence from
Spanish influence from what's actually Filipino. And I guess it comes with trying to understand who we are as a community, but then this circles back to, are we this new sort of community? Is it even possible to decolonize?... What would we find?

Mila thus understood decolonization as process of pulling apart pieces that have been locked together, but also offered the critical question around what we would end up being when all the tangles are gone. Korinne felt strongly about remembering that our history as Pilipinxes did not start with Spain’s arrival:

One thing to really get decolonization going is learning your history, because I feel like it's so important. And I feel like with the way colonization goes, [it’s] like you feel like you don't have one. And I feel like that really shapes your identity as a person, being Filipino specifically. I think it really shapes your identity, whether you're like, well, you know, we've always been colonized, I guess that's what it is. And it's, it's not, there was a history before [colonization] and there's a history after. And what you're doing now will be history later. And I think it's so important to talk about what happened [in the past] to deconstruct all the harmful ideas that it planted.

I appreciated the questioning – and the dreaming that was leading to future action. As Mila, Korinne, and others spoke of their own unique understandings of decolonization, it was evident to me that this was a new realm for them. They were willing to engage in conversations that centered on centuries of colonialism, colonial mentality, and their stories, even if it felt unfamiliar, confusing, and frustrating. But it also felt powerful, radical, and hopeful for the actions these Pilipina women will undertake to further engage in the journey of decolonization.
Engaging in their own stories and the introduction to literature on history and colonial mentality positioned them to begin taking action by asking questions that they had never really contemplated before. The interview space allowed them to begin connecting the dots, and as the fuller image came into view, they felt like they could confront the colonial narratives that have shaped their own lives.

**Bayanihan Community Dialogue Findings**

Convening the participants in one space after having conversed with each of them individually felt surreal and empowering. I initially felt a mix of excitement and uneasiness because I was unsure about how a group of students who were presumably strangers to each other would feel about sharing their narratives, especially since it usually requires some level of trust and vulnerability. Despite all the nerves and anticipation, however, the conversation flowed effortlessly. Guided by Strobel’s (2001) decolonization framework that is organized into three parts, Naming, Reflection, and Action, I conducted two Bayanihan Community Dialogues with the seven Pilipina American college students who participated in my study with the hope that they could collectively discuss colonial mentality, reflect upon the ways it has affected their lives, and engage in decolonization to re-envision what our community can be. What follows are excerpts from our conversations. The participants were willing to be vulnerable and brave with sharing their stories and it quickly became evident how meaningful the dialogue was for them because of actual gathering space to be in community with others with shared identities and experiences.

Having the opportunity to talk individually and then collectively allowed the students to be reflective in ways that they had not been afforded in the past, especially in relation to their experiences with colonial mentality and decolonization. Individually, their experiences
sometimes felt as though they happened in an isolated way. But being in community with one another led to a realization that this was indeed a shared experience of naming, reflecting, and acting. The students offered each other questions about history, they shared examples of how colonial mentality or colonial messages surfaced throughout their lives, and how the group dialogue was affirming, decolonizing, and meaningful. Here I present three key findings, including 1) Naming Colonial Messages and Loss, 2) Reflecting Upon the Past, and Taking Action for the Future, and 3) Discovery and Growth through Storytelling and Community. Through the iterative process of reviewing and analyzing our conversations and with the three stages of the decolonization framework as a compass, these findings emerged as the most meaningful to convey the significance of the students’ participation in this study.

**Naming Colonial Messages and Loss**

The feeling of loss and questioning of identity re-emerged in the Bayanihan dialogue and all the participants shared very similar feelings; however, what was different was that the experience was relational. Instead of an individual reflection, the students engaged in a collective grappling with identity and how their lives were informed by colonial mentality or colonial messages, and they could share stories, name their struggles, and affirm one another’s experiences. An example of this was when the conversation shifted to discussing how the English language was prioritized as they were growing up, and the challenges that came with it. I witnessed the energy of the interconnected nature of their lived experiences and how they provided each other a sense of comradery and support. The stories flowed from one participant to the next as the sharing of memories from one person helped to awaken another. Jojo shared:
Yeah, come to think of it…it's just so many things were lost. Like the fact that we had to learn English coming to this country. I used to be able to speak Tagalog fluently when I was two…And there were home videos of me speaking it fluently that I saw recently. And just so many things that were lost…I'm not blaming them [my parents] or anything but … and I was surrounded by other Pilipino parents too and why didn't they teach their kids?…I just feel like coming to America, there are so many cultural pressures that we have to face, learning English as one example, we kind of lose our language in that. And there's other examples, too. But probably even things that happened to me as a child that I didn't even register, like me losing aspects of my culture. And that kind of makes me sad. But it made me who I am today. And I guess it's important to reflect on that.

Jojo reflected on the loss of her ability to speak Tagalog fluently and how English replaced her main language. At the time, when she was a child, it was not anything she could name or understand, but as she talked through the memory in the dialogue, she was able to name and recognize the impact of her past on who she had become. And while she lamented the loss, she still remained optimistic because all that had happened still created who she was. Mila quickly followed with her own memory:

That reminds me of when I was, well my mom told me this, I did not remember, because she said that when I was in, I think either preschool or kindergarten, she was having this parent-teacher conference with my teacher. And the teacher was saying, like, I don't participate. I kind of just sit there and look around all spacey. And the teacher asked my mom, do you speak with her in English at home? And my mom, who came from the Philippines with me, she was like, no, I only speak in Tagalog to
her. And the teacher said, oh, I wouldn't do that anymore. So then, ever since then, I just never learned Tagalog, like entirely…She indirectly kind of disconnected and severed that connection between my own culture and kind of who I became.

Upon hearing Jojo’s thoughts, Mila thus recalled that a similar experience had happened to her, though it had been her mother to tell her the story. Mila, like Jojo, indicated that the loss or disconnect that happened a number of years ago still very much influenced who she has grown up to be. They both framed learning English and losing their ability to speak Tagalog as negative experiences, wishing that they were able to retain their native tongue.

Astrid added to the dialogue with her own childhood experience:

I can relate to Mila there. I do remember I understood Tagalog [and Ilocano and Bicolano] and that's because of Pilipino teleseries, my parents made me sing in a choir for church. So I kind of picked up Pilipino words, but I just could never speak it fluently…But I remember I was ok at English, but then, it's so weird, like, I think this was just a weird moment for me. But I was in elementary school. They had to put me in a separate classroom and that just made me feel really, I don't know. It made me question why am I different from the other kids? And they're trying to teach me English and I'm like, I'm fine in English…But then I later realized that ELA [English language arts] classes were for students that lived with parents who are immigrants. And they just come to this automatic assumption that just because I lived with immigrant parents means that I wasn’t fluent [in English]…I don't know, it was a sad moment for me as a little kid. Like, why did you put me in a different classroom?

Astrid offered her experience that also occurred while she was a young child in grade school, and talked through what it was like for her to be perceived as a non-English speaker, and the
process of being separated from her main classroom to take specific classes to ensure that she would learn English – even though she already knew how to. The negotiation of identity as a young Pilipina student in a predominantly White environment was challenging and having to experience it without support was difficult.

While it does not appear that the participants internalized a belief that English is superior or a sense of shame around their identity, the colonial message presented to the participants was that by living in the U.S., the expectation was that English was to be learned at the cost of losing the language(s) they had also grown up with. It was made clear, whether intentional or not, that Tagalog, Ilocano, or Bicolano were inferior and less important to retain when compared to learning English. What was happening during this segment and throughout the dialogue was the naming of the range of feelings the participants were experiencing as they recalled their memories, and then recognized and understood how the loss of language had affected them. Strobel (2001), in her decolonization framework, wrote that in the Naming stage, decolonizing looks like being able to talk about and understand the loss of language and its effect on identity and, in the Reflecting stage, she wrote that to decolonize is to understand the need to question a reality constructed by colonial narratives and the need to reconnect with one’s culture. So while the perceived importance and superiority of English had disconnected the students from a part of their Pilipino identity, sharing their stories and being able to name and reflect in the present day provided them a unique and critical opportunity for them to begin a reconnection with their languages and self.

The collective processing of indigenous history and colonization also produced shared reactions, and the group space offered the additional opportunity to revisit the
conversations held in the individual interviews. Being with peers allowed them to continue questioning what felt puzzling or shocking to them. Jojo brought up the readings from the second individual interview:

The passages from the second interview were very interesting because they opened my eyes to the fact that there was this whole other way of thinking before colonization was a thing. And it's completely different from how we are today. And there's just so much of a disconnect. I didn't realize how we got from point A to B because everything was just lost in history. And that's really crazy to think about what was [the] Philippines like without colonization?

Similarly, Vanessa responded:

That was my same reaction to reading that. I was like, man, in this literature, we [women] are strong, we are powerful, this and that. And then now, we're taught we're going to have a husband who will take care of us and this and that. And it's crazy how we go from that to this.

While Rose participated in a different community dialogue, the topics of indigenous history and a grappling with a loss of identity also emerged:

Oh, [we thought] this is like Pilipino ways, but actually, it's really not, and that's so frustrating. I don’t even want to talk about lechon right now because that's also not really a Filipino thing, to be honest. And it's just like, oh, like what? You know, what's really Pilipino? That's my question, because I feel like what's considered Pilipino right now is not even ours, to be honest.

Similar to the discussion on learning English and the loss of Pilipino languages, the participants shared their reactions to learning just a small segment of indigenous history and
the effects of colonization. Again, referring to the decolonization framework to better understand how they were processing the information, the participants were able to name the confusion, anger, and shock they were feeling; they reflected on the ways colonial mentality and colonial legacies shaped their realities that led to feelings of loss; and took action by questioning on the role of colonization had on forming the Pilipina identity and pushing back against the colonial narrative in order to imagine how they want their futures to be.

**Reflecting Upon the Past and Taking Action for the Future**

Throughout the Bayanihan dialogues, while much of the conversation was spent talking about the past, the subject of the future also emerged. The participants eagerly spoke of how different they hoped the future would be, some of them thinking about what traits and knowledge they would want to pass to the next generation while others asked me about my experience as a mother who is raising a daughter. Our dialogues traveled from acknowledging the variety of losses they were just learning to name and describe, to asking ourselves: Well, where do we go from here? From acknowledging this pain, what can our collective learning and healing look and feel like for us now and for those who come after us (Strobel, 2001)? Korinne first talked about timing because, during a period of her life, she felt unsure about different parts of her identity as a Pilipina, but at the time of our discussion, she felt more confident as she thought of the future:

I think talking about coming to this knowledge now, I think, you [Kristine] kind of came at the right time where I think, now I'm fit with the resources and enough life experience to be able to do something with this information. Because I feel like back in high school, I was still trying to be someone else and trying to not really focus on the fact that I was Pilipino. So I feel like now I'm more comfortable with the
knowledge that I have… There is a new generation of Pilipino people who are able to get an education, but I also think there are so many people who don't know the past being colonized because I, even myself, had no idea that we have these [indigenous] values and then we were colonized…all the terrible things we carry now probably were taught to us purely for the reason so that it would be easier to colonize us. And I think… it kind of puts you in perspective a bit more to what you can do now and how to do better.

Korinne thus acknowledged that she struggled in the past with claiming her Pilipina identity and the attempt to “be someone else” in addition to the lack of access to knowledge and a space to process prevented her from fully embracing herself. But at this point in her life, she felt more ready to take action for herself and for her community and being in the group space helped to inspire her. Rose also talked about timing and how she felt the time had arrived to define things differently, to be more open about who we are as a community, which ultimately can help to forge who we want to be:

This is our chance to be, to make things different and to make things more open. I think that kind of makes me have a little sense of liberation. Like, if I have a kid, I don't want them to have, you know this, the way I was raised and I want them to have these [different] values than I was raised in, just like picking out the pieces that I didn't like and [then] being able to give it to somebody is something that I feel is one step of, I guess, kind of like decolonization.

Rose believes that as a community we have to be able to question all that we know or what we have been told if we want to liberate ourselves from colonial narratives and expectations to redefine who we want to be. Rose, like others, throughout our dialogues reflected and
shared about the potential or imagined actions that she could take in the future to support the
next generation of Pilipina Americans. For Rose and others, when in the group setting, they
were able to imagine what their next action steps could or would be to re-envision
themselves and our community.

Mila expressed a similar sentiment but added a powerful reflection about having grown
up feeling like she knew nothing about herself:

I don't want my child to kind of be like me and know nothing or next to nothing,
especially compared to other people who have such a big Pilipino community. I'd
want to find opportunities and give my offspring the opportunity, if they would like
to, to kind of learn more of who they were rather than just completely try and
assimilate themselves into American culture.

Like Rose, Mila shared that she wanted differently for future generations. Beyond passing on
different values, she wanted to be able to provide the resources and opportunities for future
youth to learn about what it means to be Pilipino and resist the expectation or the pressure to
assimilate into dominant U.S. culture, which is what she felt like she had to do when she was
growing up.

Lastly, Vanessa, brought up the point that the next generation will not have parents
who are immigrants, rather, their parents will likely be U.S.-born. She worried about what it
would be like for her and the current generation to pass on what they know:

And in terms of next generations, it's very weird to me. I also speak about this with
other friends who have immigrant parents. And it's weird that the next generation,
their parents won't be immigrants. And that's a lot of pressure in terms of trying to
pass down what you know as your culture down to the next. And it's like trying to
simmer out, what do I want to carry out and what do I want to leave behind is a big question.

Vanessa, though she wanted to learn, decolonize, and help to create a different future for herself and future generations, was worried about what she will or should pass on and if it will be adequate. She and the others demonstrated their desire to remain connected to their Pilipina identities, and the movement of knowledge and stories between generations is something that they were cognizant about in order to not lose anymore along the way.

The participants naming colonial messages and the resulting feelings of loss, coupled with how they reflected upon the ways they can commit and act to create a different future and community that is more gentle, more open-minded and accepting, and more grounded in our indigenous histories, was like witnessing and engaging in the decolonization framework in real time. With an intentional space, knowledge, and guiding questions, participants took action by immersing themselves in the necessary self-work to move toward freeing themselves from the confines of colonial mentality and contribute to a community and future centered on love and liberation.

**Discovery and Growth Through Storytelling and Community**

While I had intentionally framed the experience to be reflective, decolonizing, and healing, it really moved me to hear the participants talk about how meaningful and transformative the community space was for them. Teresa shared:

I hope for more open dialogues like this. I hope to see more spaces for Pilipino American women to connect with each other in a really genuine way, like you did with this study, Kristine. I hope to see more representation [and] community building...I really love how your study is not only about the product, but it's the
process that is, yeah, we're talking about decolonization, but then the process that you are implementing is also decolonization. You aren't just trying to get our words and then run away. Yeah, it does feel like you care about the people that you're talking to… [and] I don't know, just thinking about education in general and its importance and how there's not enough spaces for Pilipina Americans to learn about their own histories is something that's been on my mind for sure.

When I initially set out to collect data for this study, I was not entirely sure how participants would receive the process given the level of commitment I was requesting. But it was profoundly affirming to hear Teresa leave the dialogue and complete her time in the study feeling like her participation benefited her. It is what I had hoped for. She recognized that the process truly was centered on them as students. She shared her realizations about the importance of creating spaces that bring Pinays together to connect and name our collective struggles, reflect and learn about history, and take action together. Mila offered a similar thought:

And I'm sure I'm speaking for all of us [here in the Bayanihan dialogue], but we have benefited from this [study]. We have the easy part. All we have to do is maybe like talk a little bit, answer more questions and maybe read a paragraph or two. [Kristine] you're the one who's doing all the research. And so we're the ones benefiting [by] finding this community, meeting people who otherwise I would not have met, and realizing that I am not alone. There are people just like me out there and it's normal to feel the way you are, and you shouldn't be ashamed of your own ethnicity. So, I'd like to thank you for that. And I'm sure we all feel the same.
Mila grew up in a predominantly White town and opportunities to meet with other Pilipinas hardly existed but being a participant in the study provided her a relational space that allowed her to realize that she was not alone. Her participation in the study helped her to feel like she belonged to a greater community. And it was meaningful for me to know that by conducting my study, I was able to provide a chance for her and the Pilipina American students to connect with each other that likely would not have happened otherwise. Jojo also shared:

And I can just tell that this [research] means a lot to you [Kristine] and it means a lot that you invited us to be part of your study and that we could take a part in it because I also learned a lot, and [I] came to terms with a lot of things about myself, through you. So, I wanted to thank you for that and for giving me a platform and a voice to say my experiences and everything.

It is not lost on me that Jojo, Mila, and Teresa all mentioned that through their interactions with me and their time participating in the study, they felt that I genuinely cared about them, their fellow Pinays, and my contribution to research and scholarship. I feel deeply thankful that the participants trusted me throughout the process and that through their involvement, they were able to name and grapple with tough questions, reflect on their learnings and realizations, and then imagine the actions that they would want to enact.

When designing this study, I had a heightened awareness of how my study could potentially become a one-way and self-serving process especially if it did not include elements of reciprocity or community. The manner in which studies are conducted can take on colonial behaviors if not thoughtful enough (Patel, 2016) and I certainly did not want to behave like a colonizer and demand so much of participants for my own benefit. I wanted the whole process to belong to us, meaning, though I was the researcher and they were the
participants, it was all rooted in the collective. I asked them to share their life stories with me, and in doing so, I hoped they would also be able to make meaning of the experiences and learn more about themselves. My way of giving back to the participants was then to offer a learning opportunity through the second interview with literature that was new to them, knowing that Pinays do not often get the chance to learn about their history in an authentic way. And lastly, with the group dialogue brought them together in one conversation so that they could connect and relate to each other’s stories and collectively imagine a different future, one that challenges colonial mentality and prevent toxic ideas from being passed on to the next generation.

**Summary of Findings**

This chapter presented the experiences of Pilipina American college students with colonial mentality and decolonization. The CMS (David & Okazaki, 2006b) helped with understanding how the five factors of colonial mentality emerged throughout their lives. Family and close communities served as the most influential source of messages rooted in colonial narratives and colonial mentality, participants sought knowledge about the Philippines and their culture independent from their curricula in school and, for some there were unexpected barriers to connecting with other Pilipinx students in college while others were able to more easily find community. Throughout their participation, the Pinays were also able to engage in a decolonizing process by individually and collectively naming and making meaning of colonial mentality and the corresponding feeling of identity loss to move toward action to re-envision our collective futures.

The individual and collective remembering of stories proved to be a powerful way for the participants to name the significance of their experiences, and what they had undergone
were defining moments of their childhoods, and consequently, informed their adult lives.

There was something special about being able to share a thought and then for others to enter into the dialogue and affirm each other with a related memory or reaction. It was evident that their experiences were very salient for them, but they are not often afforded the opportunity to share their stories and make meaning of it all for themselves. Being together in community allowed the participants to process different colonial messages they were surrounded by, contend with the effects of colonization and loss of history, and imagine a different way forward.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this narrative inquiry study was to explore the role colonial mentality may have in shaping the lived experiences of Pilipina American undergraduate students. This study also aimed to problematize the invisibility of Pilipina American narratives in higher education and illuminate how colonial mentality might shape the experiences of Pilipina American students. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What messages regarding identities, education, and career paths did Pilipina American college students receive throughout their lives from their families, peers, teachers, and other communities?
   a. What messages, if any, were rooted in colonial mentality?

2. How do Pilipina American college students make meaning of the messages they received while growing up?
   a. a. How do the results of their meaning-making processes inform their experiences in college and shape their values, perspectives, identity, and educational and career goals?

3. How do Pilipina American college students understand decolonization? How do they make meaning of indigenous, colonial, and Pilipinx American history?
For the design of the study, I was deeply inspired by Pinayism (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005) because of the commitment to creating a space to honor Pilipina American stories, and the decolonizing works of Strobel (2001), Halagao (2004), and David (2013) because I felt compelled to also construct an experience that engaged with history, decolonization, and healing through my participants’ individual and collective narratives. I also used the five factors of the CMS in an effort to explicitly name the ways colonial mentality influenced the lives of the participants. With Pinayism, Strobel’s decolonization framework, and the CMS, I was able to focus on the breadth and complexity of each Pinay’s story, discover how colonial mentality shaped their narratives, while engaging them in decolonizing experiences. The students involved in the study participated in two individual interviews with me; the first one primarily focused on their life stories, while the second interview was a conversation grounded by short readings on indigenous history, colonial education, and colonial mentality, with reflections on how the literature related to their lived experiences. The third interview space was the Bayanihan community dialogue where the students were brought together to connect with fellow participants with the intention of relating to one another’s narratives and imagining what our future could be for us and our greater community of Pilipina Americans.

This chapter makes meaning of the findings of the interviews and presents what I have learned about Pilipina American college students in this study. I discuss how colonial mentality stifles the way Pilipina American students are able to create their own sense of agency and identity and that the U.S. education system has been and continues to operate as fundamentally colonial and endorses colonial mentality. I also share the significance of the students’ participation in the study, mainly how the opportunity to participate in a decolonizing experience allowed them to grapple with the loss of identity to move into re-
envisioning a different future. And to visualize the decolonizing process, I offer a three-part framework – decolonizing experience, recognizing loss, and re-envisioning the future – that synthesizes the findings. This chapter also presents implications for student affairs administrators, teaching and curriculum, and theory, which is followed by possible areas of future research. Lastly, I close my dissertation in the same manner I opened it – with my narrative. I reflect on what I learned about myself throughout this doctoral journey, the elements that challenged me, and the ways it brought me hope for the future.

**Colonial Mentality Limits the Imagination**

My study’s findings built upon, amplified, complicated, and added significant nuances to the existing literature on colonial mentality among Pilipinx American people. For example, in one of the few studies that specifically focused on Pilipina American students and their experiences in college, Maramba (2008a) reported that the significant factors that played a role in the women’s lives included striving to balance obligations to their families, their Pilipina identities, the differences of their experiences in comparison to Pilipino men, and the demands of college. Additionally, literature in related fields like sociology, social work, and psychology (David et al, 2013; Espiritu, 2001; Ferrera, 2011; Nadal, 2009; Root, 1997) include more information on the colonial context that frames the Pilipinx American experience, especially how families and parents often endorse colonial messages and colonial mentality (David, 2013; David & Nadal, 2013; Ferrera, 2011). As informed by my participants’ narratives and dialogues in this study, it is evident how the rhetoric and gendered expectations my participants were surrounded by were indeed rooted in the colonial values thrust on the Philippines by its colonizers. Specifically, my findings related to rigid expectations, being treated differently from Pilipino men, feelings of having to repay a
sacrifice, how exceptionally limited the and U.S.-centric and Eurocentric history was taught in school was, all attempt to define the ways Pilipina Americans are expected to think and behave, driven by the expectations of colonial mentality. Equally importantly, participants’ families and surrounding communities served as the main sources of learning and understanding of their Pilipina American identities.

While much of what the participants shared with me very much aligns with existing research in higher education literature and in associated fields (Maramba, 2008a & 2008b; Museus & Maramba, 2011; Nadal, 2009), the findings of this study highlighted very specific and damaging ways in which the extensive colonial history of the Philippines deeply shaped the experiences of Pilipina American college students. Importantly, when participants described the messages and expectations that were heteronormative, sexist, homophobic, and conservative in nature, those messages were all rooted in colonial mentality because the origins of the expectations emerged from the toxic and patriarchal ways of machismo and marianismo, and the heteronormative and homophobic beliefs of Catholicism that had been brought to the Philippines by Spanish colonizers (David, 2013; David et al., 2017).

My study was motivated by my deep and personal interest in learning why the messages we receive as Pinays continue to exist in their current form. From learning about indigenous history and how religion and education were used to subordinate the indigenous peoples of the islands now known as the Philippines, accompanied by the narratives of the participants, I feel strongly that Pilipina American students are still, in the present day, a product of the colonial mold. Colonizers fought to replace indigenous ways of living and these are the very ideals that Pilipinas, and Pilipinx people in general, with colonial mentality still ascribe to today.
Additionally, the overarching and unchallenged assumption that the United States is the proverbial land of opportunity and that we must always be grateful to the country reinforced the participants’ desire to repay their parents and families for all the sacrifices they had made. Parents and relatives often promote the colonial mentality that they themselves had grown up with, many times unintentionally, by displaying negative attitudes toward other Pilipinxs who do not think or act “American” enough or by describing the Philippines in degrading ways like referring to it as corrupt (David et al., 2017). Ferrera (2016) found that second-generation Pilipinx Americans experience family indebtedness, influenced by parents or caregivers talking highly of the United States and the opportunities afforded. However, in reality, Spanish and U.S. colonialism had intentionally and violently destabilized and exploited the Philippines, and the veil of White supremacy has taught us as a diaspora to believe that for those who were able to come, live, and work in the United States, doing so was the ultimate “dream” and all that we can supposedly ask for.

Colonialism left behind a destroyed economy, a lack of critical education on indigenous history, and a degradation of Pilipinx identity (Labrador & Zhang, 2021), so it is no wonder that feelings of debt emerged at multiple points throughout my study. The expectation or forcing of assimilation and then having to “repay” is a product of colonialism and undoubtedly feeds colonial mentality. Had it been different, had there been no multi-century exploitation of the Philippines, there likely would not have been a reason to assimilate – or even to immigrate to the United States. The crushing force of colonial mentality severely limits the possibility, the potential, and the imagination of who Pilipina American students can be. Because if we did not have to (un)knowingly battle colonial
mentality, we could have used our capacity in another way that is not imprisoned by White supremacy.

**Education as Inherently and Intentionally Colonial**

The findings of this study made it evident that the participants’ experiences, or lack thereof, in academic and co-curricular spaces influenced their understanding of self, history, and sense of community. The Pinays made it abundantly clear that as youth growing up in the United States, they did not learn anything substantial about the Philippines or Pilipinx Americans in school, despite the connectedness between the Philippines and the United States. And if any historical content was taught related to the Philippines and Pilipinx people in the United States, it was skewed to be U.S.-centric or Eurocentric and was careful to frame White people favorably versus accurately depicting them as racist colonizers who utilized violence, religion, and education to destroy the native peoples and their identities. As the participants also shared, when they learned about the Philippines, it was not actually about the islands or the people; rather, it was typically about their involvement in wars or other conflicts or being described as the landing place of a Portuguese explorer. What was taught was hardly about indigenous history, Pilipinx culture and their contributions, or about the times of resistance against colonization, as if we were passive victims of colonization. And because mainstream curricula are intentional with avoiding the truth, the experiences of my participants provide evidence that the education system is inherently and purposefully colonial and completely fails Pinays.

What does it mean for Pilipina American students when they learn about themselves as an accessory to colonization? As presented in the findings, the participants learned of themselves through the colonizers’ narratives, and so the beginning of their understanding
themselves in an academic environment is not about the peoples or culture, but about being “saved” by Spain and then by the United States. Because they learned about themselves primarily through the lens of colonization, and with narratives of colonialism embedded in the educational materials, it cannot come as a surprise that the Pilipina American students participating in my study had difficulty with articulating about themselves distinctly and separately from colonization, thus perpetuating, whether intentionally or not, the dominant narrative that the islands and their peoples only became significant or relevant when first “discovered” by Spain.

By limiting the opportunity to learn a truthful and accurate history and by filtering information in a way that frames the colonizers as acting in good will, I argue that the U.S. education system intentionally endorses colonial mentality. Pilipina American students are taught to view themselves as colonial subjects and to feel indebted to the United States and Spain for all the presumed good that was brought or done to the Philippines. In many ways, our identities were defined for us, leading many Pilipinxs to favor Spanish or U.S. ways of living and this contributes to our unknowing of who we really are or who we really can be without colonial history. When the students in my study talked about themselves and about Pilipinxs as a people, they often did so in relation to colonialism – but we are much more than a colonial identity. And teachers contribute to the sustenance of colonial mentality when they do not critically challenge the content they teach, especially when Pilipina American students are present. This is the postcolonial reality for Pilipina American students. While formal colonization is considered a part of the past, the blatant absence of the truth and the propagation of lies or an incomplete history continue to enable colonial mentality,
particularly colonial debt, cultural shame and embarrassment, and internalized cultural/ethnic inferiority.

When the participants discussed their experiences in college after having gone through a lifetime of academic experiences that minimized their identities and histories, it was clear that in addition to pursuing academic and career goals, they were also in search of opportunities to learn about themselves or to be in community with fellow Pilipinxs. As noted in the findings, the common experience that they all commented on was the Pilipinx student organization. As Ferrera (2011) discussed, cultural portals serve as critical opportunities to access Pilipinx culture and the student organization space can be considered an important and accessible pathway given that the majority of the participants viewed the on-campus student organization as an accessible way to engage with others and learn more about themselves, reflect upon their identities, acquire new knowledge around Pilipinx history, and challenge colonial mentality. Similarly, the necessity of student spaces and campus involvement in general for Pilipinx students to feel a sense of community and belonging has also been captured in literature (Maramba, 2008b). One participant, Astrid, had a very positive experience. In comparison to her White peers from her hometown and high school, she felt she could relate better with the Pilipinx students because of similar interests and hobbies. She also knew a number of the students in the student organization prior to coming to Sea University. This existing rapport allowed her to more easily join the organization and become an active member. However, what was shared by a handful of the participants in my study was the contrary. The student organization space was difficult to join with these students feeling like they did not or could not belong, thus dissuading them from any further opportunity to return and engage in more critical dialogues on history or
colonial mentality. It was difficult to arrive to the space as an aspiring new member and not knowing anyone, and then to be made to feel like no one was willing to welcome them in. And in a central point of contention, the delineation between those who are Pilipinx versus Pilipinx American caused some to never return to the organization.

What transpired in the student organization spaces was gatekeeping, with current members of the group having the capital to scaffold the definition of who is or is not Pilipinx enough. In the case of one of the student organizations, it did not seem to be a matter of discrimination specifically against those who were perceived to be less-Americanized; rather, it was about the questioning of what is considered Pilipina enough, which had caused Vanessa and Rose to feel excluded, and to some extent, inferior and/or ashamed. The lack of attention paid to welcoming new students as well as the existing student members speaking Tagalog may or may not have been intentional to exclude others – there very may well be the possibility that they were reacting to having felt othered in the past. Nonetheless, within-group discrimination and cultural/ethnic inferiority, which are all different factors measured by the CMS, are significant barriers to creating community and opportunities to dialogue, reflect, and confront colonial mentality.

These findings suggest that student organization spaces cannot be the sole or most relied-upon resource for students because, arguably, colonial mentality is reinforced by the way the spaces were constructed, by who gets to create and hold the space, and by who gets to belong. Further, the burden is placed upon the students to address when, in reality, many of them are grappling with a variety of identity challenges, in addition to trying to thrive as a student. I had assumed that this co-curricular space would be where students would have had the most opportunities to learn about history and their identities but, to my surprise, it was
not that space for all participants. If a student organization is the only way to find community and/or learn, what then happens when the very place that they strive to identify with is unwelcoming and, in a number of ways, enact colonial behavior? Rose, Vanessa, Jojo, and Korinne never returned to their on-campus student organizations, which was a missed opportunity to create solidarity and, ideally, to grapple with history and colonial mentality. Instead, elements or extensions of the mentality itself fragmented the space.

**Decolonizing Spaces as Necessary**

As my participants and I combed through the past and present to re-envision the future, our dialogues conveyed to me that the chance to participate in the study came at an opportune time. Our conversations were what they had needed in order to either challenge them to learn more about themselves and their identities or affirm them and the questions they had been asking themselves. The decolonization framework (Strobel, 2001), composed of the Naming, Reflection, and Action stages, helped to lead me as I made meaning of the findings, especially as the participants delved into the ways colonialism and colonial mentality induced a sense of identity loss, and then from loss, a shift to looking toward the future.

What participants shared supports literature that affirms that colonial mentality can be passed down and that conflict occurs at the intergenerational line (David, 2013; David & Nadal, 2013; David et al., 2017; Halagao, 2004). Indeed, it was clear from the findings that the participants were surrounded by colonial messages as they were growing up, and those messages had been passed down from previous generations. However, unlike generations prior, my study’s participants were simply not accepting those messages at face value and had the desire and curiosity to learn. They were willing to ask the hard questions of
themselves and others, but the critical missing piece was having the necessary space to do the healing self-work toward liberation. It was evident from what participants shared that the experience of participating in the study was transformative for them. Our dialogues indicated their interest in and willingness to examine the disconnect between who we are now and how we got here in order to imagine a new and different way forward. The interview spaces provided the moments to pause, reflect, name, question, and then imagine a future that buries colonial mentality through meaningful action so that the legacies of colonialism can no longer have a grasp on who we are and who we want to be. It is important for me to reiterate that I wanted to create an experience that did not solely rely on collecting participants’ stories as data – I believe that to be colonial. I wanted to also be able to offer knowledge and space to the participants so that they may make connections between the history and literature on colonial mentality to their own life stories.

In order to re-envision ourselves and our community, our conversations showed me a realization – we had to confront the feelings of loss before our dialogues could turn toward the future. The participants had shared profound reflections and memories around loss throughout both the individual conversations and Bayanihan dialogues and though I have known that the history of colonization has undoubtedly shaped who I am, I had not necessarily anticipated that I too would be confronting and navigating my own sense of loss throughout the duration of the study. By talking about colonial mentality, the messages we learned, and engaging in conversations about history, we recognized, named, and reflected on how much had been lost due to colonialism. It is colonial mentality that continues to prevent our collective from moving toward our own liberation.
Based on the findings, I offer a framework (Figure 1) that depicts the decolonizing journey and experience that emerged from the narratives and, in particular, the process of my interviews with Pilipina American college students. I wanted to visualize what we collectively discovered within the context of this study, and the framework depicts the relationship among three different elements with a decolonizing experience in the middle, acknowledging and grappling with loss, and lastly re-envisioning the future. I present the three elements in this manner because I wanted to convey that the decolonizing experience initiates and grounds the process in the center, the next element is recognizing and grappling with loss, followed by re-envisioning and liberation as the outermost layer. In the context of this study, the decolonizing experience is the Pinay student having the unique opportunity to discuss and center their life story, engage with readings, and dialogue with fellow Pinays, which for many then ignited their thought processes to reflect upon feelings of loss and allowed them to think critically about who we want to be and what we want to pass on to future generations of Pinays. The figure is not meant to be interpreted as stages that progress linearly; rather, I hope for it to be seen and understood as three pieces that interact with one another, but what is most significant is the decolonizing experience in the center. I offer the figure so that student affairs administrators, faculty, and other educators who support Pilipina American students can more deeply understand and meaningfully engage with them. By becoming familiar with the framework, educators will hopefully have more knowledge regarding Pinay students’ experiences with decolonization, and healing and can be more intentional when addressing their wants and needs.
The findings of my study substantiate my assertion that it is not possible to adequately understand Pilipina American students without learning and knowing the sociohistorical context in which they exist. The narratives presented reflect the richness and complexity of the Pilipina American experience and demonstrate that colonial mentality informs and challenges their lives in a variety of ways. When Pilipina Americans are restricted from exploring and expressing their stories, colonial mentality and White supremacy continue to denigrate them. The students participating in my study contended with their identities and navigated a feeling of loss, but with the spaces to learn and reflect throughout their participant experience, they were able to shift toward healing and redefining the future for themselves and their communities. As part of my interviews, I asked the
participants what they wanted for themselves as Pinays in college. Based on their responses and with inspiration from the participants, I offer my perspectives on implications for practice, teaching and curriculum, and theory.

**Implications for Student Affairs Administrators**

As demonstrated by the findings of my study, the expectations experienced by Pilipina college students were often connected to colonialism and colonial mentality which, in turn, have significantly limited their potential. The education system has also been depicted in my findings as perpetuating harm in the lives of Pilipina students. Given these realities, student affairs administrators have the distinct opportunity and frankly, the responsibility, to engage with students to support them and challenge the colonial messages and structures that have informed their lives. It is imperative to understand that there are significant differences between Asian ethnic subgroups, and, among them, Pilipina American students have unique lived experiences, ones that are complicated by the extensive history of colonialism.

If student affairs administrators, especially those who work closely with Pilipina and Pilipinx American students, want to commit to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice like many of them often say they do, they will have to take more seriously the complex and nuanced narratives of Pilipina American students. A central issue that often causes student affairs administrators to overlook or misunderstand Pilipinx and Pilipina American students is the overwhelmingly widespread assumption, rooted in and perpetuated by White supremacy (Poon et. al, 2016), that Asians and Asian Americans are a monolith, and to view Pilipina American college students in this manner completely fails them. The homogenization of the Asian American experience framed by White supremacy conveys to
student affairs administrators the message that Pilipina American students are also presumed to be high-achieving and academically inclined, and the sweeping assumption diminishes their stories, particularly the colonial linkages, which then consequently overlooks their unique wants and needs (Museus, 2014; Museus & Kiang, 2009). Further, it is critical to not perceive Pilipinx students in the aggregate as well. The findings I have presented provide evidence that additional identities such as gender, religion, sexual orientation, immigrant generation, or the Philippine region their family came from, all matter with shaping the varied experiences of Pilipinx and Pilipina Americans. And parallel to how Asians and Asian Americans cannot be grouped together, it also cannot be assumed that Pilipina American experiences are similar simply because they share a racial and/or ethnic identity.

Pilipinx American students also describe feeling that campus services are not helpful because administrators generally lack the empathy and awareness to be understanding of their narratives and experiences (Maramba, 2008b). Pilipinx American students often feel pressured to forgo their connection to their heritage and assimilate to dominant White culture, which results with not only the loss of identity, it also causes them to struggle with feeling a sense of belonging on campus (Museus & Maramba, 2011). Many racially minoritized students will leave institutions that harm their identities (Rendon et al., 2000), and this is no different for Pilipina American students. Whether they have the language or awareness of colonial mentality or not, Pinay students may be negotiating an identity crisis on top of the challenges of navigating college. The college experience must be able to provide the necessary support and opportunities for Pinay students to continue their learning, decolonizing, and healing journeys, which would then support their sense of self and belonging, engagement on campus, and academic success. The results of my study offer
knowledge of Pilipina American students allowing for student affairs administrators to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of their experiences as a whole and on campus.

The findings also demonstrated that participating in the on-campus Pilipinx student organization was a negative experience for a handful of the participants, but positive for some. Some participants did not find the student organization space to be welcoming and meaningful, while others, particularly if a prior connection or relationship with students already involved in the organization existed, did find the space to be helpful with finding community. The participants that had felt negatively questioned whether or not they could belong to the space because it was very cliquey, and they did not feel as though they were Pinay “enough” to be included. This is contrary to what has been found in previous literature where Pilipinx students felt more connected to the campus and their communities via their meaningful involvement in student organizations (Maramba, 2008b; Museus & Maramba, 2011). Importantly, while institutional leaders may boast the diversity of their campuses and display the presence of student organizations sustained by racially minoritized students, my study’s findings indicated that the existence of a student organization does not necessarily mean students will find community in those spaces. Student affairs administrators cannot rely on the existence of a student organization to say that there are welcoming spaces for Pilipina American students. And while in reality the student organization unfortunately cannot be everything for everyone, it is still important to be cognizant of how the space has the opportunity to perpetuate colonial mentality and disrupt community-building. And if this is the easiest space for students to access, it will likely contribute to a lack of sense of belonging on campus.
The design of my study provides an example of what can be implemented to engage Pilipina American students in their own process of unlearning the harmful effects of colonial mentality so they may liberate themselves and re-envision a future that deviates from all the harm that has been transferred through the generations. The participants conveyed a strong desire to learn more upon entering college, but what was discovered was that a very limited amount or type of opportunities actually existed. Taking inspiration from this study and the proposed framework, I encourage student affairs administrators, especially those who are in leadership roles and have the influence and resources, to create opportunities with and for Pilipina American students to discuss their life stories and how colonial mentality informs their narratives, support them through the potential sense of loss they may feel, present them with meaningful literature on history and colonial mentality, and hold intentional spaces that bring together students to foster a sense of community, solidarity, and belonging.

I also encourage student affairs administrators who serve as the advisors of Pilipinx student organizations, as well as those who work in Student Activities departments that structurally support the organizations, to also learn and understand the manifestations and ramifications of colonial mentality in order to recognize and address challenges when they arise. This can be implemented through programming such as a dialogue series, weekend retreats, programmatic offerings offered by Asian and Asian American Centers or identity-based centers and organizations, as well as through partnerships with faculty who have knowledge around history and colonial mentality. I believe that by providing decolonizing spaces, they will ultimately help nurture Pinays’ truest selves and their sense of agency to authentically pursue their desired interests, studies, and careers. Decolonizing spaces also support Pinays to build capacity within their communities and help to heal intergenerational
trauma. In higher education, we can construct spaces that challenge the colonial nature of education so that students can then see themselves as belonging to all educational spaces.

**Implications for Teaching and Curriculum**

As the participants had shared, they had no real educational spaces dedicated to learning about Pilipinx American identity and history throughout their childhoods. Participants also noted that, if there were opportunities to learn about identity and history when they were in grade school or in high school, the content was typically an inaccurate narrative. And upon arriving to college, they expressed the yearning for more courses on indigenous history and Pilipinx American history, especially since there were already existing offerings focused on other ethnic groups. I challenge faculty and instructors, particularly if a course or discussion includes the Philippines and the diaspora of Pilipinx people, to critically examine their pedagogy, course content, texts, media, and syllabi to ensure that the methods and materials they enact and include in their courses are not U.S.- or Euro-centric, and that they disrupt White supremacy and colonialism. With the ongoing assault on critical race theory and ethnic studies (Hutchinson, 2021; Tintiangco-Cubales & Duncan-Andrade, 2021), I call on faculty in higher education to do better with how and what is taught because of the responsibility to educate college students the truth – and not the Whitewashed version of the truth. As presented in this study, the students have already experienced a lifetime of classroom experiences that minimized and Whitewashed their community’s history and stories and faculty must be cognizant this. Faculty have the responsibility through teaching and their scholarship to challenge the status quo and prevent replicating harm by teaching content that is antiracist and decenters White supremacy. This
will disrupt the inherently colonial nature of the U.S. education system that reifies colonial mentality.

One might ask, what if one is not an instructor of Ethnic Studies, Asian American studies, or Pilipinx studies? How are this study and its findings relevant? I suggest that faculty, no matter the discipline, still have the important opportunity to teach, dialogue, and support students in ways that focus on countering colonialism and racism – it goes beyond the content of a course. Inspired by Freire (1970), faculty can re-envision pedagogy to create learning experiences that are rooted in the collective and motivated by liberation. I think of the countless number of students, Pinays and others identifying with historically oppressed identities, across a variety of majors and schools, who have expressed to me the incidents and interactions they have had with faculty that are colonial and/or racist in nature because the faculty lacked the knowledge and critical pedagogy to engage them in equitable manners that acknowledged their full humanity. While my study specifically provides evidence that Pilipina American students have incredibly complex narratives, the same can likely be said of other marginalized student communities. And while faculty may not know the fuller picture of what every student had experienced prior to coming to college, being critically conscious of the way students appear and engage in class is imperative because what is often seen is truly just the surface.

**Implications for Theory**

The Colonial Mentality Scale (CMS) was utilized in this study to help guide and focus my data analysis process and while it was incredibly helpful with distinguishing manifestations of colonial mentality, I offer to build upon David and Okazaki’s (2006b) monumental work. As discussed, the CMS captures and evaluates colonial mentality via five
different factors: within-group discrimination, physical characteristics, internalized cultural/ethnic inferiority, cultural shame or embarrassment, and colonial debt. As seen in some of the participants’ experiences with the Pilipinx student organizations, they felt excluded for not being “enough” or for not having certain characteristics or language skills. I offer that this type of dynamic could be examined and included as an additional facet of the within-group discrimination factor. Though the participants did not feel discriminated against regarding whether they were Americanized enough or not, they did feel othered because their identities and experiences did not quite align with the majority of the students already involved in the student group. Their experiences speak to the diverse and complex nature of the Pilipina identity and because of the differences, it unfortunately caused a divide and went unaddressed.

Although gender identity is not explicitly named when discussing colonial mentality and its factors, it would be worthwhile to include “expectations of gender identity and expression” as an additional factor to help account for how differently colonial mentality manifests in the Pilipina American experience. The participants shared at length the ways they felt that their gender identity mattered then and now, particularly because the sociohistorical context and colonial narrative narrowly defines how women could behave. This was evident when the Pinays talked about being treated differently from Pilipino boys and men and that many of the standards for physical appearance and expected behaviors stemmed from the Spanish ideals of marianismo. The CMS outlines different aspects of the factor, physical characteristics, like wanting lighter skin, but does not account for more nuanced details like expecting to dress certain ways to appear more feminine, which again is a reflection of marianismo, and would likely not be an expectation for men. Further, to add
another layer in addition to gender identity and expression is to include sexual orientation, which also shifts how Pinays are expected to behave. For example, building upon the expectation to appear feminine, expressing the acceptable form of femininity is also emphasized in order not to be perceived as queer or gay. The overlapping identities more accurately depict the lived experiences of the students who participated in my study but are not as readily captured by the current metrics of the CMS.

Similarly, I posit that religion and its influence should also be included in conversations around colonial mentality and in the CMS because Catholicism, as discussed in the literature and findings, was introduced to the indigenous peoples by the Spanish. And 500 years later, it continues to have a significant hold in influencing the identities of Pilipinx Americans. Catholicism’s influence has shown up as the overarching conservative, heteronormative, and homophobic nature of Pilipinx culture, but is not addressed explicitly within the CMS which, therefore, loses out on a salient factor that has shaped the Pilipina American student experience. Reviewing the manifestations of colonial mentality and the items included in the Scale, religion, like gender, can be considered as embedded within the CMS. I find that religion surfaces in less obvious ways within the Scale’s metrics like in the colonial debt factor since the factor discusses items like feeling thankful to Spain and the United States’ influence and for changing Pilipinos, since the introduction of Catholicism fundamentally shifted Pilipinx way of life. However, I suggest that it is important to explore more critically and thoughtfully how religion continues to mold the Pilipina American identity and it should be included as an additional factor in the CMS.

Lastly, the focus of my study was to specifically elevate Pinays and their stories, but including gender offers a possibility to better investigate and understand the experiences of
Pilipino men and non-binary Pilipinx. If my study is able to provide a more complete picture of the Pinay experience and in doing so exposes some missing pieces that are still missing, I am certain the same can be said with the life stories of Pilipinx students of other gender identities. By incorporating gender identity and expression, against the colonial backdrop that generated the norms, we can more deeply understand how differently men or non-binary individuals are affected by colonial mentality.

**Future Research**

As a result of my study, I presented a framework that portrays three different elements that describe the decolonizing process which the students moved through as they engaged in dialogues with myself and each other. I hope what I presented serves as a tangible way to understand a facet of the Pilipina American student experience and better support them as they navigate their college journeys. However, I suggest that future research should have an even more specific focus on healing, liberation, and action. Because of how I structured the interviews, there was a heavier focus on naming and reflecting upon colonial mentality, so future research should explore the stories of Pinay students that have moved into the realm of action, those who are taking on roles to empower and mobilize their communities and are engaging in movements to liberate themselves and others.

While this study provides new information on the realities of Pilipina American college students, the seven women embody a very small percentage of the diversity of the diaspora. Future research should include those who were not represented in this study. In example, there were no participants that identified as Indigenous. I acknowledge that how the study was advertised and designed likely had an impact on whether or not Indigenous students would be encouraged to participate or not, thus it is important to note that an
Indigenous perspective is missing from my study. Given that Indigenous individuals and their ancestors experience colonialism differently (David, 2013), if future research is to center their stories, they must pay particular attention to the unique nature of their narratives and histories. Similarly, this study involved participants enrolled at two different institutions in Massachusetts. Chan (2018) writes that geography influences the way Asian Americans understand and make meaning of their racial identities and given that my study was conducted in one specific geographic context, I suggest that future research explore how might being situated in different states, regions, or institutions can uniquely shape Pilipina American student experiences and their understanding of colonial mentality and decolonization.

The participants in my study all identified as 1.5- or second-generation, meaning they came to the United States as young children or their parent(s) or caregiver(s) were the first to immigrate to the United States, respectively. While I intentionally recruited students that identified as 1.5- or second-generation, future research could investigate the experiences of third-generation Pilipina American students (and further) to learn if or how their engagement with colonial mentality is different versus the experiences of the students in this study whose parents all grew up in the Philippines. As seen in the findings of my study, most parents and family were steadfast in their ways of thinking and acting, but since third-generation Pinays will have parents who grew up in the United States, the different context may influence the way they raise third-generation children.

Finally, this study had a specific focus on Pilipina American students to better understand their distinctive experiences with colonial mentality and decolonization. It would be worthwhile for future research to explore if or how colonial mentality informs the lives of
Pilipino American students who identify as men or non-binary, and what their engagement in a decolonizing experience would be like. As discussed in the literature and in the findings, gendered expectations that were rooted in colonial history and conveyed to the participants by their families had significantly defined their realities and their experiences with colonial mentality and, for many, were points of tension and struggle. I would be curious to know more about how might Pilipinx individuals of other gender identities describe their own experiences with family and their close communities and how they make meaning of the messages they receive.

**Closing Narrative**

As I approached the end of my doctoral journey, I sat in silence and reflected upon my study, trying to make sense of it all. I am overwhelmed by feelings of complete exhaustion and total joy. As I recalled all the dynamic conversations I had with each participant, what kept coming back to my mind, like waves rising and falling on a shore, were all the feelings of loss that they shared with me. When I opened my dissertation with a collection of memories, I had woven my own sense of loss throughout, and when the students began to share all the ways they too grappled with their identities and their own sense of loss, I felt the trauma of centuries of colonialism emerge in my body. Yet, I also felt feelings of relief and hope. Though my study focused on centering and honoring the students’ life stories and creating a decolonizing experience for and with them, I had not anticipated how much my study would challenge me to reflect and grow, yet fulfill my inner child that had longed for a connection with others who could relate. I did not foresee how profoundly meaningful everything would be, from reviewing hundreds of pages of literature, to my conversations with each student, to the countless hours of reviewing transcripts, to the synthesis of findings,
and every moment in-between. It all helped me feel less alone. And with the ways I had experienced colonial mentality, whether in my own body and mind, or from witnessing it from others, I felt like I could exist in my truth when engaging with the participants. This dissertation process allowed me to recall and name my own memories, reflect upon the lessons I have learned throughout my life, and has inspired me to take action to reclaim my Pinay identity. And while the students and I had spent a lot of our time together talking about the past, I believe it is important for me to shift and channel my energy into our community’s future.

I hope for healing. I hope for the mending of intergenerational harm so we as a community of Pinays no longer feel the pressure to ascribe to harmful ideals. I hope that we can choose love and joy over hate and fear. I hope those who read this dissertation find inspiration from the participants’ narratives, especially if they are Pinay, and no matter if they can relate to the stories or not. And if they are embarking on their own decolonizing journey, may they find the support they need along the way. As for myself, I know it will not be easy to confront all the ways the dominant colonial narrative continues to inform my life, but with inspiration from this experience, I know that I can, and I must. I think of all the conversations to be had with my parents, with my cousins, and my children, all with the intent to collectively mend the wounds that colonialism and colonial mentality have caused.

I hope for transformative and radical educational spaces that are rooted in love and celebrate our humanity. For too long have academic spaces caused significant harm to Pilipinxs across the nation and globe. And I hope that my study serves as motivation for others to seek knowledge outside of what is taught in traditional academic environments. May we as a community find the histories of our families and our ancestors so that we can
feel a sense of pride, peace, and groundedness in our identities, no matter how far away we are from our ancestral homelands. I also hope that Pinays feel the strength in their voices to advocate for their own desires. No one knows what we need more than us. And I hope that the students who yearn for knowledge never become disheartened by the pursuit of the truth. White supremacy will try to derail us, but our strength and resilience remain in our collective.

I hope for a better world for my children. Every participant asked me about motherhood and wanted to know what it has been like to be a second-generation Pilipina American who grew up in the United States and is now helping to raise the next generation. I had not expected to be asked so much about my identity as a mother, but as I reflected, I wholeheartedly appreciated each of them for their curiosity and attention. And the truthful answer is that raising children is harder than I ever thought it would be. I think about all the self-work I still need to do in order to continue toward re-envisioning myself and the Pilipinx community. And much like my hope to mend intergenerational harm, I know that I have a responsibility to raise my children differently from what my generation is accustomed to.

Conducting my study transformed the way I saw myself as a mother and I had no idea that it would. When I heard the stories of the participants, I wondered to myself, what would my daughter say if she was an adult? What messages will my son have remembered? I know that they are just beginning to grow into their gender identities and the ways they choose to express them, but I promise to provide them the space to explore and challenge the gender binary and the socialized roles that try to keep us captive. I will raise my daughter to love her body, her skin, her eyes, and her nose. I will raise her to be bold and to dream her wildest dreams. I will raise her to know that love can take all forms. It does not have to be romantic
nor heterosexual. I will raise her to know that her worth is not tied to money, power, or her career. I will tell her that my greatest joy would be seeing her grow into her true self, a version that she can be proud of and does not have to hide. I will also raise my son to love his body, his skin, his eyes, and his nose. I will raise him to be a feminist. I will raise my son to be tender, emotional, gentle, and kind. I will raise him to know that if he were to identity and present as a man, he carries significant power in this world and has a responsibility to challenge the systems that privilege him and marginalize others. I will raise him to know that he is loved and that he can show love for himself and others in ways that challenge the sexist and patriarchal ideals that strive to define the expectations of men. And as my children grow, I too will grow as a mother. I do not have all the answers, nor do I know what the future holds, but the participants have given me so much to reflect upon as I navigate this lifelong decolonization journey so that future generations can be free.

And lastly, to all the Pinays reading this, you are enough.
Re: Research Study Participation: Pilipina American students in higher education

Hello,

My name is Kristine A. Din (she/her/hers), I am a second-generation Pilipina/Pinay American and PhD candidate at the University of Massachusetts Boston in Higher Education program in the Department of Leadership in Education. My faculty advisor is Dr. Katalin Szelenyi. I also serve as a COVID Student Responsibility Coordinator at Tufts University. I am conducting a research study for my dissertation at UMass Boston to explore and learn about the life stories of Pilipina Americans college students. This study will ask participants to reflect upon Pilipinx and Pilipinx American history and colonialism.

For my study, I am looking for participants who meet the following criteria:

1. Self-identify as a second-generation Pilipina American, Pinay, Pinay American, and/or of Philippine descent; and/or have ancestors from the Philippines;
2. Currently an undergraduate student enrolled at Elite University or Sea University and is a second-year student or above;
3. Must be of adult age depending on the location where you currently reside (i.e. at least 18 years old in Massachusetts);
4. Is interested in sharing their life story, learning about Pilipinx and Pilipinx American history, and connecting with other Pilipina Americans;
5. Has access to a web camera.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and includes:

1. The completion of a screening form for eligibility;
2. If selected, you will participate in two individual interviews with me,
3. you will be asked to make a timeline during the first interview and read some passages for the second interview;
4. A focus group interview, which I call a Bayanihan community dialogue, facilitated by me, to bring all the research study participants who completed the second interview.

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together to engage around their stories and their experiences. You will be asked to read some passages for the focus group.

All three interview sessions will be held virtually via Zoom. Your total participation in this study will take approximately 4 to 5 hours. The first interview and timeline activity will last approximately 90 minutes, reading passages and participating in the second interview will take approximately 75 minutes, and reading passages and participating in the final focus group interview will take approximately between 60-90 minutes. If you choose to participate, the information you share will be kept confidential and your name and other personally identifying information will not be associated with your responses.

Each selected participant will receive up to a total of $75 ($25 for each session). You will receive a $25 Target gift card after each interview. I also hope that by participating in this study, it will provide opportunities for participants to learn more about Pilipinx and Pilipinx American history as well as a space to reflect upon, explore, and make meaning of their stories.

If you meet the eligibility criteria and this study interests you, please send me an email at kristine.din001@umb.edu. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you!

Warmly,

Kristine A. Din
APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT SCREENING FORM VIA QUALTRICS

Thank you for your interest in this research study. The purpose of this study is to explore the life stories of second-generation Pilipina/Pinay American college students. This study will also engage participants in an opportunity to learn and reflect upon Pilipinx and Pilipinx American history and colonialism.

Please answer the questions below. All of your responses will remain confidential. If you are selected to participate in the study, you will be contacted via email and will receive additional information regarding the study. If you have any questions, please email Kristine Din, Ph.D. candidate in the Higher Education program at the University of Massachusetts Boston, at kristine.din001@umb.edu. You may also email her faculty advisor, Dr. Katalin Szelenyi, at katalin.szelenyi@umb.edu.

Thank you! Maraming salamat!

First Name or Preferred Name:
Last Name:
Pronouns:
Age:
University that you attend:
Email Address:
Racial identity/ies:
Ethnic identity/ies:
Gender identity/ies:
Sexual orientation (not required to answer):
Religion/spiritual background:
Socioeconomic background:
Where did you grow up? (Please include town/city, state. If you grew up in multiple locations, please include all the places you lived):
Do you have siblings? (If yes, please include number and gender(s)):
Immigrant generation:

1st generation (you were born in the Philippines and came to the U.S. for college)
1.5 generation (you were born in the Philippines and came to the U.S. as a young child)
2nd generation (you were born and raised here in the U.S.)
3\textsuperscript{rd} generation (your parents were born and raised here in the U.S.)
4\textsuperscript{th} generation (your grandparents were born and raised here in the U.S.)

Class year (i.e. first-year, sophomore, junior, senior, fifth year):
Academic major(s) (if undeclared, please share your interests):

Short answer questions – Please respond to each in less than 5 sentences
What does being Pilipina American mean to you?
When you think of Pilipinx history, what comes to mind?
When you think of community, what comes to mind?
Consent Form for **Re-envisioning Self and Community: The Narratives of Pilipina American Students and their Experiences with Colonial Mentality**

**Introduction and Contact Information**

You are asked to take part in a research study. Participation is voluntary. The researcher is Kristine Din, a PhD candidate in the Higher Education program within the Department of Leadership in Education. The faculty advisor is Dr. Katalin Szelenyi, Associate Professor in the Department of Leadership in Education. Please read this form and feel free to ask questions. If you have questions, Kristine will discuss them with you. Kristine can be reached by email at kristine.din001@umb.edu. Dr. Szelenyi can be reached at katalin.szelenyi@umb.edu.

**Description of the Project:**

The purpose of this study is to explore and learn about the life stories of second-generation Pilipina American college students. This study will also engage participants to reflect upon Pilipinx and Pilipinx American colonial history, colonial mentality, race and racism, and gender.

Your participation in this study will take approximately four to five hours. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in:

- **Individual interviews:** I will be conducting two individual interviews with you. Both will take place via Zoom and will be video and audio recorded.
  - Interview one and timeline activity: The first individual interview and timeline activity with you will last approximately 90 minutes. During this interview, we will be co-creating a timeline of your life story using the Whiteboard feature in Zoom, describing significant and/or formative moments that have occurred throughout your life.
  - Interview two and reading activity: The second individual interview will last approximately 60 minutes and we will be discussing Pilipinx history and Pilipinx American experiences. You will be asked to read a few passages prior
to the interview and this will take approximately 15 minutes. The topics of the passages include Pilipinx history, colonialism, and colonial mentality.

- **Focus Group – Bayanihan community dialogue:** I will be facilitating a focus group conversation with you and other research study participants (up to 12 total participants) and it will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes. It will take also take place via Zoom and will be video and audio recorded. You will be asked to read a passage on Pinayism prior to the focus group and this still take approximately 5 minutes. To respect the privacy of your fellow participants, please do not share anything that is learned or discussed during the dialogue outside of the study. Because we will be discussing the themes from the second interview, only participants who completed the second interview will be able to take part in the group interview.

As a token of my appreciation, you will receive up to $75 in Target gift cards. You will receive $25 after completing each interview. Within 24 hours of completing each interview, you will be sent a gift card via email.

**Risks or Discomforts:**
There are minimal risks involved in participating in this study. You may experience some discomfort when responding to some of the interview questions and when reading the passages since the topics focus on colonial history and mentality, race and racism, and gender. During the interviews, you can skip any questions or end at any time. Another risk of participation is a loss of confidentiality. I will do everything I can to protect your information.

You may speak with Kristine Din or Dr. Katalin Szélényi to discuss any distress or other issues related to study participation. If you wish to discuss concerns with university counseling services, you are encouraged to contact the counseling center at your university: [redacted information]

**Benefits:**
There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in the study. The knowledge gained from the study will help to learn and understand more about the complex life stories of second-generation Pilipina American college students.

**Confidentiality:**
Your part in this research is confidential. That is, the information gathered for this project will not be published or presented in a way that would allow anyone to identify you. Pseudonyms (fake names) will be used to replace your real name to maintain privacy and confidentiality. Information gathered for this project will be password-protected, encrypted,
and/or stored in a locked office and only the researcher will have access to the data. The University of Massachusetts Boston Institutional Review Board (IRB) that oversees human research and its representatives may inspect and copy your information.

To respect the privacy of your fellow participants, I ask that you do not repeat what is said in the Bayanihan community dialogue to others.

Once the study is completed, all screening forms and timelines will be destroyed. Upon the completion of each interview, the video recording will be destroyed. Once the audio recordings have been transcribed, they will also be destroyed. Interview transcripts for this project will be encrypted and stored on the researcher’s password-protected computer for at least seven years. The master list containing actual names and corresponding pseudonyms will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

Your information collected as part of this research will not be used or shared for future research studies, even if all of your identifiers are removed.

**Voluntary Participation:**
Participation in this research study is voluntary. If you do decide to take part in this study, you may end your participation at any time without consequence. Whatever you decide will in no way penalize you or involve a loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, and it will not affect your grades or status as a student. If you wish to end your participation, you should contact Kristine Din by emailing her at kristine.din001@umb.edu.

**Audio and Video Recording of Interviews:**
This study involves the audio and video recording of your interviews with the researcher. Upon the completion of each interview, the video recording will be erased. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audio recordings or the transcripts. Only the researcher will be able to listen to the audio recordings. The audio recordings will be transcribed by the researcher and erased once the transcriptions are checked for accuracy. Transcripts of your interviews may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this study. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study. Immediately following the interviews, you will be given the opportunity to have the recording erased if you wish to withdraw your consent to recording or participation in this study.
By checking the box in front of each item below, you are consenting to participate in that specific procedure for the recordings:

☐ having your interviews recorded;
☐ to having the recordings transcribed;
☐ use of the written transcripts in presentations and written products.

Questions:

You have the right to ask questions about this research before you agree to be in this study and at any time during the study. If you have further questions about this research or have a research-related problem, you can reach Kristine Din at kristine.din001@umb.edu or the faculty advisor, Dr. Katalin Szelenyi at katalin.szelenyi@umb.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact a representative of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, which oversees research involving human participants. The Institutional Review Board may be reached by telephone or e-mail at (617) 287-5374 or at human.subjects@umb.edu.

By verbally agreeing to participate, you will be agreeing to participate in the research. Please keep a copy of this form for your records or if you need to contact me.
APPENDIX D

PRE-INTERVIEW REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean for you to be Pilipina American, Pinay (or whatever descriptor they chose to use in their interest form responses)?

2. What has contributed to your understanding of your racial, ethnic, and gender identities?
The interview will be semi-structured. This is a list of questions to guide the interview, however not every question may be asked. The participant and I will be co-creating their timeline during the interview by using the Whiteboard feature in Zoom.

Confidentiality

“Your participation in this research is confidential. The information you share with me today is completely confidential. You will be assigned a pseudonym and your responses will not have any identifying information. The data gathered for this study will not be published or presented in a way that would allow anyone to identify you or your institution. In order to maintain confidentiality, please do not use your name or the names of others in your responses. Please also avoid using other directly identifying information, like phone numbers or addresses.”

Consent

“To ensure that I am able to capture accurate and complete responses, I would like to record these interviews. The recordings will be transcribed verbatim and all names and places will be removed to protect your identity. Recordings will be destroyed after transcription. Transcriptions will be kept on a password-protected and encrypted computer and in a UMB OneDrive folder. It is important to note that you may withdraw your consent at any time or choose to skip any questions. Do you agree to participate in the interviews and to have the interviews recorded?”

1. How would you describe your racial and ethnic identity/ies?
2. How would you describe your gender identity/ies?
3. Where is your family from and when did they arrive to the United States?
   a. How much do you know about their stories of growing up in the Philippines?
   b. How much do you know about their immigration stories?
   c. What does this mean for you and your story?
4. Tell me when you first understood or had an awareness that you are Pilipina American.
Family

1. What messages about being Pilipina American did you receive or experience from your parent(s)/primary caregivers?
   a. How old were you (or as early as you can remember) when you began to receive or experience these different messages?
   b. How were these messages relayed to you? Can you recall any particular moments?
      i. What messages were around expectations, behavior, appearance, and school or education?
      ii. Were these messages different from siblings or cousins?

2. What, if any, are important values to your family/caregivers?
   a. When did you begin to have an understanding of these values?
   b. How did these values influence you?
      i. Did these values change over time?
   c. Where do you think these values stem from?

3. What experiences with extended family (beyond parent(s)/primary caregivers) have shaped your identity as a Pilipina American?

4. Referring to the timeline, and back to the messages you shared that you learned from your parents/primary caregivers. Were these messages reoccurring? Meaning, were they repeated or emphasized at different times throughout middle or high school?
   a. When and in what context?
   b. Tell me how the messages evolved over time.
   c. What did these messages mean to you?
   d. Were there moments that you remember with family that taught you what it means to be Pilipina American?
   e. If yes, what comes to mind? What is significant about that/those memory(ies)?

5. Think back to the values that you shared. In what ways, if any, did these values influence you as you grew older?
   a. How has your understanding of these values changed over time?
   b. Did these serve as sources of conflict between you and parents/caregivers?

6. Now that you’ve been in college, what is your relationship like with your parents/primary caregivers?
   a. How might this be different if your gender identity was other than how you identify?

7. What do the messages you received or experienced while growing up mean to you now?
   b. How do you make meaning of the messages?

8. Think back to how and when you began to have an understanding of the values you shared. What do those values mean to you now, now that you’re in college?
**Education**

1. What were your teachers like in elementary/grade school?
   a. In what ways, if any, did your teachers contribute to your understanding of your identity as a Pilipina American?
   b. What about your teachers in middle school? In high school?

2. What, if any, educational experiences during your childhood shaped your identity as a Pilipina American?
   a. How old were you during these experiences?

3. In what ways, if any, has your Pilipina American identity informed your educational experiences?

4. What and how did you learn about Pilipinx American culture and history in school?

5. What were your peers like?
   a. What were your friendships like?
   b. When and in what ways, if any, did you learn about yourself through your friendships and/or interactions with peers?
   c. Did you have Pilipinx or Pilipinx American friends?
      i. If so, in what ways, if any, were friendships with Pilipinxs similar and different compared to friendships with others?
      d. Did your peer group or relationships develop as you aged?

6. How were your experiences different between grade, middle, and high school in terms of your understanding your identity as a Pilipina American?

7. How did you choose your major/minor/career interests?
   a. What and/or who has influenced you to pursue the major/minor you have chosen?

8. How might your learning about Pilipinx American culture and history changed now that you are in college?

**Communities**

1. Tell me more about where you grew up. If multiple places, please feel free to share what feels best for you.
   a. How do you think your hometown(s) environment shapes your understanding of being Pilipina American?

2. Were you a part of a church community?
   a. If so, what experiences, if any, informed your understanding of your Pilipina American identity?

3. Were you involved with other organizations?
   a. If so, what organizations?
   b. What experiences, if any, further informed your understanding of your Pilipina American identity?
American identity?
4. Recalling the different communities you had shared about earlier in our conversation, did your involvement change as you grew older? If they did, why and in what ways?

Peers and Communities
5. What are your peers or peer groups like now?
   a. Are they similar or different to your peers in high school?
6. In what ways, if any, have your peers or peer groups shaped the way you see yourself?

Closing
1. What are you proud of?
2. Is there anything else you would like to share?
3. Do you have any questions for me?
APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 2

Three passages were sent to each participate prior to the second interview. I will allot time if participants require time during the interview to revisit excerpts

Topics

- Precolonial history, gender
- Colonial mentality
- Spanish and U.S. colonization and colonial education

“I shared three different passages with you before our meeting today. If it is helpful, please take a few minutes to review the texts. Before we begin, please remember not to use your name or say anything that might directly identify yourself or others.”

Questions to pose after each excerpt:
1. What stood out for you?
2. How does reading this make you feel?
3. What questions do you have?
4. What do you wish you knew more about?
5. What might learning and engaging with this information mean for you?
   a. For your family?
   b. For our community?
6. Do you have any questions for me?

After excerpts have been read:
1. What does colonial mentality mean to you?
2. When you hear the word decolonization, what comes to mind?
   a. (Share Strobel’s definition of decolonization)
APPENDIX G

READINGS FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW 2

Topic: Precolonial gender

1) Brown Skin, White Minds, pg. 10-11 (David, 2013)
The indigenous Tao also had a well-established system of government prior to Spanish arrival on the islands. The basic unit of government was called balangay or barangay (tribe or village), which is composed of approximately 60 families. Each balangay is headed by a Datu or Rajah (Chief) (Agoncillo, 1974; Constantino, 1975; Halili, 2004), who led in consultation with a council of balangay elders – suggesting that the indigenous Tao highly regarded and values the wisdom of their elders, and suggesting that the Tao did not simply place all the governing power in the hands of their Datu (Constantino, 1975). The chief held the responsibility of governing the people and ensuring their welfare and survival. The chief, along with the council of elders, developed laws and settled disputes among the balangay people. In addition to regular contact between balangays through trade, chiefs from multiple balangays often came together to combine the resources of their groups in order to achieve a common cause, such as win a war against other indigenous tribes or survive tough times. When this happened, the chiefs each dropped their blood in a cup and they all took a drink from it, making the chiefs and their balangays blood brothers or sisters (a blood compact of sanduguan) and creating a deep connection between them (Agoncillo, 1974).

In the indigenous Tao’s form government, women may also become chiefs in the absence of a male heir. In general, women were treated as equal to men (Halili, 2004), with women being allowed to own property, engage in trade and industry, and often holding high positions in society such as a babaylan, who were regarded as the healers, shamans wisdom-keepers, philosophers, and spiritual leaders of a balangay. Women were deeply respected and valued by the indigenous Tao, and it is even customary for men to walk behind women in order to show respect (Agoncillo, 1974). These examples suggest that the indigenous Tao were advanced enough to create a well-functioning system of government to efficiently run their society and preserve their culture and ways of life.

A History of the Philippines, pg. 41-43 (Francia, 2010)
Unlike Legazpi, Chirino was impressed by the civility, courteousness, and upbringing of the Tagalogs, particularly in the use of the third person when addressing someone. Chirino was less taken by the Visayans, who “are more rustic and less civil in manners, just as their language is harsher and less polished.” On the other hand, Pigafetta commends the Visayans for their hospitality, graciousness, love of feasting, and music. It could very well have been a
matter of individual temperament – Pigafetta more attuned to the wordliness than the priest – or Chirino having a bad day in his interactions with the Visayans. Not surprisingly, both Pigafetta and the good Jesuit noted the relaxed attitude towards sex, especially among the women. The pious cleric disapproved heartily of island hedonism. He believed that the devil had convinced women that their salvation was in the hands of men, “that a woman, whether married or single, could not be saved, who did not have some lover.... Consequently, virginity was not recognized or esteemed among them; rather women considered it as a misfortune and humiliation. Married women, moreover, were not constrained by honor to remain faithful to their husbands, although the latter would resent the adultery, and hold it as just cause for repudiating the wife.”

In this context, virginity was neither prized nor desirable, and polygamy was accepted – both of which practices the zealously Catholic attempted to and did for the most part wipe out. To the macho Spanish, a sexually independent woman was intolerable. One account described island women as “generally depraved... given to abominable lustful habits.” The fact that female desire was given equal weight profoundly disturbed the repressed and repressive Spanish patriarchs. Gender equality was evident in a language such as a Tagalog with its non-gendered nominative pronouns and in the prevalent creation myth that had man and woman as emerging from bamboo at the same time, both fully formed. In contrast to the biblical story of the creation of Adam and Eve, this one held the implicit promise nonsexist gender treatment, as manifest in the sexual attitudes that titillated and shocked the Europeans.

**Topic: Colonial Mentality**

2) Brown Skin, White Minds, pg. 63-64 (David, 2013)

It has been argued that, among Filipino and Filipino Americans, ideas of superiority, pleasantness, or desirability have been associated with, not just physical characteristics, but also anything American or Western – a condition of internalized colonialism popularly referred to as Colonial Mentality (David & Okazaki, 2006a); 2006b; Root, 1997b; Strobel, 2001). My mentor (Sumie Okazaki) and I (David & Okazaki, 2006b) conceptualized Colonial Mentality (CM) as being “…characterized by a perception of ethnic or cultural inferiority that is... a specific consequence of centuries of colonization under Spain and the U.S.” and that it “involves an automatic and uncritical rejection of anything Filipino and an automatic and uncritical preference for anything American” (p. 241). It is important to note, however, that although many Filipinos and Filipino Americans are argued to have internalized the historical and contemporary oppression they have faced, not all Filipinos and Filipino Americans may hold CM. This may be especially true for many of the Muslim Filipinos in the southern Philippine island group of Mindanao who has been resisting colonization and westernization ever since the beginning of Spanish occupation. The same can be said about the numerous existing indigenous tribes in modern day Philippines such as
Topic: Colonial Education

3) Betwixt and Between Colonial and Postcolonial Mentality

The Hidden Curriculum of Colonial Education and American Benevolence (Leonardo & Matias, 2013)

When you put the term *colonial* in front of the word *education*, the connotations are strong and obviously oppressive. For the term *colonial* inherently implies a construction whereby the colonizers are the subjects of power and the colonized are the objects of power (Memmi, 1965).

The intention and aspiration for using colonial education was to model the paradigms and social norms of the colonizer. It was expected that the colonized in a colonial education system would forcibly conform to the normative, hegemonic practices of the colonizer. In this manner education in the Philippines played an assimilating role whereby indigenous people were expected to strip their native learning structures to adopt one that was both foreign to them and rationalized as superior by their colonizers. Again, colonial education had its purpose: “to equip a colonized society with the skills needed to administer the colonial enterprise” (Arnove & Torres, 2003, p. 54). Therefore, a colonial education became the medium that upheld the oppressive state of a capitalistic enterprise, racist relations, and cultural imperialism. Nowhere is this more apparent than the United States and Spain’s colonial relationship with the Philippines.

After the Spanish-American War at the end of the 19th century, the United States assumed control of the Philippines. Because of Filipino resistance, America realized it needed to fight the Philippine “insurgence” (also known as the Philippine-American War) on two battlefronts: military and civilian. It is a textbook case of what Gramsci (1971) calls hegemony or the struggle over ideology and common sense through cultural, rather than purely coercive, means. In order to culturally pacify the Filipino insurgency, Americans instituted colonial education. They wanted to teach Filipinos about the “benevolent” intention of American control. Flanked by the repressive military on one side, U.S. colonialism used the educational apparatus on the other (see Althusser, 1971). President McKinley himself affirmed the idea of a “benevolent assimilation” when he spoke to the American public on December 21, 1898.

The introduction of the Thomasites and Pensionado Program were two methods designed to instill colonial education among the Filipino people. In 1901, the Philippine Commission (run by American military officers and diplomats) initiated Act No. 74, which required the
transport of 600 teachers from the United States to the Philippines. These teachers called the Thomasites after the Minnewaska cattle cruiser they arrived in – later named the U.S. Thomas (www.thomasites100.org/thomas_hist.html). These were White men and women who came to the Philippines in hopes of educating the “savages” about superiority of American democracy. Hence, Philippine colonial education continued its racial project with a new master: the United States.

The Pensionado Act of 1903 gave birth to a Pensionado Program, designed to institute a “formal” U.S. education in the Philippines at the expense of the colonial government, much like the Illustrados, a program that sent wealthy Filipinos to Spain for formal education during Spanish colonial rule. The Pensionado Program’s intent was to generate a pool of highly trained, U.S.-educated Filipinos who embodied American ideals. It is important to note that by this time, Filipinos already internalized (through the years of Thomasite teaching) the idea that American education was superior to any teachings indigenous to the Filipinos. Although initially designed for wealth classes, eventually Filipinos who were “not necessarily wealthy” also participated in the program, and upon return to the Philippines they had access to better opportunities in the colonial bureaucracy (http://opmanong.ssc.hawaii.edu/filipino/filmig.html). Furthermore, the Pensionado Program developed the “counter consciousness” that Renato Constantino (1970) described in his book Dissent and Counter Consciousness. If colonial education is described as both an overt and covert assimilation process of colonized minds, then any extensions of it are implicated, such as the Pensionado Program. It simultaneously preached American ideals and forced Filipinos to mentally juggle the duality of their cultural existence.

Colonial education is a fact of the Filipino history. It succeeded in assimilating Filipinos into accepting ideals of government, education, and language as well as producing conditions for dissent against its imposition. It also rendered the native Filipino culture antiquated and obsolete, similar to Said’s (1979) observation of the Occident’s treatment of the Orient. Yet, paradoxically, by reducing their identities and cultures, colonialism also allowed a transformationally resistant spirit to develop, a new conceptualization of who Filipinos are as defined by themselves (see Matias, forthcoming). Therefore, colonial education is both the point of subjugation and the potential point of resistance and self-definition.

In the end, colonial education in the Philippines helped establish the Filipino diaspora, which since has spawned subjectivities even the colonizer could neither have predicted nor controlled. The rudimentary elements of Filipinoness were undermined, because for too long the Filipino self-conceptualization was defined by a superior other. This internalization of Western standards and colonialism make the discovery of authentic Filipino identity confusing, because Filipinos find themselves struggling for a sense of belonging that must
acknowledge they were uprooted (Leonardo, 2003). However, this irony is not just repressive but productive in Foucault’s (1980) sense that power creates and produces new subjects. Whether classified as indios, negritos, savages, Pilipino, or Filipino, the inhabitants and the descendants of what is now called the Philippines live in an utter state of ambivalence, reconceptualization, and activism regarding true identity. They seldom realize that there exists no box to check, because the box was originally placed there for them and not designed by them. Yet in realizing this, they also now have the opportunity to redefine their identity (see Matias, forthcoming).
APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL BAYANIHAN COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

The goal for the bayanihan community dialogue is to allow the participants to connect with each other and their narratives, develop a sense of collective power, gain inspiration to commit to their own decolonization journey, and commit to empowering others and giving back to their communities.

“Thank you all again for being a part of this study. The goal for the bayanihan community dialogue is to allow for you, the participants, to connect with each other and your narratives, develop a sense of collective power, gain inspiration to commit to our own decolonization journeys, and commit to empowering others and giving back to our communities. Please remember to not use your real names or anything that could directly identify yourself or others. And please do not share anything that is shared here outside of this space to respect the privacy of fellow participants.”

Questions:
1. Introductions
   a. Pseudonym, pronouns, racial and ethnic identities, generation, year in college, major and/or career interests
2. What was the timeline activity like for you? What was it like to reflect upon your childhood?
3. What was it like to read the excerpts of literature and history?
4. (Share Pinayism literature) How does this make you feel? What is your immediate reaction?
5. What does decolonization mean to you?
6. What are your hopes and dreams for our Pilipina American community?
   a. What do you see your role being?
   b. What makes you proud to be Pilipina American?
7. How can we support and empower each other?
8. Where do you go from here?
   a. How will you take what you learned here and into our communities?
APPENDIX I

READINGS FOR BAYANIHAN COMMUNITY DIALOGUE (PRIOR TO DIALOGUE)

**Pinayism, pg. 140-141 (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005)**
Pinay + ism: Pinay is a woman of Filipino descent, a Filipina in America and/or a Filipina American. Dawn Mabalon, [when she was] a Ph.D. student in Stanford University’s history department and community activist, identifies the terms Pinay and Pinoy as having roots in Filipino American history as far back as the 1920s and 1930s. Choosing to use Pinay + ism symbolically challenges traditional debates about P versus F (Filipino versus Filipino). Moving beyond identity politics and linguistic arguments surrounding the “correct” to use in identifying ourselves, it is important for us to explore and create new forms and mechanisms to understand the Pinay/Pinoy experience in the United States. Pinayism is localized in the United States, although it tries to provide a forum to make connections to the issues of Filipinas and Filipinos in diaspora.

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Is Pinayism just a Pinay form of feminism and/or womanism? It is presumed that feminism has been dominated by White, middle-class, liberal women and that womanism has originated in Black feminist thought. In submitting to the widely recognized framework of feminism, the issues of Pinays may get buried under more dominant and accepted voices. The critique of both feminism and womanism is mandatory in creating space for Pinayism. However, it should not stop Pinayists from engaging in the feminist and/or womanist dialogue and creating allies. Pinayism is not just the Pinay form of feminism and/or womanism. Pinayism is beyond looking at gender politics as the major focus. Pinayism aims to look at the complexity of the intersections where race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, spirituality/religion, educational status, age, place of birth, Diasporic migration, citizenship, and love cross.

**Practicing Pinayist Pedagogy (Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009)**
Pinayist praxis is a process, place, and production that aims to connect the global and local to the personal issues and stories of Pinay struggle, survival, service, sisterhood, and strength. It is an individual and communal process of decolonization, humanization, self-determination, and relationship building, ultimately moving toward liberation. Through this process, Pinays create places where their epistemologies are at the center of the discourse/dialogue/conversation and organizing. Pinays also represent Pinayism through critical cultural production of art, performance, and engaged scholarship that expresses their perspectives and counternarratives.

Pinayist pedagogy’s goals are two-fold: 1) teaching and learning critical Pinay studies with the central purpose to develop the capacity of Pinays to confront global, local, and personal problems that face them and their community; and 2) mentoring, reproducing, and creating a community of Pinayists.
At the core is critical Pinay studies, the teaching and learning of Filipina women’s stories, including their history and their contemporary experiences. Pinayist pedagogy aims to uncover challenges that Pinays face, while creating plans of action that pursue social change for the betterment of their lives. Pinayist pedagogy resists oppression both in the content and the methods of the curriculum and calls for a commitment to social justice, making the classroom a space of “transformational resistance.”

Pinayism began in the community and has created community, where Pinays could come together, share their experiences, and possibly plan actions to improve their lives.

**Not Just My Closet: Exposing Familial, Cultural, and Imperial Skeletons, pg. 32-33 (Pierce, 2005)**

*(shared during dialogue)*

Being born into a colonized family, you inherit the ideals and learn the narrative of colonization; as you come into consciousness, you are immersed in the promises of each colonizer, from the benefits of Spanish patriarchy, aristocracy, and religious authority to the promises of U.S. education, opportunity, and meritocracy. Being a Filipina American means being postcolonial – after colonization, but not certainly over colonization. It means negotiating neo- and postcolonial identities and filtering out latent Spanish colonial ideals and inherited American colonial ideals from the ideals that you struggle daily to prioritize intellectually. Being Pinay means learning how to decolonize your mind, from the necessary steps involved both in beginning and continuing that process. In her article “Coming Full Circle: Narratives of Decolonization among Post-1965 Filipino Americans,” Filipino studies critic Leny Mendoza Strobel notes, “Decolonization is a psychological and physical process that enables the colonized to understand and overcome the depths of alienation and marginalization caused by colonization. By transforming consciousness through the reclamation of one’s cultural self and the recovery and healing of traumatic memory, the colonized become agents of their own destiny.

Being Pinay thus means having a relationship to decolonization: whether active or passive, engaged, conflicted, opposed, or in denial, the relationship is automatic (and sometimes uninvited) by virtue of living in America. It means a constant awareness of “Philippine-ness” in America, awareness of systems of colonial imperialism, awareness of which generation you or your family members were American born, awareness of the obstacles that your family has had and continues to face, awareness of your relationship to others.
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