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Ashley Mika Decena  
Identity, Colonial Mentality, and  
Decolonizing the Mind: Exploring  
Narratives and Examining Mental  
Health Implications for Filipino  
Americans

## **ABSTRACT**

Colonial mentality is defined as the perception of ethnic and cultural inferiority and a form of internalized racial oppression. It is deemed a direct consequence of the Philippines' long history of colonialism. This empirical, qualitative study explored whether colonial mentality resonated with Filipino Americans who were born and raised in the United States. This study also investigated if and how the process of decolonization of the mind transpired within individuals. One way decolonization of the mind can be conceptualized is the process of understanding one's history to understand the present. Also examined was Filipino/Filipino American identity and how these perceptions of identity were related to colonial mentality and decolonizing the mind. In addition, attitudes about mental health were delved into on a micro and macro level using the above named frameworks. Postcolonial theory served as a theoretical foundation for this study. Results revealed that both colonial mentality and decolonizing the mind were true experiences for the majority of participants, and a multiplicity of manifestations emerged. Finally, mental health implications for the field of social work were drawn. It is recommended that social workers working with this population be cognizant of these possible contributing factors to Filipino American mental health.

**IDENTITY, COLONIAL MENTALITY, AND DECOLONIZING THE MIND:  
EXPLORING NARRATIVES AND EXAMINING MENTAL HEALTH IMPLICATIONS  
FOR FILIPINO AMERICANS**

A project based upon an independent investigation,  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2014

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

The Philippines has an extensive history of colonization. Four hundred years long—first by Spain starting in 1521 and subsequently by the United States in 1898 up until the mid-twentieth century. With this long history of colonialism and cultural imperialism in Filipino history, this paper seeks to examine if and how colonial mentality is experienced by Filipino American people and how this may manifest in their everyday lives. This research paper is an empirical, qualitative study delving into colonial mentality, a theory which according to David and Okazaki (2006a), is the perception of ethnic and cultural inferiority, a form of internalized oppression, that is “a specific consequence of centuries of colonization under Spain and the U.S. and it involves an automatic and uncritical rejection of anything Filipino and an automatic and uncritical preference for anything American” (p.241). The idea of decolonizing the mind was also investigated. Strobel (1997) defined decolonization of the mind as a “process of reconnecting with the past to understand the present...[and it] strengthens the cultural connection to the Filipino indigenous culture as a source of grounding” (p.63) and it can be exhibited in a variety of ways. This study explored whether or not colonial mentality and the decolonizing of the mind resonated as a true experience for second generation Filipino Americans, who are defined as those Filipinos who were born and raised in the United States. If these themes do appear to be true, how do they manifest? Leading up to these questions of colonial mentality and decolonization was an exploration of the meaning of both Filipino and Filipino American identity. Identity can be seen as a “definition” or “an interpretation of self” (Baumeister, 1986 as

cited by Revilla, 1997, p.96). According to Revilla (1997), Filipino American identity is “the product of our historical and cultural backgrounds and the process of negotiating and constructing a life in the United States” (p.96). A model of how Filipino American identity forms was created by Nadal (2004) and was used as a resource to compare the different processes of how Filipino American identities develop. Exploring identity illuminated if and how colonial mentality and decolonization may or may not have been a part of participants’ process of conceptualizing identity. Mental health implications were then drawn, which ultimately adds to the knowledge and awareness to the field of social work when working with the Filipino American population.

This research inquiry drew upon postcolonial theory to frame this work. Postcolonial theory is a set of ideas that “seeks to intervene... to force its alternative knowledges into the power structure of the west as well as the non-west. It seeks to change the way people think, the way they behave, to produce a more just and equitable relation between different peoples of the world” (Young, 2003, p.7). This theory is useful because it acknowledges that a dominant narrative thrives—and this research seeks to insert historically marginalized voices into the mainstream to create a more equitable world that has been inundated with exploitation, poverty, and colonialism. There is a lack of Filipino American voices in many arenas, two examples being in academic literature and in the field of mental health (David & Okazaki, 2006a; David & Nadal, 2013; David, 2013; Nadal, 2009). This study included voices whose roots stem from a postcolonial country in an attempt to have their voices and points of views heard.

As mentioned above, David and Okazaki (2006a) defined colonial mentality essentially as the ethnic and cultural inferiority which takes form in valuing the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the dominant/colonizing culture over one’s indigenous culture. It is a form of

internalized racial oppression, where a person internally incorporates this idea that they are less than another person or entity (David & Okazaki, 2006a). Internalized oppression has been studied in other oppressed populations who as a result, have suffered “negative psychological and mental health consequences” (David, 2013, p.62). Studies have been done inquiring whether colonial mentality is present in Filipino American populations (David & Okazaki, 2006b; David, 2008; David, 2010). The results have shown that colonial mentality is exhibited by Filipino Americans (David & Okazaki, 2006a; David, 2008; David, 2010; Lott 1980; Rezilla, 1997; Root, 1997). Further, research has demonstrated that colonial mentality affects mental health in a negative way (David & Okazaki, 2006a; David & Okazaki, 2006b; David, 2008).

Decolonization of the mind was explored. To be clearer, the fight for national sovereignty and decolonization in a physical sense in the Philippines happened over fifty years ago, but it is this decolonization of the *mind* that this research examined. In other words, classical colonialism has ended and many second generation Filipino Americans did not directly experience this colonialism, but may experience a term called internal colonialism. Internal colonialism is characterized by a society with racial inequalities and the “cultural imposition of the dominant group on the minority groups, and cultural disintegration of the oppressed group’s indigenous culture” (David, 2013, p.57). How are we manifesting these colonial beliefs and values in everyday interactions and challenging these ways of thinking?

Personal history inspired some of these questions. Further research validated my feelings. I was not alone. I grew up thinking my brown skin was not beautiful, and that it was not okay to get darker. I wanted to assimilate to white culture. I lightened my hair. I did not have people that looked like me outside of family. I was glad I did not have a Filipino accent, and I judged others who did. The strong Filipino food smell in my grandma’s house was embarrassing, especially



when my white friends would visit. I grew up with these notions, but now understand that they did not originate within me, but came from *somewhere else*. I experienced colonial mentality. Understanding that these ideas did not originate within me was a transformative experience. One way that colonial mentality takes form is through “standards of appearance” which Pierce (2005) explained as having roots in colonization: “The question is much bigger than ‘who told my mother that brown was less desirable?’ The question is, ‘Who told *us all*?’ ... We were not born with an instinct to privilege whiteness; this was a learned phenomenon” (p.40). Revilla (1997) also referred to this standard of appearance as also having roots in colonization with “Filipinos trying to stay out of the sun so as not to get too dark and pinching the nose to make it less flat” (p.108). Hagedorn (1994) spoke of this same phenomenon: “I was taught to look outside the indigenous culture for inspiration, taught that the label ‘Made in the USA’ meant automatic superiority; in other words, like most colonized individuals, I was a taught a negative image of myself (p. 174).”

De Jesus (2005) brought up of racism and a sense of lost history when talking about Filipino identity. She described some memories: “Fourth grade classmates taunting me as the ‘Oriental coffee bean’. My parents telling me that ‘Filipinos had no culture before the Spanish came’” (p. 2). Strobel (2005) spoke about her story on becoming a “split Filipina subject” and talked about Filipinos trying to connect with an innate sense of indigenous self: “There remains an unarticulated/intuited sense of primordality in their sense of self, something deeply rooted—the understanding of which is still in the process of being articulated. There is now a movement to return to our oral traditions and folklore in order to displace colonial narratives with our own” (p. 26). Strobel (2005) also discussed the importance of cultivating an ethnic sense of self as one strategy of many to resist dominant structures, and the stabilization of an ethnic identity is a

healing and transformative act in response to a people who have been “deeply violated” (p.28). Root (1997) analyzed the “insidious traumas euphemistically called ‘history’ on contemporary Filipino Americans, although they are generations removed from the original traumas” (p. xii). Root (1997) declared how despite not being directly affected, a trauma has taken place, and Filipinos are feeling its very real effects years later. With these assertions, and my own experience, I wondered if other Filipino Americans are experiencing feelings related to a deep history of colonization within the Philippines.

To ground this research, I will locate Filipino Americans physically, socially, and politically. Filipino Americans are the second fastest growing Asian/Pacific Island community (de Jesus, 2005) and are the second-largest Asian group in the United States (Root, 1997). As cited by David and Nadal (2013), the 2010 Census reported that “there are currently 3.4 million Filipinos in the United States, 1.7 million of whom are foreign born, making them the third largest American immigrant group next to Mexicans and Chinese” (p.298). Stereotypes such as the “Invisible Minority” and the “Forgotten Asian American” are imprinted upon this population (David, 2006b). In the United States, Filipinos are often referred to as the “little brown brother” (Root, 1997). All of these labels have negative, inferiorizing connotations. Politically in the United States, Filipinos are underrepresented. Filipinos were the first Asians on United States soil when they landed as slaves in 1587 from Spanish galleon ships in what is Morro Bay, California (David & Nadal, 2013). One of the first Asian settlements was in New Orleans, Louisiana, where a group of Filipinos who escaped Spanish galleon ships came in 1763. (David & Nadal, 2013). A larger number of Filipinos came to the United States beginning in the early 1900s as United States Nationals since the Philippines was considered U.S. territory. Filipinos were able to enter the United States easily, and they settled in largely western states including

California, Hawaii, Alaska, Washington, and Oregon (Jamero, 1997; David & Nadal, 2013). However, it was not until 1989 when a Filipino American was named a department head in the city and county of San Francisco. In addition, in the neighboring town, Daly City, it was not until 1993 that a Filipino American was elected to the city council (Jamero, 1997). Some community organizing was notably done in Seattle in the 1970s by a sociopolitical group known as the Filipino American Young Turks of Seattle (FAYTS) that brought visibility to the Seattle Filipino community (Jamero, 1997). The term Asian American, though useful for political and solidarity purposes, is a huge umbrella term and does not necessarily encompass the experience of the Filipino American (Nadal, 2004; Nadal, 2009). A large body of research exists in the East Asian community, most notably, the Japanese, Chinese, and Korean populations. In general these groups are more visible in mainstream society. Besides that, some statistics on mental health exist. Alarmingly, as cited by David and Nadal (2013), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that 45.6% of Filipina American adolescents exhibit suicidal ideation, which is the highest of all ethnic groups. In addition, Filipino American youth “have one of the highest high school dropout rates and one of the highest rates of teen suicide ideation and attempts” (Nadal, 2004, p.47). Nadal (2009) also mentions a study that found that within the Filipino American population, the rate one experienced depression in some form was 27%, higher than the average population in the United States which hovers between 10% and 20%. In researching Filipino Americans and mental health, a handful of theses and dissertations exist, but not much has been covered in the field of mental health in this population (David & Okazaki, 2006a; David & Nadal, 2013; David, 2013; Nadal, 2009). A closer look at the literature gives a clearer picture of what already exists, and what research has yet to be done.

## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review

#### Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory grounds this study in recognition of colonialism's lingering impact. Postcolonial theory attempts to shift the dominant ways in which people perceive the world (Young, 2003). Young (2003) stated, "postcolonialism claims the right of all people on this earth to the same material and cultural well-being" (p.2). Young (2003) asserted that postcolonialism "names a politics and a philosophy of activism" that challenges the pervasive inequality in the world. In a different way, it resumes anti-colonial struggles of the past. Historically, European powers, deemed the west, subjected many regions, the non-west, to colonial and imperial rule. European powers felt it was their duty to colonize and felt justified in doing so:

Colonial and imperial rule was legitimized by anthropological theories which portrayed the peoples of the colonized world as inferior, childlike, or feminine, incapable of looking after themselves and requiring the paternal rule of the west for their own best interests (today they are deemed to require 'development'). The basis of such anthropological theories was the concept of race. In simple terms, the west-non-west relation was thought of in terms of whites versus the non-white races (Young, 2003, p.2).

Young (2003) mentioned that white culture was and still is the basis for the dominant culture, which can encompass government, law, economics, science, language, music, art, and literature.

Postcolonialism and its theoretical foundations stem from the works of scholars including Frantz Fanon, Paulo Freire, and Albert Memmi. Memmi (1982) stated that, "racism illustrates, summarizes, and symbolizes the colonial relation" (p.32). Postcolonial theory also acknowledges that national sovereignty has been achieved in many countries and many have attained

postcolonial status (Young, 2003). However, it recognizes that the major world powers have not changed since this decolonization had taken place and a form of domination often still continues, and continues to feed off of racism. One example of this idea today is neocolonialism, where colonialism takes on the form of cultural imperialism, capitalism, and globalization (Young, 2003). In a literal sense, colonists are no longer physically present but their values, attitudes, and beliefs that have been imposed and ingrained on the indigenous population continue to hold power, and so, hegemonic powers still intrude in some form from a distance, and the indigenous population is still oppressed. David (2013) asserted that a similar oppression exists within the United States, but is outside a “formal colonial context” (p.47). He explained that racial inequality and cultural imposition by the dominant group on nondominant groups is similar to formal colonial processes (David, 2013).

Fanon (1963) said, “Independence has certainly brought the colonized people’s moral reparation and recognized their dignity. But they have not yet had time to elaborate a society or build and ascertain values” (p.40). This idea can be applied to the Philippines. After Filipinos defeated the Spanish after three hundred years of colonization, the Americans came in and continued this colonization for almost fifty more years. When the Americans left in 1946, globalization, neocolonialism, and cultural imperialism still influence the Philippines today (David & Nadal, 2013). Strobel (1997) referred to Freire in her study, who said that liberation starts with the “naming of the social and political structures that dominate and silence” (p.69). Thus, postcolonial theory serves as a backdrop to this study to name and recognize the effects of colonialism in order to break its dominating and silencing consequences. Postcolonial theory has also been acknowledged in the writings of Strobel (1997), Rimonte (1997), and David & Okazaki (2006a), as a way to recognize the inequality in the world, acknowledge colonialism’s

consequences, and work to change its enduring effects. Strobel (1997) pointed out many Filipino and Filipino American scholars have added to the understanding of postcoloniality. The ideas mentioned above frame colonial mentality and the process of decolonizing the mind.

### **Internalized Racial Oppression**

As postcolonial theory indicates, many people today are still feeling the effects of colonialism and cultural imperialism (Young, 2003). Colonial mentality is one consequence of colonialism, which is the idea that one has been conditioned to attach more importance to the values of the dominant culture over one's own (David & Okazaki, 2006a). Colonial mentality is a form of internalized racial oppression (also known as internalized racism, internalized oppression, or internalized racial inferiority) (David & Okazaki, 2006a). According to Speight (2007), internalized racial oppression is the internalization of the *dominant group's* attitudes, beliefs, and values while devaluing one's *own* attitudes, beliefs, and values. In essence, "the dominant group has the power to define and name reality, determining what is 'normal', 'real', and 'correct'" and in effect, "ignores, discounts, misrepresents, or eradicates the target group's culture, language, and history (Speight, 2007, p.130). Speight (2007) prompted for further research to be done on the relationship between internalized racial oppression, racial incidents, and psychological injury. That internalized racial oppression exists and racial incidents happen are important to note, but calling for a closer look into the effects of psychological injury is especially important. My study looked into how these incidents are experienced and how they shaped one's mental health. How to prevent these psychological injuries and how to cope will be noteworthy to uncover in further research as well (Speight, 2007). Identifying and defining internalized racial oppression here is important because it is synonymous with colonial mentality. The concept of colonial mentality is referred to in a handful of empirical studies

(Felipe, 2010; Ferrera, 2011; Lehman, 2007; Murillo, 2009), which I will delve into more deeply in the ensuing paragraphs.

### **Colonial Mentality**

David and Okazaki (2006b) constructed the colonial mentality scale (CMS) in order to measure it in a quantifiable way. They broke down colonial mentality into four different parts. The first is the idea of denigrating the Filipino self, second, denigrating the Filipino culture or body, third, discriminating against less Americanized Filipinos, and finally, tolerating historical and contemporary oppression of Filipinos and Filipino Americans. Participants self-reported on a scale of one to five on statements related to these categorizations and indicated whether they resonated with their experiences in a quantitative survey. Some examples that participants were asked to rate were “in general, I am embarrassed of the Filipino culture and traditions” and “I generally do not like newly arrived (FOBs) Filipino immigrants” (David & Okazaki, 2006b, p.245). The authors identified five different ways that colonial mentality manifested which were: internalized cultural and ethnic inferiority, cultural shame and embarrassment, within-group discrimination, physical characteristics, and colonial debt, which is this idea that Filipinos should be grateful to the colonizers who came to “save” the Filipinos. David (2008) used this same scale to measure the rate of depression and how colonial mentality might be related to this mental illness. This has brought some attention to how colonial mentality might be related to mental health in the Filipino American population. In this study, David (2008) found that colonial mentality served as a more relevant explanation for depression symptoms found in the Filipino American population, and asserted that by including the psychological effects of historically oppressive conditions into one’s understanding of a Filipino American and “ethnic minority

mental health” in general, one may have a more culturally accurate understanding of psychopathology within historically oppressed groups (p.118).

Colonial mentality was further broken down by David (2010) into overt and covert forms in another study, to further delineate how colonial mentality manifests in a population. Overt colonial mentality relates to actions taken by a person that exhibits this way of thinking, such as discriminating against Filipino immigrants, and covert colonial mentality involves internalized negative views about oneself, such as feeling ashamed of Filipino culture. In addition, David (2010) conducted a quantitative study over the internet using an Implicit Association Test to capture covert and automatic aspects of colonial mentality and found that it may be a valid tool for capturing these facets of colonial mentality that a self-report survey may not illustrate. A limitation was the finite nature of stimuli in the test and that it only catered to a particular population (i.e. having access to the internet, socioeconomic status). David (2010) also said that the connection between overt colonial mentality and mental health may be dependent on the covert aspect of colonial mentality. This study reframed colonial mentality as a more complex concept that has several facets in the way it can be experienced or exhibited. Overall, this researcher created an important way to measure this concept and has shown through these empirical studies that colonial mentality in fact exists in overt and covert forms within Filipino American populations. He hopes that it will be used as a model to understand other oppressed groups.

Acknowledging that colonial mentality exists is important, and several other studies touch on this concept and measure it in different ways (Felipe, 2010; Ferrera, 2011; Lehman, 2007; Murillo, 2009). Lehman (2007) examined how internalized racial oppression and family influenced the body image of Filipina American women. The study focused on the experience of



women and the politics of representation through the lens of internalized racial oppression and conducted a quantitative study of 138 Filipina American women. Lehman (2007) discovered that a complicated connection exists between Filipino cultural values and negative body images, and colonial mentality is a significant factor. Lehman (2007) suggested that:

Out of the process of colonization emerged a new Filipino culture, forced to adapt to the standards of Western ideals in order to preserve their cultural legacy. Colonial mentality as manifested in present day Filipino Americans might be the remnants of this adaptation and appears to have lasting effects on not only the racial identity of Filipina Americans, but also how others perceive themselves and others physically. (p.82)

Lehman (2007) said that more research is needed on the racial/ethnic identity development of Filipino Americans. This author also mentioned clinical implications, including the importance of factoring in cultural expectations and ethnic identity into the assessment and treatment for body image disturbances and to assess how prevalent colonial mentality factors into a Filipina's body image (Lehman, 2007).

Felipe (2010) conducted a quantitative study that uses colonial mentality as a framework in her examination of sexist and racist discrimination experienced by Filipina American women, and additionally examines clinical implications. Felipe (2010) sought to examine whether the factors of colonial mentality would predict perceptions of racism and sexism and the prevalence of colonial mentality. Differences of experiences in colonial mentality among varying generations were examined. Felipe (2007) wrote, "Understanding the relationship between the manifestations of colonial mentality with perceptions of racist and sexist discrimination will elucidate whether the experiences of Filipina Americans would be best understood through colonial mentality or just through constructions of race and sex" (p.40). Felipe (2010) concluded that "attending to the impact of internalized colonialism" is important to consider when thinking about the mental health treatment of a Filipina American because without a framework of colonial mentality, a person giving services could miss contributing factors of her experience

(Felipe, 2010, p.40). Felipe (2010) discovered that a third of the women exhibited colonized thinking, and she found that colonial mentality does heavily influence one's experience with racist and sexist discrimination. These manifestations may be linked to negative mental health outcomes like depression and lowered self-esteem, and she used this study to inform clinical treatment (Felipe, 2010). The author highlighted the importance of examining how colonial mentality is expressed specifically to better recognize and understand its psychological impacts and called for further research on this topic (Felipe, 2010). Felipe (2010) also invited more research into using the decolonization framework as a treatment intervention in order to "combat the dehumanizing effects of colonial mentality." By using this framework, the Filipino community can challenge the accepted and traditional idea of this emulation and admiration of colonizing entities.

Ferrera (2011) looked into the intersection of colonial mentality, family socialization, and ethnic identity formation among second generation Filipino American youth using both qualitative and quantitative measures. This study uncovered how these intersections might illuminate factors that contribute to depression. Again, mental health was an element of interest in this study. Ferrera (2011) said that it is important to acknowledge that second generation Filipino Americans are a vulnerable group due to high rates of depression, and must be understood not only through familial and developmental patterns, but also with awareness of their "political history of colonization", and be recognized as a separate entity among Asian Americans despite their categorization as such (p.1). The study sought to understand the role of colonial mentality in ethnic identity development, and how this impacted bicultural competence, and overall mental and emotional well being (Ferrera, 2011). Through individual interviews and focus groups, Ferrera (2011) gathered data and had participants complete a self-selecting

questionnaire to measure ethnic identity, perceived discrimination, colonial mentality, depression, and self-esteem, among other measures. Ferrera (2011) found that many participants' family enculturation style of first generation parents had in fact endorsed colonial mentality, but that many second generation Filipino Americans demonstrated resistance and resilience despite colonial mentality and enculturation. Ferrera (2011) also found that colonial mentality as measured by David & Okazaki (2006b) in the CMS did not fully encapsulate the complexity of the Filipino American experience, and participants displayed a desire to resist colonial mentality. Perhaps this resistance and resilience exhibited by this group is one manifestation of decolonization of the mind, which is a phenomenon my research study explored in further detail.

Murillo (2009) assessed the relationship between ethnic identity, colonial mentality, and the parenting style of Filipino Americans. The author discovered that a relationship exists between ethnic identity and parenting style and that no relationship exists between colonial mentality and ethnic identity (Murillo, 2009). I thought it was interesting that this researcher did not find a relationship between colonial mentality and ethnic identity, and my study addressed these concepts further. Additionally, Murillo (2009) found that Filipino Americans do experience colonial mentality, but it does not have a significant relationship with one's parenting style, and colonial mentality may develop independent of one's values and beliefs about parenting (Murillo, 2009). Murillo (2009) acknowledged mental health and included a clinical/professional application, in that it is important to consider Filipino history in a person's experience when providing family therapy or conceptualizing how parenting style develops.

David & Nadal (2013) wrote a piece acknowledging that colonialism and its legacies may play a significant role in Filipino emigration to the United States. They also noted that a highly Americanized climate in postcolonial Philippines exists (David & Nadal, 2013). They brought to

light that no known empirical study in psychology has been done that specifically investigates whether colonialism and its effects have influenced the psychological experiences of Filipino American immigrants *before* arriving to live in the United States (David & Nadal, 2013). They also acknowledged that no existing empirical study specifically examines the extent to which colonialism and its legacies continue to impact these Filipino American immigrants' mental health (David & Nadal, 2013). David and Nadal (2013) facilitated two studies, one qualitative and one quantitative, exploring these two ideas. They discovered that colonialism and its consequences are vital factors to take into account when making sense of the psychological experiences of Filipino American immigrants. Their results suggested that 1) Filipino American immigrants experienced ethnic and cultural denigration in the Philippines prior to their U.S. arrival, 2) ethnic and cultural denigration in the Philippines and in the United States may lead to the development of colonial mentality, and 3) colonial mentality may have negative mental health consequences among Filipino American immigrants (David & Nadal, 2013). These studies underscored the importance of the empirical support that bolsters the idea that the Filipino American immigration experience “needs to be understood in the context of colonialism and its most insidious psychological legacy” (David & Nadal, 2013, p.298). Here, David and Nadal (2013) acknowledged colonial mentality and the continued effects on mental health but focused on the Filipino American immigrant experience. Conversely, I focused on the second generation (and subsequent generations) Filipino American experiences with colonial mentality and mental health.

### **Decolonization of the Mind**

Strobel (1997) conducted a qualitative study on the process of decolonization of the mind, which is a “process of reconnecting with the past to understand the present...and

strengthens the cultural connection to the Filipino indigenous culture as a source of grounding” (p.63). She followed a group of eight Filipino Americans in Northern California who immigrated after 1965 for over a year. She proposed that “critical consciousness is facilitated by the process of decolonization” (Strobel, 1997, p.63). She had the group participate in in-depth group dialogues and interviews to discuss and then write about their decolonization experience. Her research questions focused on the manifestations of decolonization, the turning points where participants felt the need to reconnect or rediscover their ethnic roots, what participants did to decolonize, and the role of the Filipino community, the educational system, and popular culture in decolonization (Strobel, 1997). Strobel (1997) deconstructed decolonization into three categories in a detailed chart. The first category is “naming”, for example, “to decolonize is to be able to name internalized oppression, shame, inferiority, confusion, and anger” (p.66). The second category is “reflection”, for instance, “to decolonize is to develop the ability to question one’s reality as constructed by colonial narratives.” (p.66). Finally, the third category is “action”, such as “to decolonize is to take leadership positions in moving the Filipino American community toward visibility and empowerment” (p.66). She found themes that pointed to the power of naming decolonization as a process and telling one’s story, the need for Filipino cultural and historical knowledge, the role of language and memory, and the role of Filipino spirituality (Strobel, 1997). Revilla (1997) proposes some strategies such as questioning racism and getting involved in political and cultural activism. Strobel’s (1997) study focused on the same phenomenon I investigated in my study, though I did not have the capacity to follow participants for over a year nor have participants interact with one another. However, I inquired in a similar fashion how decolonizing may have been a part of one’s experience, and I went a

step further by inquiring about one's impression of mental health in themselves and in the Filipino American community.

De Jesus (2005) and Root (1997) compiled essays and stories by Filipino and Filipino American authors into books that addressed loss and trauma within Filipino history. These pieces prompt its readers to think critically about the formation of identity and acknowledged colonial mentality as a valid factor in people's lived experiences (Pierce, 2005; Rimonte, 1997; Strobel, 1997; Strobel, 2005). The narratives display the depth of the multi-faceted Filipino American experience. Some went into detail of a variety of issues and topics facing the Filipino community, including the crisis of forming an identity, mail order brides, community organizing, the media, queer perspectives, colonialism's legacy, and feminism (Revilla, 1997; Root, 1997; Ordonez, 1997; Jamero, 1997; Bergano & Bergano-Kinney, 1997; Lipat, Ordon, Stewart, & Ubaldo, 1997; Aguilar & Aguilar-San Juan, 2005). Woven into many of these stories and studies at separate times is colonial mentality, identity, decolonization, and mental health, and my study addressed the intersection of all of these themes.

## **Identity**

Colonial mentality and decolonizing the mind could play a role in one's conceptualizing of identity. Scholars have deconstructed identity and created models of identity development, and one example is done by Nadal (2004) who created the Pilipino American Identity Development Model, which is modified from the Asian American Identity model. The Pilipino American Identity Development model breaks into stages a nonlinear and nonsequential process of how a Filipino American might move through different identity states that can be characterized by feelings of struggle, disillusionment, celebration, pride, and empowerment. He emphasized that not all Filipino Americans will follow this trajectory, and some may never enter

certain stages. Stage one is known as “ethnic awareness” which is when one is only aware of their own ethnicity because they are not exposed to other cultures. Stage two is “assimilation to dominant culture” which is having a preference of dominant culture over one’s own and could possibly continue throughout the rest of adult life. Stage three is “social-political awakening” when one begins to notice social injustice and racial inequalities, increases political awareness, and gains new perspective. Stage four is “panethnic Asian American consciousness” where one takes ownership over being Asian. Stage five is “ethnocentric realization” where one realizes Filipino marginalization within the Asian American community. Stage six is “incorporation” which is the:

highest form of identity evolution, focused on Filipino pride, gratification, and appreciation...he or she will no longer see his or her placement in the Asian American category as completely negative, but will continue to advocate for the needs for himself or herself, his or her Filipino community, and for social justice as a whole...He or she will encourage other Pinoys/Pinays to reach the same level but will be respectful and patient if others spend more time at earlier stages. (p. 59)

Nadal (2004) garnered implications for counseling and education. He pointed out that, “if a counselor is unable to notice the difference between Filipino Americans and other Asian Americans, let alone not understand the concept of Filipino identity, then there is a strong possibility that the counselor will wrongly assess the client” (p.60). He highlighted that it is important to delineate the differences in the Filipino population when compared to the wider Asian American population, and it can be seen in physical traits where Filipinos often identify as being “brown” and at one point created a “Brown Asian Caucus” to distinguish themselves from the “Yellow Power Movement” in the Civil Rights era. Additionally, according to David and Okazaki (2006a), “Filipino Americans are the only Asian American ethnic group to have experienced direct U.S. colonization” (p.5). Nadal (2004) also mentioned that it is important to

acknowledge the wide diversity within the Filipino American community, whose ancestry traces back to “aboriginal Pilipino roots, Muslim, East Asian, Pacific Islander, and Indonesian influences” in addition to Spanish and United States colonial rule (p.46). Nadal (2004) stated, “Filipinos differ markedly from ...other dominant Asian groups in the United States,” and there is diversity within the Filipino group as well (p.47). “By beginning to understand the uniqueness of minority groups within minority groups, one can progress toward accuracy and the therapeutic success of all members of society” (Nadal, 2004, p.61). Finally, Nadal (2004) noted that it is *not* the counselor’s responsibility to move a client through the process of advancing through these different stages. One may challenge a client with new perspectives, but not with the sole purpose of advancing one through different stages. I conceptualize stage two, which is assimilating to the dominant culture, as relating to colonial mentality because of the adherence to dominant beliefs. The later stages, such as social political awakening, panethnic Asian American consciousness, and ethnocentric realization, could be related to the process of decolonization, because of the connection to and understanding of one’s social and political history.

Fabella (2002) explored identity in more detail. This researcher conducted a quantitative study that examined the predictors of ethnic and social identity among Filipino Americans by examining the perception of visibility of Filipino Americans and how this perception influenced one’s ethnic and social identity. The study revealed that a person’s sense of identity increased in both categories if the *perception* of visibility is high. Ultimately, a Filipino American’s sense of self is negatively affected due to how the dominant culture views the Filipino population (Fabella, 2002). This study showed that it is important to recognize how ethnic identity forms and the way in which colonial mentality, here manifested as the influence of the dominant culture’s views, might contribute to shaping it.



## Strengths & Limitations of Literature

In many of the studies mentioned above, different sections of the Filipino American population were examined, and all had an underlying theme which was the acknowledgment of colonial mentality and how it was exhibited through different lenses (Felipe, 2010; Ferrera, 2011; Lehman, 2007; Murillo, 2009; Strobel, 1997). Some limitations were that it only examined certain populations within the Filipino American population, such as only having women participants (Felipe, 2010; Lehman, 2007) parents (Murillo, 2009), college educated (Felipe, 2010; Ferrera, 2011), second generation immigrants (Ferrera, 2011), first generation immigrants (David & Nadal, 2013) and low sampling numbers (Felipe, 2010; Lehman, 2007; Murillo, 2009). Most of the studies were quantitative in nature except for Strobel's study on decolonization (1997), David and Nadal's (2013) inquiry into colonial mentality within immigrants from the Philippines, and Ferrera's (2011) study on colonial mentality, family socialization, and ethnic identity formation. One limitation of these studies was that many of the participants were self selected convenience samples using a snowball sampling technique (David & Okazaki (2006a, 2006b); David, 2008; David, 2010; David & Nadal, 2013; Felipe, 2010; Ferrera, 2011; Lehman, 2007; Murillo, 2009). All of these studies using colonial mentality as a framework did not define or tell participants about the phenomenon of colonial mentality besides Ferrera (2011) and Strobel (1997), but rather measured its existence by using the colonial mentality scale. My study differed in that it defined colonial mentality and decolonizing the mind from the outset.

Missing from the literature is a more in depth examination of *how* colonial mentality and decolonizing the mind are experienced by Filipino Americans. Most prominent in empirical studies thus far are measuring colonial mentality on a quantitative scale based on a set of preconceived questions. In general, adding a qualitative lens to this topic is an important

perspective to examine as called on by Felipe (2010) and Ferrera (2011) as it may add a layer of understanding by adding a person's context and history. Most of the studies did acknowledge mental health or clinical implications (Felipe, 2010; Ferrera, 2011; Lehman, 2007; Murillo, 2009; David & Okazaki 2006a; David& Okazaki, 2006b; David, 2008; David, 2010; David & Nadal, 2013). Issues such as body image, identity, racism, internalized racial oppression, and colonial mentality were included, but a discussion on how the process of eradicating colonial mentality was not present except for Strobel's (1997) study. Ferrera (2011) did discover a resistance to colonial mentality, which I conceptualize as decolonizing the mind, and my study investigated the expression of this resistance. Colonial mentality was acknowledged widely through various quantitative studies that it does affect Filipino Americans and their mental health (Felipe, 2010; Ferrera, 2011; Lehman, 2007; Murillo, 2009; David & Okazaki,2006a; David & Okazaki, 2006b; David, 2008; David, 2010; David & Nadal, 2013). My research study filled a gap in the literature—not just that colonial mentality exists, but *if* people recognized it for themselves, and *how* it is expressed. It is also to important to acknowledge that colonial mentality may not be a part of a person's experience, or that they may not be able to identify how this is a part of their experience (David & Okazaki, 2006a).

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Methodology**

#### **Formulation**

This study investigated if colonial mentality was a true experience for Filipino Americans and if so, how it manifested in the second generation Filipino American population. If colonial mentality was true to participants' experiences in some form, this study then investigated if the decolonization of the mind was a true experience and how this manifested. Filipino identity and Filipino American identity were examined and analyzed through colonial mentality and decolonizing frameworks. Finally, from these themes, implications on the mental health of Filipino Americans were drawn.

#### **Sample**

The sample consisted of fifteen participants who identified as Filipino Americans. Inclusionary criteria included those who were English speaking, at least eighteen years of age, and those born, raised and currently living in the United States. Since this sample included a small number of participants, participants' experiences cannot be generalized to the entire Filipino American population.

Convenience sampling was utilized through my social and professional networks. A nonprobability, snowball sampling method was used since many participants stemmed from my own connections, which limited the randomness of the sample. Recruitment strategies consisted of posting flyers on public bulletin boards at bookstores and coffee shops in New York, social

media announcements through Facebook and Instagram, and e-mail announcements to family, friends, and colleagues (refer to Appendix A for recruitment flyer, Appendix B for social media recruitment message, and Appendix C for e-mail recruitment message). One example of a recruitment pool that was used was the Pilipino Alumni Association network through UCLA, which was a group of alumni that identified as Filipino. I accessed this group through a networking group on Facebook, and first sent an e-mail asking permission to post information to the administrator of the group (refer to Appendix D for recruitment message geared toward organization and Appendix E for e-mail to group leader/group administrator to grant permission to recruit). All participants volunteered to participate and were sent informed consent forms outlining the details and purpose of the study including possible risks and what to expect (refer to Appendix F for Informed Consent Form). Participants read and signed the informed consent forms prior to participating. I made sure the participants were all eligible before interviews. I also confirmed that I did not know any participants on a personal level.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected with the following procedural guidelines. I conducted fifteen separate interviews with participants either over the phone, video chat, or in person. Any identifying information was kept confidential. During the interview, member checking was utilized and participants were asked to give feedback regarding the interview process in general. Before meeting and once participants initiated interest in the study, I sent participants information about the study via e-mail. Next, eligibility was confirmed and informed consent forms were sent via mail. Wet signatures were collected indicating whether or not they granted permission to be audio recorded, and whether or not they gave consent to participate in the study. If the participant

chose not be recorded, I planned to manually write notes during the interview, but this was not an issue that came up.

All interview data that was audio recorded was then transcribed and kept in a password protected word document. Any handwritten notes and audio recordings had only participant codes on them and were kept in a locked cabinet separate from any informed consent forms to protect confidentiality. All research materials including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent documents were stored in a secure location and will be for three years according to federal regulations. Materials will be kept secured until no longer needed and then destroyed. All electronically stored data are currently password protected and will be for the duration of this storage period.

Participants filled out a demographics survey (refer to Appendix G for demographics survey), including information about age, gender identity, socioeconomic status, level of education, religion/spirituality, and were asked to list any other ethnic or racial identities one identifies with, and to indicate from which generation they identified (2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> etc.). This information will also be stored in a secure location and destroyed once no longer needed. The definitions of identity, colonial mentality, and the decolonization of the mind were provided in the interview (refer to Appendix H for interview questions). Some qualitative questions included:

- What, if anything, were you told or taught about what it means to be a F/Pilipino growing up (explicitly and implicitly)? Include messages from family and from other races/cultures/ethnicities, and the media.
- What are the general messages you have gotten about mental health in the F/Pilipino culture/community. What is your own experience with mental health?

The data collection process may or may not have caused harmful effects to some participants. The questions were personal and may have brought up feelings of anger, shame, embarrassment, or inferiority. A list of Filipino resources and mental health resources were provided to participants. Participants were aware that the study was completely voluntary and

that they had the right to refuse to answer any questions or withdraw at any time without consequence. The participant was made aware that if they chose to withdraw after the interview process, their data would be destroyed. The participants were informed that if they chose to withdraw before being interviewed, any identifying information would also be destroyed. Once the interview was finished, the participant had until March 15, 2014 to withdraw from the study.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of the study was that I recruited from a pool of people from my own familial and professional network which limited the sample's variability. Another limitation was the small number of participants and so results are not generalizable. Yet another limitation was my own researcher bias. Because of my view and experience on the subject of colonial mentality and the decolonization of the mind process, I was mindful of avoiding asking leading questions and looking to interpret answers in a particular way. In order to keep this in check, my questions and research proposal was approved by Smith's Human Subjects Review committee and by my research advisor (See Appendix I for the Human Subjects Review approval letter). In addition, participants were asked to give feedback on the interview process and questions.

### **Data Analysis**

After the interviews were completed and transcribed, a thematic analysis was conducted. Themes were identified by combing through transcriptions and pulling out striking quotes and highlighting ideas pertinent to the research question. These themes were then categorized. The qualitative answers in my study yielded a variety of answers, some of which coincided with David and Okazaki's (2006b) 53-self reported questionnaire that measured manifestations of colonial mentality. Multiple readings were done to make sense of the data collected to ensure its accuracy and quality. In addition, the data was recorded in an organized fashion by creating

separate files on my laptop that was accessible only to the researcher to ensure confidentiality.

Similarities, differences, and frequencies among themes were noted and categorized accordingly.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Findings**

The study revealed a wide spectrum of results from which a number of themes transpired. The interview focused on questions pertaining to Filipino and Filipino American identity, experiences with colonial mentality, decolonizing the mind, and observations and experiences of mental health through these lenses. I found that colonial mentality and decolonizing the mind did resonate with many in the sample, and several participants were able to articulate how this was a factor in their mental health.

### **Sample**

The sample included participants from the age range of eighteen to sixty-four and about half of these participants reported being between ages twenty-five to thirty-four. All identified as second generation Filipinos, which was defined as those who identify as Filipino/a and were born and raised in the United States. Thirteen participants grew up in various cities in California, including Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, Pacifica, Richmond, and San Jose. Two grew up on the east coast, one in New Jersey and one in Washington D.C, and a few relocated to various places different from their place of origin, including New Mexico, New York, and Wisconsin. In terms of annual income earned, of those who reported, one indicated earning 0-\$15,000, one indicated \$15,000-\$29,999, two indicated \$30,000-\$39,999, five indicated \$60,000-\$75,000, and two indicated earning more than \$100,000. All had completed a college education and two were in the process of attaining one. Seven participants had attained Master's degrees,



three were in the process of attaining a Master's, one was in the process of attaining a PhD, and one had a PhD. Of the fifteen participants, nine identified as female, and six identified as male. Religiously, six identified as Catholic, two as Christian, one as Buddhist, one as spiritual, and three did not identify with a religion. The following results are categorized into three main sections: 1) Filipino/Filipino-American identity, 2) colonial mentality and decolonizing the mind, and finally, 3) mental health. Themes were then drawn and categorized within these sections.

## **Identity**

**Filipino Identity** This first question focused solely on Filipino identity. Participants were asked about messages they received, whether implicit or explicit, about what it meant to be Filipino.

***Implicit themes*** Most participants felt that the messages were implicit rather than explicit, and so learned about Filipino culture and identity from subtle cues or cultural practices within their home or extended family and community gatherings, as opposed to being directly told or educated about Filipino culture: "I don't think I've ever been told what it means to be Filipino...we have culture..." Another reflected, "I didn't really know I was Filipino until maybe grade school. My parents never said, 'you are Filipino' but...I guess I picked up on little things like language." Some of these major recurring themes that emerged are discussed below. It is important to note that these values are not inclusive of all Filipino cultural values, but out of the fifteen participants, these were most prominent. They serve as a framework to give insight on how some participants navigated their environments and how they may have eventually played a role in mental health.

***Community*** Seven participants mentioned the collective nature of the Filipino culture and how community is valued. One manifestation is the gathering of families and friends for

occasions: “I felt the communal aspect about it...I remember helping out your family members was central to being Filipino.” The sharing of food is often an activity that is prevalent during these events: “Our community is about sharing meals and eating. We all knew each other. When new people came into the community, they were welcomed.” Another described, “Hospitality is the biggest thing my mom taught me. My mom would say, ‘did you eat?’”

*Familial expectations of achievement* About half of participants felt that they had certain expectations to uphold, and struggled with finding their own path and coming up against what was expected versus what they wanted for themselves. One participant explained:

I felt like I was entitled to more than just what they thought I should be, which was kind of like them living this quiet life, getting a degree, but not too high. They didn't even think about that as a possibility, if it was going to be a degree it was going to be in accounting or nursing. Even as a graduate student, my mom didn't have very diverse expectations of me...it had to do with the immigrant experience of laying low, not thinking of oneself as anybody who could possibly make big changes or contributions to the larger culture...Basically you are there to serve, do your duty, have a family. You know, write a book, what?! Research, what?! It was more like how much money are you going to make? And I definitely felt a lot of anger and resentment about those expectations ...

Yet another participant struggled greatly with not meeting his parents' expectations in school and in his choice in career:

My biggest struggle was making sure my parents are proud of me, and I always heard that stereotypical Asian or Filipino parents put a lot of pressure on you and it's true. In the Philippines, my family grew up poor, and I don't live with that struggle...I always felt like I want to make my parents proud, and I've focused much of my life to doing that, and it caused a lot of problems for me.

Three participants described certain expectations put on the oldest daughters to behave a certain way. For example, one participant's father had expectations for going to a certain school and she instead applied to schools where she knew her needs would be met and this culminated into a conflict:

I applied to a certain university to make my dad happy but I applied on purpose with the majors of pre-med and engineering, so I got declined on purpose...then he got really mad

at me, he got so pissed, and got all these messages of ‘you’re a failure, you’re not good enough’ and all that.

One participant said, “Maintaining this image of the perfect Filipino daughter was something I always had to deal with growing up, getting good grades...having to perform piano ...” Seven participants mentioned the importance of education. Parents would have high expectations when it came to performing well in school:

I would see other people getting rewarded for getting B’s, but if I got a B then I would be grounded for a month, and so it was really frustrating for me growing up...You get straight A’s you get nothing, you get a B you get scolded.

Often education is linked with the idea of job security. A few felt pressured to go into a certain field, such as the sciences and were expected to become a doctor, nurse, or engineer: “I finally realized I wanted to be an artist, not an engineer, or a *nurse*, cuz that’s what a lot of Filipinos do.” One participant described her Filipino friends had parents who pressured them to go into certain fields, and they would say, “My mom is making me do pharmacy school... [or] making me do nursing.”

*Religion* Four participants mentioned that religion, specifically Catholicism, was a value that was important to Filipino culture whether or not they adhered to the religion. One said, “I associate [being Filipino] with being Catholic and going to mass.” Another said, “Basically my whole family is Catholic...” which meant “strong morals...respect people all people no matter what.”

*Respecting elders* Respect was also mentioned by a few participants. Respecting one’s elders is especially emphasized within Filipino culture. One described that she was to “always be respectful to the elderly, always greet your uncle, auntie, even if you’re not related, show respect, or else.”

**Filipino American Identity** Participants were asked to describe what it meant to be Filipino American as an identity, specifically adding in the American piece. Participants received varying messages about what it meant to be Filipino American and came to different realizations on how they incorporated this identity into their lives.

***Navigating biculturalism*** Four participants felt that they were trying to incorporate two different cultures into their reality and so were navigating being bicultural. One participant noted: “I’m learning to embrace this kind of gray where I know I’m not quite like my parents but I know I’m not quite like an American peer or white middle class American...I think I discovered a sort of definition and retreat[ed] from it when it didn’t quite fit.” Yet another participant mentioned that he “feel[s] like being in both worlds, being both your Filipino side and your US side. I feel less Filipino not knowing Tagalog. I wonder how we as a Filipino American community will continue to negotiate that. How do we reconcile our Filipino and American sides?” Another participant explained her Filipino American identity as “learning the history, understanding which parts of history resonate with me, [and] which parts I might need more knowledge.” One participant felt that he was accused in the Philippines as not being “Filipino enough.”

***Acknowledging American privilege*** A few participants conceptualized their Filipino American identity by acknowledging the privileges that come along with being American. As one participant said:

I think I identify as Filipino American in recognition of all the privileges I have from being born here, just seeing my family in the Philippines struggle so much, I kind of feel like I could have easily had their lives and they could have easily gotten my life.

Another participant said that going to the Philippines made the significance of being American more salient. He realized how much he still needed and wanted to learn about Filipino culture, and recognized the importance of knowing his ancestor's struggles and accomplishments:

I went [to the Philippines] after I graduated in 2009, and that was when I learned what it meant to be Filipino American, because when you're in the Philippines, you realize like wow there's a lot I need to learn about my own culture. I have to. I think there's a sense of pride, I think there's a sense of generational understanding, understanding the generations before you and the hard work done before like what my ancestors and my mom had to do to get here.

***Grappling with the label*** Some struggled with the label of Filipino American and what that meant for their identity. Three participants did not readily identify with the term Filipino American, and two of these three felt this way due to feeling marginalized within the Filipino American community. For example, one participant articulated that she was “struggling with the hyphen”, that is, being Filipino coupled with American as one whole identity. Yet another participant mentioned that she did not fit into these “essentializing terms” of what it meant to be Filipino, and it felt “exclusionary” to hear her grade school teachers (who happened to be Filipino) project certain expectations of what it meant to be Filipino: “The definitions became a lot more specific and it became repulsive to me for me to identify, because I didn't feel like I did...” One articulated that it “is very difficult to identify as Filipino American because there are no mentors or someone successful that you can look at...It's either going to be some sports star or comedian or actor, versus, the President of the United States, or CEO of a company or being an activist.”

**Factors contributing to identity formation** Out of the results, certain themes materialized but were not explicitly asked within the study. The process of identity formation and how this manifested I think are important to include as it applies to how one came to

conceptualize identity. The meaning one attributes to one's identity is intertwined with identity development.

***Lack of representation*** Many felt marginalized in that there was a lack of representation of Filipinos in the media and in other settings, which was a factor in identity development. Four participants felt that there was a lack of mirroring in the media. One participant stated, "Not seeing Filipinos on the movies, TV, stuff like that, I guess that could be a message in itself but at the time I'm not thinking that deeply." Another mentioned, "Growing up I didn't see a lot of Filipinos on TV, I think once in a while my dad would watch a Filipino news program." One of the participants said that he did not feel mirrored in the media but in general, he noticed that: "if I am [in the media] I am the comic relief dark person, or the servant. I'm not the main actor." Another example of marginalization and lack of representation occurred in one's university community. One participant described an incident where there was a map of countries in the dorms and the Philippines was not labeled, and how he reacted:

I definitely think our stories are marginalized...the first thing that came to mind as a young person of color who is going to a school that is predominantly white, who had just taken all these classes about brown pride and all this stuff, the first thing I thought was that they forgot about us again...it's crazy for me to learn these things and these basic facts about the history of a people that are not included in certain textbooks....I think it's starting to get a little bit better for Filipino Americans. I think more people are voicing their struggles and what they experience but it's not even close enough to understand what happened and how people came to America, ....On the radio, we don't get much play, ...a lot of other people of color, their songs play more than ours do...

Another participant felt that:

It is so easy for the entire world to look at the Philippines and poo poo it! And that's a really hard thing to say, 'okay we're from there, look how far we've come.' We haven't gotten the message down. It's like we need a really good talking points person to figure out for us, once those talking points person are figured out, maybe you're doing that, and maybe my book is doing that.

***Identifying with Latinos*** Some participants, who did not have many Filipinos in their communities growing up, mentioned feeling like they felt a sense of belonging with Latinos,

which was part of the process of their identity development. As one participant put, “I immediately gravitated towards them. They would wear a lot of red, they were Norteños, and I would immediately be like I want to be more like them, they look like me. So my identity was very much like, I’m Latino.” Another described:

I feel like I have a lot of parallels between my Latino friends, cuz we happen to have big families and it wasn’t unusual for us to come back on Monday morning and say what did you do? And I hear they hung out with cousins or grandmas and that was pretty normalized in terms of the different cultures I grew up with.

Another participant said:

When I was in Jr. High, I had a bunch of Mexican friends and I would try to dress like them and slick my hair back and wear a hair net, a lot of stuff my family never understood, so it was interesting as a young kid trying to figure out what am I really, what is my identity when it comes to my heritage.

***Comfort in finding Filipinos in community*** More than half of the participants expressed that they felt a certain comfort in finding community with other Filipinos. One said:

It is those commonalities that allow people to bond easier and get to know each other easier because it is like, oh this person has a similarity, so I can tell this person about me, and I can tell him who I am because I won’t feel judged. I felt like I fit in easy, I didn’t really have to actively try to be something I wasn’t as much, I wasn’t wearing clothes that made me fit in with certain people. I wasn’t talking in a specific way.

One described:

Seeing people who looked like me when I went to the grocery store or when I went to the restaurants...when I was in the firm, I was working twenty hours a day, working with white people, talking to white people, I felt so happy when I found a Filipino. It reminds me of home.

Another said that being around Filipinos is “helpful” and she would “kick at Costco with the brown people” to find community in an area where she was living at the time was predominantly white. One described how he started to connect with Filipinos when he got to high school, which was more diverse than his previous community:

When I got to high school, I was meeting all these Filipinos and I was like, ‘yeah, this is cool, what’s up? What’s your name? Oh you eat adobo?’ It was a very superficial definition of what it meant to be Filipino. You have an Uncle June, you have an Uncle

Boy, you know Rex Navarette stereotype joke, and that was...the foundation of my identity.

*Specific incident led to awareness of racial/ethnic identity* There was usually a specific interaction or memory that allowed participants to realize that they were “different” than mainstream society, or white middle class America, which played a factor in identity development. At times it was a subtle or blatant act of racism or discrimination that sparked this realization:

I was in second grade, and there was this girl I really liked and her name was Kyrstie, and she was blonde...blue eyes...the typical all-American girl...One time we were on the bus, and I was sitting behind her and she turns around with her friends and she made the slanted eye thing. At that point I didn't realize people saw me as something different until that moment, so it was awkward. I didn't know what it meant, I didn't know it was racist, I didn't know where they got that from, and I think at a young age I started asking questions because of stuff like that.

Another had a similar incident:

I was at a predominantly white school and I was the only Filipino slash Asian person, and I remember there were two Caucasian kids saying, ‘oh where are you from?’ and I said, ‘oh, I’m from down the street,’ and then they said, ‘no, where are you really from?’ and I said, ‘from California,’ and then they said, ‘no, what planet are you from?’ and I said, ‘I don’t understand,’ and then I said, ‘the Philippines,’ and they pulled their eyes out to show the slanted eyes

Like this participant, some other participants did not think about their identity as being racialized until someone brought attention to difference.

Sometimes the participants themselves observed the differences, and it was often due to a new environment that brought attention to this. One participant became aware of her difference when she moved to a less diverse neighborhood, and would begin asking questions directed toward her parents about her identity early on and noticed that cultural practices were different when compared to the dominant culture, or white middle class:

I grew up in the San Francisco bay area, so it was still a very large Filipino community, but I think my first awareness of being Filipino didn't really come out until I moved out of San Francisco and into the East Bay, where there were fewer Filipinos, so my parents kind of started to engage in conversations about difference...when I started kindergarten, I would be more aware of how different we were from the way my parents talked about



us compared to other kids in school, and even in their own relationships with other parents within the school district.

Another participant who grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood but had not given too much thought about his racial/ethnic identity became hyper aware of his racial/ethnic identity in college:

I was part of this group of friends...and I moved up through elementary and Jr. High so when I went to college it was kind of a shocking event because I'm a different person because my skin is a different color. I knew my skin color was different and darker because growing up I was called the 'N' word I don't know how many different times...[but] you assimilated into a group of friends and it wasn't a big deal...there was a black white fight [in college] and it completely divided the dormitory. If you weren't white you were on one side, and if you were dark skinned, you were in another, and it made absolutely no sense to me... So I'm a freshman in college...and I like girls and I wanted to ask girls out...and I would get turned down specifically because I wasn't white...

***Wanting to learn more about Filipino culture*** All participants except for two mentioned that they did not know the main language, Tagalog, or any other Filipino dialect and was a prominent aspect that people mentioned regarding wanting to know more about their culture. Knowing the language they felt was central to Filipino identity, and many felt a sense of loss not knowing the language. One participant explained:

My parents didn't speak to me in Tagalog, they didn't think it was important for us to assimilate in terms of school. But after I learned about the culture in general, it was very much something that I wanted to learn and I'm trying to learn it more.

It seems to be very common for second generation Filipino folks to not know the language, and bilingualism in the community is not widespread:

I wish I spoke Tagalog or another Filipino language... I regret not speaking. I think when I was younger I spoke it, and I took classes in college, but I wasn't practicing, and I don't know a lot of folks my age who speak Tagalog, and I feel like I would understand my parents so much better. I think in terms of culture, the language is huge with that.

One participant said, “In the house we would never speak Tagalog. He [his dad] never wanted me to learn that stuff cuz he didn’t want me to have an accent or he wanted me to be All-American.”

### **Colonial Mentality**

**True to experience** Further into the interview, I defined colonial mentality and asked about one’s experience with the term and how it might or might not be true for themselves or for the wider Filipino population. If it was true, I inquired about how it might manifest. I found that two-thirds of the sample felt that this was true to their experiences, and they were reflective on how this played out in their lives. One participant said:

I think it [colonial mentality] becomes so common place that it was finally nice to have a word to pinpoint remnants of colonial thought. The way I experienced it was kind of seeing it float around me, and then kind of get practiced around me, and I would pick it up depending on the situation.

About half observed colonial mentality in other Filipinos. One participant said that in a study she had conducted on Filipino identity, a person said, “I’m American, I’m not Filipino American, I think Filipinos are gross and embarrassing,” She came across another participant that said, “Oh I’m not Asian Asian, I’m not one of those *really* Asian people.” This participant identified these participants as exhibiting colonial mentality, whether or not these participants would have admitted to or had been aware of this colonial mentality themselves.

***Feeling inferior, discomfort, shame and confusion*** One way that colonial mentality manifested for people was identifying feelings, including inferiority, discomfort, shame, confusion (etc.), that stemmed from colonial mentality at different points in their lives. One participant said, “I was kind of ashamed to tell people what my heritage is, what my ethnicity is.” Another participant described how he would be embarrassed to have his parents speak Tagalog at his school, and he reflected, “No one told me to be embarrassed about the language my parents

speak,” and attributed these feelings to colonial mentality. One said, “I think growing up and all of the confusion I felt, and all of the discomfort with my culture and who I am, that has some kind of connection to colonial mentality.” One participant remembered how she noticed colonial mentality in messages given to her from her mom:

I still have debates with my mom about our ethnic origin, and her intentional belief that we are of German, Indian, and French descent. And I’m like, ‘no we’re not.’ So to my knowledge it would probably be thousands of generations back, but I see that and I hear the colonial mentality where it is not cool to be full Filipino.

One participant described feeling as if he had to prove himself in order to avoid feeling a sense of inferiority:

I had to prove myself more. I wanted to convey that I was better...I was trying to overcompensate, for that feeling of inferiority...I eat fried chicken, I eat turkey, I eat steak, I eat meat, I love McDonalds and Burger King...There were no Asian kids that played sports, I was like I’m gonna play basketball, I’m gonna play football, I’m gonna play soccer and tennis. In a way, in a sad way, it drove me.

One participant said, “It was all about outdoing the white kids.”

***Feeling like a secondary citizen*** Another factor was always feeling like a secondary citizen. One participant expressed this feeling of being a secondary citizen as she reflected on her evolution of Filipino American identity, which is another way to conceptualize inferiority or colonial mentality:

It’s still a process I think. One of the things that I definitely did not have the language for articulating while I was growing up was constantly feeling like a secondary citizen...Somehow I was always made to feel that my experience was not the standard experience.

This same participant also described this idea of having to accommodate to mainstream culture instead of it being the other way around. Along these lines, she brought up an example of her Filipino mother meeting her white partner for the first time. Her mother did not know what to cook:

‘Do I make steak? Does he not eat rice?’ ...She had this sense that she needed to accommodate to him and so I think one way of putting it to sort of describe the first part

of my life before I started to become more conscious and critical about identity, was that I always had been made to feel like...my family had all assumed that we're to accommodate to mainstream culture, that somehow it was our responsibility, our burden to accommodate for them in big and little ways.

***Rejecting Filipino culture*** In addition, five participants had a period of a time rejecting Filipino culture, and some noticed this in other Filipinos, which is a manifestation of colonial mentality. One participant thought about joining the Filipino organization on campus when he got to college, but reflected back:

I didn't want it at first, I think I wanted it but it was uncomfortable and challenging for me. I had never been in a room full of Filipinos who were rowdy and loud...I was uncomfortable learning about the injustices about Filipino American history, and there was this book full of historical comics that degraded Filipinos...and I said, 'no this is not real, you're taking this too seriously'...I thought [they] were trying to brainwash [us]...

Another participant mentioned:

I struggled because I didn't see other people who looked like me. My mom was trying to instill good Filipino values, but I didn't want to be Filipino because I grew up in a predominantly white area, and even coming to a community with more Filipinos, Filipinos are gossipy, we eat dog, and are really loud, so it wasn't a good picture until my adult years...Seeing a bunch of Asian people, I just did not like it, I was like, 'Ew! This is weird'...it was the first time seeing Filipinos that's not like family, and I was just turned off by it.

Another possible manifestation of colonial mentality was this situation that a participant described: "For my mom, she was proud to be Filipino, she was Filipino before American, as opposed to my father. My father...for him, he broke ties with the Philippines a long time ago because of the experience in his country. He's American now, not Filipino."

***Desiring to be white/messages about being white*** Seven participants felt that colonial mentality played a role in how they viewed themselves physically, particularly in terms of skin color, because of the messages they received about whiteness as desirable. One participant explained how her mom encouraged her to use lightening creams and valued lighter skin over darker skin:

When I was younger I used lightening creams too, and then I felt terrible, I need[ed] to stop using [them]! I think I actually look more beautiful when I'm darker. My mom disagrees with me, like a lot of Filipino American moms.

One participant said that she would be reprimanded for being dark and her parents would get upset at her for playing in the sun or swimming before a family gathering:

I think it was my mostly my parents that made me feel like my skin color wasn't quite good enough, and they would say indirect things about my skin color or the shading in my face. I do think there was a time in my life to [see] what it would take to be a little bit lighter skinned. I think it was probably around middle school and a good buddy of mine, we were wondering what the deal was with lightning soap.

One participant who had married a partner who was white at one point was given the message that "marrying up meant marrying white" and was reflective of how this message had affected her thought process. In addition to participants noticing the desire for lighter skin, some participants observed how having pointier, "Anglo" noses is often an enviable trait, as opposed to a flatter nose that is typical of Filipinos: "My cousins had babies and everyone was pinching their noses hoping that it will be pointy when they grow older."

Another issue that emerged was participants having thoughts of wanting to be white, or thinking that if they were white, things would be easier. Many times it would have to do with the standards of beauty or physical appearance portrayed in mainstream society, but not always. One participant remembered, "I felt not as pretty as other white girls in my class..." Another participant described:

In fourth grade, my hair was very thin, and it would never really do that thing that white people's hair does, and I was like oh man I want my hair to be like that, most of the people in my class, and the girls are talking to the guys with their hair a certain way, and I would get this gel. I would spend hours before school trying to fix my hair. ...and I think that would be the earliest thing I could remember thinking back, my hair is not good enough because it is not white and it doesn't do the things that white peoples hair does.

Another participant recalled how he never wished to be white but thought if he were white, his situation could be different:

I remember feeling like Abercrombie models were the standard of beauty in the gay community...and thinking, oh I don't think that guy would be open to Asian guys or open to nonwhite guys...I feel invisible and unseen...I remember feeling less attractive...I never said to myself, I wish I were white per se, but I think remember feeling like oh you know, if I were white, I could get more attention or something like that.

Another expressed similar thoughts in a different context:

There were times that I wish I was more white when I was little...part of it was being part of a white family...I wondered why they didn't want to hang out with me, and maybe it was because of my skin...I actually remember having dreams of me having blonde hair...there were moments when I definitely wanted to be white because I thought it would be easier to interact with people, relate with people...I would be like, what do they have that I don't have, except for that piece [white skin].

Yet another:

I would want to be like my Barbie Doll, I wanted blonde hair and blue eyes. I would look in the mirror and open my eyes and make it look more almondy, and every year for Halloween, I would try to dress up in some sort of blonde hair like Cinderella, and Tinker Bell. I was very intentional about getting those costumes, and I would always think to myself, maybe I'll wake up one day, I just need the eyes and the hair.

Another participant spoke about her experience with feeling almost disadvantaged by not being white:

In college I felt like I didn't fit in, it was a weird experience. I wasn't used to talking to people who came from generations of college students...and later in law school thought, 'I wish my parents exposed me to all these activities', and these behaviors that are rewarded in law school or in legal settings...little things missing in my culture that were given to other people, white people, like all this shit I didn't know...so it was kind of stressful for me, and I didn't want to sacrifice my knowledge and what I know and the way I see the world. I felt like in order to get what I want in the end as a woman of color in this position, I have to understand where they are coming from in participating in this white culture.

This participant felt that she had to understand white privilege and felt that her culture was "missing" something, yet at the same time did not want to devalue her own culture.

*Survival* A few conceptualized colonial mentality as a survival mechanism, or a way to consciously or unconsciously, feel accepted and safe. One participant explained, "A lot of it [colonial mentality] came from struggle and survival here in the US, and some of it was

translated in the form of colonial thought.” Another participant described how this colonial mentality as a survival mechanism seemed to transform into a genetic trait:

I guess in the history of the country, people in the Philippines had to adapt, year after year day after day, to what this colonial power was doing, and in a way it's being flexible and acquiring those traits to survive, in a country that is not yours but it kind of is because you're living there, not really choosing what happens. And I think that it's something that passed down to us...I think that for us as Filipino Americans, first and second generation...we do have that because of the stress that our families and the families before them went through. I do think it's the knowledge but it's also in our blood.

Another described an experience of a family friend who came from the Philippines: “He had to assimilate to be American, as fast as you could or you would be ostracized. So not to be Filipino was to be American.”

**Not true to one's experience** A few participants did not feel colonial mentality was true for their own experiences. Four of these five participants, however, identified this phenomenon in other people. One participant articulated this when trying to understand colonial mentality, and she clarified how it does not fit in her experience:

That is the difference than probably somebody else. I've never understood us to be inferior. I've always known us to be superior...I think that has more to do with the people who trained me. I was taught that I was never owned and never will be owned.

Another said, “I don't know if any of that [colonial mentality] is because I'm Filipino. Maybe because I'm insecure. I don't think my personal feelings are based on colonial mentality...but I do see it in other Filipinos.”

### **Decolonization of the Mind**

**True to Experience** The concept of decolonizing the mind was in line with colonial mentality in terms of how participants responded to these concepts. For ten participants, decolonizing the mind was a term that was a true experience and an important process to undergo. If they had not heard of the specific term before, they were able to conceptualize how

this played out in their experiences upon hearing the definition. The way in which one decolonized their mind differed from person to person.

*Self Awareness* Five participants felt that having a level of self-awareness is part of the decolonizing process, including knowing why one might have lower self-esteem or identifying feelings of inferiority connected to colonial mentality and breaking those down. Another described decolonizing as a form of self-awareness:

It's also more of understanding yourself as you move along in your life, what you need to accomplish and how you can actively understand yourself to decolonize your mind...it's internal and external. You need to do things but you need to have time for yourself to understand your experience and it's different for everyone else...analyzing your actions, and analyzing what you're doing and why you're doing it.

Another explained the importance of her own self-awareness and that this is crucial in her current job:

I think part of it [decolonizing] is deconstructing my mind...A big part of it was I wanted to break down my biases, and I guess like learn how to talk about me with other women who have a similar path. I feel like it's a disservice to the students I work with if I'm not continuing to find myself and learn who I am, because I'm here to help them discern who they are and if I'm not doing that myself, then I'm doing a disservice to them...It not about how much you know, but how much you know yourself.

Another tries to be aware in the moment of when he feels a certain way in different moments during work or in the social area:

I try to keep a pulse as best I can when I feel triggered or with Filipino clients, I feel shy or don't want to say anything...or unpacking and deconstructing when I feel attractive and knowing when I attach self-esteem or self-worth to that...I'm trying to be a fish out of the fishbowl, fish out of water, being on the outside and looking like okay, try to take a step back, are you feeling triggered right now...trying to be more self-aware...my internal conversations informed by this internalized colonialism, informed by years of I don't see myself in the media, or all these other guys are the standard of beauty...

Another delineated the difference between a tangible colonial past to more abstract ideas of colonialism and how this applied to her:

I think for me the definition has evolved over the years whether it's decolonizing from a very real colonial past, like the material colonial past, or even decolonizing the mind of more abstract concepts... So for me it has taken on a more historical and more spiritual or



metaphysical level of realizing what might be overtaking my mind in the moment. And I think the reason why it is changing is because I am still in the process of understanding exactly what it is that I'm targeting in decolonizing. I think in part it's recognizing what exactly is colonizing my mind at the moment.

***Learning and understanding history*** Others conceptualized decolonizing as a process of learning and understanding history. As one participant put:

Decolonizing has a lot to do with understanding why the Filipinos are here in the first place also, and that has a lot to do with the history...of understanding the history of the Philippines...and a lot of us came here for opportunity, and because of Marcos, and stuff like that, but peeling back that layer and understanding why we need more opportunities, why it's so fucked up in the Philippines, that really gets to the heart of decolonizing.

Another expressed similar ideas: "No history no self, know history, know self...But I think it comes down to understand what happened before to understand where you're going and I think that's how it's always going to be." He articulated an experience:

When I was in college I took an Asian American studies as a double major, and one of my classes was the Filipino American studies class, it kind of broadened my horizons to what first generation, second generation, just people coming from the Philippines have experienced in their journey to raise their families here. and from there I did a final paper and I did it on my father and his experience...for me it allowed me to understand who I was in that situation and what I came from just because knowing the struggles he went through in the military and the positive things he did...and doing that helped me respect him more as a person...I think it's important to understand where you're going, you have to know where your family came from and what they went through.

***Involvement in Filipino organizations/community*** A majority of participants were involved in some form with the Filipino community and considered this as a way to decolonize.

One participant explained:

Community organizations are the foundation, they are what is needed to decolonize the mind...Decolonizing happens through community organizations that are not just speaking about Filipino issues and advocating for Filipino culture, but they have their hands in the community, they are working with immigrants, they are working with Filipino Americans, and they are addressing the needs of the Filipino and the Filipino American, of the real issues, of not just like here let's get together and cook lumpia, and watch us do a dance for a month...There's a lot of orgs that are arts based, and culture

based. I'm not saying that that is not part of the decolonizing process, I just think that there's obviously different levels of decolonizing, and I think that all levels are needed...I think it really in order to decolonize, I really feel you need a community of people whose goal is to become decolonized... I think that some success can be obtained by reading books, and reading history and just educating oneself. I think a level can definitely be obtained by that, and I think that the action of manifesting one's decolonization process in the community is more genuine, more genuine than just studying about it.

This same participant said, "It was during college that I got educated about my Filipino roots, where I started organizing with the Filipino community, and that's when stuff hella changed for me." One participant described being involved in the Filipino community in college was the number one way he was able to decolonize his mind, and described his experience of helping a campaign to start a Filipino studies major in his college and in turn felt empowered:

Part of decolonizing the mind was working with others in the community, so it wasn't just me going to every single faculty member and saying it's important but thinking about the relationships you have and making it a team slash community effort was a bigger rewarding experience. [Having the] community behind you...[witnessing the] potential of a community working together and see what change can be, [was a] liberating feeling slash movement, seeing connection...if this can be done, anything can be done!

Another participant spoke about the first time she reached out to other Filipinas in a grass roots organization that educated people about domestic violence against Filipino women around the world: "Hearing stories of Pinays was really cool. I was an activist...a place where I could break down my fears of hanging with Filipino women." She ended up doing community workshops on feminism at other organizations and college campuses, all of which had an educational component which covered current issues going on in the Philippines. Another described:

I started getting involved with the Filipino outreach group that tried to make students more at home while they were in college and I think... it was huge in my process of becoming conscious. ...I talked to a [peer] counselor...we did lots of teaching ourselves and sharing our stories, and I think that made me most comfortable with who I am and they were really proud of it and not be embarrassed by my parents or the way we grew up...I really felt validated, I felt like I *am* beautiful, I *am* smart, I'm just as good as everyone else here.

***Realization of Institutional & Structural Racism*** A few participants experienced a realization that colonial mentality, and that this internalized racial oppression they had been harboring, was not all internal and individual but that it was structural and institutional. One participant realized, “It’s hard cuz it’s not my fault I wasn’t in on all of what these tools are,” when she saw that she did not have all of these advantages her white peers had. Similarly, another participant articulated this idea of feeling “at fault”, and after years of therapy while using a “colonial mentality filter”, and had a liberating experience: “[it took] ten years of therapy to be like, it’s not all me! Using colonial mentality to frame how I thought about things, I can say, ‘oh shit! It’s not my fault, there’s a reason I’m still stuck in this.’” Another said of colonial mentality and its structural nature:

I have definitely thought it’s a big part of how I think, if I don’t think I’m good enough, and it’s never one problem... But also that if you think that way it’s not necessarily because of you, it is part of the structure that makes you think that way.

Another described an experience she had in her undergraduate experience:

I took a postcolonial literature class. The class just blew me out. Every single week was jaw dropping. We were reading things from the Philippines, the Caribbean, from Africa, from Latin America. The instructor was from the Caribbean and most of the student body [in the class] were people of color, and I think that was probably what I could point to as the biggest transformative decolonizing experience...It was the first time these feelings of secondary citizenship were validated...it was the first time I could really see that it was something structural, it was institutional, and it was enforced by institutions as opposed to thinking it was an internal problem.

***Cyclical nature of decolonizing the mind*** A few expressed that the process of decolonizing as an ongoing, at times cyclical process:

I think it’s ongoing, and it sounds sad when I say it, that it’s something I’ll constantly live with, and it will be a cycle, even when I tell my friends. Sometimes I’m like, ‘Yeah I’m so proud to be Filipino, this is awesome, fuck everybody else, we’re the best! And then months later, I’ll be in a situation in a job, and I’ll feel like, man no one understands me, no one gets me, maybe it’s cuz I’m Filipino, and I feel so sad, not that I’m Filipino, but they can’t understand me the way I want them to.’

This participant described how she goes back and forth between making progress on decolonizing, but having moments where colonial mentality seeps back into her thoughts.

Another explained a similar process:

I'm still going through the process, and anyone who...has gone through colonial mentality, they will continue to, and is going to be decolonizing the mind, will continue to go through it, it is something that will never end, you can't just forget about your life and what you've experienced...I don't think I'm decolonized at all, I think I understand what I experienced when I was younger and my perspectives when I was younger because of the knowledge I acquired, but you know, by no means am I decolonized, I think for everyone it is a process that takes longer, because your life is longer, those things that you went through didn't just happen within a day, it was day after day...Someone could have a longer process, it could go faster, some slower...

*Educating Others* A few participants felt that a way to decolonize is to educate others about this concept, or to help others articulate their experiences and/or to challenge them to think critically. One participant is a professor of anthropology, and there are not many Filipinos in the area or in her program, but she found parallels with the young Latina students she teaches:

I'm feeling like it's more my job to pay it forward, especially for the college students that I teach, so although I am not dealing with a lot of Filipino students, because there are none, I do mentor a lot of Latina students, and students who are coming from colonial slash postcolonial areas, and...making them conscious about the processes of colonization and giving them language to articulate their feelings of displacement or feelings of low self-esteem...and validate them, because I wish I had that earlier on and I didn't.

Another spoke about how this passing of knowledge happened through the college organization he was a part of: "It was kind of this cycle, where someone learns something and they teach it to someone else, and that person teaches it to someone else and it goes on and on and just being able to spread that knowledge was important." A high school teacher expressed, "I'm constantly critical about what messages I'm telling my kids. Am I perpetuating the status quo or challenging it?"

**Not true to experience** Those participants who did not experience colonial mentality analogously did not experience decolonizing. They did not feel the need to decolonize because colonial mentality was not a true experience for them from the beginning.

## **Mental Health**

Participants were asked to disclose information about their own experiences with mental health and to comment on their general impression of mental health within the Filipino/Filipino American community, using colonial mentality and the decolonization of the mind as lenses.

**Mental health Issues** The following themes were identified as key issues.

**Self-esteem** A few participants felt that self-esteem was a mental health issue in which colonial mentality was intertwined. One participant said, “I don’t think I felt pretty til college, and I’m trying to see how it affected mental health, and I think it affected my self-esteem. I wouldn’t want to take as many pictures...” One participant observed how colonial mentality affected his client’s self-esteem:

Part of his issues is that he had a lack of self-esteem, and he says, ‘I want to date and have a girlfriend but I have dark skin and my hair is kinky and curly...and I don’t think I’m going to attract women.’... so I tried to provide psychoeducation, and he was actually aware of that, he was like, ‘oh that’s like internalized colonialist stuff.’

One participant said, “I have a problem with self-confidence, I have an inferiority complex, I feel inferior to everything, to everyone, and it’s a mental problem. I can’t do anything without comparing myself to other people.” “The costs are low self-esteem, which is colonizing the mind,” said another on colonial mentality. Another explained a phenomenon that could have contributed to lower self-esteem, or to other issues not completely understood:

It’s the little things that make you go crazy. If you’re going through colonial mentality and you have this inferiority, and I’m speaking for myself... it’s not something tangible, you’re not depressed, you’re not lying in your bed for days, you’re not doing crazy shit... you’re not addicted to drugs, you’re just you....It’s the little things that progress day after

day week after week, month after month, year after year, that you have within you, that can affect your mental health in a negative way...

**Depression** Four participants mentioned that they or other family members had experienced depression at some point in their lives, which is another issue that colonial mentality played a role in. One participant said:

I remember reading this book in class, it was an Asian American studies class...I remember I read that Filipino women at that time, 1990s, I forgot what year, and they had the highest depression rates. And I remember I put the book down...and I said, 'Heck no! That's me!' I felt like the book totally resonated...I sat there and I was like omg this is the story of my life! And I was remembering how in high school I was going through depression...

Another said on depression and possible causes:

I think for myself, I went through quite a bit of depression. I think part of it was a sense of low self-esteem but...I think it was more complex...I think more specifically it was a sense that my experience wasn't being validated, that the expectations within the family were very narrow and not quite keeping with what I wanted. That the models that existed for me...were very ethnocentric...you know geared towards a very middle class, white, heterosexual Anglo-Saxon Protestant kind of model. And realizing that on multiple levels I couldn't live up to any of those models definitely set me up for bouts of depression and I see that with other family members...

One Filipino clinician said of his Filipino clients, "I have a few families and clients and it's there, the depression, the self injurious behavior..."

**Suicide/Suicidal ideation** Suicide was a theme that came up directly and indirectly with some participants, and a possible factor in the mix was colonial mentality. One participant reported that he had suicidal ideation at one point because of the pressures of school and not meeting his parents' expectations:

I contemplated suicide...I was struggling because I wanted to be an artist but I wanted a stable career so I could help my family...I thought if I died, not only would my parents get money out of my death, but they would get insurance money from me, and that's it.

When his family found out, he said that they were, "upset as hell. They were pissed." Two other participants described instances where family members or friends had suicidal attempts and who had committed suicide. Another participant reflected:

I remember reading a statistic, and the statistic was that in the county of Santa Clara, Filipinas had the highest suicide rate, and for whatever reason, my mind questioned whether or not there is a connection between the fact that there are homies in my life that are killing themselves and at one point in Santa Clara County, Filipinos held the highest suicide rate, and the reality that it can be argued that Filipinos don't know who they are because of their history of colonization, Spain, American, Japan, American, and in my head I was like, I wonder if that has any connection. Because in my mind, if you don't know who you are, life is a little bit more difficult than it would normally be and as a people if the Filipino people have that much of a difficult time knowing who they are, than the normal everyday difficulties of not knowing who you are, are going to be on top of that, and it's just like, does that have anything to do with all the suicides in my life?

This participant had lost two people who were Filipino American that committed suicide, and one made an attempt, and was trying to make sense of this statistic he had heard and wondered if there was any connection his losses.

**Barriers to obtaining mental health services** Six participants felt that reaching out for help is something that is rarely done, or is an action that is disapproved within the Filipino community.

**Taboo** Three mentioned that it is also taboo in mainstream society to get help, and one explained, "It's not necessarily Filipino centric, it's any culture...What I've learned from anybody...you don't need to go to a psychiatrist when you can just approach the problem, or just talk to people..." Another articulated, "I think apprehension with the mental health system here in the United States became sort of this culture within [my] family."

**Keeping it within the family** Three participants articulated this idea that families can handle problems within the family without any outside help. One participant's brother who had autism said her family "segregated itself from the rest of [her] immediate family," and her mother refused any outside mental health services or providers. She noted one Filipino value her mom tried to instill in her was, "don't tell anyone your family business." Another participant explained:

In my mom's experience, when she needed mental health support, she had gone for a brief amount of time, and she told herself, 'it's okay, I can handle this on my own, and if there's anything I do have a problem with my family will help solve it...'

This participant spoke to this issue further:

I think about my aunt who has bipolar disorder, and my cousin who has severe autism that has never gone treated, and I think there is a feeling that that is within the family, that it can be handled within the family...there are consequences due to the lack of treatment... it might be related to trying to maintain a certain rapport within the community of the family.

Yet another described:

My cousin tried to swallow a bottle of pills when he was in high school, and it was difficult for our family cuz his mom who found him... didn't find the need to tell the rest of the family, she kept it isolated. She kept it a secret. Some of us cousins were kind of sad that it wasn't shared with us. In our minds, we would have made a difference if we would have known...

Another participant explained:

My sister reached out for a mental health professional, and my cousin who was going through breast cancer did, and our family, I think as a whole, would laugh it off and say, 'oh that's weird, why would she have to do that, why didn't she come to us', or they wouldn't understand why a stranger who doesn't know you or where you're from, how they would be able to provide you with compared to the people who know and love you and grew up with you.

*Shame* Shame was mentioned by a few participants when explaining a reason why mental health services might not be sought out within the Filipino American population. One participant explained the perspective his parents have: "There's a shame, you know, 'I don't want my son or daughter to be telling someone else about his problems with me, or what I've done that affected him or her.'" This participant had also led a workshop on mental health issues in the Filipino community and found that "a lot of us agreed was the fact that 'wulang hiya'. It means no shame..." which was a part of the culture that rang true for many Filipinos—that Filipinos wanted to avoid bringing shame to the family. In addition, one said, "It's tough, there's that shame piece and not wanting them [family] to say 'tsismis' [gossip] about you, or people to



find out.” Another described, “I would refuse talking to people because I felt pride and shame at the same time when I opened up and asked people to help me.”

***Lack of Accessibility*** Out of the sample, five participants felt that perhaps the reason why there is a lack of understanding of mental health services and its availability was due to the fact that these types of services were not available or accessible in the Philippines where their parents originated:

I think there is a stigma in the Filipino American households in general towards having a psychiatrist or a counselor or talking to someone about your problems because I guess Filipinos haven't really in the past had that luxury...it's like you know I went through this without that, it got me this, and you don't need that. I think it could be related to the older generation just kind of saying you know you guys are privileged.

One participant described, “health in general...I didn't see a doctor until high school...it was considered unaffordable, we could take care of ourselves kind of thing....so growing up, anything regarding help whether it be mental health, medical health, was unknown.”

***Restricting feelings/ denial*** Four participants described feeling as if they were deemed dramatic by their parents if they had an issue and were thus invalidated. Perhaps their parents were in denial but the end result was that the participants felt the need to conceal their real feelings. One participant reported that their parent said in response to a mental health issue, “You are being dramatic. You can have mental health without having to talk to someone about your problem.” Another described, “One time I tried to tell my mom I was depressed in high school and she thought I was being dramatic, she didn't believe me, she's like, ‘why do you feel depressed? What is the point of you feeling depressed?’ and I was like, ‘uhhh, okay.’ I didn't feel supported.” Another relayed a similar experience:

In high school, I thought I had a mental health problem so I talked to my mom to bring me to the doctor for it, and my doctor was Filipino, or pediatrician, and my mom said, ‘Oh! It's nothing, but I'll take you anyway, but you have to believe in God and it's going to be okay’, and then, that's also what the doctor told me. Which was interesting because I was like, ‘oh I don't get a chance to test or anything?’ ...and so they just let me go,

which was an eye opener because what if there was something? I could have been helped, but I don't think my mom would feel comfortable having a problem with her daughter...but it would have been nice to be able to have the choice to be able to take things like that... it was a weird feeling to be shot down.

Similarly, another participant who is an atheist had a parallel example with his parents referring to religion/spirituality to help: "My parents have always told me, if you have a problem pray to your guardian angel. Like, that doesn't help me." Five participants felt they were placed in an atmosphere where they did not always feel free to express their feelings. One participant realized recently that she often says that "she's okay" when she's actually not okay:

One of my friends challenged me and he would say, why do you say it's okay all the time?" and I said, 'I don't know!' and I thought about it and I told him the next day, 'you know why I say that all the time is that is how I grew up in my household, if there was tension, we would say, oh it's ok,' and to understand that was really valuable, so that I can be more intentional when I say it's okay...and not actually say it's okay but say that it's not okay.

One participant said, "You don't really talk about your feelings," and thought this was common across different Asian groups. Another participant said, "Growing up as a kid we weren't allowed to talk...when you're not allowed to speak that whole time, other than yes or no, or you were asked to answer a question, your communication skills and the way you interacted with people are kind of hampered." Another participant said:

I think the biggest problem was I always kept things inside, cuz I don't like to burden anybody, and I don't want to put my problems on everybody else, cuz it's not fair. I used to keep them inside a lot, but...it reached a point where it brought physical pain,[I] would slap himself in the face if I was upset, [I] hated waking up and looking at himself in the mirror.

One said of a mental health workshop with a group of Filipinos:

A lot to us in the room agreed that Filipino culture doesn't necessarily allow us to be depressed. So a lot of us agreed that our parents don't necessarily interact with those types of feelings, a lot shared that a lot of us don't feel comfortable sharing this with our parents.

### **Addressing barriers to mental health services**

**Community Outreach** Eight participants were supportive of the idea of making mental health services less mysterious and more acceptable within the community. One said, “It would be great to go to churches or schools and to demystify the taboo on therapy, because in my community, they don’t talk about this stuff, they keep it behind closed doors... I’ve seen a lot of grief in lives,” and she realized the importance of “creating spaces for people to talk.” Another said:

I will say that I wish more people talked about therapy, and I wish people talked about therapy more in my family and or in Filipino American communities, cuz so many of my cousins and my sister had struggled through different things like death, or like eating disorders and depression from different parts of life. I wish that people were more open about talking, like oh it wouldn’t be taboo to say that, ‘my therapist said blah blah blah’...it would be cool for my cousins who are younger than me to know that if you feel like you are not healthy and if you can’t talk to us about it, therapy is totally an option, and no one will judge you and no one will get weird. I wish that was something my mom had, and I think, I’m not a doctor, but I think that she gets really lonely, and she would benefit from talking to a therapist, or a medical health professional.

One participant, who is a social work clinician, said:

I’m hoping that if it’s promoted more, not just destigmatization, but just you know, people coming into the field to pursue social work. I think it will help destigmatize and encourage people to get help because and that’s true for communities of color as well...it’s tough, for individuals and families out there whether they’re navigating acculturation issues or self esteem issues, and how that affects someone’s depression, and how they’re academic performance or job performance or depression, it all gets affected. So I hope as time goes on, I hope there will be more outreach and education to the Filipino communities to get help.

One contemplated, “I wouldn’t want my son to feel like he’s on his own,” when asked about her views on accessing mental health services. Another commented on the mainstream discourse on mental health and its influence on her family’s views: “I’m really trying to change that norm, and I really involve my siblings around that too because I think they really have tried to move toward making mental health services an easy thing to talk about.” Four participants noticed that there was a lack of access to mental health services, and creating access could also support making

therapy more widely accepted. One noted that therapy is expensive. Two people who had jobs that had insurance coverage said that psychological services were not covered.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **Discussion**

The main question to cover in this discussion is how do all of these themes on identity, colonial mentality, and decolonizing the mind influence mental health in a micro and macro way in the Filipino American population? This will then add to the knowledge and research for the benefit of current and future Filipino American clients and those social workers who work and may potentially work with this population. It is important to note that the sample size was small and that these results are not generalizable to the entire Filipino American population.

To begin, I will touch on the significance of my initial interview questions that focused on the meaning of identity. There were many commonalities within the answers relating to Filipino identity. Incorporated into many of these answers were participants' processes of becoming self aware of their ethnic identity, which was not explicitly asked for, but it seems integral to include development when exploring themes of identity. I found that participants' individual stories often matched specific stages of Nadal's (2004) Pilipino American Identity Development Model. Nadal (2004) laid out different stages that a person may experience in their ethnic identity development, and it may be linear, jump around, or even stay in one stage indefinitely, and this was true in the sample. Using this model as a backdrop, I observed how some people's responses resonated with certain phases of the model. For example, those that reported having a memorable experience of realizing that they were perceived differently or that they were different compared to the wider population, perhaps due to an experience with racism

or noticing differences themselves, tried to emulate or admire white culture. This would be designated as somewhere between moving from stage one of ethnic awareness to stage two of assimilation to the dominant culture. Some were aware of their ethnicity but never felt they had to assimilate to the dominant culture and thus skipped a stage. A striking pattern was that those in the sample who grew up in a predominantly white community and were not explicitly taught Filipino values reported more instances of desiring to be white, or trying to emulate white culture, which is in line with stage two. Those that grew up in a more diverse neighborhood with other Filipinos in their community were less likely to express a desire to be white, although this was not true across all participants. In addition, another pattern was that those that grew up in a predominantly white community were able to identify more readily with colonial mentality, and able to identify distinct experiences with this term. Those that grew up feeling mirrored by other Filipinos in their community did not always readily identify with colonial mentality or had difficulty applying this to their experience because many times it was not part of their reality growing up. But again, this was not true for all in this sample.

It is important to note how those that readily identified with colonial mentality in their experience had moved through stage two of the Pilipino Identity Development Model, which was adhering to the dominant culture, or white American culture in this case. One's Filipino identity development seems to be influenced by the type of community one grew up in and how Filipino values were communicated by their caregivers and others in the community. Those that experienced colonial mentality reported more instances of wanting to be white, or thinking it would be easier to be white. Overall, I would relate stage two of assimilating with the dominant culture in identity development as experiencing some form of colonial mentality. When this group was asked to report on the climate of mental health within themselves, it was common that

they identified issues of self-esteem and/or depression. This relates to David and Okazaki's (2006b) creation of the colonial mentality scale which was created to measure colonial mentality on a quantitative level. They had found that colonial mentality affected mental health in a negative way. More specifically they found that higher levels of colonial mentality meant lower levels of self-esteem and higher rates of depression (David & Okazaki, 2006a). My study was different in that it defined colonial mentality up front and asked how this might or might not apply to one's experience, and went on to have the participant describe in what way colonial mentality manifested in a qualitative manner. A limitation here could be that some colonial mentality manifestations that were listed in David and Okazaki's (2006b) scale that I did not mention as examples may have in fact been a part of one's experience but participants were not able to identify in that moment. However, a person's free association with thinking about how colonial mentality might manifest in their life without a list of prompts is valuable in that they were listing their most salient and conscious experiences. David (2010) also created a study where they discovered a way to measure colonial mentality in an automatic way through the colonial mentality implicit association test, because self reporting may not always reveal accurate answers, perhaps due to denial or to it being a part of their unconscious experience. This could also have been a limitation in my study—that some participants did not want to admit or were denying pieces of how colonial mentality may have been a part of their experience, or that colonial mentality could have been a part of their unconscious experience. One participant admitted that although she wanted to get a nose job just because she felt it would make it more proportional to her face, or how she is “supposed” to look like. However, she contemplated the idea of colonial mentality and white standards of beauty being so ingrained in her that it was a possibility that it could be an unconscious desire to attain features associated with whiteness. It is

also important to keep in mind that people who did not feel colonial mentality fit their experience still exhibited mental health issues, including suicidal ideation, family conflict, stress, self-esteem, and depression, and this could have or could not have been related to being Filipino.

Colonial mentality was acknowledged in this study, and it went a step further to inquire about the experience of decolonizing the mind. Those that identified with colonial mentality readily identified with decolonizing the mind and located ways this manifested. Paralleling this result was that those who did not identify with decolonizing the mind did not identify with colonial mentality. This made sense in that participants did not feel the need to decolonize if they did not feel colonized in the first place. An example of this process was when during an interview, a participant did not quite grasp how colonial mentality might fit her experience. It became clearer when I inquired about the phenomenon of decolonizing the mind, and she stated that she did not have to decolonize because she never felt colonial mentality from the start. She explained that while she grew up, her Filipino identity was affirmed and she felt no sense of shame or inferiority about being Filipino, and the term colonial mentality did not make sense in her situation. I think this circumstance rings true for those participants who grew up with a strong sense of ethnic identity and were surrounded by a Filipino community. With this type of support system, colonial mentality was less likely to be a part of one's experience, and thus decolonizing the mind did not apply.

I wonder about those who denied colonial mentality as a part of their experience and if it was a possibility that they did in fact exhibit colonial mentality but did not understand the concept thoroughly, were in denial, were unable to identify how this was real for them, or that it was a part of their unconscious experience. In other words, is it ethical to name another person's reality when it is not a reality in their own mind? David and Okazaki (2006b) identified colonial



mentality in the Filipino population, but Filipinos did not necessarily know that this is what the study was measuring. The researchers affirmed that it was a part of their experience. In my study, one participant spoke of his father where he saw how colonial mentality might have shaped his father's experience. However, his father essentially let go of his Filipino identity and was solely American in his process of assimilation for differing reasons, one being that the United States afforded him a life he could not attain in the Philippines. The participant conceptualized this as his father not displaying colonial mentality because he is "not Filipino anymore" and therefore colonial mentality does not exist for him. Contrarily, I would conceptualize this as his father being so entrenched in colonial mentality and was the reason why he had denounced his Filipino roots long ago. However, if we look through a post-structural lens, a person can name his or reality, and no one else has the authority to do so—therefore the participant was right in asserting that his father does not in fact exhibit colonial mentality because his father sees himself as no longer Filipino. The qualitative interviews in my study may have had elements where people were not even aware of their colonial mentality, but from the same post-structural lens, I would leave it to them to name their own reality. However, it is also true that some people truly did not experience colonial mentality, as David (2006b) also acknowledged.

Colonial mentality may be applicable to the population in the Philippines. However, this study focused on American born Filipinos who were raised in the United States. David and Nadal (2013) noted how some Filipinos in the Philippines strive to come to the United States and a continuous endorsement of the "Golden Legend" which is this idea that Americans are liberators and enlightening heroes that saved the Filipinos from the Spanish, has been observed (David, 2013). There is also this belief that anything American is inherently more valuable than

anything Filipino as mentioned by Nadal (2009). They attributed this attitude as evidence of colonial mentality (David, 2013; Nadal, 2009). I would call for more research on the attitudes of those living in the Philippines and how colonial mentality may be exhibited there. This is valuable because I wonder about if and how these ideas of colonial mentality could have been transmitted to the second generation Filipino Americans, who were not innately born with these feelings of inferiority and did not directly experience colonialism. I speculate that this inferiority was transported through attitudes and values they received through messages from their parents, whose attitudes and beliefs at least in part stem from their experiences in the Philippines. For example, those participants that felt they had to lighten their skin received these negative attitudes mainly from parents. It seemed that their parents had given their offspring certain messages that were influenced by classical colonialism, and had passed them on to their offspring, who indirectly received traces of colonial attitudes, beliefs, and values. Again, more research is needed on the colonial mentality that the population in the Philippines experience or exhibit as this study focuses on second generation Filipino Americans.

Colonial mentality can also be framed as a survival mechanism in the United States. Filipinos experienced overt racism in the United States, and many instances were recorded specifically in the 1920s and 1930s when the first large wave of Filipinos began settling in the United States (David, 2013). Signs such as “Positively No Filipinos Allowed” were put up at store fronts, and Filipinos were lynched (David, 2013). Anti-miscegenation laws restricted Filipino men dating white women to marry as mentioned by one participant who remembered her uncle not being able to marry his partner who was a white woman. To refuse to assimilate to American values was many times dangerous. This is a parallel of what happened in the Philippines when the Spanish invaded the country and again when the Americans took over. Not

ascribing to certain values compromised one's safety. However, Filipinos found ways to subvert colonialism (David, 2013), and a revolution against the Spanish in 1896 and the Filipino-American War were examples of this resistance. Nevertheless, many had to adapt and take on colonial values in order to stay alive, which was a similar process that happened to Filipino Americans in the United States who experienced racism. It was a necessity to assimilate to maintain one's safety.

Colonial mentality is exhibited differently and incorporated into people's lives in different ways for different reasons, and in order to move past colonial mentality is the process of decolonizing. To actively decolonize took on many forms for participants. Some participants described it a slow and cyclical process. This relates to how Pierce (2005) described it:

Decolonization is a painstakingly slow process, often because the path is not quite linear: denial, lack of information, and the stronghold of colonial ideologies can slow the process to such an extent that new levels of consciousness for the colonized are often accepted only provisionally at first." (p.43)

Strobel (1997) delineated the different ways that decolonization could manifest in her study.

Many participants were able to identify colonial mentality playing a role in their lives, and saw how shame, inferiority, confusion, and anger were a part of their story. Strobel (1997)

categorized this as "naming": "To decolonize is to be able to name internalized oppression, shame, inferiority, confusion, and anger" (p.66). Other ways of decolonizing in the "naming" category in Strobel's (1997) study was to learn history, to understand the meaning of "loss of cultural memory", to understand how loss of language affects Filipino identity, to heal the self, and to name the "oppressor and oppressive social structures." The results revealed participants who identified with decolonizing the mind as taking part in the above named processes. For instance, the recognition of the lack of bilingualism in the Filipino American community was strikingly prevalent as many participants regretted not learning or forgetting Tagalog or another

Filipino dialect and many were actively trying to learn the language as adults. Many were able to identify the “oppressor and oppressive social structures” when they realized that colonial mentality was more than just an inner and solitary experience. Learning history was also a part of many participants’ process of decolonizing. Results also showed that a myriad of participants took on leadership positions and were actively involved in Filipino organizations, which Strobel (1997) would categorize as an “action” item; “To decolonize is to take leadership positions in moving the Filipino American community toward visibility and empowerment” (p.66). Strobel (1997) created a “reflection” category of decolonizing which included “developing one’s ability to question one’s reality as constructed by colonial narratives, to develop critical consciousness that can understand the consequences of silence and invisibility, and to understand the generational gap as being constituted by historical realities that shape each generation’s experiences” (p.66). Participants in the study did identify invisibility within the Filipino community, were critical of the education system and how had this influenced them, and were trying to understand their parents’ stories and how their realities were different.

Going back to identity development, many participants, especially the ones who had experienced and identified colonial mentality, went through a process of social and political awakening which is stage three of Nadal’s (2004) Pilipino American Identity Development Model. It is characterized by “the abandonment of identification with white society and a consequent understanding of oppression and oppressed groups (Kim, 1981 as cited by Nadal, 2004, p. 55). I would name this stage as a process of decolonizing the mind. In essence, decolonizing the mind for participants was recognizing how colonial mentality influenced their worldviews and internal landscape of mental health in a negative way, and how they then

discovered ways to reconstruct a different narrative of acceptance and celebration of their history, culture, and identity. Strobel (1997) called it an “emotional process” (p.66).

I think it is important to think about this idea of educating others about the ideas of colonial mentality and decolonizing. Many felt the need to pay it forward and to educate people in their communities so they would be able to articulate their experiences in a postcolonial world. My own process of wanting to do this study was in part to see if this was true for others and to also create a greater awareness of these ideas. Through the lens of postcolonial theory, I sought to create a space for marginalized voices to be heard. Like some participants who realized it was not only internal but structural, this study was first hand evidence for myself that it was not just me, but that others had experienced this as well. However, just as other researchers had found, experiences of colonial mentality and decolonization did not ring true with all participants. Despite this being small sample and results not being generalizable, fifteen random Filipino Americans across the country had similar experiences and stories, which is remarkable. Overall, the act of this study was a way to create more knowledge and literature on the experience of Filipinos and Filipino Americans, and so a way to create opportunities for education.

### **Limitations of study**

Socioeconomic status is a factor in thinking about who has been exposed or is open to think about colonial mentality and decolonizing the mind. I used a snowball sampling technique and gathered people through my own network, and all participants had at least a college education, about half had received or were in the process of attaining advanced degrees, and many earned a sizable income, all of which were limitations. Because many were highly educated, participants were not representative of the Filipino American population. In addition, many in the sample had been or are currently in a leadership position or involved in the Filipino

community in some capacity which influenced their views on Filipino and Filipino American identity. Also, most of these participants were from California and went to a school in California where Filipinos are often concentrated and opportunities for involvement in social/political groups are prominent. The same went for the two who grew up on the east coast—there was a concentrated group of Filipinos and opportunities for involvement in the community. A person who has been educated and took part in this type of Filipino group would have been more likely to reach out to a study of this nature and to be open and reflective about these themes. Some had been exposed to the concepts of colonial mentality and decolonizing in their education prior to this study. One participant framed it as a privilege to be able to decolonize, and I think that this encapsulates this experience because it requires time and often exposure to education to be reflective of how these themes may apply to one's life.

### **Mental health implications in social work**

After participants were asked to reflect on Filipino identity and possible experiences with colonial mentality and decolonizing the mind, they were asked to comment on their experiences with mental health, and how the above named factors shaped their experiences. Throughout thinking about how mental health is affected, it is important to be mindful of the basic Filipino values such as community, Catholicism, familial expectations of achievement, and respect as part of the equation when thinking about what a Filipino American may need to balance and incorporate into their experiences. Aligned with these Filipino values is Enriquez's list as cited by Nadal (2004) of core Filipino values, one of which is "kapwa" which is one who "does not recognize the self as a separate entity. Rather, kapwa is the unity of self and others and implies a shared identity" which relates to Filipinos valuing community (p.50). Also, familial expectations of achievement can be related to his identification of "pakikisama" which is the idea that:

“Filipinos thrive on acceptance of those surrounding them...They will be encouraged to gain status and power...Filipinos will be at their best mentally when they are socially accepted and socially celebrated at the same time” (Nadal, 2004, p.50). Being mindful of how these values are interwoven in Filipino Americans’ experiences is important. Also, issues of self- esteem and depression were common among participants, which coincided with David’s (2008) findings of colonial mentality having a role in mental health. The depression rate in the Filipino American population as mentioned earlier is higher than the general American population (Nadal, 2009). Participants often spoke to how colonial mentality and one’s experience as a second generation Filipino American had influenced one’s self-esteem and depression, but would also be reflective if other factors were at play, such as attributing it to Asian culture in general or other identities that intersected with their experience, such as gender or sexual orientation. Some would relay information about their mental health and did not relate it to identity, colonial mentality, or decolonizing the mind.

Suicide and suicidal ideation were also issues that came up with one participant, and other participants’ Filipino friends or family members. Referring to the statistics mentioned earlier, Filipino youth have one of the highest rates of teen suicide ideation and attempts and Filipina American adolescents have thought about suicide which is the highest rate among all ethnic groups (David & Nadal, 2013; Nadal, 2004). One participant was reflective about whether there was a connection between one not knowing who they were, or a “loss of cultural memory” as put by Strobel (1997), and suicide. He wondered about the validity between the connection of having a hybrid culture with elements of indigenous history that were largely lost or unknown and these high statistics of suicide. It did not seem like a coincidence when he applied this idea to the amount of people he had lost, or almost lost, in the Filipino community. If a culture was

based on a lost indigenous history, it seems to make sense that a person as a second generation Filipino American might be struggling to know who they truly are, and to deal with challenges of acculturation and identity issues, on top of everyday life which in itself can be challenging, and how this might lead to something extreme like suicide. I think one's own understanding of ethnic identity and history should be included when thinking about mental health issues that a Filipino American may be dealing with, especially with such high statistics of depression and suicide/suicidal ideation.

Family conflict was also an issue that came up often and for different reasons. Many of these issues of family conflict were related to Filipino values reflected in the literature which also connected to participants' answers regarding what it meant to be Filipino/Filipino American. For example, high expectations of achievement, or "pakikisama" and the avoidance of bringing shame to the family were values that many participants struggled with and were at the center of some disagreements. Shame, or "hiya" as cited by Nadal (2004) is one of the core Filipino values illuminated by Enriquez's Filipino psychology, who said, "The goal of Filipinos is to represent themselves in the most honorable way possible. The avoidance of hiya (or shame) may sometimes result in the inability of Filipinos to recognize emotional or mental problems" (Nadal, 2004, p.50) The culture of restricting feelings and parents denying or not believing their kids' feelings I think can be an added layer which fueled misunderstanding and tied to the part of the culture of avoiding shame. It aligns with participants feeling distant, angry, or misunderstood by a parent growing up.

Sometimes, though, participants were prompted to learn their parent's history after taking a class related to Asian American or Filipino American history and a deeper understanding of their parents' experiences resulted. A participant shared that he thought his dad was just an



“asshole” who was very strict growing up, but after learning about his dad’s experience in the military as a Filipino man of color, he gained a new respect for his father and a different type of relationship ensued. A similar experience happened to a participant who became involved in a Filipina women’s group, and after hearing her peers share stories, took initiative and asked her mom to tell her history, and this too created a sense of shared understanding. It might have been the process of growing up, but a handful of participants’ journeys of understanding their Filipino identities were the catalyst to creating a bridge of communication with their parents which then led to improved relationships. I would say the root of many of these situations was dissonance between the traditional Filipino values and participants’ differing outlooks and the differences between first and second generation immigrant experiences. More specifically, second generation Filipino Americans straddled two value systems (Filipino and American) and their first generation parents held their children to largely the Filipino set of core values and at times perhaps had a more limited understanding of American values. For example, one participant said she had been an “angry teenager”, and she wished that she had known about colonial mentality earlier. Had she known that her experiences were not individual but structural, and the conflict in values between her and parents were normal in an immigrant family that had many parallels with other immigrant families, things might have been easier growing up. In addition, the phenomenon of being unable to express feelings in general as cited by many participants, and that some Filipino parents invalidated some participants’ feelings or requests for mental health help, played a part in family conflict in Filipino families. Interestingly, conflicts stemming from early childhood experience often led to improved relations and shared understanding when these participants took initiative to learn more about the Filipino culture and their family histories.

One area that I would call for more research is this idea of intergenerational transmission of mental health issues. Some participants mentioned the idea of adaptability and how it is a common Filipino trait. I wonder if this is a result of years upon years of having to adapt to new colonial entities entering into their lives. Additionally, Pierce (2005) wrote, “only when we have theorized our experiences, considered our positions of complicity, and begun implementing strategies for resistance can we heal the traumas that have, variously, affected us all” (p.43). More research needs to be done through a trauma framework, and look into how secondary or vicarious trauma has perhaps played a role in Filipino American experiences. One participant spoke of a particular institutional “collective violence” placed upon second generation Filipino Americans, and I think this would be a valuable area to study, this idea of a collective and cultural trauma. Two other participants mentioned the cumulative nature of colonial mentality, and some of these experiences could be classified as microaggressions, which are difficult to quantify. Further examination is needed to see how these issues may or may not have been passed through intergenerationally.

In terms of one’s exposure and experience with mental health, it seems that a handful of participants had reached out for mental health services as adults, and the majority was open to the idea of receiving help. Most participants said there was a stigma to reaching out for help and that their parents either had a limited understanding of mental health services that were available or did not think they were necessary as the attitude was that issues could be solved within the family. It was striking to hear that a few participants were more or less told that they were “dramatic” for saying that they had a problem with depression or some sort of mental health concern. Some were directed to God or guardian angels which participants did not find useful. I think this attitude can be attributed to a denial on the parents’ part, or that there is this culture of

restricting feelings. It might have set up this precedent that their feelings were not valid and reaching out for help is a bad or shameful act. One participant mentioned that she always said things were “okay” when things were not okay, and wondered why this was so. She then decided to start saying how she truly felt in conversations with others and feeling comfortable feeling those feelings and taking up space to do so. It seems that some Filipino Americans perhaps, in order to cope within their family systems, had to keep feelings to themselves and deal with them internally and did not have the space to articulate feelings out loud. This can be attributed to shame, or “hiya”—this inability to recognize mental health issues to “save face” and/or avoid gossip within the family (Nadal, 2004, p.50) Perhaps not having the space to articulate feelings hindered their ability to communicate feelings later in life, or to even feel comfortable with just feeling or identifying those very feelings. I also want to recognize the positive aspect of the strong culture of community that Filipinos have, and that it can be framed as a strength that Filipino families have the willingness and ability to help out their family members without outside help. So it is both/and—the hope is to lessen the stigma of mental health but to also to avoid pathologizing Filipino cultural values, and imposing this idea that they “need” mental health services.

Many participants were supportive of the idea of making mental health more acceptable within the Filipino American community. One mentioned that idea of having “talking points” for the Filipino American community, and messages about mental health could be one platform. A message could be that mental health is important and services are available, and to then normalize the idea of being able to utilize those services when in need. One suggested going in to churches, schools, and other Filipino communities to introduce this idea. I think many made the point that it is not only within the Filipino community that mental health is stigmatized but that

this idea is pervasive in mainstream society. This is on top of the fact that mental health coverage is often not covered even when people have jobs and health insurance plans. Without insurance, mental health services tend to be expensive, which makes it even harder for the Filipino American population to know about the services, much less access them.

## **Conclusion**

As mentioned earlier, a small amount of research exists on the Filipino American population in mental health (David & Okazaki, 2006a; David & Nadal, 2013; David, 2013; Nadal, 2009). From the above findings, factoring in a Filipino American's possible experience with colonial mentality and decolonizing the mind are important to hold in mind when working with this population. Salient issues in this study were low self-esteem, depression, and suicidal ideation, and this study demonstrated how colonial mentality and decolonizing the mind and mental health are related. Furthermore, being mindful of a Filipino American's ethnic identity development and one's very individual process with this development and how it relates to one's mental health is important for practitioners in the field of social work. If colonial mentality is a factor in one's experience, decolonizing the mind can be used as a tool to begin the healing process. Filipino core values such as "wulang hiya", or "no shame" as mentioned in literature and reflected in participant responses, related to this avoidance of reaching out for help, conceptualizing getting help as taboo, or wanting to keep issues within the family. These attitudes should be taken into consideration when treating this population, which may serve as initial barriers for treatment. In addition, it is also important to note that some clients will be conscious of these themes, some will not, and some might be in the midst of grappling or trying to articulate these issues.

This study was done to give a voice to Filipino Americans and to add a level of awareness about these issues. I challenge the Filipino community and those who work with them to continue to reflect on these ideas and to develop different modes of thinking about these concepts. One participant problematized the idea of colonial mentality and decolonization, and said that she is “decolonizing on the colonizer’s word” and wondered about how to move beyond this binary and think about it more critically. bell hooks (1990) called for an intervention: “The margin...is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves, where we move in solidarity to erase the category colonized/colonizer. Marginality as the site of resistance. Enter that space. Let us meet there. Enter that space. We greet you as liberators” (p.342). Before erasing those binaries of “colonized/colonizer”, though, acknowledging them is necessary and the first step to erasing those categories. I believe Filipino Americans need to recognize how colonialism has structured their personal and collective narratives as a people and how their mental health has been affected. Root (1997) said, “Healing is a process composed of the acts of many people across time as well as across space.” (p.xii) For many in the study, it was powerful and useful to identify colonial mentality and decolonizing the mind, however slow, cyclical, or emotional the process may be. Decolonizing for many was a process to facilitate healing in one’s mental health. For those who did not identify colonial mentality or decolonization, this study served as a platform for their voices to be heard. In the world of social work, it is often said to “meet the client where they are at.” In this case, we as social workers need to meet and move alongside Filipino Americans on their paths of creating their own narrative, whether it is on the trajectory to finding liberation from colonial mentality, healing through decolonizing, resisting such limiting labels and binaries, or simply giving space to hear their stories.

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APPENDIX A

“No history, no self; Know history, know self”



## Volunteers needed for a research study!

Are you:

- **Filipino American** and born and raised in the United States?
- 18 years of age or older?
- Interested in **voicing your experience** as a Filipino American?

I will be conducting an interview for approximately 1 hour on experiences of:

- **Colonial Mentality:** a sense of cultural inferiority, when a person attaches higher value to the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the dominant/colonizing culture over one’s own indigenous culture
- **Identity:** a “definition” or “an interpretation of self”
- **Decolonizing the mind:** Understanding one’s history to understand the present; “naming internalized oppression, shame, inferiority, confusion, anger”

**Please consider participating in my study if you feel you relate to the ideas listed above.**

Contact: Ashley Decena, MSW candidate 2014 (XXX) XXX-XXXX/ [adecena@smith.edu](mailto:adecena@smith.edu)



## APPENDIX C

Dear colleagues, friends, and family,

My name is Ashley Decena, and I am a 2014 MSW candidate at Smith College School for Social Work. I hope this e-mail finds you well. I am reaching out because I know you well or we have crossed paths, and you have made an impact on me. I am reaching out to my network to help find participants for my research study for my Master's thesis. I am conducting a study where my focus is on the Filipino American population and mental health.

Specifically, I am looking into how one's experience with the term, *colonial mentality*, which is defined as the idea of cultural inferiority, or that one feels "less than" the colonizing nation (Spain and the United States colonized the Philippines for 400 years) has factored into one's experience into forming an identity. An example of colonial mentality could be valuing light or white skin over one's own darker skin, or putting importance on the colonizer's belief, attitude, or value over one's own Filipino belief, attitude, or value. I am also interested in how the process of decolonization of the mind is happening. Decolonization of the mind could take form in reconnecting with the past to understand the present, or the process of naming or identifying feelings of internalized oppression (internalized and believing denigrating beliefs about one's culture, race, or ethnicity), shame, anger, confusion, or inferiority. With all of these themes in mind, I will garner mental health implications for the field of social work to widen the knowledge and literature base of the Filipino American experience. It is important to note that these ideas may not ring true for every Filipino American, or it may be an experience one has already felt but it has not been acknowledged or recognized in this way.

I will be conducting interviews with twelve participants either over the phone, video chat or in person for approximately one hour about their experiences with these ideas listed above. I am looking for people who identify as Filipino American and have been born and raised in the United States. They have to be eighteen years of age or older and English speaking. All identifying information will be kept confidential in the process of writing my thesis. I am looking to interview people I do not directly know or do not have any sort of relationship.

If you know anyone who might be a potential participant that would be interested in volunteering for my study, or have interest in this topic, it would be greatly appreciated if you could forward this on. I am looking to interview people until March 15, 2014. Thank you for your time and consideration. Feel free to contact me if you have any follow up questions or concerns, or if this has been forwarded on to you, let me know if you are interested. I look forward to hearing these important stories!

Best,  
Ashley  
[adecena@smith.edu](mailto:adecena@smith.edu) (XXX) XXX-XXXX

## APPENDIX D

\*\*\*Research participants needed!\*\*\*

Dear Samahang Pilipino Facebook Community/Fellow UCLA Pilipino Alumni,

My name is Ashley Decena, and I am a Bruin Alumni (c/o/2008) and was a part of the Samahang community during my time at UCLA. I am currently a 2014 MSW candidate at Smith College School for Social Work, I am reaching out to my network to help find participants for my research study for my Master's thesis.

I am conducting a study where my focus is on the Filipino American population and mental health. Specifically, I am looking into how one's experience with the term, *colonial mentality*, which is defined as the idea of cultural inferiority, or that one feels "less than" the colonizing nation (Spain and the United States colonized the Philippines for 400 years) has factored into one's experience into forming an identity. An example of colonial mentality could be valuing light or white skin over one's own darker skin, or putting importance on an American belief, attitude, or value over one's own Filipino belief, attitude, or value. I am also interested in how the process of decolonization of the mind is happening. Decolonization of the mind could take form in reconnecting with the past to understand the present, or the process of naming or identifying feelings of internalized oppression (internalized and believing denigrating beliefs about one's culture, race, or ethnicity), shame, anger, confusion, or inferiority. With all of these themes in mind, I will garner mental health implications for the field of social work to widen the knowledge and literature base of the Filipino American experience. It is important to note that these ideas may not ring true for every Filipino American, or it may be an experience one has already felt but it has not been acknowledged or recognized in this way.

I will be conducting interviews with twelve participants I do not already know either over the phone, video chat, or in person for approximately one hour about their experiences with these ideas listed above. I am looking for people who identify as F/Pilipino American and have been born and raised in the United States. All identifying information will be kept confidential in the process of writing my thesis. I am looking to interview people until March 15, 2014. Message me or pass this along to anybody who might be interested in helping me complete this study. Thank you!

In solidarity,

Ashley

## APPENDIX E

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (Filipino organization),

My name is Ashley Decena, and I am a 2014 MSW candidate at Smith College School for Social Work. I am reaching out because of your important work with the Filipino community, and I need to recruit Filipino American participants for my research study. I am conducting a study where my focus is on the Filipino American population and how their experience with colonial mentality, this idea of cultural inferiority, or that they are “less than” the colonizing entity (Spain and the United States), has factored into their experience into forming an identity. I am also interested in whether or not the process of decolonization of the mind is happening. Decolonization of the mind could take form in reconnecting with the past to understand the present, or the process of the process of naming or identifying feelings of internalized oppression, shame, anger, confusion, or inferiority. With all of these themes in mind, I will garner mental health implications for the field of social work to widen the knowledge and literature base of the Filipino American experience.

I will be conducting interviews with twelve participants I do not already know either over the phone, video chat or in person for approximately one hour about their experiences with these ideas listed above. I am looking for people who identify as Filipino American and have been born and raised in the United States. They have to be eighteen years of age or older and English speaking.. All identifying information will be kept confidential in the process of writing my thesis.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could forward this on to the Filipino community with whom you are connected, or grant permission for me to send out a similar message to members of your organization to recruit participants for my study. I am excited to be providing this space to hear Filipino American voices and perspectives. I am looking to interview people from (date-date).

Thank you for your time and consideration. Feel free to contact me if you have any follow up questions or concerns. I look forward to hearing these important stories!

Best,  
Ashley  
(XXX) XXX-XXXX  
[Adecena@smith.edu](mailto:Adecena@smith.edu)

APPENDIX F



**Consent to Participate in a Research Study  
Smith College School for Social Work • Northampton, MA**

.....

**Title of Study:** Colonial mentality, identity, & decolonizing the mind: Reconstructing narratives & examining mental health implications for Filipino Americans

**Investigator(s):**

Ashley Decena, MSW Candidate 2014, (XXX)XXX-XXXX

.....

**Introduction**

- You are being asked to be in a research study about your experience of colonial mentality, identity formation, decolonization of the mind, and perception of mental health within the Filipino American population.
- You were selected as a possible participant because you identify as Filipino American, have been born and raised in the United States, are 18 and over, and are English speaking.
- I ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

**Purpose of Study**

- The purpose of the study is to gather more information about the Filipino American experience with colonial mentality, identity formation, and decolonization of the mind, and to garner mental health implications for the field of social work. Colonial mentality is defined as attaching importance to attitudes, beliefs, or values of the colonizer over one’s own indigenous (i.e. Filipino) attitudes, beliefs, or values. Identity is defined as a definition or interpretation of self. Decolonization of the mind is defined as understanding one’s history to understand the present, or naming or recognizing internalized oppression, shame, anger, or inferiority.
- This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my master’s in social work degree.

- Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences.

### **Description of the Study Procedures**

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things: participate in an approximately hour long one time interview in person, over the phone, or on video chat and if you agree, will be audio taped for the interview. If audio taping is not an option, I will take hand written notes of the interview. A list of definitions will be given to you, and I will go through a series of predetermined questions.

### **Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study**

- The study has the following risks. First, the study may bring up some uncomfortable thoughts, experiences, or stories about ethnic identity and deep personal feelings about being Filipino American, which may or may not be a risk for you. I ask that you be open and prepared for personal questions about identity having to do with your Filipino American experience. However, you may choose not to answer any question and may withdraw from this study at any time.

### **Benefits of Being in the Study**

- The benefits of participation are it being a potentially liberatory and meaningful personal experience for you to reexamine your own experience of colonial mentality. It may also be an act of repairing your own sense of self, identity, and self esteem. You may gain more insight about yourself and your experience. You may think more critically about what it means to decolonize your mind and be inspired to help the Filipino community in different ways.
- The benefits to social work/society are that, the study will add more insight into the experience of Filipino Americans. It may add to the knowledge of cultural competency and sensitivity to different group experiences. For example, social workers in the clinical field may have more knowledge about how the Filipino American experience may possibly factor into self esteem issues, depression, or anxiety, among other mental health issues.

**Confidentiality** This study is confidential. Information will be secure, password protected, and eventually destroyed. The following steps will be followed to ensure confidentiality:

- Confidentiality will be assured by protecting your name and any identifying information. I will assign a code to you during the data collection process, and I will combine data. Names will not be put on audio tapes and instead your participant code will be labeled on the tapes. I will keep signed consent forms locked up separately from any other data so your name and data cannot be connected. We will meet in public such as a coffee shop or library, but I will find a private space so others will not overhear the content of the interview. If the interview is done over the phone or video chat, I will be in my home or a library where other people will not be within hearing distance during the interview. No one will know about your participation except for if you were referred to me by one of your personal or professional connections. In addition, the records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. If audio tape recordings are made, only I will have access to them, and they will be destroyed afterward. Once the audio tape recording is transcribed, the data will be password protected on an electronic device and the audio tape recordings will then be deleted.



- All research materials including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period. I will not include any information in any report that may be published that would make it possible to identify you.

### **Payments/gift**

- You will not receive any financial payment for your participation. I will offer to purchase a coffee or drink of your choice if you are interviewing in person in a coffee shop.

### **Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* (up to the date noted below) without affecting your relationship with me, the sole researcher of this study, or Smith College. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely up to the point noted below. If you choose to withdraw, I will not use any of your information collected for this study. You must notify me of your decision to withdraw by email or phone by March 15, 2014. After that date, your information will be part of the thesis.

### **Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns**

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, or would like an e-mail of a summary of the results, at any time feel free to contact me, Ashley Decena at Adecena@smith.edu or by telephone at XXX-XXX-XXXX. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your participation, you may contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at (413) 585-7974.

### **Consent**

Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep. Below is a list of referrals and access information if you experience emotional issues related to your participation in this study.

- Should you feel any discomfort, here are some resources that focus on the Filipino population:
  - Filipino American Community Health Initiative (FACHIC) <http://www.fachic.net/> (Chicago, IL)
  - Filipino-American Council of San Francisco, <http://www.filipinovillage.com/show-assoc.asp?a=39> (San Francisco, CA)
  - FilAm ARTS, <http://filamarts.org/> (Los Angeles, CA)
  - Filipino American Library, <http://www.filipinoamericanlibrary.org/> (Los Angeles, CA)
  - KAYA: Filipino Americans for Progress <http://kayagrassroots.org> (Los Angeles, CA, Bay Area, CA, D.C./Virginia Chapters)
  - Collaborative Opportunities for Raising Empowerment, Inc. (CORE), <http://www.core-nyc.org/> (NYC )

- Filipino American Human Services, Inc. (FAHSI), [www.fahsi.org](http://www.fahsi.org), 718-883-1295, 18514 Hillside Ave. Jamaica, NY 11432, [fashi@fahsi.org](mailto:fashi@fahsi.org) (NYC)
- Filipino-American Community of Colorado, <http://www.coloradofilipinos.org/> (Edgewater, CO)
- List of more Filipino organizations across country: <http://www.thefilipino.com/>
- Mental Health Resources:
  - <http://smchealth.org/sites/default/files/docs/BHS/OCFA/FamilyEmerBrochureTagalog.pdf> and [http://smchealth.org/sites/default/files/docs/BHS/HEI/FMHI\\_HandbookJune2008.pdf](http://smchealth.org/sites/default/files/docs/BHS/HEI/FMHI_HandbookJune2008.pdf) (San Mateo County, CA)
  - <http://www.apaitonline.org/resources/> (Los Angeles, CA)
  - Richmond Area Multi-Services, INC. (RAMS) <http://www.ramsinc.org/> (San Francisco, CA)
  - <http://www.up2sd.org/find-help/resources/mental-health-local-resources> (San Diego, CA)
  - Sound Mental Health <http://www.smh.org> (Seattle, WA)
  - <http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/resources/chicago-and-illinois-mental-health-agencies-and-organizations/> (Chicago, IL)
  - MHA-NYC Innovations in Mental Health, <http://newyorkcity.ny.networkofcare.org/mh/index.aspx> (NYC)
  - New Horizon Counseling Center, <http://www.nhcc.us/> (NYC)
  - New York Psychotherapy and Counseling Center, <http://nypcc.org/> (NYC)
  - The Fifth Avenue Counseling Center, <http://www.tfacc.org/> (NYC)

.....  
 Name of Participant (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

.....

**[if using audio or video recording, use next section for signatures:]**

**1. I agree to be [audio or video] taped for this interview:**

Name of Participant (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. I agree to be interviewed, but I do not want the interview to be taped:**

Name of Participant (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX G

### Demographics

1. What is your age?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 and over

2. What is your gender identity?

- Female
- Male
- Transgender
- Intersex
- Gender Queer
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. How much is your approximate annual income?

- \$0-15,000
- \$15,000-29,999
- \$30,000-39,999
- \$40,000-49,999
- \$50,000-59,999
- \$60,000-74,999
- \$75,000-100,000
- > \$100,000
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the highest level or type of education obtained?

- Elementary/Middle School
- High school/GED
- Community college
- Some college
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree

- PhD
- Technical/Specialized Degree
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. How do you identify religiously or spiritually?

- Jewish
- Muslim
- Christian
- Catholic
- Hindu
- Buddhist
- None
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

6. If you identify as anything other than Filipino, list those ethnicities here: (ex. Part Japanese, white, black, Latino etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Which generation do you identify as?

- 2<sup>nd</sup>
- 3<sup>rd</sup>
- 4<sup>th</sup>
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX H

### Interview questions

1. What, if anything, were you told or taught about what it means to be a F/Pilipino growing up? Include messages from family and from other races/cultures/ethnicities, and the media.
2. What does being “F/Pilipino American” mean to you as an identity? What factored into your formation of this identity?
3. How knowledgeable do you feel about Filipino culture, history and customs?
  - a. **Colonial Mentality:** a sense of cultural inferiority, when a person attaches more value to the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the dominant/colonizing culture over one’s own indigenous culture
  - b. **Identity:** a “definition” or “an interpretation of self”
  - c. **Decolonizing the mind:** Understanding the past to understand the present; “naming internalized oppression, shame, inferiority, confusion, and anger
4. After having been read the definition of colonial mentality what are your general thoughts on this concept? Is this something you experience? If so, how?
  - a. If you can relate to colonial mentality, describe how this may have played a role in your identity development.
5. After having become familiarized with the concept of decolonization, what are your thoughts on this process? What does this look like to you? Was this something you were aware before this interview?

6. What are the general messages you have gotten about mental health in the F/Pilipino culture and your own experience with mental health?

## APPENDIX I



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**School for Social Work**  
Smith College  
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063  
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

December 25, 2013

Ashley Decena  
1921 Avenue I #4J  
Brooklyn, NY 11230

Dear Ashley,

Thank you for the effort you have put into your Human Subjects Review (HSR) application. Our job as a federally mandated human subjects review committee is to make sure that all research projects which we approve follow federal guidelines for research with humans, including informed consent, protection of vulnerable participants, the ability to withdraw from projects, appropriate storage and collection of data, and other items discussed in the HSR manual. Part of our job is to ensure that the research results are worth the risks and costs to the participants. The actual benefits to the researcher, participants, and the field of social work, must be worth the time and energy participants will put into being a part of the study. Projects that are unclear in their questions and methods may lead to results that are not beneficial to the participants or to the field.

Attached you will find your proposal with our required changes in **MS Word Track Changes** and our requests for revisions marked as *New Comments* in the margins. These comments will provide guidance to make substantive changes in accord with HSR federal guidelines for research.

Please make all changes to your research proposal with **MS Word track changes** or indicate changes in another way (e.g. bold type or highlighted type) so they are easily read in order to speed the return of your revision. If you feel we have misunderstood your study and there are changes you do not wish to make, please explain in the margins with a *Comment s*. Sometimes we ask for changes that do not make sense to applicants because something was unclear to us and your explanation can clarify these issues.

Please understand that we function with a collaborative model- we want to help all applicants learn from their research while protecting all human subjects. Should you have any concerns

about committee comments, please review with your thesis advisor, who may follow up with a contact to the Chair, HSR Committee.

Please return your application to Laura Wyman at [lwyman@smith.edu](mailto:lwyman@smith.edu). Please label each document you send with **your name, the term "HSR," the term "Revision", and the number of the revision**. As an example, if your name is Sara Jones, we should receive an application revision document like this: "SaraJones HSR Revision1.docx".

Please label the subject line of your email as HSR Revision.

Please note that most of your correspondence will come from me through Laura. It may also come from Marsha Pruett, PhD, Co-Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee. She will respond when I am not able.

Sincerely,



Elaine Kersten, EdD  
Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Kelly Mandarino, Research Advisor