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# Community and college partnerships for student retention in higher education : critical reflections of Pilipino American young adults

Ingrid Mariano Gonzales

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The University of San Francisco

COMMUNITY AND COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS FOR STUDENT RETENTION  
IN HIGHER EDUCATION: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS  
OF PILIPINO AMERICAN YOUNG ADULTS

A Dissertation Presented  
to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

by  
Ingrid Mariano Gonzales  
San Francisco  
May 2007

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

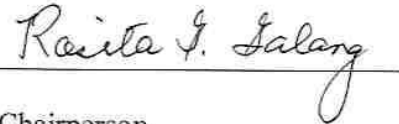


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## DEDICATION

My work is dedicated to my husband (my better half), as well as to my parents, my brother, my extended family, my friends, my colleagues, and my community. This work is also dedicated to my articulate participants, Ms. Canlas from CCSF, my advisor Dr. Galang, and my committee members Dr. Koirala-Azad and Fr. LaBelle. I will be forever grateful for your unconditional support and love and for the inspiration throughout my studies. Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat! We did it!

## CHAPTER I

### THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

#### Introduction

Current literature reveals that institutions of higher education in 21st-century America are still struggling to retain their students. According to retention expert Vincent Tinto (2002), only fifty-one percent of all first year students in the United States graduate on their campus within six years and the colleges with open enrollment graduate only thirty percent of their students. Furthermore, numerous studies on student retention in higher education continue to indicate that students of color have lower retention rates than their white counterparts (Lau, 2003; Maldonado, Rhoads, & Buenavista, 2003; Tinto, 1987; Zea & Reisen, 1997).

To decrease attrition rates of students of color in college, three approaches to student retention are generally promoted in the field. Among the three approaches, the social integrationist approach (retaining students by involving them in the campus culture) and the multiculturalist approach (retaining students by changing the campus culture to adapt to their different cultural needs) hold administrators, faculty, and staff largely responsible for addressing the high attrition rates of “at-risk students” (Maldonado, Rhoads, & Buenavista, 2003). A growing number of scholars have expanded the discourse to include the empowerment approach to student retention (Maldonado, Rhoads, & Buenavista, 2003). These scholars claim that college graduation rates among communities of color would increase if administrators in higher education promoted the establishment of student-run retention projects (SRRPs) and saw students of color as agents of social change who are

capable of mediating their own college education. In this approach, students must take action and take on a decision-making role in institutions of higher education—they must not only persevere, but also actively resist the systemic forms of oppression based on race, class, and gender, as perpetuated by institutions of higher education.

In order to guarantee educational and social mobility for all communities, more school and community partnership initiatives are sprouting up in the nation to help strengthen local neighborhoods, to improve educational equity, and to provide comprehensive health and social services for children and youth populations (Melaville, 1998). The youth of color will eventually age out of public, for-profit, and not-for-profit youth programs when they turn 18 but throughout their young adult life, that is, from ages 18-24, will continue to need comprehensive health and social services as well as academic support (Department of Children, Youth and Families, 2005; Wald & Martinez, 2003). According to the 2000 Census, young adults, ages 18-24, constitute about 10% of the entire U.S. population totaling 27.1 million, most of whom live in the states of California, New York, and Texas. Thirty-eight percent of the young adults in the United States are young adults of color and 13% of the young adults were foreign born (Jekielek & Brown, 2005).

The transition from young adult to adult is a fragile period and can be a space for development or for further disconnection from society. Setbacks such as early pregnancies, school drop out, entry into the juvenile justice system, and lack of access to employment can greatly affect a young adult's chance in maximizing his or her potential for mobility as adults and perhaps affecting his or her future offspring's chances as well (Jekielek & Brown, 2005). Disconnected young adults are defined as adults who are out of the labor force and out of school for an extended period of time (Besharov, 1999; Wald & Martinez, 2003). Jekielek



and Brown also found that 14% of young adults are disconnected. Also, 75% of the 27.1 million young adults in the United States still live at home or have formed their own household. To what extent are the needs of young adults being addressed by colleges or community organizations?

The dire need to retain more students of color is pushing universities and colleges to provide comprehensive health, social, and academic services to their students, but many young adults of color (YAC) who run into academic difficulty do not utilize these campus based services (Astin, 1975; Bryant, 2001; Tinto, 1987). Despite the great interest in how institutions of higher education can help retain students, the larger community must also play a role in supporting the YAC population in higher education. Are the high dropout rates of YAC in American colleges the effect of our local communities' lack of social policy to support the holistic needs of the young adult population?

Many college and community partnerships have also been sprouting up across the nation in the forms of community service projects, civic engagement programs, service learning projects, research partnerships, or one-time charity volunteer projects. The more successful and sustainable partnerships have been found to be efforts which develop high-trust relationships and high-investment relationships between the community and the college participants (Langseth, 2000). High-trust relationships approach the college and community partnership by seeing the community for its assets and strengths and not from its deficiencies. High-investment relationships, in the same way, view the college and community partnership as a long term endeavor not a quick fix.

The Pilipino American young adult population is one of the little studied, invisible communities in the United States, partly due to the perpetuation of the Asian American

model minority myth (Strobel, 2002). Although the 1986 Philippine Constitution uses Filipino to refer to the people and the national language of the Philippines, in this study, the term Pilipino, instead of Filipino, will be used to name the people whose ancestors originated from the Philippines. Pilipino instead of Filipino is used by some Pilipino scholars and cultural workers due to the absence of 'F' in the sound system and the original alphabet of Tagalog, the basis of the Pilipino national language, and as a political and nationalist statement against an identity or label defined by former colonial oppressors Spain and the United States (Aquino, 1999; Flores, 2002). Few studies (Castillo, 2002; Gonzales, 2004; Luzzo, 1993) have investigated whether Pilipino American students have the proper resources, skills, and support needed to academically achieve and graduate from higher education. The demand for specific research on the Pilipino American educational experience will increase as this community continues to grow in the United States (Gonzales, 2004; Juarez, 1997; Paz, 2000; Strobel, 2000).

According to the 2000 United States Census, Pilipino Americans totaled about two million out of the 281.4 million people in the United States, making them the second largest Asian American group in this country, second only to Chinese Americans. About 400,000 more Pilipino Americans resided in the United States in 2000 than in 1990. Almost half of the Pilipino American population lives in California. As the next generation of community leaders, parents, and workers in the American work force, the Pilipino American young adult population will have a direct impact on the social and economic stability of California and the nation as a whole (Strobel, 2002).

## Statement of the Problem

An initial review of the literature reveals many studies have been done to explore how campus based services for young adults of color can help retain students in higher education (Astin, 1975; Tierney, 1992; Tinto, 1987). However, few scholars (Langseth, 2000; O' Grady, 2000; Rice & Pollack, 2000; Toh & Floresca-Cawagas, 1997) have identified roles community institutions—such as the public, for-profit, and not-for-profit sectors—can play in helping to increase the educational mobility of the young adult population.

Extensive research has also been conducted regarding the benefits of involving young adults in college-community partnerships (Boyle-Baise & Efiom, 2000; Sleeter, 2000). However, most studies have approached college–community partnerships from a needs-driven view of communities instead of a capacity-focused view of communities (as cited in Sleeter, 2000). By defining communities from a needs-driven view, scholars see disempowered communities as dependent upon outside experts to be the saviors. More scholars need to define communities from the capacity-focused view and acknowledge the various strengths and resources communities have at their disposal, and the capacity community members have in directly addressing the holistic needs of the young adult population (Sleeter, 2000).

Guided by the premise that scholars should define communities from a capacity-focused view, this study was an attempt to identify community services beyond a college campus which will help retain Pilipino American young adults in higher education, particularly in the local, for-profit, and not-for-profit sectors.

### Purpose of the Study

With the continuing high drop out rate of young adults of color in higher education (Lau, 2003; Maldonado, Rhoads, & Buenavista, 2003; Tinto, 1987; Zea & Reisen, 1997) and with the dire needs of young adults less prioritized by the public, for-profit, and not-for-profit sectors (Department of Children, Youth and Families in San Francisco, 2005; Wald & Martinez, 2003), this study places young adults of color, particularly Pilipino American young adults, out of the margins and into the center of the discourse. This study explored three main issues: (a) factors that contribute to the retention and academic success of Pilipino American young adults in higher education, (b) types of support that are needed in the public, for-profit, and not-for-profit sectors to help retain Pilipino American young adults in higher education, and (c) types of community and college partnerships that can be implemented to help retain Pilipino American young adults in higher education.

### Research Questions

The researcher explored the following questions:

1. According to Pilipino American young adults, what factors contribute to their retention and academic success in higher education?
2. According to Pilipino American young adults, what types of support are needed in the public sector, for-profit sector, and not-for-profit sector to help retain Pilipino American young adults in higher education?
3. According to Pilipino American young adults, what types of community and college partnerships can be implemented to help retain Pilipino American young adults in higher education?

## Theoretical Framework

The three approaches to student retention in higher education, that is, the social integrationist, the multiculturalist, and the empowerment approach to student retention, together with the concept of disconnection of young adults and theories on culture and power in education were used as the theoretical framework for this study.

### *Student Retention Approaches*

The social integrationist (Astin, 1975; Tinto, 1987; Tinto, 2002), multiculturalist (Tierney, 1992; Olenchak & Hebert, 2002), and empowerment approaches (Maldonado, Rhoads, & Buenavista, 2003; Shor, 1996) to student retention evolved from the 1980s, early 1990s, and late 1990s, respectively. These approaches prescribed program reform, institutional reform, or both, to prevent student dropout in higher education. This study utilized these three approaches to analyze the experiences and retention needs of young adults in higher education and their implications to creating young adults of color support services in the local, for-profit, and not-for-profit sectors.

### *Disconnected Young Adults*

Disconnected young adults are defined as adults who are out of the labor force and out of school for an extended period of time (Besharov, 1999; Wald & Martinez, 2003). Social policy goals to keep young adults in school and employed have been utilized by the policy makers to promote young adults: (a) not to be incarcerated, (b) to be self-sufficient, (c) to have a social support network, (d) to acquire skills and education to earn at least twice the poverty level, and (e) to participate in civic engagement (Wald & Martinez, 2003). In this study, these social policy goals to prevent young adults from being disconnected from

our society were used as the framework for identifying needed Pilipino American young adult services in the local, for-profit, and not-for-profit sectors.

### *Culture, Power, and Education*

The following theorists take dynamic positions with issues of culture, power, and education. Whether they are educators, scholars, or anthropologists by profession, each of these scholars have directly or indirectly made an impact on the field of education. They have broadened the typical “black and white” discourse to include the gray areas and marginalized issues in between—beyond the limiting dualities and causalities of Western thought and Western concepts of learning.

### *Problematizing Culture, Power, and Learning*

Nieto (1992) and Rosaldo (1989) warn scholars and educators alike that culture, power, and learning issues in education are more complex and more dynamic to be put in any simple formula. Nieto believes that in order to have an equitable education for all learners—people in the field must recognize that “equal is not the same” (p. 109). We must acknowledge the different experiences and backgrounds of students, admit that different students learn differently, and make provisions in our schools for these differences. Nieto contests the cultural deprivation theory and believes every student has a rich culture, a culture which impacts their learning, social interaction, and language.

In terms of power and domination, the picture is also not as clear-cut. Rosaldo (1989) recognizes the presence of a cultural hegemony and cultural capital in American society that favors the dominant culture. He also supports that even though there is a dominant cultural center, there are numerous overlapping subordinate cultures which create permeable but persistent cultural boundaries. Rosaldo found people living in these cultural borders are

living in the most pertinent sites for creative cultural production. Even though race relations in North America “involve a blend of assimilationist efforts, raw prejudice, and cultural containment that revolves around a concerted effort to keep each culture pure and in its place” (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 212) Rosaldo affirms the interplay between the assimilationist and resistant efforts of marginalized groups and subordinate cultures.

The work of Nieto (1992) and Rosaldo (1989) captures the resilience, the self-determination and the potential that students of color have but have gone unrecognized by the assimilationist driven American educational system. This study explored the interplay between culture, power, and learning from the Pilipino American young adult experience.

#### *Hybridity, Diasporas, and Identities*

Mabardi (2000), Rouse (1996), Omi and Winant (1993), and Bhabha (1994) locate cultural, racial and identity formation within the context of a complex world shrunken by imperialism and globalization. These scholars included the concepts of hybridity, diaspora, racial formation, and cultural location in the dominant discourse to broaden our perspectives of humanity and our global village.

Hybridity to Mabardi (2000) is the proper term to use because it reveals culture to be both a condition and a process that is constantly shifting and evolving. Hybridity is the interplay between forced powers such as colonization and agency, resistance and globalization. Rouse (1996), also believes localizing or regionalizing strategies in defining culture is useless in a time where there is constant movement and shifts between people, money, goods, and ideas. Diasporic cultures are dispersed people who long to return home, are usually commodified, and whose experiences are racialized, classed, and gendered by the dominant culture. Omi and Winant (1993) also assert that race is not a static condition— it is

a socially constructed concept. They promote a process-oriented theory that must apply to contemporary political relationships, global conditions, and a historical context. In the same way, Bhabha locates culture away from essentializing any identity—an identity shaped by capitalism, class, sexuality, race, feminism, diaspora, and AIDS. Bhabha (1994) sites Fannon, a psychoanalyst from the Algerian revolution, to illustrate humanity's complexities—Fannon writes:

As soon as I desire I am asking to be considered. I am not merely here-and-now, sealed into thingness. I should constantly remind myself that the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence. In the world in which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself. And it is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate my cycle of freedom. (pp. 8-9)

It is important to look to issues of hybridity, diasporas, and identities to help understand the global experiences and histories of Pilipino American young adults in higher education. Are Pilipino American young adults entering institutions of higher education viewed by the system as blank slates or as the products of cultural hybridity and diasporic cultures (Bhabha, 1994; Mabardi, 2000; Omi & Winant, 1993; and Rouse, 1996)? In addition are Pilipino American young adults getting the proper support in higher education? According to these theorists, marginalized students need support that provide them: (a) the proper tools and resources to help them navigate and explore their non-dominant cultures and identity; and (b) the opportunity to deconstruct their racialized, classed, and gendered experiences so marginalized students can initiate their own “cycle of freedom” (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 8-9). This study is an attempt to explore and deconstruct the complexities of the Pilipino American young adults experience in higher education.



### *Culture and Non-Eurocentric Perspectives*

Dussel (1998) is a proponent of alternative non-Eurocentric perspectives on critical thinking and culture and a critic of Western thought and the Eurocentric division of history—the rational and scientific social philosophy. According to Dussel (1998), eurocentricism places modernity and Europe in the center of the discourse, neglecting the role that globalization and colonization played in the cultural and physical displacement of Indigenous people and the third world. According to Dussel (1998), modernity was not the cause but the effect of colonization and globalization, and modernity is not absolute but is dependent upon a political and economic philosophy that is both environmental and multicultural. Modernity is also limited by: (a) ecological destruction of the planet, (b) destruction of humanity itself, and (c) the impossibility of subsumption of the marginalized, oppressed and Indigenous populations, economies, nations and cultures. Looking to the community and Pilipino American young adults for answers and solutions to increase student retention in higher education creates space in academia for indigenous knowledge and third world knowledge and furthers our nation's modernity.

### *Culture, Minority Status, and Education*

Ogbu (1994) claims that minorities in the United States fall under two types of status: voluntary—that is, people who moved to the United States voluntarily for greater socio-economic mobility; or involuntary—that is, people who were incorporated into the United States not by choice but by colonization, slavery, or conquest. Minority students, according to Ogbu, behave in relation to their cultural frame of reference that is dependent upon their minority status. He claims:

For minorities in urban industrial societies, it is not merely cultural differences and differences in cognitive socialization that distinguish the groups in measured intelligence;

their measured intelligence and academic performance are also influenced by other factors generated by their minority status, such as their cultural frame of reference, i.e., how they perceive and interpret the cultural differences between them and the dominant group. (p. 366)

Voluntary immigrants unlike involuntary minorities, for example, possess a positive dual frame of reference where they can compare their situations back to their home country where conditions are generally worse than in the United States. Voluntary immigrants, consequently, are more motivated to study and do not see the dominant culture to be threatening to their mobility.

In accordance with Ogbu's (1994) findings, Sue and Okasaki (1990) found that Asian students' academic achievement depends upon cultural values as well as sociopolitical factors. Children of Chinese peasants, for example, do not attain high academic achievement in China but perform well in the American school system. In the same way, Korean students' academic performance is generally lower in Japan than in the United States because of their low social status in the Japanese society.

Ogbu (1994) and Sue and Okasaki (1990) illustrate how diverse the backgrounds are for students of color in the United States. Educational institutions must take into account the cultural differences and socio-political factors shaping the experiences of minority students. It is also critical for institutions to examine their own prejudices and stereotypes of minority students and their communities' experience. The Asian American model minority myth—for example, fails to take into account the heterogeneity of the Asian American experience—leading many educators to assume that Asian American students, including Pilipino American students, do not need academic support and individual attention. Looking through Ogbu's cultural frame of reference will help us appreciate the diversity in experiences of the

Pilipino American young adult participants especially in relationship to their family's immigration experience.

Culture and power issues in education are not clear-cut, black and white issues. In fact, it is in the gray areas—the borders, the in-betweens, the margins—where the complexities of our society and our civilization manifest. The borders, the in-betweens, and the margins is where we will find the reasons behind class withdrawals, student activism, and other important issues affecting the student retention of Pilipino American young adults.

#### Significance of the Study

This study provided insight into a new approach for retaining Pilipino American young adults in higher education by including community institutions in the discourse. Since many of the community support services tend to focus on prevention by focusing on youth or children populations, this study exposed the dire academic, social, and economic needs of Pilipino American young adults— needs which institutions of higher education cannot address alone. Also, by exposing the needs of Pilipino American young adults, this study identified practical support services that can be implemented by administrators, educators, and community members to help retain other young adults of color in higher education.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To better understand how colleges and community organizations can address the needs of the Pilipino American young adult population, the researcher reviewed the literature on student retention approaches in higher education, the Pilipino American educational experience, and college and community partnerships. In this chapter, the works of key scholars or key concepts from each field are discussed.

#### Student Retention Approaches in Higher Education

##### *Social Integrationist Approach*

Since the 1980s, Astin (1985) and Tinto (1987; 2002) have been the two fundamental scholars promoting the academic and social integrationist approach to retention. According to Astin and Tinto, student involvement in the classroom and on campus serves as the greatest retention strategy for students in higher education. These two scholars created a new discourse that placed the responsibility of retention largely on the institution, rather than the student's pre-entry attributes.

##### *Astin's Theory of Involvement*

Astin's Theory of Involvement (1985) simply stated that students are most likely to persist and be retained if they are active on campus. If college students are involved, then they learn more than uninvolved students. The Involvement Theory is comprised of five basic postulates:

1. Involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects
2. Regardless of its objects, involvement occurs along a continuum.
3. Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features.
4. The amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program.
5. The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement.

Astin's Theory of Involvement was rooted in earlier studies done by Astin (1985) on college dropouts from the mid- to late-1970s. Astin found that the positive factors that increased student retention rates due to increased student involvement included: living in a campus residence, joining extracurricular activities, and working at a part-time job on campus. The negative factors that decreased student retention rates due to decreased student involvement included: working full-time and off-campus, having part-time student status, and having faculty who work only part-time. Astin also found that college students have "an easier time becoming involved when the college environment seems comfortable and familiar" (p. 146).

Astin's Theory of Involvement is applicable to the work of higher education faculty members, administration, counselors, and personnel workers—staff whose main objective is to maximize student involvement and learning. Astin's Theory of Involvement only briefly addressed the issue of retaining students of color. Instead, he prescribed that higher education administrators, faculty, and staff give greater attention to "passive, reticent, or

under-prepared students...[in order to] serve the interests of greater educational equity, since passivity often characterizes minority and disadvantaged students” (p. 150). Astin’s view of minority and disadvantaged students as passive was derived from racist, deficit model approaches. Instead of deconstructing the hegemonic structures and practices within the institution, Astin framed the issue as the social or academic deficiency of an entire group or community.

### *Tinto’s Theory of Individual Departure*

The Theory of Individual Departure from Institutions of Higher Education was Tinto’s (1987) attempt to explain why and how particular students depart from their colleges before completing their degree programs. This theory is both a descriptive and explanatory model that focuses on voluntary student departures—or departures not due to academic dismissal. Tinto developed this theory to examine the multiple interactions that students have within the academic and social systems of institutions of higher education, which impact a student’s departure decision over time. His model specifically addressed “how it is that factors of intention, commitment, adjustment, difficulty, congruence, and isolation all come to affect student departure from institutions of higher education” (p. 85).

According to Tinto’s Model of Institutional Departure, students enter institutions of higher education with various attributes based on their family background, skills and abilities, and prior school experience. These pre-entry attributes shape students’ educational and occupational goals and their level of commitment to reach these goals. Furthermore, these characteristics also help shape how these students interact with other students, staff, faculty, and administrators of the institution.

The subsequent experiences of college students in the institutions' academic systems (i.e., the students' academic class performance and student/faculty/staff interactions) and social systems (i.e., students' involvement in extracurricular activities and peer group interactions), which further their intellectual and social integration in the college environment, enhance their ability to be retained. Students who are academically and socially integrated develop clearer educational goals and a stronger commitment to graduate.

Tinto's Theory of Individual Departure, which promoted student involvement or integration, supplemented Astin's Theory of Involvement, which promoted resilient students who actively involve themselves in their learning and campus life. However, Tinto's Theory of Individual Departure primarily examined what the institution is doing to get involved in their students' educational experience, rather than what the student is doing to get more involved with the decision-making of the institution. Tinto contended:

If we wish to have our students become actively involved, we must first be involved in their learning as well as our own. If we want students to be committed to the goals of education, we must first demonstrate a commitment to those goals and to the students we serve. (p. 188)

Tinto's Theory of Student Departure also addressed the retention of minority students in greater detail than Astin's theory by acknowledging the social and academic barriers that prevent students from fully integrating in institutions of higher education. Tinto (1987) cited: (a) the effectiveness of minority mentor programs that provide positive student and faculty role models for disadvantaged minority students, (b) the development of social support networks made up of student communities having similar backgrounds (although Tinto warned of the excessive fragmentation of the college environment), and, (c) outreach efforts and constant phone and mail contact to combat negative social influences that may distract students from completing their degree.

### *Multiculturalist Approach*

Tinto's academic and social integrationist approach to student retention has been critiqued as an assimilationist view on student retention. The term "integration" implies assimilation to the dominant framework of the institution of higher education—Eurocentric, mainstream white America. Tierney's social constructivist theory calls not for integration but for the deconstruction of the university's constructs of race, class, and gender according to the dominant group's perspective (as cited in Tanaka, 2002). Ortiz and Rhoads (as cited in Magolda, 2003) later constructed a framework on multicultural education in higher education that helps student affairs administrators and faculty members better understand issues of diversity on their college campus. Their five-step framework for multicultural education includes: (a) viewing culture as socially constructed, (b) inviting students to understand diverse cultures through dialogue, (c) deconstructing white culture, (d) valuing multiple cultures, and (e) developing a multicultural outlook (pp. 238-239). To Tierney, Ortiz, and Rhoads, the retention and resilience of students of color rests on the ability of the institution to recognize and validate each community's specific cultural needs and values.

Olenchak and Hebert (2002) advocated for a multiculturalist approach to retention when they found that even gifted students of color are at risk of dropping out of their universities. Their case study focused on the university experiences of two gifted first-generation students who were academically underachieving—a Vietnamese male student from a large urban university, and an African American male student from a flagship southeastern university. Through semi-structured interviews and document reviews, the authors found that both students had similar concerns with their peer and academic relationships. Both students had a difficult time balancing out their own needs with different



peer expectations. The participants also noted instances of institutional racism and the feeling of never being “supported by the university’s programs, curricula or faculty” (p. 209). The authors highlighted the importance of creating mentorship programs, faculty advising programs, and academic support programs that meet specific “emotional, social, motivational needs, as well as their intellectual needs” of first-generation students of color (p. 210).

Family needs and support was another critical factor in multicultural education and in meeting the retention needs of students of color. Hinderlie and Kenny (2002) investigated the relationship between parental attachment, campus social support, and college adjustment for 186 full-time Black students attending predominantly white universities in the northeastern United States. The authors found that support from friends, student organizations, and faculty were significantly associated with college adjustment, specifically, social, personal-emotional, and institutional attachment. The researchers also found that maternal and paternal attachment significantly explained the academic and personal-emotional adjustment of students. Paternal attachment also significantly explained institutional attachment. The authors advocated for building on-campus support for Black students and to have universities validate the importance of parental relationship for Black students’. They further noted:

Supports offered on campus should not challenge or compete with family support. The cultural norms of the college environment need to be structured with sensitivity to cultural diversity and in such a way to integrate family and college values. Counselors and student affairs administrators can support familial values and assist students in integrating the worlds of family-of-origin and college. (p. 342)

Magolda (2003) envisioned a collaborative academic and student affairs program based on the principles of multicultural education. She interviewed two male and two female

participants in a 15-year longitudinal study of young adult learning and meaning-making. Magolda found that adults construct their meaning or understand their contribution to creating their reality more clearly at age 30 than at age 17. Her longitudinal study attributes this late timing to the lack of focus on self-authorship during undergraduate years. She developed a collaborative undergraduate program that makes the “self” central to learning. This framework is based on three key principles: learners are capable of learning, learning is situated in the learners’ experience, and learning is defined as mutually constructing meaning (p. 237). She proposes a collaborative academic and student affairs program based on the following: (a) Ortiz and Rhoads’ multicultural education framework, (b) participation in Piper’s Community Standards Model, (c) developmental advising, and (d) Haynes’ four-year interdisciplinary writing curriculum.<sup>1</sup> Magolda and other multiculturalists place the student in the center of the discourse, but fail to account for ways to challenge the hegemonic structures within the institution of higher education, as well as examine the role that students can play in the university’s decision-making process outside of their own learning in the classroom.

### *Empowerment Approach*

#### *Student Initiated Retention Projects*

Scholars who advocate for the student empowerment approach to retention seek to develop students who are not solely resilient within the system but also resistant to the system (Maldonado, Rhoads & Buenavista, 2003). Maldonado, Rhoads, and Buenavista argued that retention programs that viewed students as agents of social change best met the

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<sup>1</sup> The Community Standards Model facilitates student groups in generating their own community standards and implementing them. Developmental Advising is a counseling methodology that makes the student accountable for his or her academic and career decisions, shifting from an advisor-centered approach to a student-centered approach over the course of their undergraduate career. Lastly, Haynes’ four-year interdisciplinary writing curriculum is a four-stage model that progressively incorporates the student’s voice in analyzing complex research and texts.

retention needs of under-represented students of color and other marginalized students. These scholars found that the empowering practices of student-initiated and -run retention projects were more effective and productive than the methodologies promoted by the dominant retention theories. They interviewed 45 student organizers from diverse backgrounds, and six full-time staff members from student-initiated retention projects at University of California at Berkeley and University of Wisconsin Madison in their case study. They found that student-initiated retention projects: (a) increase skills, knowledge, and social networks; (b) increase community commitments; and (c) increase the ability to deconstruct status quo norms.

Through student-initiated study groups, organized study halls, academic workshops, and mentoring programs, student-initiated retention projects increase students' knowledge, skills, and social networks to better prepare them academically and professionally. The study found that students' cultural knowledge, critical thinking skills, public speaking skills, and organizational skills increased through their involvement in these projects. Students were able to advocate for their own needs to staff and faculty and also developed strong social networks for educational and professional advancement.

Instead of assimilating to the cultural norms of the university, students from student-initiated retention projects strengthened their own cultural identity, their commitment to their community, and their alliances with other under-represented communities. In response to the hostile racial climate at predominantly white universities, students in student-initiated retention projects sought strength through working with other students of color towards a unified front. Lastly, student-initiated retention projects also work for the successful participation of all students of color by deconstructing social and institutional norms. By

challenging university policies and advocating for locally and globally relevant campaigns on campus, the students became actively involved in creating change in their schools and communities. Maldonado, Rhoads, and Buenavista (2003) found that the theoretical framework for student-initiated projects was based on three constructs: cultural and social capital, community consciousness, and social praxis, which are based on the works of Bourdieu (1977), Fannon (1963), and Freire (1992; 2003), respectively. The student empowerment approach to retention differs from the social integrationist and multiculturalist approach because students act as the main advocates and problem solvers of issues on retention. The empowerment approach to retention depends on whether administrators, faculty, and staff are willing to support these systemic changes and share their power in order to increase the retention rates of disempowered students.

#### The Pilipino American Educational Experience

Data on Pilipino American young adults' educational trajectory are few and are lumped into the broader Asian American category. This section will explore the educational experience of Pilipino American young adults from miseducation to higher education.

##### *Philippines' Colonial Past and Miseducation*

Pilipino Americans (U.S. citizens or immigrants who trace their ancestry to the Philippines) and other Pacific Islander communities find themselves often at the margins of the discourse---they are "relegated to a footnote or asterisk in discussion regarding Asian Americans" (President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, 2001, p. 17). Few studies and narratives have been written on the Pilipino American experience. The analysis of the intersections of race, class, and gender dynamics within

American educational institutions and/or the field of multicultural education must be regarded incomplete without the inclusion of these marginalized narratives.

One such marginalized issue is the indigenous people's struggle to maintain their indigenous language and culture. The Pilipino colonial experience has vastly shaped the consciousness of the Pilipino people. The Pilipino colonial experience has been described as spending four hundred years in a convent and fifty years in Hollywood alluding to the four hundred years of Spanish occupation during 1521-1898 and fifty years of American occupation of the Philippines during 1898-1946 (Bundang, 1999). During American occupation, education was the tool used to subjugate the minds of Pilipino people. This is the beginning of what Constantino (1982) called the "miseducation" of the Pilipino. The Pilipino had to "be educated as a good colonial" (p. 3) and the indigenous cultures and languages in the Philippines were threatened to extinction.

The author of the book, *Philippines*, Elliott (as cited in Constantino, 1982) described the militancy and great scope of the American-imposed educational system in the Philippines at that time:

The immediate adoption of English in the Philippine schools subjected America to the charge of forcing the language of the conquerors upon a defenseless people... Of course such a system of education... could only be successful under the direction of American teachers... Arrangements were promptly made for enlisting a small army of teachers in the United States. At first they came in battalions. The transport Thomas was fitted up for their accommodations and in July, 1901, it sailed from San Francisco with six hundred teachers—a second army of occupation—surely the most remarkable cargo ever carried to an Oriental colony. (p. 3)

The teachers were not in the Philippines to educate, they were there as weapons of mental and cultural mass destruction. The American-based educational system in the Philippines taught the Pilipinos that they were subservient and unequal to their Western colonial master.

An American-based education and language loss meant the suppression of the nationalist

fervor in the Philippines. English was the only language used for instruction and more Pilipinos were exposed to Western literature and Western thought as Americans instituted the first public educational system in the Philippines. Education became the main colonizing tool for American colonizers whereas during Spanish colonization, religion was used as the main colonizing tool. Constantino (1982) explained that placing Pilipinos in essentially Americanized classrooms began the miseducation of the Pilipinos, causing the Pilipino people to have negatively distorted views of themselves while keeping American culture in high regard. These negatively distorted views will impact the Pilipino consciousness for generations to come.

*The Pilipino American Young Adults in Higher Education*

The educational needs of Pilipino American youth and students often go ignored because all Asian Americans are assumed to be high academic achievers. Studies on the Pilipino American educational experience, however, tell a different story. A report from the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (2001) found that Pilipino youth have one of the highest high school dropout rates in the country. Researchers have found that institutional factors occurring during Pilipino American students' secondary education experiences have also curtailed their academic achievement. Mau (1990) found that Pilipino American high school students are tracked into lower-skilled and lower-paying professions based on their ethnicity and their gender, regardless of their academic potential. Pilipino American students, therefore, enter college having less academic preparation and expecting little institutional support from the university.

Research on Pilipino American student retention in higher education is scarce. Statistics indicate that the enrollment rates for 18-24-year-olds are 37% and 27% for males

and females respectively, while Pilipino Americans are at a much lower rate at 28% and 23%, respectively. Enrollment rates for Chinese Americans (at 71% and 58%) and Japanese American students (at 56% and 48%) are also higher than Pilipino American students (Fulgado, 1991). Pilipino American college students identify the biggest barriers to their future career attainment are the lack of educational development and study skills preparation in their colleges (Luzzo, 1993).

Pilipino American students have felt that institutions of higher education are not doing enough to increase the retention rates of communities of color. Pilipino American students from the University of California at Berkeley, University of California at Los Angeles, University of California at Davis, and City College of San Francisco, have organized with other students of color and established student-run and -initiated retention projects on their campuses (Maldonado, Rhoads, & Buenavista, 2003). These student-run and -initiated retention projects developed their own peer counseling, workshops, and mentorship methodologies that specifically target “at-risk” students in their universities.

According to the empowerment approach to student retention, in order to retain students of color in higher education, students must take action and take on a decision-making role in institutions of higher education—they must not only persevere but also actively resist the systemic forms of oppression based on race, class, and gender, as perpetuated by institutions of higher education (Maldonado, Rhoads, & Buenavista, 2003). Constantino (1982) also argued that “education is a vital weapon of a people striving for economic emancipation, political independence, and cultural renaissance” (p. 1). According to Constantino decolonizing and re-educating the miseducated Pilipino entails motivating Pilipinos to critically understand the country’s problems and the solutions to these problems,

and to “care enough and have courage enough to work and sacrifice for their country’s salvation” (p. 1). For Pilipino Americans it may mean sacrificing for the salvation of two countries—the Philippines and the United States.

There is a sense of hope in college campuses across the United States despite the bleak conditions and educational realities of their communities. Pilipino American students in higher education are combating the pressure of cultural and language extinction in various ways. Pilipino Americans in higher education are: getting involved in student/community activism (Maldonado, Buenavista, & Rhoads, 2004; Samahang Pilipino, 2006; Strobel 2000), learning Pilipino dialects (Juarez, 1997; Paz, 2000; Strobel, 2000); validating Pilipino American scholarship (Gonzales, 2004; Strobel, 2000), and enrolling in ethnic studies classes (Gonzales, 2004).

Studies have shown that being an active member in student organizations who are partnered with community organizations has many benefits for American students in higher education (Maldonado, Buenavista, & Rhoads, 2004; Strobel, 2000). These authors found that being an active member in a student-run organization can be a vehicle not only for student empowerment and community involvement but also for a successful matriculation from a university. Pilipino American student organizations today also prove that partnerships with community organizations are essential to their leadership development and their education. For example, UCLA Samahang Pilipino—a Pilipino American student advocacy group at UCLA—has built reciprocal relationships with community-based organizations in historical Pilipinotown in Los Angeles to help advocate for student issues, coordinate their own student-initiated outreach and retention programs, and facilitate their own leadership development classes in Asian American Studies. The community and



political components of Samahang Pilipino provide their members ample opportunity to serve their community while getting a more relevant education (Samahang Pilipino, 2006).

Although colonial mentality and language loss have been found by scholars to go hand in hand, there is also a counterculture. There is a movement in the Pilipino American community to heal from this colonial past by reclaiming their native tongues. The Pilipino American community, for example, is reclaiming its language in various sectors including the arts, performance, bilingual literature and curriculum, Philippine study abroad programs, Tagalog immersion programs, and Pilipino American student organizations. Strobel's (2000) participatory study on decolonization of post-1965 Pilipino American immigrants tackled the research question: "How do we unlearn colonial mentality?" Strobel found that Tagalog classes are highly in demand in secondary and higher education. Tagalog is one of the major languages in the Philippines and was chosen to be the basis of the national language, Filipino (Galang, 1999; Galang, 2000). The Pilipino American students "relearning Tagalog are doing so for intrinsic reasons, such as the need to connect with their ethnic roots, the need to pass the language to the next generation, and other personal needs" (p. 89). In the same way, Paz (2000) examined the role Tagalog foreign language classes play in Pilipino American students' attempt to reclaim the loss of their primary language or to further strengthen their primary language despite the strong assimilation pressures from mainstream America. He found that students attending Tagalog Foreign Language classes are highly motivated and engaged in their subject and have a deep sense of wanting to reconnect to their native language and indigenous culture.

Pilipino scholarship in higher education also plays a pivotal role in validating

indigenous Pilipino modes of knowing and being. Pilipino American professors have taken on this social responsibility to resist the colonial pressures and determine for themselves their own curriculum, pedagogy, and research interests. Strobel (2000) used the method of journaling and reflection to deconstruct her internal oppressions. In this process of what she calls coming full circle, her decolonization work is based on regaining her voice and silencing the “subversive voice that undermines [her]” knowledge” (p. 7). Gonzales’ (2004) study on Pilipino American student retention in higher education found that access to academic mentors was one of the factors that contributes to the successful retention of Pilipino American college students. Pilipino American professors sharing their narratives and their scholarship are a boon to enriching the college experiences and improving the retention rates of Pilipino American students in higher education.

Similarly, ethnic studies classes have historically been a tool for communities of color to create their own educational agenda in higher education. Unfortunately for many Pilipino Americans, it is not until they step into a college campus that they get their first exposure to literature and research from scholars from the Pilipino diaspora. Gonzales’ (2004) study on Pilipino American student retention in higher education found that gaining a sense of community is an important motivating factor for her Pilipino American participants in taking ethnic studies classes, particularly Asian American Studies and Pilipino Studies classes. Without relevant classes that speak to their experience, many Pilipino Americans in higher education felt alienated in their college experience.

*Educational Trends for the Future of the Pilipino American Community*

Even though the overall tone in the Pilipino American student movement is hopeful, the quest for attaining educational liberation is definitely arduous. When internalized

oppression is perpetuated in daily discourse, it becomes even more difficult to motivate Pilipino American college students to graduate and become future scholars, researchers, and educators. Pilipino American professor Fulgado (1991) in her analysis of the conditions being faced by Pilipino Americans in higher education wrote:

It is almost a common knowledge that Filipinos tend to be followers of American standards and ideology. If it is "US made" it must be good! Furthermore, some may follow the saying "when in Rome, do as the Romans do." Is it possible that the Filipino youth's non-pursuance of higher education is American influenced? Is it possible that our Filipino youths are not pursuing higher education because there is no motivation coming from the parents? (p. 17)

Fulgado's perpetuation of the deficit model illustrates the need for greater organization among Pilipino American educators, scholars, and community members to define for themselves their community assets and their educational agenda for K-12 and Higher Education. This discourse must continue in the streets, in our homes, in our schools, in our colleges, and in school board chambers.

### College and Community Partnerships

College and community partnerships come in different forms. Some partnerships include service learning projects where students are required to do certain hours of community service at a community-based organization, or civic engagement projects where students are required to learn how to influence policy and become informed decision makers and community leaders. Partnerships can be garnered with schools, community organizations, and government agencies. Recently, the trend of these partnerships has focused on maintaining close ties with the business industry and the private sector. In the last 15 years the popularity of the community college and the private sector, for example, has grown exponentially, by the mid-1990s about 90% of our country's two-year colleges have trained workers for specific businesses and industries (Carducci, 2003).

The more sustainable partnerships between colleges and communities have been found to be efforts that develop high-trust relationships and high-investment relationships between their participants (Langseth, 2000). The high-trust relationships approach does not focus solely on the deficiencies of the community but works with the assets and strengths of the community. The high-investment relationships, in the same way, view the college and community partnership as a long term endeavor not a quick fix. As Langseth (2000) critiqued:

Far too often, campus-community partnership efforts...do not adequately focus on relationships first. Rather the focus is on finding the “right” programmatic “fix”... Applying outdated or inappropriate models to community issues; the medical model of disease/diagnose/drug, the military model of conflict/strategy/deployment, or the business model of problem/analysis/solution...Unfortunately, we have been enculturated to believe that if we just deploy the right programmatic weapon or take the right programmatic pill we can solve anything. We cannot. (p. 249).

#### *Civic Engagement and Service Learning*

Some scholars critique the traditional educational system of producing mere workers and instead promoted education as a tool to change our society. According to the literature on civic engagement and service learning, students must: (a) learn to navigate through systems of power (Freire, 1992; O’Grady, 2002), (b) recognize that they are agents of social change (Langseth, 2000; Rice & Pollack, 2000), and (c) be recognized as holistic beings, all of which will be discussed in this section (Dryfoos, 1988; hooks, 2003; Langseth, 2000).

#### *Students as Navigators of Systems of Power*

There are interlocking systems of power through which students and the community must navigate. The higher one’s privileges and status, as determined by one’s race, gender, economic status, sexual orientation, ability, age, etc., then the easier it is to navigate through

these hegemonic systems of power in U.S. society. Higher education as an institution is a microcosm of society; therefore, neutral education is a fallacy. O'Grady (2000) stated:

Service learning without a focused attention to the complexity of racial and cultural difference can reinforce dominant hegemonic cultural ideology, academic work that seeks to deconstruct these norms regarding race and culture without providing a community-based touchstone isolates students and schools from the realities of the larger communities of which they are a part.  
(p. xiv)

Service learning grounded in multicultural education, civic engagement, and critical pedagogy—when institutionalized in higher education—will demythologize not only the notion of a neutral education but the notion of a neutral society.

To prevent isolation of students from their community and their community's socio-political and historical struggles, service learning, civic engagement, and critical pedagogy practices must be able to connect the curriculum with the current plight of the community. Freire (1992) explained when he was retelling the sentiments of an adult peasant community member out in the audience. The peasant in the audience said: "Cause as far as you here're concerned—and he pointed to the group of educators—'you're talkin' salt, and these people here,' meaning the others, the peasants, 'they wanna know 'bout seasonin,' and salt ain't but part of the seasonin'" (p. 59). The seasoning for this peasant symbolized the interlocking systems of oppression. He knew that his education can not be separated from his struggle for survival and, inadvertently, his struggle for freedom.

### *Students as Agents of Social Change*

Service learning grounded in multicultural education, civic engagement, and critical pedagogy are tools that can also promote hope that students have the agency to create social change. Langseth (2000) argued there are three highly interrelated investments our society needs to make—all three rely on the agency and the participation of the everyday masses—

“1) a renewed focus on longer-term community impact and deeper community relationships... 2) highly strategic efforts to increase faculty/institutional investment in service-learning...3) weaving multicultural education more fully and effectively into everything we do” (p. 261).

Students, through their exposure to service learning, civic engagement projects, and critical pedagogy, are challenged to shape and redefine their world. “Service learning is understood as an active learning pedagogy to help students experience and examine their role in a multicultural society and to further explore the ethical and moral issues related specifically to multicultural participation” (Rice & Pollack, 2000, p. 118).

For disempowered communities and oppressed communities, an understanding of their historical struggles and present conditions entails action and resistance. Their agency stems from their “ethical and historical conviction that their fight is legitimate” (Freire, 1992, p. 151). Their agency also rests on finally legitimizing the importance of their community and each other, as well as the power of collective action.

### *Students as Holistic Beings*

Dryfoos’ (1988) Safe Passage model promoted a service learning model in the 1980s which acknowledges the holistic needs of a student. From school partnerships with family resource centers to school based youth programs, to working with university linked satellite agencies, the wide array of successful partnerships with not-for-profit and community grass roots organizations has been successful in increasing the academic achievement and the sense of empowerment of students and their families. Most of the school partnerships occur in the K-12 settings. Dryfoos (1998) found that success at the K-12 school level is ensured when initiatives have done the following: (a) promoted a mission based on increasing educational

achievement; (b) had on-site facilitators that are highly trained and skilled; (c) social skills training implemented with students; and (d) involving students in community service. While at the community level, Dryfoos found the following factors to be critical for a successful initiative: (a) having a program that is centrally located in the community; (b) having a successful community outreach program; (c) providing culturally responsive programs and resources; and (d) giving youth an intensive and long-term involvement with the program.

Dryfoos' work, however, does not make a distinction between the different needs of communities based on race, class, and gender make up. How applicable are these criteria to higher education institutions and their community partners? How applicable are these factors to college and community partnerships aiming to increase the retention rate of Pilipino American young adults in higher education?

Scholars like hooks (2003) promote school and community partnerships which “affirms a healthy self esteem” (p. 72) but also challenge the interests of the status quo—only then would educators and students be involved in a teaching community and participate in an education as the practice of freedom. For hooks, holism is a potent weapon for the oppressed because it rehumanizes them. hooks (2003) wrote: “popular ideas of what constitutes academic brilliance continue to perpetuate the notion that the critical thinker is unfeeling...Education that serves to enhance our student's journey to wholeness stands as a challenge to the existing status quo” (p. 181). Since many of the historical divisions between underprivileged communities were enforced by the divide-and-conquer rule, it will be the “high trust relationships and high-investment relationship building...[which will be] the most important and most fundamental elements in creating lasting community change.” (Langseth, 2000; p. 249). The community also becomes an escape from the alienating university halls.

### *Colleges and the Pilipino Community*

#### *The Perspective from the Motherland*

According to Pilipino scholars Toh and Floresca-Cawagas (1997) college and community partnerships must function from a people-centered education—a system that “organically [links] education to visions and strategies of emancipation or liberation inspired by the value of caring for the dignity and quality of life of all human beings” (p. 528). This is an education that is people-centered because it is based on justice, democracy, environmental justice, solidarity, and active non-violence. It is the antithesis of the traditional systems of education that promote socio-economic stratification and “reduce educational systems to degree and credential mills” (p. 528).

Coining from a Pilipino peace and justice advocate—Toh and Floresca-Cawagas (1997) used the touching ground and taking root metaphor—to illustrate the importance of being grounded in the realities and conditions of the everyday masses in order for the educational system to be successfully rooted in the Philippines. This, according to these researchers, entails “growing leaves, fruits and seeds of self-reliant transformation that is nurtured by collaborative relationships among educators and learners” (p. 533)—a departure from the top-down and highly controlled traditional pedagogical practices of Pilipino schools in both the public and private sectors.

In the same way, Segovia and Galang (2002) promoted the importance of having a sustainable development-based education that is grounded on the lived experiences of the people. Sustained development is defined as development which does not compromise the needs of the future population while addressing the current needs of the population. The



authors discuss how higher education can be used as a tool to promote sustainable development.

According to Toh and Floresca-Cawagas (1997) a people-centered education in the Philippines is practiced within social movements and non-governmental agencies. The dictatorial regime of Ferdinand Marcos was toppled by the people's movement in 1986 called the People Power Revolution. The People Power Revolution illustrated the true power of the Pilipino people to create change and liberate themselves from oppression. However, violence and human rights violations continue and the gap between rich and poor continues to widen.

Toh and Floresca-Cawagas (1997) drew on four themes found to be worthy of study in the people-centered work on the non-governmental and political organizations in the Philippines—namely, a pedagogy of dialogue, a praxis of critical empowerment, active non-violence for peace and justice, and walking in solidarity which will be analyzed successively next.

Historical layers of disempowerment, violence, and oppression create numerous barriers in working to raise the consciousness of the marginalized sectors of Pilipino people. People-centered work of the non-governmental organizations uses a pedagogy of dialogue (based on the Freirian model) to unravel these layers of socio-economic problems and to pinpoint the causes and solutions to these problems engulfing the marginalized lives of the Pilipino people. From Christian communities that use the Bible and Christ's teachings to facilitate a dialogue of social justice to women's organizations such as Gabriela that discuss the impact of patriarchy structures in society that lead to social and gender inequities, dialogue facilitates a "creative, critical inquiry, and self-reliant understanding" (p. 534). In

the Philippines, the pedagogy of dialogue has been successfully supported by popular education methods such as people's theatre, music, art, and other interactive exercises.

A praxis of critical empowerment is an important component of a people-centered education in the Philippines. A praxis of critical empowerment is what Freire (2003) called conscientization, which is personal and social action to gain internal and external peace or freedom from oppression. Examples from the Philippines include the struggle to end foreign military presence in the Philippines in the late 1990s. Non-governmental agencies and political organizations engage in constant self-reflection and assessment of their goals, strategies, and assumptions.

Thirdly, Toh, and Floresca-Cawagas (1997) also cited the importance of valuing active non-violence for peace and justice. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have used this strategy to fight for agrarian reform, zones of peace during military conflicts, and basic human rights such as attaining food, jobs, and shelter.

Lastly, the fourth theme is the idea of walking in solidarity or coalition building. Efforts to solidify the masses were evident in the passing of the Urban Development and Housing Act by the Urban Land Reform Task Force. Coalitions also have existed internationally as some Philippine based organizations collaborate with Canadian NGOs to get aid to promote people-centered development.

Among the many barriers to these partnerships included: (a) pluralism; (b) ideological splits between organizations and sectors; (c) government cooptation of the organizations or the movement; and (d) the difficulty of persuading a society of a non-materialist vision of progress. Segovia and Galang (2002) contend that another challenge in advancing community and college partnership lies in the leadership and credibility of the academic

programs. Institutions of higher education, these authors argued, have the capacity to be independent of government and business interests, and the social credibility and the moral responsibility to promote an education that is just to people and the environment.

### *Efforts in the Pilipino American Community*

How do service learning and civic engagement projects help shape educational experiences and development for Pilipino American young adults? Gonzales (2005) found that civic engagement can be a tool to create a movement for self-determination and long-term social change and a resistance against the status quo. In addition, it is important to include Pilipino American and other marginalized voices in this discourse. According to Gonzales, civic engagement differs from service learning in that, with civic engagement efforts, there is a feeling of contributing to a larger movement and a long-term struggle. There is also a clearer analysis of how to resist the status quo and identifying ways to be liberated from oppression. Service learning projects are frustrating when there is no larger analysis of the conditions and students are passively participating in community service projects without the proper background as to the root causes of the dire problems of the people that they are serving. The alternative to this “feel-good” approach is to build a sense of real community and collective power.

In order for a movement of self-determination, long-term social change, and resistance against the status quo to occur through civic engagement efforts, several factors must first be put in place. Gonzales (2005) identified key factors for implementing successful civic engagement efforts for Pilipino Americans, they were: (a) recognizing the holistic needs of students—as political, historical, and emotional beings, (b) incorporating a

strategic developmental process based on action and reflection, (c) developing a long-term larger support system, and (d) teaching how to deconstruct power.

First, civic engagement in the Pilipino American community must meet the holistic needs of its target population. A Pilipino American participant in the dialogue was a coordinator of a college community partnership which taught Pilipino American Studies with a local high school and a community-based organization. The participant found that the project was successful because it promoted a Pilipino American Studies curriculum for high school students that considers the heart, body, and mind of the learner (Gonzales, 2005). This approach to developing curriculum is based on Freire's emphasis on rehumanizing students and learners. Recognizing the holistic needs of students mean recognizing them as subjects and agents in their world, not just as objects (Freire, 1992; Freire, 2003).

Recognizing the emotional, academic, communal, spiritual, and physical needs and talents of students and community members is the first step in valuing each person's entire being. Recognizing that every person is historical and is impacted by his or her environment also reaffirms one's community, family, ancestors, culture, and land. The students and community members no longer feel as though they have to deny aspects of themselves that do not have cultural capital. Students and community members also feel that they are valid enough to be heard and be seen.

A strategic developmental process in a civic engagement practice is about starting at the level of a service provider or a service recipient—at the level of the student and the community member. Often the lessons in this journey are unraveled by periods of what Freire (2003) called praxis—action and reflection. If civic engagement efforts did not put the learner in the center of the discourse, then the learner becomes alienated from the entire

process. The major responsibility falls on the administrators and facilitators of the civic engagement project. There has to be a clear balance between action and reflection experiences, and a clear balance between a strategic process and fluidity based on the needs of the Pilipino American students.

Thirdly, another important factor in guaranteeing a sustainable change in the Pilipino American community through civic engagement projects is making sure that community members have a larger support system both in schools and in the communities. It is important to create these larger support systems to help the student/community member remain active in the community especially after not being part of the civic engagement project anymore. The lack of continuity and follow-up after service recipients or service providers have aged out or transferred out of their programs is problematic for the larger Pilipino American community. How do we ensure that the service recipient maintains a peer group that would continue to motivate them to be civically engaged and continue to become an agent of social change? Long-term support systems are necessary in keeping the “movement” energized and sustainable for the long haul.

Lastly, teaching how to deconstruct power is another factor in developing a long-term strategy for successful civic engagement programs in the Pilipino American community. A large part about understanding the root causes of oppressive conditions in society is about learning how to deconstruct power. Identifying the oppressive systems that covertly and/or overtly shape one’s life is an important step in being a self-determined community. Being taught how to deconstruct power is about questioning popular constructs such as the American Dream or neutral education. Civic engagement projects can be a valuable lesson in understanding how systems of power work. Analyzing power at the local city level is a

microcosm of the global conditions in terms of who has power and who does not have power. Civic engagement projects provide first-hand understanding of how racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, and other interlocking systems of oppression affect different communities.

Service learning and civic engagement projects cannot be viewed solely through brown, black, and white lenses. If service learning and civic engagement is truly about creating change and providing greater equity in society, then it is critical that Pilipino American perspectives and other marginalized and invisible voices be included in the discourse.

The Pilipino American experience is shaped by systems of power controlled by the status quo (Strobel, 2002). Since the status quo is what defines cultural capital, disempowered communities feel the external and internal pressure to either assimilate or be defined solely by their deficiencies. This deficit model is evident in the approach of many service learning projects—as disempowered communities' strengths are never assessed or validated in their program. This tension between the community and the service learning project then creates a rift that breeds distrust from the community's end. Historically, social programs have left a bitter impression on the Pilipino American community and have forced the Pilipino American community to instead be self-reliant and self-sufficient.

With the issues of Asian American model minority myth and the deficit model lurking in the consciousness of the Pilipino American community, Gonzales (2005) explored the uniqueness of the Pilipino American experience by posing two very important questions: (a) What are some of the specific barriers Pilipino Americans hope to overcome as a community? and (b) What are some of the strengths of the Pilipino American community?

It is important for the community to name their world and identify the barriers Pilipino Americans hope to overcome as a community (Strobel, 2002). This also is the first step in identifying the types of service learning or civic engagement projects that are appropriate for their communities. Naming these barriers also helps shed a better light on why service learning and civic engagement projects are not prioritized within the Pilipino American community. The barriers that Gonzales (2005) identified included overcoming poverty, escaping the violence in the communities, and not having enough resources to be self-determined or knowing how to advocate for themselves and their communities.

An underlying thread of hope and joy persists despite the many barriers to overcome in the Pilipino American community. Gonzales (2005) argued that three core strengths can help Pilipinos reaffirm the need for community empowerment and action—reaffirm the importance for civic engagement in our communities—namely: (a) strong and extended familial and community networks, (b) elders, and (c) Pilipino American Studies.

### Summary

Literature on student retention approaches in higher education and college and community partnerships were reviewed to better understand the impact colleges and involvement in community organizations have on Pilipino American young adults. The first section of this chapter discussed the three approaches to retention: the social integrationist, multicultural, and empowerment approaches. The second section reviewed the Pilipino American education experience to expose the past miseducation, present conditions, and educational trends for the future. The last section of the literature review focused on college and community partnerships with an emphasis on civic engagement and service learning.

Relationships between colleges and the Pilipino community were also discussed from the perspective of both the Pilipino and Pilipino American sectors.

After an initial review of literature, it was evident that more studies are needed to understand the retention needs of Pilipino Americans in higher education particularly from a non-deficit model perspective. It was also found that the field of college and community partnerships lacks theories and scholarship coming from a community perspective, particularly the scholarship on how young adults of color experience these partnership efforts. The discourse around civic engagement, service learning, and multicultural education is very rich in context and real world application, but none of the scholarship has connected this discourse with the student retention research. Many Pilipino American young adults have yet to share their stories about their participation in after-school programs, community service bake sales, or community rallies—the many whispers of hope in the Pilipino American community's *pakikibaka* or struggle.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the methodology for the present participatory study is discussed. The sections include research design, setting, participants, questions that guided the initial dialogues, check-ins and ice breakers, data collection and data analysis, protection of human subjects, and the background of the researcher.

#### Research Design

The researcher conducted a qualitative research using participatory research methodology to engage Pilipino American young adults in transformative dialogues and resulting action. Participatory research methodology was chosen because its purpose, history, and philosophy are the best fit for the study. The participatory research method was a vehicle to bring the marginalized voices of Pilipino American young adults out from the margins and into the center of the student retention discourse. Participatory research is grounded on the principle that human beings are not mere subjects but holistic beings who are capable of manifesting their own realities and their own knowledge (Collins, 1999; Wadsworth, 1998). Participatory research is based on the Freirian model of action and reflection or praxis (Freire, 2003). Freire found that in a traditional education system, students are not challenged to dialogue, reflect upon their world, and act upon the problems that plague their community.

According to Collins (1999), the main points in participatory research are (a) collective and locally based, (b) subjects can become researchers, (c) personal experiences are relevant data, (d) the research topic is relevant to everyday people, (f) there is an action

component which makes a change, and (g) participants are empowered by the experience. Participatory research is not linear; the cycle begins with reflection then moves participants to action and then continues with further reflection and research. This approach is also based on the possibility theory instead of the predictive theory (Wadsworth, 1998); that is, “human actors are both willful and capable of thwarting research prediction, and willful and capable of selecting and implementing theories or probabilities they want to see manifested” (p. 7). This is the reason why historically participatory research was closely aligned with human rights and women’s rights movements.

### *Voice*

Participatory Research is a vehicle of resistance against what Freire (2003) called the theme of silence. The theme of silence is mutism of the oppressed due to an overwhelming force that keeps them in their place of powerlessness and lack of mobility. Participants are able to critically reflect and share intimate stories about their lives. This act places the participants’ voice out of the margins and into the center of the discourse, challenging the oppression of silence and isolation (Maguire, 1993). According to Park (1993) people’s knowledge is produced through participatory research by:

Recovering people’s practical skills, communal sentiments, ancient lores, and collective wisdom that live on but are submerged... Under the onslaught of the capitalist political economy, people are uprooted from their cultural moorings and are made dependent on the market economy as unconnected individuals... Participatory research is especially crucial in digging up the necessary cognitive layers that are buried under technical consciousness and commodity relationships, and returning them to the people. The reason is that in these layers lie submerged structures of atrophied community relations and critical consciousness which cannot be redeemed except by deliberate practice. (pp. 17-18)

Furthermore, through critical investigation the participants begin to see their reality for its problems and for its new possibilities. According to Park (1993), “urgent social problems

require uncovering the structural causes of social conditions that affect segments of a population...They also require the raising of questions about public policy at all levels” (p. 7). When participants raise questions they validate their own capacity for self-determination.

### *Dialogue*

The researcher and participants engaged in two group dialogues and a one-on-one dialogue. A dialogue is different from a discussion. According to Bohm (1996) a discussion is a ping pong match between people’s ideas while a dialogue “is something more of a common participation in which we are not playing a game against each other, but with each other” (p. 7). Both participant and researcher must suspend their own opinions and biases and attentively listen to one another to create a new consciousness. In a dialogue, no one idea prevails. Through dialogue we will have a new coherent meaning within the group which then results in the emergence of a new culture which is defined as shared meaning. According to Bohm, the reason for dialogue is interpersonal fellowship, a higher level bond between human beings which take them out of their isolation.

### *Constructivist Listening*

According to Maguire (1987), the Navajos’ indigenous saying “you listen with your ears, not your tongue” (p. 139) is analogous to the type of listening skills needed by a researcher conducting a participatory study. To create a comfortable and safe space, the researcher will use constructivist listening as a tool during the dialogue with the participants. During constructivist listening, the listener listens attentively, maintains confidentiality, but “does not interpret, paraphrase, analyze, give advice, or break with a personal story” (Becerra, 2000, p. 10). Constructivist listening can provide a less anxious environment to the

participants. It can also be used to encourage the participant to self reflect and work through the sets of emotions and memories the dialogue triggers.

### *Participants as Co-Researchers*

It is the participant's role in participatory research to be the co-researcher of the study. The co-researcher helps shape the direction and the trajectory of the study, particularly participating in data collection and continuing the discourse after the study is done. A reciprocal, equitable relationship must exist between researcher and participant. A participant is not an empty vessel. According to Maguire (1987), "collective investigation, education, and action are important to the re-humanizing goal of participatory research... The collective processes of participatory research help rebuild people's capacity to be creative actions on the world" (p. 31). Other scholars have referred to this as guerilla research (Gaventa, 1993). That is, once the everyday masses internalize their role as co-researchers, they will be able to further investigate their world and "they will develop other popular and indigenous ways of gaining information from the power structure" (Gaventa, p. 36).

### *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*

Sikolohiyang Pilipino emerged in the 1970s as a social science in the Philippines and as a form of resistance against the oppressive government and social conditions of the time (Enriquez, 1994). According to Enriquez, Sikolohiyang Pilipino is the systemic study of the "appreciation and application of indigenous knowledge for, of, and by the Filipinos of their own psychological make-up, society, and culture, rooted in their historical past, ethnic diversity, and the dynamic interaction of Filipinos with forces within and outside their social and physical boundaries" (p. 27).

*Pagtatanong-tanong* (asking around), *pakikiramdam* (shared inner perception), *panunuluyan* (staying with), and *pakikipamuhay* (living with) are the indigenous field methods used in Sikolohiyang Pilipino or Pilipino Psychology. The researcher used the first two field methods of *pagtatanong-tanong* and *pakikiramdam* during the dialogues.

*Pagtatanong-tanong* was used by the researcher, for example, to keep the researcher more aware of the types of questions that the participants were responding to and were critically reflecting on. Also, *pakikiramdam* was used by the researcher to become more aware and sensitive to the sets of cues provided by the participants during the dialogues to ensure that the dialogues provided a safe and comfortable space.

### Research Setting

The study took place in a diverse city, San Francisco, where the majority of the neighborhoods have working class, low to moderate income families. This city also has a high percentage of well educated people and recent reports have shown that a large percentage of the low to moderate income families are being pushed out of the city due to the high cost of living and the lack of quality public schools and affordable housing (Coleman Advocates, 2006; Department of Children, Youth & Families in San Francisco, 2005). A convenient, quiet, and comfortable location for the focus groups and one-on-one dialogue was chosen by both the participants and the researcher. The one-on-one dialogues occurred in typical young adult hang-outs like a café near their college or in the city, or a local restaurant in their neighborhood. The focus group occurred in a college cafeteria frequented by most of the young adults. Food and drinks were provided by the researcher during both focus group sessions to create a more comfortable and casual atmosphere. The food and

drinks were the perfect *merienda* (snack) time, since our focus group sessions were scheduled for late afternoons.

### Research Participants

The researcher recruited seven young adults between the ages of 18-24 of Pilipino descent. Five were male and two were female participants who had some college education and were selected to form a purposive sample. Six of the seven participants were referred by their Asian American professor who gave them extra credit points for participating in a community research project which was a limitation of the study.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher conducted a one-on-one dialogue with each participant and two focus groups in the winter of 2006-07. The researcher met each participant individually before the first focus group. The dialogue was audio-taped, transcribed, and analyzed for generative themes. The participants were given copies of transcriptions and findings to verify that the researcher represented the participants' voices correctly. The participants were invited to participate in the first focus group so the participants could meet and dialogue with the other co-researchers. The first focus group was transcribed and analyzed for generative themes which were discussed at the second focus group. The participants were invited back for a second focus group to reflect on and discuss collectively the results of the study and plan the resulting action.

The following is an outline of the data collection procedure that was followed by the researcher for the study, as adapted from Castillo (2002).

1. Posted a participant recruitment ad in a local Pilipino American newspaper and posted in various locations frequented by Pilipino American young adults (See Appendixes A & B).
2. Mass emailed a flyer to recruit participants among personal contacts from the Pilipino American Bay Area community.
3. Contacted prospective participants to discuss the purpose of the dialogues, select six to eight participants, half male and half female, and schedule their first dialogue.
4. Had consent forms signed by the participant, held the one-on-one dialogue with each participant, taped the dialogue, and scheduled future dates and locations where they would be most comfortable for the first focus group.
5. Transcribed the one-on-one dialogues and analyzed the data.
6. Sent participants a copy of the transcripts of their dialogues.
7. Contacted the participants to confirm the meeting dates and location of the first focus group so the other co-researchers could meet and dialogue with one another.
8. Held the first focus group, taped the dialogue, and discussed as a group further recommendations on college-community partnerships.
9. Transcribed the first focus group and analyzed the data.
10. Emailed transcriptions of the first focus group.
11. Contacted participants via email or by phone for any clarifications on the transcriptions and scheduled the second focus group's time and location.
12. Held a second focus group for the all the participants to reflect on and discuss the results of the study and decide on their collective action.

13. Informed the students about an upcoming community event/meeting/presentation and invited them to participate and co-present the findings of the study with the researcher.
14. Emailed transcriptions of the second focus group and asked for any feedback.

#### Check-ins and Ice Breakers

After having the one-on-one dialogues with the participants, it was evident to the researcher's *pakikiramdam* that the participants might have felt uncomfortable to have such an intimate session with fellow peers they barely knew, plus the group needed basic understanding of the background for this study. The researcher, therefore, integrated check-ins and ice breakers during the focus groups to ease the anxiety and discomfort in the beginning of the dialogues. The first focus group's check-in questions were: what's your name, how are you doing, how much college education have you had, and what do you want to get out of participating in the study? The ice breaker for the first focus group was called the EnSINGmada Challenge, a game that combined certain rules of the popular game shows Jeopardy and American Idol, only this time they answered trivia questions relevant to the Pilipino American young adult experience and they were competing for Pilipino sweet bread called ensaymada. The second focus group's check-in questions were: how are you and what was your highlight for the week. The ice breaker for the second focus group was an exercise to show what young adult community programs looked like in the city. The participants had to look over the services from the brochure of the only young adult program in the city and share with the group whether or not they would participate in the program.



### Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study included limited sampling and participant response bias due to the background of the researcher. The researcher had access to a large sector of Pilipino American young adults through a referral by an Asian American Studies professor, a personal colleague of the researcher. The sampling, however, was limited because all the co-researchers in this study had exposure to Asian American Studies or Pilipino Studies, and tend to have greater community and cultural awareness and involvement than students who have never enrolled in an Asian American Studies or Pilipino Studies course.

Secondly, because the researcher is a Pilipina American who is involved in the larger Pilipino American community in the Bay Area, the researcher knew some of the participants' professors and two of the participants were her acquaintances; these factors could have affected the participants' responses. The researcher greatly emphasized confidentiality during the dialogues and the importance of having the participants as active co-researchers who lead the direction of the study themselves.

### Questions that Guided the Initial Dialogues

The participants had power in directing the trajectory of the dialogues and the study. The following questions, however, were used by the researcher to guide the one-on-one dialogues and focus groups in order to address the three research questions:

*Research Question 1. According to Pilipino American young adults, what factors contribute to their retention and academic success in higher education?*

1. Did you or are you attending college? Describe your college experience.
2. What is your definition of a successful college experience?
3. What factors enable (enabled) you to succeed in college?

4. What factors are (were) challenging about attending college?
5. How do your peers' experiences compare to yours?

*Research Question 2: According to Pilipino American young adults, what types of support are needed in the public sector, for-profit sector, and not-for-profit sector to help retain young adults of color in higher education?*

1. What types of college services have you utilized?
2. In what ways did utilizing these services help or hurt your college experience?
3. How can college services help more college students graduate?
4. What types of jobs have you had?
5. In what ways did your jobs help or hurt your college experience?
6. What types of community-based or not-for-profit organizations have you been a part of?
7. In what ways did your participation in these organizations help or impede your college experience?
8. How do your peers' job and community experiences compare to yours?
9. What can the business sector and the community-based organizations do to help more college students graduate?

*Research Question 3: According to Pilipino American young adults, what types of community and college partnerships can be implemented to help retain Pilipino American young adults in higher education?*

1. In what ways have you seen colleges work with community folks or community organizations?

2. In what ways have you seen community-based organizations help K-12 students and college students?
3. In what ways have you seen businesses work with K-12 students and college students, or the larger community?
4. If you had your choice of support from college services, the business sector, and community-based organizations, what would this support be?
5. How can college services, the business sector, and community-based organizations, help support young adults to graduate from college?

#### Protection of Participants

The researcher sought the approval of the University of San Francisco's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects to ensure that the study was in compliance with the policies and procedures set forth by the board (see Appendix A). Each participant also had the opportunity to choose a pseudonym to protect his or her identity during the study. All identifiable characteristics and organizational names were edited by the researcher for the study.

#### Background of the Researcher

I come from an immigrant, working class background but spent the majority of my secondary and undergraduate education in elite, mostly white, middle class, public educational institutions in Southern California. I identify myself as a 1.5 generation Pinay (a politicized term meaning empowered Pilipina American). I mastered the art of code switching and assimilated well at a very young age in American educational institutions. It was not until my undergraduate years at UCLA that I became politicized and worked to actualize my consciousness—unraveling the various layers of internalized oppression. I was

personally drawn to choose participatory research as my research methodology because it provided participants to name their world and from my experience as Pilipina American I did not have many opportunities to do this as a young adult especially in a traditional college classroom.

Through my exposure to Asian American Studies and my involvement with a progressive Pilipino American student advocacy group, a community service project in South Central Los Angeles and a multi-ethnic community programs office, I slowly became whole again. Professionally I was a director of a Pilipino American student initiated student-run retention project after my undergraduate career and being a part of this empowering project was my main motivation to pursue this research in student retention in higher education. I currently work for a not-for-profit organization that works with low to moderate income families in order to provide more hope and opportunities to all families through grass roots community organizing, leadership development, and public policy advocacy revolving around two major agendas—providing more affordable family housing and more quality public schools.

It was through a gradual developmental process and through the support of my peers and progressive mentors that I was able to reclaim my cultural and indigenous identity and witness the power of collective action. It was through the struggles of my parents, my family back in the Philippines, and my ancestors that I was able to share this story and participate in this dialogue. As a young adult I was able to gather greater cultural capital academically because I was from a prestigious research university and I was tracked into honors classes throughout my elementary and secondary education. Through my community experience I was able to gain program and organizational skills and teaching experience. What I did

struggle with as a young adult was gaining access to professional opportunities and networks, learning how to be financially independent, balancing my responsibilities to my own wellness, my family, and my community, and knowing how to be civically engaged.

Luckily I also belong to a few communities that keep me rooted and continually support me to continue to strive to be a better person. The community I most closely identify with is the Pilipino American communities in the San Francisco Bay Area and the Los Angeles Area which work with the marginalized sectors of the Pilipino diaspora and promote the importance of self-determination in our communities. At the same time, working at a small, advocacy not-for-profit organization in a city in the San Francisco Bay Area, I have been privileged enough to work with an ethnically diverse group of working class youth, parents, and community leaders. Lastly, my community of family and friends remind me of where I come from and motivate me to remain steadfast and headstrong in my quest to make positive changes in our society. Within these communities I find my source of unconditional love and hope.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

Seven participants, five males and two females, took part in one-on-one dialogues with the researcher and two focus groups and served as co-researchers for the study. Using participatory research methodology, the researcher dialogued with the seven participants to explore the following research questions: (a) According to Pilipino American young adults, what factors contribute to their retention and academic success in higher education? (b) According to Pilipino American young adults, what types of support are needed in the public sector, for-profit sector, and not-for-profit sector to help retain Pilipino American young adults in higher education? and (c) According to Pilipino American young adults, what types of community and college partnerships can be implemented to help retain Pilipino American young adults in higher education? The following chapter is a narrative which presents the findings of the study consisting of the profiles of the Pilipino American young adult participants in the study and their critical reflections. Two general themes were identified by the researcher during the dialogues which will be discussed later in the chapter, they are: (a) the effects of the interlocking systems of power based on race, class, and gender in student retention and connection of Pilipino American young adults, and (b) the need for a Pilipino American-run university—the quest for Lapu Lapu University.

#### Profiles of the Participants

All of the participants identified with being Pilipino Americans, one is a biracial Pilipina American. Of the seven participants one is a first generation Pilipino American, two are 1.5 generation Pilipino Americans, three are second generation Pilipino Americans, and

the remaining participant is a third generation Pilipino American. Two of the participants are recent Bay Area transplants from Southern California, and one participant recently immigrated to the United States from the Philippines. All of the participants come from low to moderate income family backgrounds. All of the participants also have had some college education, although one had already attained her bachelor's degree and one had taken a break from school. Six of the seven participants are taking college courses at an urban community college and are enrolled also in an Asian American Studies class or Pilipino American Studies class. All the participants had diverse interests ranging from civil rights law to animation. Six of the seven participants also live with their parents or other family members. Four of the seven participants are employed part time in the following industries: retail, food and drink, and airport security.

### *Cedric*

Cedric was the first participant with whom I had a dialogue; we met at a local coffee shop near his community college. He was recruited through a referral from his Asian American Studies professor. He has been at his community college on and off for about six years. He wants to be an Asian American Studies Major and plans to transfer to a public four-year university next fall. His career goal is to become a teacher for his former public high school and give back to his home town. He is already invested in his community and has a history working with other youth through his Catholic organization back in his home town. His engagement in his studies was regained after his exposure to Pilipino American Studies and he believes that Pilipino American young adults need this historical and community understanding to work to greatness. This semester he feels more focused, he explained:

It's been four weeks in this semester and this has been the longest I've lasted with a full load. I'm usually gonna drop something or gonna do something else. And I'm not

working, and most of the time I do. And that's primarily because I can do this full load thing and just kinda focus and get out. I mean most of my friends are graduating from college, so reality is starting to catch up.

Cedric is an advocate for staying connected to one's community and contributing back to his home town and the larger Pilipino American community. He is also one of the most critical participants and uncertain of the direction of the participatory research methodology. He explained at the first focus group check-in that he did not know where the study was heading but promised to remain present and active during our dialogues.

### *Ruby*

I picked up Ruby from her home, a Pilipino American household among a predominantly African American community. We chose to talk at a local neighborhood restaurant where parking was accessible. Ruby is of mixed ancestry; her mother is Pilipina and her father is South Asian Indian, but she did not reveal this to me until the latter portion of our one-on-one dialogue. Ruby has a lot of privileges and a lot of support from friends and family. She went to a top-notch public high school renowned for its very academically competitive environment and high academically achieving students. She already received her Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry last spring and she was taking a Pilipino American Studies class in a local community college for fun. She is currently working part time at a Starbucks café and is taking some time off to figure out her next move. Ruby believes that everyone has the potential to achieve and complete their degree as long as they worked hard. She was also shocked when she found out that in her previous middle school only one other person outside of her peer group graduated from college.

What Ruby struggles with though is to find her inspiration and passion. She was able to complete a rigorous major but she failed to find relevance or engagement in the field



outside of just passing her tests and completing the requirements professors demanded of her. Ruby never had an opportunity to explore and reflect in her college courses—classes which would allow her to think about her own interests and to pose her own questions about life or her future. She wishes she had gotten more involved in clubs, applied to more internships, and had utilized more resources in college. Ruby is thinking about pursuing business and not continuing the field for which she went to school. Ruby does not want to get pressured into being in a career that would be too boring, isolating, and mundane for her.

*Izar*

My dialogue with Izar was refreshing since he was from my old neighborhood in Southern California and we reminisced at a local café and music store about how much we missed our old neighborhood and about his experiences as a Pilipino American young adult. I could not solely discuss issues of the young adults in the Bay Area with Izar because he just recently moved from Southern California and also recently immigrated from the Philippines about a year ago. Izar's story is compelling because it added a global and transnational perspective to the study. Izar was raised primarily by his activist mother in the Philippines. He remembers moving around a lot and being quite self-sufficient at a young age. By elementary school he was able to commute in jeepneys and was able to skip school and hangout with friends at local internet cafes to play video games. His mother ran a nongovernmental agency in the Philippines. He had a unique childhood and he remembers growing up with the constituency his mother's agency served, the disabled community in the Philippines. Izar's family was able to immigrate after his grandfather petitioned them to come to the United States. He was seventeen. Izar never went to college in the Philippines.

When they first immigrated, Izar's family stayed in his aunt's house in Southern California. Izar moved to the Bay Area when his mother took a job in the city. Izar went to a community college in Southern California but ended up dropping most of his classes. Izar worked immediately after he immigrated; he worked at a Bank of America with his aunt and at a local Pilipino bakery. He decided to make the move with his mom to the Bay Area because his mom promised to support him while he was going to school. He is currently looking to move out and find an affordable place to live with his friends. Although he is early into his community college studies, Izar plans to take up bioengineering and transfer to the top universities in that field, the University of California, Los Angeles or John Hopkins University. His mother is happy with this choice because of the anticipated boom in the stem cell research industry in the Bay area.

*Ronald*

Ronald was the fourth participant I met. We met at a local café for our first dialogue a couple of hours before he went to work at a popular retail store. Ronald is also another transplant from Southern California. Ronald is a strong minded, critical queer Pilipino young adult. Ronald was accepted by prestigious universities in the country but was shockingly not admitted by the top two public universities in California. Ronald could not afford to enroll in elite, private institutions so when he graduated from high school last Spring he reluctantly attended UC Santa Barbara in the summer on a full scholarship. Ronald felt marginalized and isolated on the campus where he felt a lot of the students were privileged and did not work as hard as he did to get there. He dropped out of UC Santa Barbara midway through the fall quarter.

Ronald is starting up again in the Bay Area, partly to get space away from his ex-boyfriend and first love living in Southern California. Ronald transferred to a local public four-year university but all the classes he wanted to take were full. Ronald wants to be an Asian American Studies Major and has a 10-year plan to get his J.D., Ph.D., and become a civil rights lawyer, and adopt children. He had taken many college courses while in high school through a special summer college bridge program at a local public university. Ronald entered college having almost enough credits to be in junior standing. Ronald is critically and socially aware about gender and race relations in the United States. He has an older sister who mentors him and challenges him to fight and get involved in causes. He is aware of being a mestizo Pilipino and recognizes his “whiteness.” He believes his father disapproves of his sexual orientation because he is afraid that Ronald will turn into a woman.

*Jamie*

The dialogue at the café with Jamie was also a reunion for the both of us. She was previously a student of mine when I team-taught Pilipino American Studies at her public high school through a college-community partnership called Pinoy/Pinay Educational Partnership. I have not seen Jamie in three years and so much has happened in three years. Jamie is a new aunt and she is in an independent living skills program for young adults formerly in foster care. Unlike Ruby, Jamie knows exactly what she wants to do; she is passionate about art and animation. Jamie is a talented artist and was turned on to animation by her high school teacher. She wants to transfer to San Jose State University and be an animation major. Jamie wants to attend a public university and not a private art school because of financial limitations and because she also wants to continue to take Ethnic Studies courses.

Jamie is now in her second semester of the first year at the community college and is taking six classes. She is glad to have survived her first year. She currently lives with her sister, her brother-in-law, and her baby niece. Jamie takes care of her niece when her sister and her brother-in-law are at work. Because of these family obligations, Jamie usually does not have much time or space to do her homework at home, so she tries to complete her homework on campus before she goes home. Thanks to scholarships and grants made possible by her independent living skills program, Jamie does not have to worry about her tuition and most of her living expenses. She recently got a job working at a dessert stand at the local mall's food court because she is also in the process of saving up for her own place.

### *Mark*

Mark, a youth organizer in the Bay Area, is an acquaintance of mine. He decided to participate in the program after receiving my email message calling for Pilipino American young adult volunteers for the study. Mark has been in his community college for the last three years but recently decided to take a break. Mark is thinking about majoring in South East Asian Studies or International Relations. The community college Mark attended enrolled mostly commuter students, older students, and working students. Because of this, Mark struggled to find a community of peers on campus.

Mark does not have his residency yet which prevents him from attaining long-term employment, financial aid for school, and financial independence from his parents. His experience taught me that one's immigration status can automatically determine if a young adult is connected or disconnected in the United States. Mark is a bright and articulate young adult and remembers being more studious in elementary school and eventually had to "dumb down" in order to become more socially accepted when he was in middle school. Mark is

frustrated that he has to remain dependent on his parents. Raised by politically active parents, Mark was encouraged by his parents to continue his community organizing efforts instead of participating in the underground economy in which many non-residents are forced to participate. Mark took a break from school partly to focus on his organizing and also to invest more time in a youth organization that fights for the rights of Pilipinos and all marginalized people. He is the only participant who wants to go back to the Philippines. He explained:

I promised myself when I left that I was going to spend more time in the Philippines than I was going to spend here. I was in the Philippines for eleven years and I've surpassed that... That's why I'm seriously considering spending more time there or maybe divi-ing up my time here and just to be honest that the only reason I came here was to be with my mom. She came here what '88 and to be honest I would never would have left. That was the only reason, I was never like enticed going to the land of opportunity.

*Christian*

Christian grew up in an urban city and moved around a lot as a child. Christian is a second year student at his community college. He took some time off to go to barber college when hair cutting became one of his hobbies. Christian is unsure about his career path. He is interested in numerous professions such as a barber, a firefighter, or an army soldier. He is currently working part time for the Department of Homeland Security as an airport screener. He feels blessed to be a federal employee at such a young age. Christian also feels he can lead a simple life and will be happy as long as he received his associate's degree and a stable city job.

One of Christian's motivations to do well for himself and to remain ambitious is to prove to his father that he can make it. Christian's father left his mother when he was three, and even though his mother remarried a couple of times, Christian never had the strong father figure in his life. Growing up, Christian experienced domestic abuse, was arrested in middle

school for vandalism, and graduated late from high school. Christian was the man of the house at an early age for his younger half sister, his mother, and his grandmother. His grandmother helped raise him and his sister and encouraged him to go to church, do well in school, and to speak his grandmother's native language, Capampangan, which is spoken in a province called Pampangga. Christian is third generation Pilipino American. His other support system includes a Pilipino Christian barber and mentor, and his other male cousins from his mother's side.

Christian and I had difficulty coordinating our schedule for our first dialogue. The day we finally met at a café near his community college I was not feeling very well. I continued with the dialogue out of respect for him, and his time, and I knew that Christian would have a lot to contribute to the study. After meeting Christian, I was very humbled by our dialogue and realized I had a lot of negative expectations based on stereotypes that I had about him being a street-smart person. I thought he was going to be a misogynistic and egotistical person and was going to see my research as pointless. Instead, he had tremendous love for his grandmother, mother, and sister and he also had a lot of love for his culture. He was also proud of his ability to speak Capampangan unlike his other cousins. Christian was willing to share a lot of his stories, some very intimate, some very painful. It took a lot of courage for him to be so revealing to a near stranger like me. I did a lot more active listening in our one-on-one dialogue.

#### Critical Reflections of the Participants

The seven participants took part in one-on-one dialogues with the researcher and two focus groups. The researcher extracted two generative themes from the transcripts: (a) the effects of the interlocking systems of power based on race, class, and gender in student

retention and connection of Pilipino American young adults, and (b) the need for a Pilipino American-run university—the quest for Lapu Lapu University. The following section is a narrative of the critical reflections of the seven Pilipino American young adult participants on these themes.

*Interlocking Systems of Power Based on Race, Class, and Gender*

The dialogues were a complicated web of stories linked by the struggle against interlocking systems of power based on race, class, and gender in the United States and in the world. There are still many untold stories—untold stories which may prove detrimental to the Pilipino American young adult community if their needs continue to be unmet and the conditions continue to be swept under the rug under the false pretense of the Asian American model minority myth. Institutions of higher education and the community must be exposed to these stories to ensure their organizations are serving the diverse needs of all young adults, and providing them an equal opportunity for an education and a meaningful life.

At the end of our one-on-one dialogue, Christian wondered if his story was the least Filipino. I heard the same sentiment from Ronald and Mark. There is a myth that is being perpetuated in the larger society that all Pilipino American families are a nuclear family with a nurse for a mother and an engineer for a father. This is not the case for all the participants and the majority of the Pilipino American community. Christian explained:

I just grew up and learned different things that I wish I could change when I was younger or before. It wasn't all perfect. I don't know about all the people you interviewed. I felt that I didn't have a regular Filipino life, because I wasn't raised Filipino...I mean you got a mom that's a nurse and a dad that's a something—your family's close, still together, you watch TFC [The Filipino Channel] all day, cooking Filipino food. It wasn't like that, if you hear me talking on the phone, you won't think I'm Filipino. People mistake me for part black still. People look at my mom and they don't think she's Filipino, because she looks kind of Latino and she could speak Spanish.

What is very special about the participants in this study is that their unique and diverse stories prove that we can not essentialize the Pilipino American experience to a particular caricature or stereotype.

The racial equity and class equity transcend into our neighborhood schools. The educational pipeline pushes out students who do not acquire fast enough the cultural capital to navigate through the hidden curriculum. Ruby revealed that, out of her entire middle school class, only one person outside of her small group of friends graduated from a four-year university, she explained:

The rest of them dropped out of high school, or didn't finish high school. They got their GED [general education diploma] and didn't plan on going to college. And we just talked about being stuck where you are and not knowing how to get out of that. I thought it was sad because you want your friends to succeed and everything but I was amazed when she said that.

The issue of race and class also becomes problematic as many more Pilipino Americans immigrate to the United States in search of the American Dream. Izar understood this phenomenon very well and was aware of the conditions his young adult counterparts in the Philippines were facing. Izar shared that by the age of 20 or 21, young adults in the Philippines would be graduating from college and trying to find a job. The school system is designed differently in that many students do not have much choice in their curriculum and the trajectory of their studies. Izar affirmed that it is hard to get a living wage job in the Philippines. He said that a good job and top professionals would be earning 50,000 Philippine pesos a month which is about 1,000 dollars. He further explains:

Like the normal person, P800 a day, a day not per hour. That's like \$16/day. I did work there [in the Philippines], because my cousin works for an advertising company. And they need people to advertise, so a few hours we're going to have P800 that was good but it would only be for a week.



Immigrating to the United States would be a continuing struggle for many families. In Mark's case his lack of residency status prevents him from gaining socio-economic mobility and this became even more difficult when he moved to a white, middle class suburb. For Mark it was easiest to assimilate in an academic setting; he found it funny that upon his arrival to the United States he was placed in advanced English classes. He said his classmates wondered who was "this new kid from some country that I haven't heard of" who had a funny accent but surpassed their English abilities and reading comprehension. Mark can not reach his full potential as a young adult because of his immigration status. Mark explains his dream situation:

I would like either access to a source to get income or the ability to keep going to school and be able to explore more than I currently would like to. If I open the class catalog, I see all these classes that I'm really curious about and wanting to take those courses but not being able to and knowing that I can't take it because it's another \$26/unit. More recently I've been paying for my classes, from money I've earned through my internships or just save, whatever odds and ends. Whatever little money that I get.

He plans to leave to go back to the Philippines and contribute back to his motherland. He plans to travel and eventually settle in a job at the call centers in the Philippines which ironically would need Mark to tap into the cultural capital he mastered in American schools but was not allowed to fully capitalize on while in America.

Even with a bright and ambitious young adult like Ruby with a Bachelor of Science degree in one hand, the struggle remains. She is conscious of the struggles her mother and father endured in order to provide a future for her and her four sisters. She is frightened not to have future that would not be able to sustain the lifestyle and socioeconomic mobility her parents and her family want for her. Ruby reflected:

I understand where my mom is coming from, she works hard so she can support us. And it is hard especially in San Francisco where it is the most expensive city in the

United States. It's really hard for housing and especially if you're living pay check to pay check. And especially if you have five children. I don't think my mom understands how hard it is to get into a program. Finding the college, finding what you want to major in, what you want to get your masters in, if you want to pursue a doctorate or not. A lot of time, a lot of money. Education is not cheap. She'll I'll help you out, I'll help you out. But I don't want to place the burden on her and have her pay for your education

The majority of the participants were male but all the participants spoke of the greater role women had played in their lives in passing down culture, family expectations, and educational expectations. Ronald for example had the support of his mother and his sister. His sister particularly mentored him and encouraged him to participate in different programs to enrich his experience. She also encouraged him to get involved in the community and take classes on Asian American Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Pilipino American Studies.

Ronald feels that his sexuality is more of an issue to his father than his mother, even though he feels that both of his parents need more education and opportunities to expand their cultural view of what being a queer Pilipino American means. He advocated:

The only thing that I can honestly say [I need support in] and I'm pretty sure any other queer student of color would admit is the lack of understanding from the generation before. The lack of knowledge. My mom was pretty open to it. But my dad was adamant about the idea—he actually said to me—you are being pressured by your friends ha, they are contagious...He was scared that I was going to become a woman. That's what his idea of being gay is. Not just like being gay a full on drag queen, transgender. Bakla, it's not just gay. And it's a lack of understanding.

Ronald's parents are divorced and he continues to struggle with his parents accepting nontraditional gender roles and the concept of an alternative family. Ronald aspires to get married and adopt a child. His parents disagree.

Mothers and grandmothers play a critical role in defining gender roles and providing young adults the ability for self-care and independent living. Jamie for example is taking

care of her sister's daughter but needs more skills in learning how to cook and doing other household chores. Jamie eats out every single day. This is a sharp contrast to Mark's upbringing. He learned from his grandmother, mother, and aunt at a very young age these duties. Partly due to his socioeconomic background, gender roles become more fluid. Mark explains the teachings that were passed on to him and the privileges of acquiring some of life's toughest lessons:

I think just experiences, my grandmother taught me how to cook at a very young age. We learned to build from experiences. And as far as budgeting money, it's because I grew up seeing, my parents not having high paying jobs and seeing them, my mom at night calculating to see if we have enough money for the month. I just grew up with that mentality. That was like the social values. Things like having to raise my cousins, watching them. At least I definitely feel good, I feel privileged that I had those experiences to build upon. Youth in general, not just Filipinos, youth who grew up generally did not have those experiences.

Izar also recalled that he has been independent even at a young age. He moved around a lot because his mother was doing work for many not-for-profit organizations. His mom would later rent a room in his mom's friends' house so Izar could stay in Manila to go to school. Izar commuted a lot and was traveling around town on his own at a very young age. He was self-sufficient. He would hardly go to school. She told him when he was a teenager that if Izar was drunk that she would rather have him sleep over his friend's house and not go home. Izar's mother also said that she would rather have Izar drink at their house instead of going out to drink. Izar attributes his responsible drinking to their candid talks and real life discussions. Izar also knew that there was a double standard in his family. He felt bad for his women cousins who were not allowed to go out and had a curfew even if they were already in their 20s.

The campus culture can make a positive or a negative impact in a Pilipino American young adults' college career. How do the colleges manage the interlocking systems of power

based on race, class, and gender and remain true to their vision of diversity and equal opportunity? The institutional barriers remain great for the participants on top of the financial constraints. Ronald's experience as a freshman illustrates the many intricate layers that student retention experts must understand. Ronald observed:

When I went to Santa Barbara I felt really isolated. Outside of my roommate, I found nobody else like me. He and I were both Filipino, gay, from the same area. We were into the same music, same things, same sense of humor. He and I were just two peas in the same pod. Everyone else was so different. We constantly felt like we were looked down upon for being one of color and two gay. Actually having some kind of intelligence...I can't stand the idea of privileged people going to the same school as me. I worked hard and I ended up here. These people were they didn't work as hard and they managed to come there because they were rich.

How can communities and colleges provide hope and opportunity for students that need to overcome conditions out of their control? For Christian the struggles were many; he described his life in the city:

It was crazy and hard, it was a big struggle for me. My mom had me when she was 18 or 19, she was married also like around that age. My dad was ten years older than my mom. She left my mom when I was three. Supposedly my dad had a gambling problems and what not. And had my mom file for bankruptcy and all that. So I was automatically raised with a young mom, and she was learning too but at the same time I'm with her. [A few years ago I visited my dad in Las Vegas]...we parked at some casino parking lot and I was crying in the car. I told him that I never had a father figure. I just told him all the things that he missed out all my struggles all the good times I had while he wasn't there.

These hardships continue to motivate Christian to take his future seriously. His family moved out of the city a couple of years ago into a quieter and more affordable suburban town 30 minutes away from the city. He continues to attend community college in the city partly to remain connected to the place he will always consider home.

### *The Need for a Pilipino American Run-University*

At the end of our second focus group, the group needed to decide what the action component of our study should be. I had a tentative list that I was going to present to the

collective. The list I wanted to propose in case the group was at a loss were: Group Decision for Action: class presentations at their Asian American Studies Class, presenting at the Retention Committee meeting, presenting at a Pilipino student organization on campus, designing a letter-writing campaign to counselors and college administrators, hosting a panel, and creating an educational play, a comic book, or a cd soundtrack about the Pilipino American young adult experience. I did not get the opportunity to present these ideas because the group was inspired by an idea that Christian proposed.

Christian proposed that we should promote more college and community partnerships by creating our own college. A Pilipino American-run university likened to the vision of the historically black colleges in the United States and the National Hispanic University (National Hispanic University, 2007). Christian discussed a curriculum that would be for and about Pilipinos, even suggesting in jest that we would have the first cock fighting physical education class in the nation. Christian imagined that we could call it Lapu Lapu University; Lapu Lapu is one of the national Pilipino heroes responsible for killing Ferdinand Magellan, the representative of the Spanish colonial monarch. Lapu Lapu University is a feasible dream. It represents many things to this group: (a) greatness, (b) healing, and (c) self-determination.

First, Lapu Lapu University represents the pursuit of greatness. Cedric said his friends strive to be successful financially but also want to make a mark in the world and do great things. This was a poignant point in our dialogue because it revealed to me that Pilipino American young adults do want to achieve greatness and make a significant contribution to American culture and society. Many joked about their families encouraging them to become a nurse and Cedric explains why that is not the path he wishes to follow; he stated:

It's a noble thing to be a nurse...but what I find is that most of them are doing it not because they want to help people, they do it because they could make money. It's kind of that group mentality that me and my friends are trying to get away from. If we're going to do something we're going to do it good. We want to do it with heart. And we have the hope that we can be successful at it even financially.

Ronald also believes that the majority of his peers are "wanting to live in the moment" and perpetuate a hedonistic mentality but he is personally committed to fight for everyone's civil rights and educating more people about the sameness in people's struggles. What Lapu Lapu University can be is a tool to create hope that we can attain greatness, validity, and influence.

As Ronald put it:

I feel like we can't accept ourselves and unless we see ourselves in a cool way and the only way we can do this is to have influence. A lot of people need influence. A lot of people have influence but the wrong kind.

Will there be an alternative life for Christian besides the military? Lapu Lapu University represents that hope that there is going to be sweetness despite Christians' arduous journey.

He intimately revealed:

I'm not saying it's all strictly negative it's what I know. There's some good things but I see a lot of negativity more than positive. My cousin he doesn't have a job and he still lives with his parents. So I'm trying to be different. Trying to do something and to do something for myself. As corny as that sounds.

Secondly, Lapu Lapu University represents the quest for healing. Lapu Lapu is a nationalistic and anti-colonial symbol. Lapu Lapu University is a symbol for healing and embracing being Pilipino American. Many of the participants made an observation that the Pilipino American community has a stronger tendency to assimilate than other cultures which Mark declared, "gives us a sense of urgency; that's why we need to maintain our culture."

He further told the larger collective:

When the manongs came here the first thing they do is save money to buy suits, Cadillacs and cruise like American teenagers. Whereas you read the stories of others, the Japanese, Chinese, or even Indian. They still maintain their style of dress more so

than Filipinos. Me and my dad were driving around Fremont and Fremont had a lot of Indian people. So we saw a lot of women wore saris. Why is that a lot of Indian people still wear their traditional clothing and we don't? I told him that we don't even wear our traditional dress back home.

For Ruby, her Pilipino culture is just as meaningful to a biracial Asian American. She wants to move away from this feeling of lacking culture and lacking language. Lapu Lapu University is a step towards wholeness.

Even if my friends are diverse, the majority of them are Filipino, I feel that our culture is not there. In a way we are Americanized and just the way we act. And like my parents—it's kinda hard because my dad's Indian and my mom's Filipino and they both talk to me in English. And just the language is not there. My culture is something I want to retain and keep alive in my life and I don't have to practice it but have it. I want some part of it that I can you know.

Even though Ronald is not biracial, he understands feeling like he is not Pilipino enough because of lighter complexion and the white privilege that come from being mestizo or having mixed ancestry. Ronald recalled:

I feel like my family has put me in a pedestal because I wasn't Filipino looking. And my friends never believed I was Filipino and so I always tried to compensate. No really though, I really wanted to be a stereotypical Filipino, I didn't like the attention, I didn't like it. I wanted to feel connected to my culture. With not getting it at home, I kind of went into my own tangent. Like for awhile I had a subconscious Filipino accent, I didn't even know. I had an accent, I didn't even realize.

Without an outlet to understanding our own internalized racism the pain can be manifested into a physical pain. Christian described the transformation of her younger sister who is thirteen while she started visiting her father's new family:

She would see them every other weekend to visit and you could slowly see her turning to like Gothic stuff, white Britney Spears stuff. She started talking like how do you say—I'm not racist but white washed. Because my sister's really big boned and stuff and all them over there were backup dancers for Britney Spears and Jessica Simpson, that's how good they looked. My sister got there, because my sister is really chubby and stuff so she thought about killing herself. She grabbed scissors and sliced her arm which really worried my mom.

Thirdly, Lapu Lapu University represents the thirst for self determination. Lapu Lapu is a concept that breaks away from the institutionalized form of education. Ruby having her college degree felt uncomfortable with the incorporation of dialogue and self-determination in the classroom. She admitted, “I feel like the discussions are nice and you get to say your opinion but sometimes I just need people to tell me what I need to know. This is what’s going to be on the test.” At the second focus group, Ruby quickly came up to me and asked if it was possible for us to do this. And she sought the expert advice from me—she sought approval to make sure that she and the group were capable of thinking big and doing big things.

The group pondered whether it was possible to be in control of our education and our community’s resources. Many of the participants have had experience in being acculturated to maintain the status quo and accept the banking method of teaching. And for many of the participants Lapu Lapu University is a tool for young adults to discover, perhaps for the first time, their own wants, needs, and ability to determine for themselves the future they want to create for their generation.

For Cedric it was also about defining for himself the complex cultures and communities of which he is a part. He wants to reconcile being a Pilipino and a Catholic, despite the oppressive and colonial legacy of the Catholic Church in the Philippines. He reflected:

My growth as a Catholic started to accelerate at the same time my growth as a Filipino started to accelerate which was about three years ago. And I started reading a lot, more so on the Catholic side because I had more resources. When I was like 19 or 20 I started to mature a little bit more and I slowed down a little bit. I was struggling with my identity like who am I going to be? And I realized that I’m a Filipino first, but then I was like damn, what the hell is a Filipino? It’s like the Matrix sometimes would I rather not know? Would I rather walk around the matrix aimlessly? And go with it and you would have never known. And sometimes I feel



like it's a burden for me but then I realize if that's a burden...that's my life! How can I call my life a burden?

Cedric's quest for seeking out his own base of knowledge and his own process for naming his world is an important element of the conceptualization of a Lapu Lapu university.

The call for a Pilipino-run university is also a testament to the longevity and resilience of the Pilipino American community. Ronald, when questioned about his identity as an Asian American, felt that this label does not reflect his entire experience because he also feels marginalized as a Pilipino American under this umbrella. He explains:

I don't feel like we are acknowledged quite as often as we should be as Filipino. Yeah often times I do qualify as Asian American a lot of times. I do identify as Asian American when it counts. When it comes to civil rights, and when it comes to group action, yes I'll classify as Asian American. But when it comes to a situation where it's one or the other I will pick Filipino because we are separate.

It is the uniqueness and greatness that the participants want to celebrate and highlight in the pursuit of the Lapu Lapu University. For Mark it is an opportunity to not have resentment for being intelligent and academically advanced. Redefining higher education to have high standards for all students and to value different types of knowledge and types of learning are important components of a Pilipino-run university. Mark found having an intergenerational dialogue valuable in a classroom setting to deglamorize and gain a real-life perspective in history and sociology courses as well as learning about the Pilipino American experience.

Christian also wants a well rounded curriculum that piqued his other interests; he mentioned what would be compelling for his disengaged cousins:

My cousins would want like an older brother, like an O.G. Filipino gangster. They'll want someone street wise, who would be there for them and be able to relate. Have like programs like a music studio, free to record and do what you want. Play basketball, we're into sports. We love football, basketball, we love music. There's no other place to go.

### Summary

Seven Pilipino American young adult participants were involved in dialogues about the Pilipino American young adult experience. Their critical reflections supported two main generative themes: (a) the effects of the interlocking systems of power based on race, class, and gender in student retention of Pilipino American young adults in higher education, and (b) the need for a Pilipino American-run university— the quest for the Lapu Lapu University. These narratives brought the complexities of the Pilipino American young adult experience into the center of the discourse and out of the margins.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following chapter contains the summary of the study, conclusions based on the initial research questions that guided the study, recommendations for educational practice and future research, and reflections of the researcher.

#### Summary

Five male and two female Pilipino Americans participated in this study to critically reflect on the experiences of Pilipino American young adults and to help identify support services needed from their colleges and the larger community to increase the student retention rate of Pilipino Americans in higher education. Upon initial review of the literature on student retention issues, and college and community partnerships, the researcher found that there is a greater need for Pilipino American voice in these fields. The researcher facilitated one-on-one dialogues with each participant and two focus groups using participatory research methodology. Two general themes were identified by the researcher during the dialogues conducted with the seven participants: (a) the effects of the interlocking systems of power based on race, class, and gender in student retention and connection of Pilipino American young adults; and (b) the need for a Pilipino American-run university—the quest for Lapu Lapu University.

#### Conclusions

The following conclusions address the research questions which guided this research: (a) According to Pilipino American young adults, what factors contribute to their retention and academic success in higher education? (b) According to Pilipino American young adults,

what types of support are needed in the public sector, for-profit sector, and not-for-profit sector to help retain Pilipino American young adults in higher education? and (c) According to Pilipino American young adults, what types of community and college partnerships can be implemented to help retain Pilipino American young adults in higher education?

*Retention and Academic Success in Higher Education*

According to the Pilipino American young adult participants, these factors contributed to their retention and academic success: (a) relevancy and their life's passion in their education, (b) financial stability, and (c) safe and healthy home life and campus life.

*Finding Relevancy and Their Life's Passion in Their Education*

In a culture where intelligence and academic excellence is negatively perceived as being nerdy or antisocial, it becomes difficult for many Pilipino Americans to view institutions of education in a positive light. Mark recalled that when he first immigrated he “wasn't feeling the pressure to assimilate then and dumb myself better to assimilate better” but the pressure mounted to be more social and less academically minded when he was a teenager. Many Pilipino American young adults seek answers to their identity, to their future profession, and to their values during their college life. A relevant education, that is, an education which allows students to understand themselves, their communities, and their cultures better, can be the key to motivate students to stay in college. According to Cedric it took a Pilipino American Studies class to keep him focused in his studies:

I don't know if you're familiar with Professor he's like your lolo (grandfather) and he teaches a Philippine history class and just straight up history. And I've never taken Philippine related classes and I took it two years ago and heard things I've never heard before. And it really inspired me. None of it has ever scared me off, it's always just more fuel I guess. I feel like I've found what I was looking for. It's hard to explain... I do do the work! I do write my essays and all that stuff. It's still hard, sitting down chomping at a computer but I go to class and I listen and it's not like other classes.

This type of engaging and empowering learning experience was a sharp contrast to Ruby's classroom experience. She recalled:

When I studied it was not really retaining information it was memorizing for the test. And forgetting it after the test because you need to memorize other stuff. It's been like memorizing all my notes for the test, and after the test it was okay because I don't need to worry about that stuff anymore.

Ruby was able to graduate from college because of her strong academic background and support system, but many other Pilipino American young adults would have been pushed out of the educational pipeline. The lack of engaging curriculum and practical real-world experience also leaves Pilipino American young adults unprepared for the work force. Many young adults are seeking to develop their talents and interests as well as find a career which will lead to financial stability, happiness, a sense of fulfillment, and connection with community. The participants in this study did not find these experiences in their school halls so they sought them elsewhere. Cedric found relevancy in his Catholic youth group, Mark with this youth community organization, and Christian with the local hip hop-inspired barber shop.

#### *Having Financial Stability while in School*

Financial stability for the Pilipino American young adult participants came in the form of financial assistance, career assistance, and pragmatic financial planning skills. The young adult development period is also a critical time to create greater independence and space from one's family. But in the Pilipino culture where the big extended family is the norm, these obligations and household dynamics are much more complex. Cedric revealed during our one-on-one dialogue that:

There's a pressure to get yourself established, like career and all that. That's always there and being able to identify yourself separate from mom and dad. Even though

you're not starting a family per se, but you're starting your own life. That's kind of scary but you know it's coming. You don't want to stay here forever, even though mom's cooking is really providing for me right now.

Students like Izar understand as well that his college education is also a financial investment for his future. Unfortunately the ability to get enough resources to pay one's bills is such a pressing and immediate need that many can not invest the same time and energy in their studies. As a recent immigrant, Izar took note of the fact that many college students in the United States also worked while taking classes. This phenomenon was different from the Philippines where the majority of the college students are supported by their parents until they earn their diploma so many do not have to work. Izar recalled:

I told my mom, I don't want to work, I want to go to school. There's nothing I can do. It's kind of hard here. It's different. It's really hard actually. Cell phone bills, net flicks, and then my car broke down. When I first moved out I had a car originally, a used one. One thing I found out, you can't just move out without any money. I moved out and I didn't have any money at all. I had like five dollars.

Consequently Izar decided to make the move from Southern California to the San Francisco Bay Area because his mother promised that with her new federal job she would be able to put him through school and Izar would not need to work. Izar, however, is still looking for a job and prospective roommates because he wants to gain living independence from his mother.

Jamie is doing well in her classes partly due to the fact that she has the financial independence from her sister thanks to the educational grant of \$2,500 per semester she receives for formerly being a youth in the foster care system. Cedric is also now able to focus and transfer after six years by being a full-time student and not having to work. This sacrifice of what Cedric termed "living simply" is difficult when the cost of living is so high in the San Francisco Bay Area.

*Securing a Safe and Healthy Home and Campus Life*

Not all Pilipino American young adults live in safe and healthy homes. The college and the community are needed to provide different and empowering experiences to young adults living in the margins or in high need communities. Ruby, for example, considers her family and her friends as her biggest source of support. Doing well in school was a given expectation of her parents and her circle of friends were just as studious and are mostly Pilipino. Ruby shared her exceptional situation:

My friends are really good support system, a lot of them are school oriented and they want an education. A lot of them already finished their bachelor's degree. Having like the right friends around that the big part of it. For me I just think my educational experience is so different from other people because from the high school and going to college, the peer pressure and everything like drugs and stuff, that wasn't a major issue for me because my friends were not like that.

Christian, on the other hand, grew up under different circumstances living in the same city as Ruby. He remembers a lot of negativity in his life and experiencing a lot at such a young age. He never made school his priority and never had time to do extracurricular activities because he was the only male in the house and had to go home to his grandmother and his younger sister. Growing up he remembers sharing a bunk bed with his grandmother and sister. Laying down on the top bunk bed he would hear his mother and future step father throwing dishes and arguing at night. Tumultuous relationships followed him through his high school years and young adulthood, and he continued to live the life of what he considers a "not perfect Christian" person. He recalled:

My cousins' friend he's like so Filipino, like yeah Filipino! So he works for a program that work with youth like a Rec center for Filipinos trying to be cool. But the Filipinos around here they don't get along with each other around here over drugs, and money and wrong stuff. He's telling me you need to change, you need to be cool, cause me and my cousin recently lost somebody because he was into drugs.

Regardless of one's home environment the campus environment is also an important factor in preventing student drop out. Many colleges' academic rigor would benefit greatly from the contributions of diverse young adults who had overcome their impoverished surroundings or marginalized communities. Ronald, for example, despite having a full scholarship to the university, a strong academic background, and lots of support from home especially from his sister, still struggled. He shared at the café:

So I went to UC Santa Barbara, hated it for two semesters, two quarters. Hated it completely, I loved my roommate and I love my friends but the people there were in general very privileged, very ignorant, very narrow minded. I'm really against feeling marginalized at any kind of setting. And so I had to leave. So I came home. I finished my summer quarter there and in the middle of the fall quarter I dropped out.

Fostering a sense of community and collective values is especially difficult at a traditionally commuter community college. For Mark, there is not much incentive to become involved on campus or stay in school because most of his classmates at his community college leave directly from their classes to go to work or go home to their children. In fact, Mark admired his former classmates because he learned a lot from their first-hand experiences and the dialogue in his classes were not just knowledge gained from books, but also from outside of the classroom courses. Mark had no ties to the larger college community.

#### *Support Needed in the Various Sectors*

Many pragmatic support services and opportunities for partnerships were identified during our dialogues. For the for-profit sector they included: (a) internship opportunities, (b) policies to hire PAYA and train for upper management positions, and (c) media coverage on positive Pilipino role models and the Pilipino American community. For the not-for-profit sector and community groups, the following services were identified: (a) arts, music,



culinary arts and media based programs; (b) financial independence and employment classes; (c) intergenerational and mentoring programs for parents, sibling and grandparents; (d) Pilipino American Studies and political education in the community; and (e) outreach to more marginalized sectors of the young adult population—aging out foster youth, queer youth of color, young parents, and young adult groups in Churches.

In the public sector, the services identified were: (a) funding for programs in the community to address PAYA needs, (b) funding small businesses of PAYA, (c) providing young adult services regardless of citizenship status, (d) affordable housing and public transportation, and (e) violence prevention services especially stopping the Pilipino on Pilipino crime.

The support services for institutions of higher education identified were: (a) financial aid and grants to all qualifying students regardless of citizenship status, (b) traveling, arts, and cultural programs, (c) Pilipino American/Asian American classes and language classes, (d) childcare available for family members, and (e) young adults having more decision-making power in their education, instead of having a testing-based education.

This wish list of support services in the community are new opportunities for all sectors of our community to work together. They are a hopeful vision of what our young adults want to see in their lives. These support services can be made a reality regardless of resources and funding sources.

*Community and College Partnerships for Pilipino American Retention*

It was evident in these dialogues that colleges alone can not support the holistic needs of Pilipino American young adults. Both the community and the college must forge partnerships to make sure that students are retained and have the opportunity to attain their

degree from a four-year university if they so choose. The community can provide young adult services and outreach to the larger community while the college can provide more resources out into the community as well as advocate for the larger community. The relationship must be amiable, reciprocal, and community driven. The participants were also acutely aware of the issue of institutional racism both in the college setting and the professional setting. Ronald recalled:

My mom really believes in me just as long as I go to college, because she went to college. But she went to college outside of the country and so when she came here it really didn't do much for her. Because it was weighed with people who went to college in this country, and they would always get picked.

Institutions of higher education are in a great position to be strong and credible advocates for their community. They can partner up with community members to support policy and research that can ultimately help meet the basic needs of their young adult constituents.

Mark referred to the fact he has many needs that a white, middle class person in the United States does not have—needs that the community and institutions of higher education have the resources and the collective power to better address. He stated:

One of the greater needs is steady employment especially with my status it's hard to obtain... Yeah, that's a primary concern I have. A lot of it is not about education but my status. I can't even get financial aid in my school, so that's one of the major stumbling blocks...I've lived with my parents since forever. The first 14-15 years of my life, we all lived in a room. In the Philippines we rented a room until we basically moved here so culturally it was a little bit difficult growing up in a white, middle class neighborhood.

The vision of Lapu Lapu University is to have a community-driven effort to build community partnerships with different sectors in the community. The seven participants realized that their current institutions of higher education will not be wholly committed or feel any affinity to the empowerment of the Pilipino American community today. They envisioned professionals, community leaders with street credibility, artists, businesses, and

not-for-profit workers educating the next generation through Lapu Lapu University to have more opportunities than they had before. A centralized community hub and institution of higher education where students have power will need a concerted community effort.

### Recommendations

#### *For Educational Practice*

One of the reasons Pilipinos choose to immigrate to countries like the United States is to provide their children greater opportunities to go to college. Today, even though Pilipino American students living in a First World country are not directly experiencing the dire economic and social conditions their kababayans or fellow countrymen and women are facing—Pilipino Americans will always be connected to their home country whether it is through family ties, identity, skin color, language, food, or culture.

Retaining Pilipino Americans in higher education is part of a more complex discourse on global education—one which involves a discussion on further exploring the following issues: (a) education based on a nation state versus education based on a global society; (b) academic freedom in higher education; (c) public accountability, and (d) student activism's role in national politics. First, the nation state must make explicit the purpose of higher education because of the growing tension in choosing between education for a nation-state and education for a global society (Guttek, 1993). If the purpose of traditional American education is for political socialization and teaching loyalty and patriotism in the United States, then it is of greater interest for American policy makers to create citizens who are isolated and ignorant of global issues. This nationalistic educational approach will affect negatively the retention rate of many immigrant students and other students of color who already have a global consciousness.

Secondly, academic freedom in higher education must also be further explored in connection with the student retention issues. Academic freedom is not just freedom for professors to teach and do research. It is also means of institutional autonomy. Around 1915 for American institutions, institutional autonomy was also due to geography since most universities and colleges were built in the periphery of major cities. Altbach, Berdahl, and Gumport (1994) argued that academic freedom means localness, not just in the geographic sense, but also in organization. Academic departments had local control and decision makers were from the inside, without many federal conditions. Today, how much power can students and communities truly exercise in defining their own education if they must compete with federal and corporate interests? How much power can Pilipino American students advocate for more Pilipino American Studies classes and other more personally relevant courses?

Similar to academic freedom, public accountability is another issue that is important to explore in the student retention discourse. Autonomy and accountability to the public is eroding in our institutions of higher education (Altbach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 1994). Autonomy is eroding in our institutions of higher education because there is external pressure and dependency on funding which is closely tied to the policy making and the academic/research priorities of that institution. A lot of pressure also exists for institutions of higher education to acquire prestige in the public realm. The accountability to the public is a hot issue as well in public American institutions of higher education. Colleges and universities have to address the needs and demands of a very diverse public. Since the value of acquiring higher education is so high in American society, public universities are feeling the pressure not only from the public but also from politicians and governing boards. Young

adults and their community need to be a part of the decision making in their institutions because so many of their needs are not being met.

Lastly, if student empowerment is a key factor in retaining students, then student activism and politicization must be fostered in American higher education and American society. It is also important to recognize the power of student activism to create social and political changes (Altbach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 1994). According to these authors, fundamental institutions tend to have more conservative campuses and in the 1970s and 1980s, there was a shift away from humanities to management and engineering courses in higher education. Third World students, for example, are more active on campuses because they are part of the political pulse of their countries unlike their American counterparts. Pilipino American students and other students in the margins especially must be provided understanding of their collective political power and how they can strategically use that power for collective interests and educational self-determination. This is a very difficult path as hooks (2003) explains:

In our nation most colleges and universities are organized around the principles of dominant culture. This organizational model reinforces hierarchies of power and control.... It encourages students to be fear-based.... Learned helplessness is necessary for the maintenance of the dominant culture. (p. 130)

There are other key lessons retention experts should take away from this brief examination of the literature on Pilipino approaches to higher education—the answers in retaining more Pilipino Americans in higher education may lie in: (a) meeting larger community interests as well as individual interests; and (b) implementing effective college and community partnerships having reflection, dialogue, and action components. It is evident that student retention approaches must not only understand the individual needs of Pilipino American students, but they must also understand the larger history and community

of Pilipinos in this country. The first key lesson on meeting larger community interests speaks to the importance of a people-based education and a sustainable development-based education which defines education as connected to a larger social movement and to the health of the environment. The purpose of higher education, therefore, must provide students with a greater purpose than solely preparing them for the work force. Secondly, forming effective college and community partnerships, using the Freirian model of consciousness raising through a cyclical process of reflection, dialogue, and action, means education continues outside of the college campus as well as in their own neighborhoods and community based organizations. Expanding the scope of higher education to be more community-minded and to be more apt to create community partnerships is a testament that the stakeholders themselves—the community members—must be active participants in their own retention. These key lessons are also aligned with the premise of the empowerment approach to higher education—if Pilipino American students and their communities are actively exercising their decision-making power, then more Pilipino American students in higher education will graduate.

#### *For Future Research*

Continued research on Pilipino Americans in higher education is needed in order to achieve self-sustaining and self-determined communities—and, more importantly, reverse their miseducation and manifest educational liberation. Also, retention scholars should not forget the mother country as a source for answers and new educational approaches and possibilities. The Pilipino American student experience is complex but needs to be further studied.

Other possible research questions related to the topic of Pilipino Americans in higher education include: What factors increase retention rates of Pilipino Americans in two-year and four-year institutions of higher education? What factors decrease retention rates of Pilipino Americans in two-year and four-year institutions of higher education? How do the college experiences of Pilipino American college students who “decolonize” differ from those who do not? What are instances of communities successfully implementing an educational agenda? What are the policy implications of ensuring higher graduation rates for Pilipino American college students in California? In the nation? What are Pilipino American college students’ views of American education and definitions of educational liberation? What are the differences in college experiences between first, second, and third generation Pilipino Americans? What are the differences in college experiences among different groups of the Pilipino diaspora? How can a cross-cultural dialogue on higher education occur between marginalized communities? What are the similarities and differences between groups and within groups?

It is up to the community leaders, parents, educators, students, and administrators to participate in this discourse and critically listen to the stories of the Pilipino Americans. The action to elicit change can not happen without this space for reflection and without the space for global reflection and global exchange of ideas and stories. The Pilipino American student dilemma after all is a global issue transcending geographic limitations.

It is also evident that a global exchange of ideas and perspectives on higher education must continue in order to increase the retention rates of American institutions of higher education—particularly focusing on the following issues: (a) education based on a nation state versus education based on a global society; (b) academic freedom in higher education;

(c) public accountability; and d) student activism's role in national politics. More research on Pilipino American students in higher education is recommended. Educational and societal transformation may only happen when the voices of these marginalized communities are included in the discourse and are collectively demanding national and international change.

### Reflections of the Researcher

#### *Lessons for California*

The state of California is rich with human and natural resources. California is home to diverse communities and a large immigrant population. Immigrants have historically played a major role in developing California's large industries from farming to exports. Since communities in California are so diverse and multicultural, the college students in California benefit from the richness of the communities surrounding the university. The wonderful dreams, talent, and stories of the Pilipino American participants in this study alone illustrate the richness of California's communities.

If public institutions of higher education strive to be owned and operated on behalf of all Californians, then one of the great opportunities our public institutions of higher education have is the ability to work with the diverse and vibrant immigrant communities in the state. The immigrant communities in California have been organized at a more feverous pitch because of the recent anti-immigrant policies being passed by state and federal governments in the post 9-11 era. The immigrant youth and young adult leaders from their respective marginalized communities need access to higher education. Their sociopolitical understanding of our society and their vision for a more equitable tomorrow is a great asset to public institutions of higher education in California.



California is also rich with natural resources. If California wanted to become its own nation, California would have the biggest economy in the globe (Wikipedia, 2006). The gross domestic product (GDP) of the state of California is \$1.5 trillion, which is 17% of the GDP of the United States. Agriculture, aerospace, entertainment, light manufacturing, and tourism are among the most profitable industries in the state. The state of California's booming economy, therefore, needs an educated and diverse workforce—professionals, educators, and researchers to further develop its industries. Pilipino American young adults and other young adults of color deserve these opportunities.

Today, state and federal funding of education in the post 9-11 era has declined significantly because the federal government has prioritized military spending over education during the American occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq. State funding of research continues to decline as well. This trend has resulted in social science research experiencing the biggest cuts and the public institutions of California becoming more dependent upon private research funding. This year, through the Higher Education Compact Agreement with California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, the University of California system has been promised an increase in state funding over the years. This agreement, however, presumes about an 8% tuition increase for undergraduate students and 10% for graduate students (UCLA Today, 2005). The high cost of education has proven to be a factor in the decreasing diversity of student applicants in the UCs. It costs about \$17,000 a year for undergraduate students living on campus, and \$21,000 for graduate students living off-campus. My dialogues with the participants have suggested this will increase the disconnection of our young adults from higher education.

The numbers of young adults of color continue to decline in higher education since the passing of Proposition 209 which further marginalizes the already underrepresented communities in higher education. In the year 2010 for example, the University of California Los Angeles is expected to grow in its student population by over 4,000 students. But how diverse would this student population be? In 2006, communities of color were in an uproar at UCLA about the record low numbers of enrolled African American and Chicano/Latino students. In 2006 only 659 Chicano/Latino freshmen enrolled which was only 14% of the freshmen class when this sector represented more than 75% of the Los Angeles elementary and secondary education student population (Kayise, 2006). The numbers were more alarming for the African American freshman students enrolled at a mere 96. African American students represented 2% of the freshman class while African Americans represented 10% of the total Los Angeles county (Kayise, 2006).

Diversity in higher education also includes supporting a more relevant education for historically underrepresented and marginalized student communities. Considering the lack of academic and financial support for ethnic studies classes and community service learning programs due to budget cuts, it is extremely important that funding be retained for these programs. Ethnic studies classes and community service learning programs give voice to the surrounding communities in Los Angeles—communities which have an entirely different perspective of Los Angeles from the Westwood Village neighbors.

The public-run universities in the state of California must commit to a true dialogue with the 38 million people of California. The state's residents, through local communities, need to define for themselves the purpose of higher education—the purpose of large public universities and community colleges alike. The local communities must first have an

understanding of the following questions before policy change and social change can be implemented so that communities can regain control of their universities from the large corporations: Who are the decision makers in a public institution of higher education? How can educational funding be made the center of the discourse for the state and federal governments? How can all young adults of color have equal access to quality education? Local communities and universities must partner up to reclaim their communities' education.

### *Taking a Look Back*

After my first dialogue, I felt very self-conscious about whether or not I was conducting myself properly as a participatory researcher. I dressed casually so I did not present myself as an intimidating researcher and I used language that did not seem like intimidating researcher jargon. We had a dialogue that was empowering and hopeful and I actively listened to their stories using the dialogue questions as a mere guide. I had to create check-ins and ice breaker exercises. I struggled with not having enough control with the dialogues. I began the focus groups purposely with merienda, or mid-day snack. I brought empanada (a pastry filled with stewed chicken and potatoes) and tropical fruit juices. Culturally I felt that food would help people relax and be comfortable in the space.

I also incorporated a game called the EnSINGmada Challenge, a game which entailed competing for a Pilipino pastry called ensaymada by singing the correct answer to a trivia question. The questions were centered on the following themes: homeland trivia about the Philippines, young adults in the United States, Asian American and Pilipino American demographics. The EnSINGmada Challenge introduced to the co-researchers the current state of young adults in the United States and linked the importance of conducting research on Pilipino American Young Adults. The participants enjoyed the game and broke the ice.

We were more comfortable with each other after hearing our tone-deaf renditions. I also felt that as a participatory researcher I had the flexibility and responsibility to engage and incorporate joyous and fun moments during our time together.

I was very blessed to have met such a creative, articulate, and gifted group. I wanted to have merienda and eat ensaymada, but the group was engaged in dialogues revolving around issues of colonial mentality and American imperialism. These subjects were not discussed in an academic nor tense manner, but it heightened the level of discussion and the group grew from some of the uncomfortable and painful issues we discussed. Some of the books that I read on participatory research discussed how this participatory process can be frustrating for the participants and co-researchers and I too experienced this at the first focus group. Cedric was very vocal and discussed how he wanted to know where I was going with this. But I comforted him by telling him that I was going to go where they wanted to go.

Our most memorable contribution is the idea of creating the Lapu Lapu University. This to me was an anticolonial statement, a nationalistic statement, and a hopeful statement. I underestimated Christian; I thought he would be one of the conservative people in the group that would undermine any proposed long-term action, but he proved me wrong. He has revolutionary values and his ideas for the Lapu Lapu University warranted a standing ovation on behalf of the Pilipino community. As a learned, institutionalized person, I did not think his street values would allow him to think big. But big thoughts he had indeed and he inspired the rest of the participants! The quest for a Lapu Lapu University is a testament to the resilience and the inner strength or *lakas ng loob* of Pilipino American young adults.

Based on my experience in this study, participatory research is a boon to the field of education. In order for participatory research to be prioritized and valued, public interests

must have more power than corporate interests—academic freedom in our universities and colleges is at stake. Research must also have an action component that is relevant to the local or global community in order to reclaim higher education for the everyday masses not just the wealthy. Long-term institutional change can only happen alongside greater social movements to quell globalization and to create long term opportunities for Pilipino American young adults and all young adults in the United States.

*The Next Steps for Lapu Lapu University*

The next couple of months will be a time of planning and reconvening for the young adult participants. The group plans to launch the Lapu Lapu University fair during April 2008 in commemoration of the battle between Lapu Lapu and Ferdinand Magellan at the Battle of Mactan. The vision for the fair is to have a safe and engaging space to host information tables for different businesses and organizations, workshops and networking opportunities for Pilipino American young adults in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. The participants and the researcher hope to work on different outreach projects to recruit more volunteers and more sponsors to make this dream a reality. Classroom presentations and radio show interviews are already scheduled to continue the dialogue.

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APPENDIXES

**APPENDIX A****IRBHS LETTER OF APPROVAL**

June 13, 2006

Dear Ms. Gonzales:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #06-051). Please note the following:

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file a renewal application.
2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS. Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.
3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP  
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

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IRBPHS - University of San Francisco  
Counseling Psychology Department  
Education Building - 017  
2130 Fulton Street  
San Francisco, CA 94117-1080  
(415) 422-6091 (Message)  
(415) 422-5528 (Fax)  
[irbphs@usfca.edu](mailto:irbphs@usfca.edu)  
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<http://www.usfca.edu/humansubjects/>

**APPENDIX B**  
**RECRUITMENT AD**



**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH STUDY ON  
PILIPINO AMERICAN YOUNG ADULTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study of *PILIPINO AMERICAN YOUNG ADULTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION*. The purpose of this study is to find out how community and college partnerships can help retain Pilipino American young adults in higher education. As a participant in this study, you would be asked to participate in two focus groups and a one-on-one dialogue. The total time commitment will be about 8 hours or more.

If you are interested, please email Ingrid Gonzales at [imgonzales@usfca.edu](mailto:imgonzales@usfca.edu) or call (415) 515-4707.

*This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance from IRBPHS- University of San Francisco.*

*Source of Picture: [http://us.st11.yimg.com/us.st.yimg.com/I/mybarong\\_1895\\_36306970](http://us.st11.yimg.com/us.st.yimg.com/I/mybarong_1895_36306970)*

## APPENDIX C

## RECRUITMENT FLYER

*PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH STUDY ON***PILIPINO AMERICAN YOUNG ADULTS  
IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study of  
*PILIPINO AMERICAN YOUNG ADULTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION.*

The purpose of this study is to find out how community and college partnerships can help retain Pilipino American young adults in higher education.

**As a participant in this study, you would be asked to participate in two focus groups & a one-on-one dialogue. The total time commitment will be about 8 hours or more.**

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact: *Ingrid Gonzales* at (415) 515- 4707 or email [imgonzales@usfca.edu](mailto:imgonzales@usfca.edu)

*This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance from IRBPHS- University of San Francisco.*

*Source of Picture: [http://us.st11.yimg.com/us.st.yimg.com/I/mybarong\\_1895\\_36306970](http://us.st11.yimg.com/us.st.yimg.com/I/mybarong_1895_36306970)*