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# Challenging Filipino Colonial Mentality with Philippine Art

Francesca V. Mateo

University of San Francisco, [fvmateo@dons.usfca.edu](mailto:fvmateo@dons.usfca.edu)

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# Challenging Filipino Colonial Mentality with Philippine Art

Francesca V. Mateo

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University of San Francisco – Master of Arts in International Studies – December 2016

## ABSTRACT

350 years, the Philippines was colonized by Spain and the United States. The Philippines became a sovereign nation in 1946 yet, fifty years later, colonial teachings continue to oppress Filipinos due to their colonial mentality (CM.) CM is an internalized oppression among Filipinos in which they experience an automatic preference for anything Western—European or U.S. American—and rejection of anything Filipino. Although Filipinos show signs of a CM, there are Filipinos who are challenging CM by engaging in Philippine art. Philippine art is defined as Filipino-made visual art, literature, music, and dance intended to promote Philippine culture. This research project analyzes the Philippine art community and discovers that those involved in the Philippine art community are conscious of how colonialism dictates standards today. They also actively challenge colonial affects by creating and/or supporting artists whom promote Filipino cultures. However, Philippine art's ability to decrease CM among Filipinos is not evenly accessible among classes.

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## INTRODUCTION

Colonization is the conquest of one nation by another. It involves the exploitation of the colonized nation's labor, resources and space for the gain of the colonizing nation. (Kapoor 2007) Not only does the colonizer physically assert itself onto the colonized, it also asserts itself into the locals' minds. Colonizers taught the colonized that they must emulate its conquerors in order to become civilized. (Quijano 1992) (Cupples and Glynn 2011) Thus, rather than acknowledging the indigenous ways of life as merely different than their own, colonizers instilled an inferiority complex among those it colonized. This inferiority complex forced the colonized to conceal their own cultures and redefine what being civilized meant. (Fanon 1967) (Kapoor 2007)

For nearly four hundred years, colonization has been part of the Philippines' history. From 1565 to 1898, Spain colonized the Philippines and left upon being defeated by the United States in the Spanish-American War. (Caronan 2005) The U.S. then annexed the Philippines and claimed the country as its own territory until 1946, or as the U.S. 1916 Jones Act stated, until the U.S. government deemed Filipinos fit to govern themselves. (Caronan 2005) Both Spanish and American colonizers projected definitions of civilization overruling the Philippines' own determination of development. These definitions continue to exist in the Philippines today through what some scholars call "colonial mentality." Colonial mentality (CM), as defined by

ethnic study scholars, is an internalized oppression among Filipinos in which they experience an automatic preference for anything Western—European or U.S. American—and rejection of anything Filipino. (David 2013)

The measurement of one’s CM correlates to one’s self-esteem<sup>1</sup>. The higher one’s CM is, the lower one’s self-esteem may be. (David 2013) Therefore, understanding the lasting effects of colonization in the Philippines is critical for the mental health of Filipinos. A low self-esteem is at risk of depression and feelings of hopelessness. (Crocker et al. 1994) One can see traces of low self-esteem due to CM, or the “feeding off of Americans” as anthropologist Arjun Appadurai puts it, among Filipinos’ views on skin color and favoritism for lighter-skinned celebrities. For example, many of the celebrities in the Philippines are part European or American and singers often cover American songs.

However, despite remnants of Philippines colonized past in the psychology of Filipinos, there are Filipinos challenging CM by engaging in Philippine art. For the purpose of this research project, Philippine art is defined as Filipino-made visual art, literature, music, and dance intended to promote Philippine culture. One example of Filipinos critiquing CM with art is Philippine-based artist Abigail Dela Cruz. Dela Cruz illustrated the pre-colonial Tagalog goddess Dian Masalanta. She did not feel “self-love” for her Filipina identity until she began researching

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<sup>1</sup> Psychologists define self-esteem as the “central aspect of psychological well-being” that can measure one’s

about pre-colonial cultures in the Philippines, she then applied it to her artwork. By creating her own Philippine art, Dela Cruz increased her self-esteem for her national identity.

I observed similar efforts among other Filipinos and Filipino American colleagues in which they challenged their CM after learning to appreciate their Filipino identities. They gained appreciation for their Philippine identity through art. Observing how Philippine art changed perspectives is what inspired this thesis. This research project hones in the question of whether art can be a tool for challenging CM—whether one is Filipino or of another post-colonized ethnic identity.

### **Research Question and Methods**

This research project focuses on the push against CM by the Philippine art community. I ask if art can be a sufficient tool for decolonization. Decolonization refers to the process of reducing CM. As coined by ethnic studies scholar and psychologist E.J.R. David, decolonization reduces CM by allowing individuals to better analyze their feelings, attitudes and behaviors toward his or her Filipino-identity then relating those expressions to the Philippines’ colonial history. (David 2013) Specifically, I ask how Philippine art informs how Filipinos grapple with CM. I argue that Filipino artists and Filipinos involved in the art community challenge their CM because, by exposing themselves to Filipino-made artwork, they increase their esteem as Filipinos.

In order to examine if CM is an influential aspect in the Philippine art community, I conducted a qualitative study among artists in Metro Manila for six weeks. I interviewed and surveyed Metro Manila artists as well as art programs' participants and organizers. For a basis of comparison, I also studied the CM of a general sampling of Metro Manila students at the University of the Philippines, Diliman.

### *Limitations*

My limitations in producing this research project revolve around two factors: time limitations and my Filipina American identity. These two factors may have influenced the outcome of my data. Given these time restrictions, I cannot claim that the amount of people I interviewed and surveyed is a full representation of Filipinos in the Philippines or Metro Manila. I cannot claim that six weeks living in Metro Manila gave me a sufficient understanding of life as a local.

As a U.S. born Filipina, my Filipina-American (Fil-Am) identity comes with limitations, including a language barrier as well as my biases and potential biases Filipinos in the Philippines may have towards me. My oral skills for the Tagalog language are not fluent, although my comprehension skills are. (My surveys were conducted solely in English whereas my interviews were mostly in English and occasionally in *Taglish*, a mixture of Tagalog and English. Lastly,

because of my Fil-Am identity, folks may have been less forthcoming or honest with information.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of my research is to better understand the existing effects of colonialism today and how to provide a solution to those effects. Although the focus of my study is in the Philippines, the findings can be transferrable to other post-colonized ethnic groups because I address how colonialism still affects the mental health of post-colonized peoples. Because European colonizers embedded a colorism<sup>2</sup> onto the cultures of those they colonized, a skin-color hierarchy can be seen among nations who have been colonized by Westerners today. (Hunter 2007) For instance, in Mexico, light-skinned people are higher up in its social class system due to its Spanish colonial history. (Hunter 2007) Because my research provides possible reasons of how colonialism affects post-colonized people today— such as with colorism—this project also promotes the importance of diversifying the representation of people in all forms.

I posit that engaging with art can reduce internalized colonialism. What I do not intend to do is romanticize the Philippines, indigenous cultures, and its pre-colonial history. Rather, this

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<sup>2</sup> Colorism is the process in which in which light-skinned people have greater social privileges than those of dark-skinned color people. These privileges include social favorability, income, and education opportunities. (Hunter 2007)



project demonstrates the need to address the ways in which colorism and prejudice exist in the Philippines and even in the art community. Decolonization is needed for the Philippines to move forward as a new, not as emulators of those who colonized it but as autonomous peoples. As author and politician Aimé Césaire wrote in his book *Discourse on Colonialism*:

“The problem is not to make a utopian and sterile attempt to repeat the past, but to go beyond. It is not a dead society that we want to revive... Nor is it the present colonial society that we wish to prolong... It is a new society that we must create, with the help of all our brother slaves, a society rich with all the productive power of modern times, warm with all the fraternity of olden days.” (Césaire, 1972: pg. 52)

Like Césaire, I do not suggest that Filipinos should repeat its pre-colonial ways of life or colonial. Rather, the Philippines must create a society based on what it learned from pre-colonial and colonial times and “go beyond.”

### **Presentation of Research Project**

In order to better develop my argument for the Philippines’ need to challenge CM, the following section provides context on the Philippines’ history, colonial experience under Spain, and its colonial and post-colonial relationship with the U.S. Following background on the Philippines is the literature review. The literature review is categorized in three parts: CM, decolonizing through inclusivity, and art for self-esteem. Within each section, I share literature by other academics on the three topics then pose how my research contributes to them. Thirdly, I illustrate my research methods, which include surveys and interviews. I then describe how I

collected my data and analyzed it. Afterwards, I demonstrate my research findings in both paragraph-form and graphics. And, lastly, I conclude with a summary of my results as well as with a discussion on limitations and how this project opens up further discussions for further research.

## BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY

External forces have always influenced the Philippines. The oldest human remnants found in the Philippines are 67,000 years old and has traces from African and Southeast Asian lineages. (Hnederson 2010) Slightly younger remains prove the Philippines had contact with several Asian countries such as China, India, and Malaysia. (McKay and Junker 2001) Over the course of time, several languages formed; in this small country alone, 182 languages are used today. (Bickford et al. 2014) However, despite these thousands of years old dialects being spoken across the country, the two national languages include Filipino—based on the native Philippine dialect *Tagalog*— and English—a language from one out of two colonizers of the Philippines.

The two colonizers in the Philippines included Spain (1565-1898) and the United States (1898-1946). Studying the Philippines colonial past is imperative for this research project because it provides background on how CM developed. This section illustrates how Spain and the U.S. influenced the Philippines' rationale through colonization.

### *Spanish Colonization*

Spain sought to convert Filipinos into Christian believers during its colonial reign. Colonizers manipulated indigenous beliefs to be favorable of Christianity. The first Archbishop in Manila Domingo de Salazar, for example, taught locals that those who believed in the

Christian God would be protected from natural disasters. He stated in 1586 that prejudice against Filipinos who converted to Christianity caused natural disasters. (Salazar 1911 [1588]: 57-69) (Camba 2012) Therefore, Filipinos' obeying the Spanish colonizers and their religious beliefs perceived their Christian conversion to be a favorable act for divine will.

While colonizing the Philippines, Spain built two divisions: 1) between colonizers and the colonized and 2) between Christian Filipinos and non-Christian Filipinos. Filipinos who abandoned their traditions that Spain found offensive claimed to be a different type of people than those who continued the traditions. These traditions included human sacrifices, wearing loincloths, and teeth decoration. (Scott 1994) The colonizers encouraged this separation. For example, Spanish priest Pedro de San Buenaventura said "Whoever files his teeth, I will certainly punish." (Scott 1994)

### *U.S. Colonization*

Upon winning the Spanish-American war, the U.S. annexed the Philippines. Filipinos then fought for sovereignty against its new colonizer during the Philippine-American War. In 1902, the U.S. defeated the Philippines. In 1901, the U.S. established an education system throughout the Philippines in order to maintain its power over the Filipino people. (Rafael 2016) Military governor, Douglas Macarthur, stated that creating schools were necessary to "expedite restoration of tranquility throughout the archipelago." (Rafael, 2016: 44) The U.S. government

used the schools as a means of assimilating the Filipino people to “Anglo-Saxon values” while cultivating a peaceful relationship with natives.

The U.S. created a universal education system. However, it revolved around strengthening its power over the Philippines through the weakening of Filipinos’ esteem by promoting Americanization. The first teachers were American soldiers who were dubbed as “Thomasites” because they arrived on the U.S.S Thomas. (Rafael 2016) American teaching was problematic because Thomasites lacked knowledge on Filipino culture yet, they decided to define what being Filipino meant. For example, an American high school principal in the Philippines Harry Couch Theobald wrote the *Filipino Teacher’s Manual* in 1907 where he encouraged the teachers to create bonds with the students’ culture. However, he left it up to them to define what their culture entails. (Elias 2014)

One can see another example of U.S. power over Filipinos in the education system within the book *History of the Philippines* by David Barrows. Barrows was the General Superintendent of Education in the Philippines from 1903 to 1909 and also the Chief of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes. His goal for his history book was to teach Filipinos that being colonized by the U.S. meant they were progressing from primitive ways. (Hawkins 2012) Barrows stated that “black races”—including Filipinos—did not progress until they were introduced to Westerners. (Barrows 1905) According to Barrows, the Philippines did not live a historical nor credible life

until it encountered Spain. (Hawkins 2012) Along with Filipinos learning that they were lesser beings until colonized, Filipinos also learned that speaking English meant they were rising from savagery. (Rafael 2016) The U.S. established English as the main language for its schools, which resulted into a social hierarchy based on linguistics. Those who became fluent in English were more likely to succeed economically and climb up the social ladder. (Rafael 2016)

### *Identity*

Arising from colonialism was a nationalistic push from Filipino scholars who sought to reframe the education system to better reflect their definition of the Philippines. Historian Renato Constantino argued that the U.S. instilled their education system in the Philippines as a means of “pacifying their newly-won freedom from an invader who had posed an ally.” (Constantino, 1966: 47) (Claudio, 2015: 194) Colonial teachings, according to Constantino, caused Filipinos to become an “uprooted race” detached from their own traditions and ways of life. (Constantino, 1966: 37) (Claudio, 2015: 194)

On the other hand, political scientist Lisandro E. Claudio argues that nationalists such as Constantino dismissed how “indigenized” curriculum is formed with miseducated biases. For instance, while Constantino criticized Americanized textbooks, Claudio argued that nationalists must recognize that we are now in a globalized world. Being simply “anti-Western,” according to Claudio, leads to the neglect of totalitarian governance within the Philippines.

What is clear from these two opposing sides is that Filipino identity is complicated because of that history. Philippine president, Benigno Aquino III said in 2015, “Filipinos are bewildered about their identity. They are an Asian people not Asian in the eyes of their fellow Asians and not Western in the eyes of the West.” (Heydarian 2015) This project focuses on how the lost sense of identity due to CM affects Filipinos today and how the Philippine art community is challenging these ideas

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarly work reviewed for this research is organized in the following sections: colonial mentality (CM), decolonization and inclusion, and art for self-esteem and identity.

### Colonial Mentality

#### *Skin-Color Hierarchy and Elitism*

Spanish and U.S. colonial teaching strongly affected how Filipinos perceive themselves. One of the existing effects of colonization was a skin-color hierarchy which is still pertinent today. A skin-color hierarchy rates the social worth of a person based on the person's skin-tone. The skin-color hierarchy parallels light skin as a Western characteristic. Colonialism taught Filipinos to believe that to be Westernized is to be wealthy, intelligent, and beautiful. Therefore, the lighter your skin color, the more wealthy, intelligent, and attractive you are perceived to be. On the other side of the skin-color hierarchy is dark skin-tones, which is identified with the lack of wealth, intelligence, and attractiveness. (Rondilla 2012)

Spanish colonists established the skin-color hierarchy in the Philippines by teaching Filipinos that they were the superior race. (Camba 2012) When Spanish men reproduced with the Filipinas, their children and future generation would often rise to political power and economic advantages while others were more likely to continue to be less educated and have less economic opportunities. (Hall and Livingston 2003) Spain strengthened the skin-color hierarchy by



creating a division between Filipinos and Filipinos with Spanish-bloodlines. Also during Spanish colonization, groups of Chinese merchants migrated to the Philippines and gained a higher economic status than Filipinos because they supplied Spanish colonists with luxury goods. (Rondilla 2012) The Chinese migration intensified the color hierarchy because their light complexion contributed to the discourse that light skin relates to better economic statuses. And, as demonstrated from “Background Context,” the skin-color hierarchy was reinforced during U.S. colonization as well.

The skin-color hierarchy instituted a form of a structural violence (SV). SV is a way in which the structure of a society socially disadvantages a group of people by stereotyping or stigmatizing them. (Ziegler and Ziegler 2016) Filipinos’ CM perpetuated the skin-color hierarchy as a form of SV by continuing to endorse light skin as socially superior. For example, most upper class Filipinos, politicians and celebrities in the Philippines tend to be light-skinned and from Chinese and/or Western lineages. (Rafael 2003) (Rondilla 2012) Prominent figures include the 2010 to 2016 president Benigno Aquino III’s mother (who was also a Philippine president) comes from a Chinese-Filipino family. Also, Miss Universe Philippines 2015 Pia Wurtzbach is half Filipino and half German. (Ax and Bailey 2015)

Darker-skinned Filipinos tend to have additional social disadvantages. Darker-skinned celebrities exist but are often only athletes like the boxer Manny Pacquiao or Filipino-African

American athletes (Rafael 2003) such as Jordan Clarkson, a basketball player in the Philippine National Basketball Association. (Yeh 2015) Most darker-skinned Filipinos were stigmatized as low-valued citizens. (Rafael 2003) For instance, the indigenous populations of the Philippines were the biggest victims to the SV of CM and were systematically placed in a cycle of poverty. (Ty 2010) In 2015, different Filipino indigenous groups came together for a forum by the European Union Delegation to the Philippines in which they complained that they continue to face “social discrimination, economic marginalization, and political disempowerment.” (ABS-CBN News 2015)

#### *Demeaning Filipino Self-Esteem*

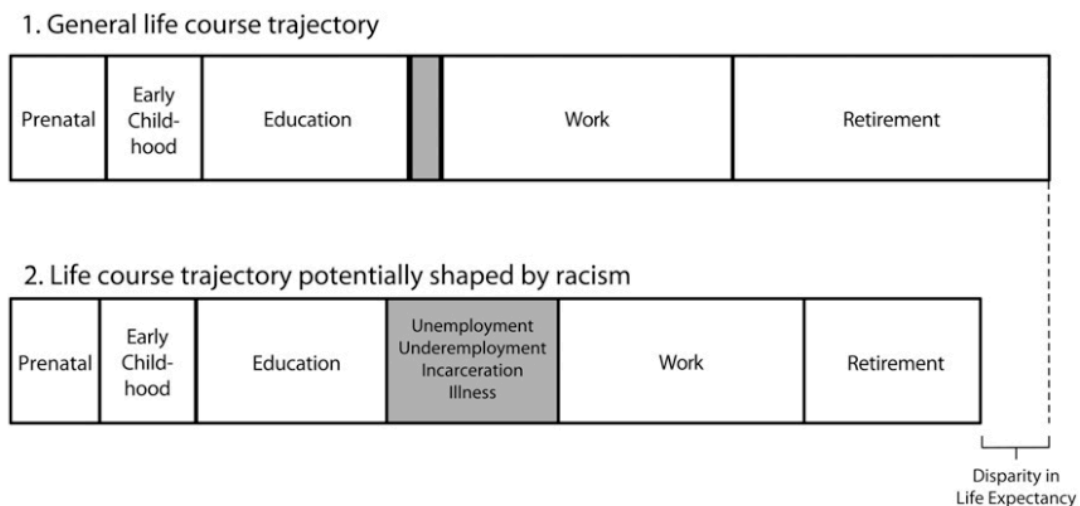
CM affected the mental health of Filipinos by instilling low self-esteem, shame, and other issues. Psychologists define self-esteem as the “central aspect of psychological well-being” that can measure one’s satisfaction with his or her life. (Crocker et al., 1994: 503) The higher the self-esteem, the less likely they are to be at risk of depression and hopelessness, which are symptoms of SV. (Crocker et al. 1994) (Ziegler and Ziegler 2016) Also, those with higher self-esteem perceive themselves and the world more positively. Collective self-esteem is defined as the measurement of how one evaluates the social group he or she belongs to; these social groups include gender, religion, social class, and ethnic identity. (David 2013) The concept of “self” comprises of both personal and collective self-esteem. That is, the psychological well-being of

people directly relates to not only how they perceive themselves but also the group(s) in which they identify themselves a part of. (Crocker-et al. 1994) (David 2013)

Therefore, how one perceives their ethnic identity affects his or her overall self-esteem. Considering Filipinos experience CM because of their colonial history, they have a low sense of collective self-esteem. (David 2013) As the skin-color hierarchy stresses, Filipinos should not have dark skin if they want to be recognized as attractive or intelligent or powerful. For instance, a 48 year old Filipina woman who migrated to the U.S. recalled her experience growing up in the Philippines with her darker complexion, “I had no self-esteem in the Philippines. Come to think of it, I didn’t because everything I was, was I guess not meeting their standards.” (Rondilla 2012)

**Figure 1:**

**“Conceptual model of how racism may shape time in different states over the life course”**



(Gee et al., 2012: 971)

There is not enough data on how discrimination affects the mental health of specifically Filipinos but there are studies on how discrimination affects people for all. Researchers found that discrimination correlates to stress-induced illnesses such as depression and heart attacks. (Gee et al. 2012) (Mohammed 2009) Also, as **Figure 1** demonstrates, racism correlates to life disparities. Each bar illustrates how a disparity may exist in a “quality of time.” The unequal lengths represent how there is an inequality in the lives between those who are not discriminated against those who do face discrimination.

#### *Significance of Studying CM*

Studying CM is important for understanding the potential affects it has on the mental health of Filipinos. Philippine leaders must address CM because it correlates to depression or inferiority complex. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2011, the Philippines ranks number one in depression in Southeast Asia. For every 100,000 Filipinos, WHO found, 93 of them commit suicide. (Panela 2012) And, out of those diagnosed with depression, the WHO concluded only a third of them seek professional help. (Panela 2012)

Not only may depression lead to suicide, it can also lead to “loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, low energy and poor concentration.” Also, the 2012 World Happiness Report by Columbia University’s Earth Institute reported that the Philippines is one of the least happy countries, ranking only 103rd out

of 155 countries. (Helliwell et. al 2012) Although there is not enough data to conclude that depression rates in the Philippines to determine exactly how much the skin color hierarchy affects Filipinos' self-esteems, the Philippines should not dismiss that this hierarchy and CM contributes to people's mental health. (David 2013)

One should note that studying CM is also effective in understanding the psychology of others who identify themselves with post-colonized nations who also feel the need to emulate Westerners because of inferior connotations tied onto their ethnicity. For example, in Latin American countries like Columbia, Mexico, and Venezuela, elite statuses are associated with light skin colors because of their colonial history as well. (Gomez 2008) Another example of how Latino communities suffer from CM too comes from an organization called the U.S. Literary Heritage Project. This project restored literature by Hispanics from colonial times, literature including novels and poems. Commonly found in this literature were dark-skinned Hispanics' recollection of the discrimination they faced. One of these narratives is from Angela Jorge, who wrote in 1979:

*As the black Puerto Rican woman goes through various stages of life... the blackness of her skin and the clearly Negroid physical characteristics makes her experiences within each stage different from those of her lighter-skinned sister in struggle for emancipation and liberation... (Jorge 1979)(Gomez, 2008: 194)*

Like the Philippines, the gap between the quality of life between light-skinned people and dark-skinned people not only exists in colonial times but even today.

### *Contribution to CM Literature*

Through this research project, I contribute to the discussion on CM by studying current indicators of CM in Metro Manila. My interviews and surveys reveal how CM affects individuals today and how art involvement in Metro Manila influences one's CM. Also, the interviews reveal how media and consumer culture in Metro Manila perpetuates colonial standards thus strengthening the CM among Filipinos. Not only does this research project strengthen the argument that studying CM is necessary for the mental health of Filipinos, this project also proposes how actors may be able to challenge CM.

### **Decolonization by Inclusivity**

Discussing decolonization and inclusivity is critical for my research project because both provide a framework for resolving CM. Decolonization refers to the process of reducing CM. As coined by ethnic studies scholar and psychologist E.J.R. David, decolonization reduces CM by allowing individuals to better analyze their feelings, attitudes and behavior towards his or her Filipino-identity then relating those expressions to the Philippines' colonial history. (David 2013) In a broader sense, as defined by social justice professor George Sefa Dei, decolonization

breaks the boundaries of thinking instilled by colonists thus creating “many paths with many openings and many endpoints.” (Sefa Dei 2016)

Inclusivity refers to the encompassment of all. By creating an inclusive society, one creates a safe space for everyone; space not only refers to physical places but also societal and abstract spaces like in education systems and mass media. (Sefa Dei 2016) Representation in the Philippine mass media, for example, is exclusive to colonial-like standards of beauty because of the population’s CM. By decolonizing representation, Philippine media would reflect the diversity of the Philippines. Media would then represent everyone regardless of their varying views, appearances, and practices. And, by diversifying spaces, openness to understanding these differences follows. (Sefa Dei 2016)

This research project argues that decolonization is necessary for the mental health of Filipinos and other post-colonized people. It also posits that Philippine art can be a tool for decolonization because Philippine art is inclusive to a wide array of Filipino experiences. Decolonization programs exist all over the world, all with the goal of healing the oppressions that colonialism implemented. Actors who support decolonization are responding to colonial “domination and exploitation” (Cupples and Glynn, 2014: 57) by providing spaces of acceptance and understanding.

For this section, I provide two decolonization programs to further support how valuable decolonization is for oppressed groups. The two examples of decolonization are: the Universidad de las Regiones Autónomas de la Costa Caribe Nicaragüense (URACCAN) and FADE-ing Away our Colonial Mentality (FADE.) The first example shows how an inclusive education system provides the opportunity for marginalized communities to succeed. The second example demonstrates how becoming aware of one's own CM, one can deconstruct it.

### *URACCAN*

The indigenous and Creole populations of Nicaragua often struggle economically due to the country's colonial history. URACCAN, a Nicaraguan-based university, aims to empower all of its students to change the status quo and rise against "racism, discrimination, poverty, and marginalization" by promoting an intercultural university education. Subjects offered include Intercultural Medicine and Intercultural communication. According to a study in 2009, the Intercultural Communication students—whom were mostly Creole and the indigenous group Miskito—were "outspoken, engaged, articulate, and willing to share their ideas about globalization, development and culture." This is due to URACCAN creating an inclusive space that allows all of its students to feel validated and safe when sharing their views. (Cupples and Glynn, 2014: 61-62)



### *FADE*

Another example is from Filipino-American psychologist E.J.R. David who wrote *Brown Skin, White Minds*. In his book, he included a decolonizing program for Filipino-Americans. As part of the program, these Filipino-Americans attended Filipino history and culture classes that aimed to increase the participants' knowledge on Filipino and Filipino-American history, and gain consciousness of their own CM and how to challenge CM. At the end of the program, the author noted that the participants did have a decrease in CM and also experienced an improvement in their awareness of self and community as well as motivation in self and community empowerment. (David 2013)

### *Significance*

Decolonization and inclusivity does not aim to dismiss a group of people's colonial past. Rather, decolonization encourages acceptance of that past whereas inclusivity intends to open the doors for all. Globalization today continues to expose the Philippines to Western ideals and theories. (Brillantes and Fernandez 2013) However, Filipinos must not let that influence neglect its own local context. If the Philippines was more prepared and knowledgeable of its role individually in the globalized world, its "real identity may emerge." Then, the Philippines would cease in attempting to emulate another's. (Brillantes and Fernandez 2013)

### *Contribution*

My research contributes to the literature on both decolonization and inclusivity by providing how artists and those who participate in the Metro Manila art community are decolonizing themselves through Philippine art. As shown in my “Research Findings,” those who view and engage in Philippine art have the opportunity of feeling included because Philippine art is reflective of the wide array of Filipino experience. The chapter “Research Findings” goes into detail on how my interviews reveal different individuals’ thoughts on inclusivity and its need in the Philippines. My research also provides why individuals and how Filipinos may or may not choose to decolonize. Overall, my research provides more understanding on how Filipinos decolonize themselves and how inclusivity affects them. Understanding both contributes to discussions on improving the mental health and self-esteem of post-colonized people.

### **Art for Constructing Confidence**

The previous section discusses how decolonization and inclusivity can heal the oppressions inflicted by CM. This research project proposes that art can enact both decolonization and inclusivity. Although this project focuses on Philippine art, the following section discusses art in general. The purpose of discussing art generally is to explore how engagement in art—whether it be through attending an art program or creating art—one is more

receptive to critically think about his or her environment and increase his or her acceptance of his or her identity. As the previous sections demonstrated, improving one's sense of identity correlates to increasing one's level of self-esteem. (Phinney and Chavira 1992)

First, I describe how art engagement expands ways of thinking thus leading one towards positive self-acceptance. In doing so, I provide examples of how art programs in different parts of the world were used for improving the self-esteem of its participants. I then explain how studying the ways art constructs confidence is beneficial for my research and how my research contributes to that discussion.

### *Expanding Ways of Thinking*

By creating art or surrounding oneself in art, one expands his or her way of thinking. For instance, art engagement not only promotes creativity and self-expression, it enhances one's cognitive abilities as well as empathy and critical thinking skills. (Dewey, 1919; Heilig et. al, 2010; Eisner 2002; Kisida et. al 2016) Art educators have also found that utilizing art in education systems allows its students to develop thinking habits from studying art. These habits include, “observing, reflecting, envisioning, innovating, stretching, and engaging and persisting.” (Hetland et. al 2007) In terms of art participation specifically, those who participate increases their skills in building theories, reflecting, expression and elaboration. (Kisida etl al 2016)

These art benefits can be seen in a case study in Arkansas conducted by the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville and Rice University of Houston, Texas. The case study found that arts in education strengthened students' ways of thinking critically. In order to analyze students' exposure to art, some students from the study were randomly assigned to participate in a facilitated art museum tour. All of the students completed a survey that included essay questions in regards to an unfamiliar work of art. These essays were then coded to examine the students' critical thinking skills. The results showed that the students who attended the art museum tours demonstrated signs of critically thinking more than the students who did not.<sup>3</sup> The study describes the essays by the museum participants as providing "deeper and more complex interpretations." (Kisida et al., 2016: 177) (Luke et al. 2007) One example of analysis the researchers provided was by a tenth grade girl who analyzed the painting "The Box" by Bo Barlette (2002):

*I believe the children are reminiscing on the loss of their father. The look on the children's faces is very mournful. In the open bucket you can see things that would be sent home if a loved one was lost in war. The Popeye doll seems like he would represent the father's strength. There is a wedding photo, probably for remembrance and what looks like communion, which represents religion that maybe the family was close to. Also, to me, the empty chair in the foreground shows where the father would be sitting if he were*

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<sup>3</sup> The researches of this study used a critical thinking skills checklist in order to score the students' analysis of artwork. The checklist includes: "observation, interpretation, evaluation, association, problem finding, comparison, and flexible thinking." (Kisida et. al, 2016: 177;

*present*” (Kisida et al., 2016: 177)

This excerpt of the student’s essay has indicators of critical thinking such as “observation, interpretation, and association.” Art’s ability to improve critical thinking is not only beneficial to people pursuing arts, it is beneficial to students overall. Arts integration into other subjects has the potential to attract different types of learners by enhancing the learners’ “comprehension and retention of materials.” (May and Robinson 2016)

### *Constructing Confidence in Identity through Art*

Because art improves one’s critical thinking skills, one can better develop his or her understanding of him or herself. In a case study that observed the effects of art therapy on two groups, the researchers found that art nourished its participants ability to share and understand their personal stories. (Linesch et al. 2014) The two groups included 1) Hispanic/Latino adolescents and 2) Hispanic/Latina immigrant women that were originally from Mexico and moved to the U.S. Both groups participated in activities in which they would express their personal narratives. For one of the art therapy sessions, the women used fabrics to share their experiences onto “tapestries” while the youth repurposed vinyl records for their narratives. (Linesch et al. 2014)

The groups showed increasing self-confidence especially in their experiences as immigrants exposed to different cultures in the U.S. For instance, the adolescents expressed how

comfortable they became with sharing their experiences with those who had similar experiences and be able to reframe those experiences as “positive lessons.” They also expressed how proud they were of their accomplishments. (Linesch et al. 2014) The adolescents became more confident because they began seeing their experiences in a new positive light. The women, on the other hand, became more confident because the art therapy served as a coping mechanism for them. One woman confessed that she identified feelings in the art sessions that she never expressed before. Another woman explained how participating in an art process enabled her to take parts from her past and integrate it into who she is today. (Linesch et al. 2014)

As shown in this case study, art therapy provided a space for its participants to increase their self-confidence. The participants were able to share their stories with those who experienced similar trials as immigrants. And, because they were able to share their stories creatively, the participants were able to be at peace with their past and confidently build from what they learned from it. The next case study describes a program that increased the participants’ self-confidence by providing a space for its participants to express their “ethnic and cultural identities.”

#### *Constructing Confidence in One’s Culture through Art*

While the Pasifika<sup>4</sup> population is growing in New Zealand, educators are investigating how to teach a culturally wide array of students. Unfortunately, because of the stereotypes

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<sup>4</sup> Pasifika is a New Zealand term that refers to immigrants from Pacific Islands and their descendants. (Smith 2016)

constructed about Pasifika students, Pasifika students' academic performance resulted in "passivity or rebellion." (Smith, 2016: 87) This case study analyzes how four New Zealand art teachers sought to empower Pasifika students by providing them the tools and space to express themselves. The teachers interviewed for the study taught at schools with Pasifika students as the majority. (Smith 2016)

Each visual arts program included a section that focused on Pasifika cultures, subjects, and art symbols and techniques. By including their cultures into the program and allowing the students to share their knowledge and experiences as Pasifika people, the teachers found that the students felt comfortable being themselves because their cultures were "reflected in the classroom." (Smith, 2016: 102) The teachers also observed that the students felt empowered to express their ethnic and cultural identities in their artwork.

### *Significance*

Art engagement—either creating art or simply observing it—enables people to enhance their critical thinking skills, construct a better sense of their own identity, and increase their self-confidence. The examples shown in this section provided how art programs proved how art benefits people from different age groups, ethnic groups, and cultural groups. Art can improve the self-esteem and intellect of various people, therefore, art engagement proves to be significant for education systems, psychology, and the overall well-being of populations.

Low self-esteem can lead people to be more susceptible in believing negative stereotypes of others and including themselves. (Phinney and Chavira 1992) (Crocker and Major 1989) Whereas, for those with high self-esteem, has a clearer understanding of their own identity thus more able to express positive feelings about themselves and others. (Phinney and Chavira 1992) Therefore, studying a way in which actors can improve self-esteem would benefit not only individuals but also how these individuals interact with each other. As this section provided, art can be that tool for improving self-esteem.

#### *Contribution*

CM affects the self-esteem of post-colonized people because it involves the self-oppression of one's ethnic identity. My research project contributes to the discussion of increasing self-esteem through art by providing an analysis of how the Philippine art community utilizes art to challenge CM. Through my research, I demonstrate how Metro Manila artists and people involved in the Metro Manila art community are analytical of the Philippines' colonial history and how that history plays a role in their identity. This project furthers the argument for the necessity of art engagement for the mental health of all. I also determine that art engagement—because of its power to improve critical thinking skills—can be a tool for decolonizing. Decolonization involves analyzing one's feelings towards his or her ethnic identity



then relating those feelings to his or her colonial history. Because art improves one's analysis, this project determines how helpful art's benefits are in decolonizing.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Exposure to Philippine art inspired me to decolonize my own CM as a Filipina-American. I seek to discover whether Philippine art can be a tool for challenging the CM for others as well. In order to achieve this, my goals for this research project are 1) to understand how Filipinos are experiencing CM and 2) determine whether art engagement affects Filipinos’ CM. Through surveys and interviews, I conducted a qualitative study in Metro Manila, Philippines.

**Table 1.1: Number of surveys and interviews in each research group**

	PHILIPPINE ARTISTS	PARTICIPANTS OF THE PHILIPPINE ART COMMUNITY	STUDENTS
Survey Total	6	7	10
Interview Total	4	5	3

The people I interviewed and surveyed were broken down into three groups: Philippine artists, participants of the Philippine art community, and general population. (Table 1.1) The general population sample is from University Philippines, Diliman (UPD) in Quezon City of Metro Manila. The purpose of interviewing and surveying students from UPD was to provide a basis of comparison between a population that engages in art versus a population is less likely to.

In order to describe my research methodology, I will first illustrate the setting in which I conducted my research. I then provide detail on my data collection procedures for interviews and surveys. Lastly, I explain the limitations that I faced while conducting the research.

## Research Setting

### *Metro Manila*

I lived in Metro Manila from July 9 to August 21, 2016. I interned for the non-profit organization *Viva Manila!* from July 18 to August 13, 2016. Metro Manila region surrounds the country's capital, the city of Manila. During Spanish colonialism, the Spanish government developed Manila as the country's political and economic hub. Since then, Manila and its region Metro Manila continues to be the urban center of the Philippines. (Choi 2016) The Philippine government and urban planners today seek to make Metro Manila “modern and global” by creating developments such as malls. (Choi 2016) This makes Metro Manila an interesting setting for my research. As my research findings will show, there are various reactions among Filipino locals in regards to the globalization of Metro Manila and how CM plays a role in shaping those reactions.

### *Metro Manila based Artists*

The artists I interviewed and surveyed were chosen from various Metro Manila cities. These cities include Parañaque (1 interview), Makati (2 interviews, 2 surveys), Quezon City (2 surveyed), and Manila (1 interview, 2 surveys.) The artists come from various artistic backgrounds as well. Their art mediums include: tattooing, graphic design, music, play writing, acting, and visual art.

**Table 1.2: Philippine artists interviewed**

Philippine Artists Interviewed	AGE	ART MEDIUM	CITY
Andrei	32	Playwright	Makati
Carlos	44	Theatre Performer	Manila
Daniel	34	Theatre Performer	Makati
Luigi	32	Illustrator & Tattooist	Parañaque

**Table 1.3: Philippine artists surveyed**

AGE	ART MEDIUM	CITY
20	Visual Artist	Quezon City
20	Visual Artist	Quezon City
23	Musician & Writer	Makati
25	Theatre Performer	Makati
33	Graphic Photographer	Manila
33	Graphic Animator	Manila

Although the artists were chosen randomly and I did not know them prior to conducting research, it should be noted that 3 out of 4 artists interviewed are part of the network of my

internship with *Viva Manila! Viva Manila!* is a non-profit organization that promotes the city of Manila's art and culture scene. *Viva Manila!* seeks to:

*Increase the livability and creativity of the neighborhoods in Manila by: building partnerships, respecting the city's heritage, supporting local businesses, advocating for public space, activating underutilized spaces, and promoting walking and biking in the city. (Viva Manila 2014)*

Through this internship, co-founder Julia Nebrija networked me to artists and informed me of events and spaces of art engagement in Manila.

#### *Participants of the Philippine Art Community*

The participants of the Philippine art community group were interviewed and surveyed were chosen randomly from select organizations and events in two Metro Manila cities: Manila (4 interviews, 7 surveys) and Quezon City (1 interview). These organizations and events promote Philippine history, culture, traditions and/or modern Filipino culture.

The events in which I interviewed and surveyed participants were the *Walk This Way*<sup>5</sup> tour, *Cinemataya*<sup>6</sup>, *I HUB SABADO*<sup>7</sup>, and *Puppet Exchange*<sup>8</sup>. I attended the four events as well.

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<sup>5</sup> **Walk this Way Tour:** a guided tour by performer Carlos Celdran through Fort Santiago in Intramuros. In this tour, Celdran gives insight on Manila's history—from Spanish Colonization to U.S. colonization and World War II.

<sup>6</sup> **Cinemataya:** an annual independent film festival featuring short films and long films made by Filipino filmmakers hosted at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

<sup>7</sup> **I HUB SABADO:** a weekly event in which artists and crafters who have studios and boutiques in the First United Building in Manila host an open house of their art spaces.

**Table 1.3: Participants of the Philippine art community interviewed**

Participants of the Art Community Interviewed	AGE	INVOLVEMENT	CITY
Charisse	32	Founder of Network for Indigenous Communities with Manila	Manila
Glenn	23	<i>Cinemalaya</i> Film Festival	Manila
Katalina	27	Co-Owner of Brand that collaborates with Indigenous Products	Manila
Merselle	23	Graduate Student in Museum Studies	Quezon City
Monica	25	<i>Walk this Way</i> Tour	Manila

**Table 1.4: Participants of the Philippine art community surveyed**

AGE	EVENT	CITY
19	<i>Cinemalaya</i> Film Festival	Manila
22	<i>Cinemalaya</i> Film Festival	Manila
23	<i>Cinemalaya</i> Film Festival	Manila
28	<i>I HUB SABADO</i> Bazaar	Manila
19	<i>Puppet Exchange</i> Show	Manila
29	<i>Walk this Way</i> Tour	Manila
55	<i>Walk this Way</i> Tour	Manila

Along with participants of Philippine art events, I interviewed individuals who were involved in

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<sup>8</sup> **Puppet Exchange:** Hosted at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, Puppet Exchange features the art of puppetry from both Japan and the Philippines. The event included lectures on the history of puppetry in Japan and the Philippines and puppetry performances.

Philippine art organizations although they were not artists themselves. These individuals include:

1) the founder of a network for indigenous Philippine communities to share their culture with Manila, 2) a co-founder of a product brand in which Manila artists work with indigenous communities to create goods for sale and 3) a museum studies graduate student who was also a previous staff member of the Vargas Museum in UPD.<sup>9</sup>

*General Population: University of the Philippines, Diliman*

I selected University of the Philippines, Diliman to collect data because of safety and accessibility. I entered the Philippines shortly after a highly controversial presidential election, putting the country on travel warning list. The new president, Rodrigo Duterte, has encouraged thousands of extrajudicial killings for a war against drugs. Thus, UPD, being a college campus, allowed me to conduct research in a controlled safe and calm environment.

In terms of accessibility, UPD is a public university. Only students, staff, and faculty were permitted on campuses of private universities whereas UPD, on the other hand, was an open campus. Selected buildings required university identification, however, it was open to the general population. Also, I decided to conduct research at a university because I am not fluent in Tagalog/Filipino. Considering many of the college courses in the Philippines are taught in English, I had a better chance of speaking with locals who were fluent in English than if I were

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<sup>9</sup> To keep the anonymity of the founders, both of their organizations will remain nameless.

to conduct surveys and interviews elsewhere. It should be noted that two of the survey participants were not UPD students but visitors to the campus.

**Table 1.5: General population interviewed**

General Population Interviewed	AGE	YEAR IN COLLEGE
Chloe	20	Junior
Paula	21	Senior
Xanith	21	Senior

**Table 1.6: General population surveyed**

AGE	YEAR IN COLLEGE
18	Freshman
19	Freshman
18	Sophomore
19	Sophomore
19	Sophomore
20	Junior
20	Senior

*Limitations*

This research project’s limitations include: time and my identity as a Filipina-American. Both of these factors potentially influenced the outcome of my data because they affected how much data was collected. I conducted research in Metro Manila from July 9 to August 21, 2016.



Although I visited Manila multiple times prior to this research trip, I do not claim that a month's visit was sufficient to learning the local experience.

The research findings can provide an insight on CM in Metro Manila and the impact the art community has on CM. However, the amount of people surveyed and interviewed is a limited representation of the Filipino experience in Metro Manila. For instance, as mentioned in *Research Setting*, the majority of the artists I interviewed are part of the same network. This may lead to my research only representing the opinions of a niche group within the Manila art scene. More time researching would have possibly given me more opportunities to interview and survey a wider variety of people.

Also, considering I only had enough time to interview and survey students from one university, their campus culture may have affected all of their responses as well. For instance, UPD is particularly known to be vocal in advocating for social justice. This could mean that all the students are well versed in the effects of systematic oppressions, such as from colonialism. Another limitation could be that majority of the research participants are millennials, with the exception of one 44-year-old artist interviewee and one survey of a 55-year-old Philippine art community participant. This research's results are therefore reflective of primarily one age group.

## Data Collection Procedures

### *Surveys*

This research project analyzes the CM of three different groups in Metro Manila: artists, participants of the Philippine art community, and general population. Survey questions remained the same among each group. However, I added specific questions pertaining to creating art for the artist surveys and questions about art events in general for the participants of the Philippine art community. There are 28 questions in total for art participants and artists. The general group had a survey of 24 questions. The survey included introductory questions (such as age and “Were you born in Manila?”) and questions based on a Likert scale from “Strongly Agree “ to “Strongly Disagree.” The Likert scaled questions can be put into two different categories: self-esteem and attitudes toward the West.

The purpose of the self-esteem questions is to better understand the participants’ self-esteems and collective self-esteem. Self-esteem measures how satisfied one is with his or her life and his or her psychological well-being. Collective self-esteem refers to how satisfied one feels in regards to the social group he or she belongs to; in this case, this project studies how the participants feel towards their Filipino ethnic identity. Having low self-esteem and collective self-esteem are indicators for CM because the questions will reveal how they may reject aspects

of being Filipino. The self-esteem questions ask the participants what their attitudes are towards light skin-tones versus dark skin-tones, their own skin-tones, and the English language versus their Filipino language(s).

CM not only indicates the rejection of anything Filipino, it also includes the automatic preference for anything Western. In order to study this characteristic of CM, the other survey questions study participants' attitudes toward the West. These questions can overlap with revealing their self-esteem, however, these questions have a focus on comparing the Philippines to the West, particularly the United States. For instance, there are two questions that ask the participants to compare if they find European/white-Americans and/or part European/white-American Filipinos more attractive than Filipinos. This portion of the survey also asks students to reveal their attitudes towards Spanish colonization and U.S. colonization.

### *Interviews*

The purpose of the interview questions was to get a deeper understanding of the three groups' CM and how Philippine art may play a role in that. Like the surveys, the participants of this study include three different groups in Metro Manila: Philippine artists, participants of the Philippine art community, and general population. The interview questions were consistent among each group. However, in regards to the artists, I added questions regarding how their Filipino identity plays a role in their art. The participants of the Philippine art community had

additional questions as well. Their additional questions are about their involvement in the Philippine art community.

The interview questions followed the same themes as the survey questions: self-esteem and attitude towards the West. The questions were reformatted to be open-ended rather than like the Likert scale questions from the surveys. For example, one survey question is “Spanish colonization of the Philippines was beneficial to the Filipino people.” The interview asks instead, “How would you say Spain influenced the Philippines, for the better or worse?”

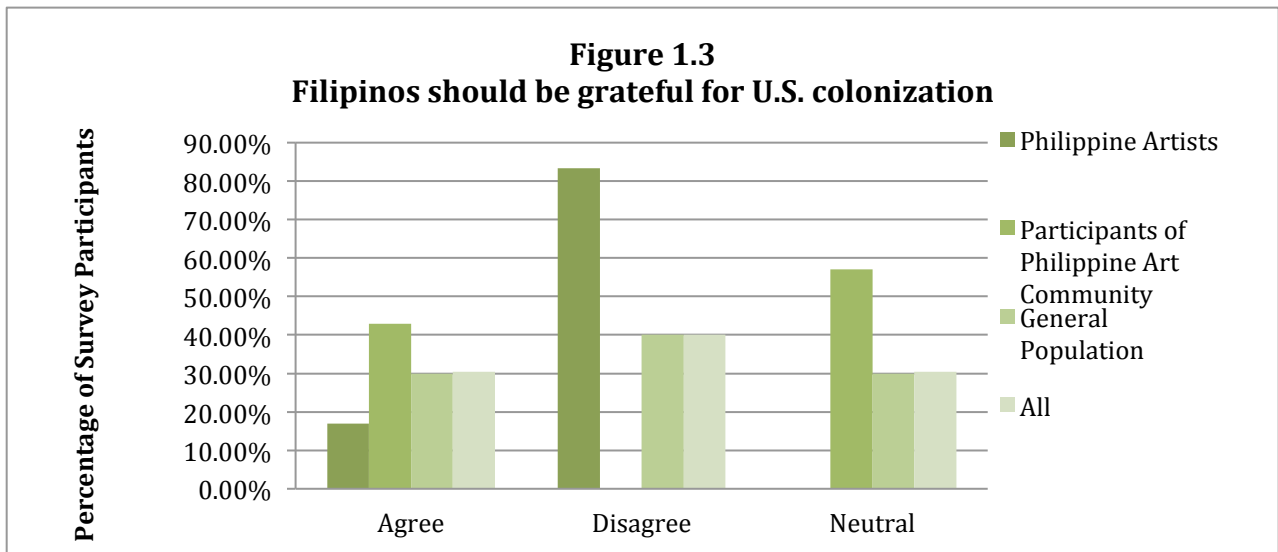
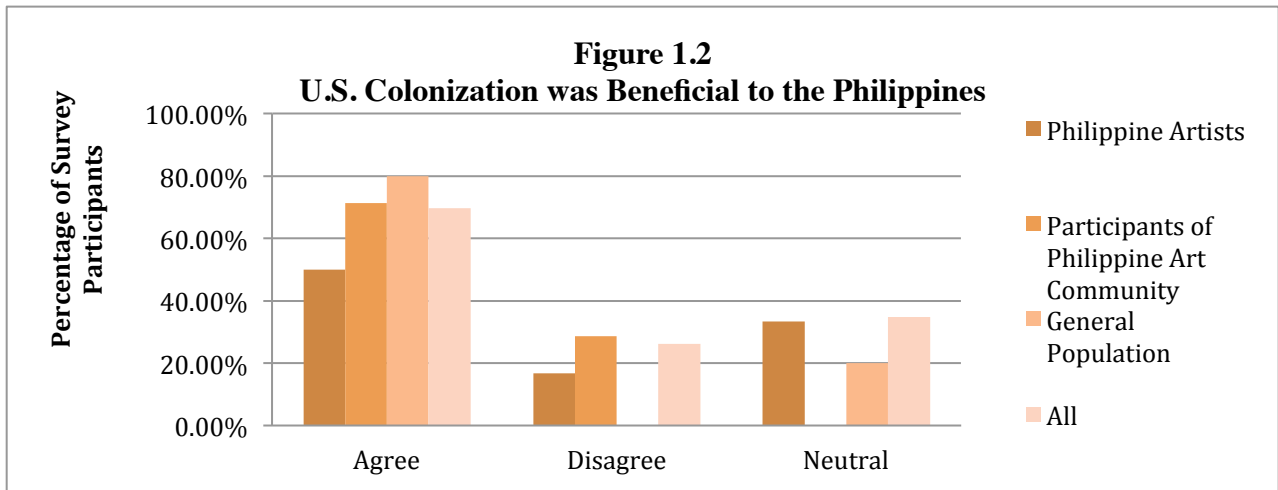
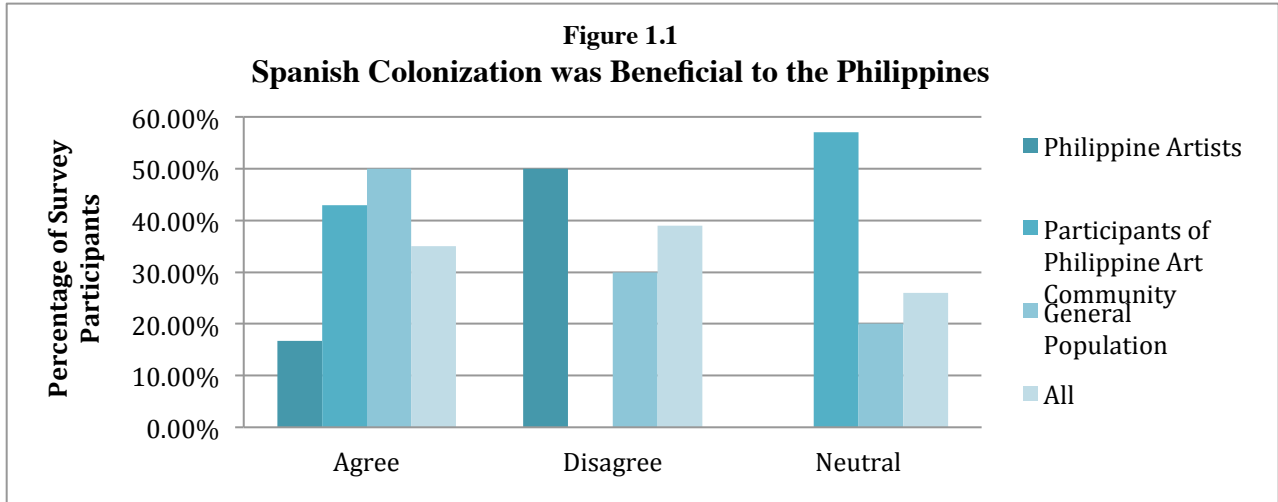
## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The surveys and interviews reveal that there is a growing resistance against CM and that Philippine art plays a role in that. However, the results also reveal that despite the resistance, CM still harms the self-esteem of Filipinos today. Also, the groups “artists” and “participants of art community” were found to be more critical and aware of CM than the group “general population, students from UPD.” The results do support the thesis that those engaging in Philippine art are challenging their CM. But, as the following sections will reveal, Philippine art has limitations and cannot eradicate CM alone.

There are four themes found in the research results: 1) mixed views on colonization and its effects today, 2) the West is the standard and the Philippines is the other 3) social divisions caused by CM 4) Philippine art and Filipino identity.

### **Mixed Views on Colonial History**

The surveys asked the study’s participants if they believed Spanish and U.S. colonization were beneficial to the Philippines. Overall, the results showed that majority of the survey participants believed U.S. colonization as beneficial. (Figure 1.1) Also, more participants perceived U.S. colonization as favorable compared to Spanish colonization. (Figure 1.2) However, the participants revealed mixed feelings towards the question, “Filipinos should be grateful for U.S. colonization. (Figure 1.3) Participants’ feelings towards the Philippines’



colonial history is reflected when categorized into the three groups (artists, participants of art community, and general population) in both surveys and interviews. The most critical towards colonization were the artists, then the participants of the art community. The general population—who still showed reservations towards colonization—was the least critical towards colonization.

### *Attitudes towards Spain*

#### Philippine Artists

The artists expressed significantly more negative feelings towards Spain and the U.S. for colonizing the Philippines. (Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2) In regards to Spain, half of the artists surveyed did not perceive Spanish colonization as beneficial for the Philippines. The artist interviews demonstrated that the negative feelings towards Spain may be due to Spain's implementation of Catholicism. For example, Daniel, a theatre practitioner and gallery curator, expressed frustrations towards Spain because of how Catholicism continues to be embedded in Filipino culture today:

*The Philippines is a shaming society because Filipinos use Catholic values to shame others. Everything is influenced by our colonial past. No one thinks for themselves.*

Carlos explained that he does not blame Spain for wrongdoings towards Filipinos during colonization. He asserted that Spain created the skin-color hierarchy in the Philippines, however,

the Catholic Church reinforced it by its portrayals of the Catholic martyr Jesus and his mother,

Mary:

*White is right because it shows you do not work outdoors; you are more elite. This has a lot to do with religion because of the portrayals of Jesus and Mary. We should stop blaming Spain. The real enemy is the Church.*

### Participants of Philippine Art Community

The survey results revealed that no one involved in the Philippine art community disagreed that Spain was beneficial for the Philippines. However, more than half of the Philippine art community surveys chose to be neutral in answering the question. While surveying, the participants often responded with similar phrases to, “But it depends!” when asked their opinion.

Unlike the artist interviews, which displayed unfavorable opinions of Spanish colonization, the art participants’ interviews expressed pros and cons. The pros included architecture and social systems. The cons, on the other hand, included social and skin-color hierarchies.

Charisse expressed her mixed feelings towards Spanish colonization in her interview. She explained that the pros and cons of Spanish colonization can be seen in modern Philippine society:



*Spain introduced to us different food and architecture, Catholicism, galleon trade, but it also depleted our resources... Spain made us feel inferior; those who were mixed were the social elites. Thus, they created the hierarchy you see in our class system today.*

Monica further explained how Spain created social divisions and color discrimination that continues to be embedded in the Philippines' social structure:

*Corruption started with [Spain.] They brought the feudal system in our system. Because of them, the wealthy ones are in control of the government even after colonization. They did build beautiful monuments and brought great architecture. But, they started the color hierarchy and the white insecurity.*

Other interview participants discussed how Spanish colonization created a low collective self-esteem among Filipinos. For example, Merselle shared that despite the benefits of Spanish colonization, the real harm was on the "Filipino spirit:"

*Spain helped with improving the quality of life. For example, they created a sanitization system. But, they damaged the Filipino spirit and created an inferior complex.*

One participant, Glenn, emphasized that the act of colonizing itself was what makes Spanish colonization non-beneficial for the Philippines. He explained that this is due to the fact that colonization involves a country's feeling of entitlement and another country's feeling of suppression:

*It is unfair or inhumane for a race or a nation to feel so entitled that they just decide to own or suppress another nation who do not have the means to defend itself or retaliate. And since the [Spanish] colonization became successful for a certain time, I believe its largest impact to some or maybe to many is being conditioned that being Filipino is being inferior.*

### General Population

According to the surveys, half of the general population group perceived Spanish colonization positively. The interviews, on the other hand, showed more negative feelings towards Spain. However, the interviews' critiques towards Spanish colonization were not as elaborate nor unfavorable compared to the two other groups studied. For instance, Paula said that Filipinos simply did not benefit from Spanish colonization:

*They were here for a long time and didn't accomplish much. They did not share any knowledge with us. I mean, many of Filipino habits come from Spain like siestas. But that's it.*

One student, Chloe, did argue that Spanish colonization damaged Filipino values by implementing Catholicism. She posited, "Spain brought the Catholic Church and that is why we are conservatives and sexists." Unlike the other groups studied, Chloe did not further assert how Catholicism affected Filipinos' neither social structures nor self-esteem.

### *Attitudes towards U.S. Colonization*

### Philippine Artists

Half of the artists surveyed believed U.S. colonization was beneficial. However, more than 80% of them disagreed that Filipinos should be grateful for U.S. colonization. The interviews showed that Philippine artists saw positive and negative affects from U.S. colonization. The results suggested that the most positive influence the U.S. has on the

Philippines is the sense of individualism. For example, Luigi believes that the Philippines is progressive due to its relationship with the United States. “I do like that we are more progressive for a Southeast Asian country because of the US. For instance, we have had women presidents,” said Luigi.

Andrei posited that exposure to the U.S. helped ease Catholic conservative attitudes in the Philippines thus boosting his own confidence as someone who identifies as gay:

*As a gay man, my exposure to the U.S. media helped with my confidence considering the U.S. has a stronger sense of compared to the strong Catholic society here in the Philippines.*

Despite these positive perceptions, the artists’ interviews reinforced ideas of Western supremacy. Hence, as a result of colonization, Carlos argued that the Philippines praises American ways of life and associates products to U.S. branding:

*America has more to do with screwing up our mindset than Spain... [Filipinos say that] every toothpaste here is Colgate, every soft drink is Coke, every copier is Xerox, every refrigerator is Frigidaire... The U.S. colonized us intellectually and spiritually. They colonized the inside of us.*

### Participants of the Philippine Art Community

Out of the three groups surveyed, the participants of the art community disagreed the most that U.S. colonization was beneficial for the Philippines. However, the participants were also the highest group to agree that Filipinos should be grateful for U.S. colonization. The

participants' interviews expressed that the U.S. treated the Philippines better than Spain while continuing to oppress the country with Western ideologies. According to the interviews, Filipinos continue to trust the U.S. as they did during colonialism.

Charisse explained that Filipinos' positive feelings towards the U.S. causes Filipinos to neglect the negative impacts of U.S. colonization:

*The U.S. made us feel like we were loved... Filipinos trust and are optimistic towards the U.S. because they make us feel protected when really they want us for their power. Yes, the U.S. formed an education system. However, with that, they taught English and now our language is dying.*

Monica inferred how Filipinos' appreciation for the U.S. causes them to neglect how the U.S. still has power over them today:

*The U.S. intensified the inferior complex. They said they are helping us but they are really conquering us. And people today do not realize that we are still affected. Everyone wants imported goods and to be white and classes are taught in English.*

Glenn admitted that although the U.S. treated the Philippines "more diplomatic" than Spain, the U.S. is still "undeniably a colonizer of smaller nations." He also referred to Filipinos' preference for U.S. products to be evidence of CM.

*I think the most negative influence the US has brought into the Philippines is also conditioning Filipinos that white is better or superior over brown or black. And that products coming from the US are a status symbol which pave more susceptibility to colonial mentality.*

### General Population

At 80%, the students surveyed believe that U.S. colonization was beneficial to the Philippines. Like the other groups interviewed, the students expressed negative feelings towards the inferior complex instilled by Spain and reinforced by U.S. colonization. Unlike the other groups, the students emphasized that U.S. colonization was beneficial for the Philippines because it established an education system and a globalized economy. Along with the benefits of U.S. colonization, the interviewees discussed that the negative outcomes were the effects colonization had on Filipino identity. For example, Paula argued that the U.S. founded the Philippines education system. She explained how education greatly benefitted Filipinos, however, Filipinos cannot move forward from colonization because of those benefits:

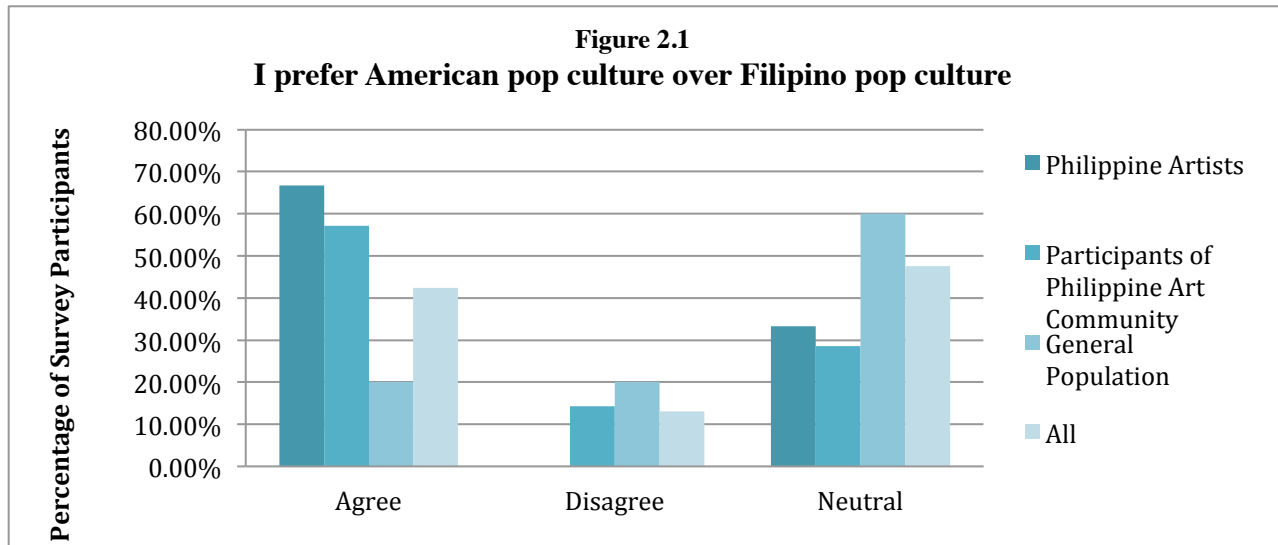
*What's great with the [US] is that they offered education... But Filipinos are only aware of good things the U.S. did. They have no knowledge of oppression. They made us feel less inferior than Spain because they spent less time here and they accomplished a lot.... The Philippines has potential but it is very stuck in the past.*

Although Paula perceived U.S. colonization as beneficial to the Philippines, she also said that because of colonization, Filipinos “weren’t able to explore our own identity” and now “feel the need to relate to others.”

Xanith mentioned as well how colonization affected Filipino identity in her interview. She believed colonization was harmful towards Filipinos’ sense of identity but she also commented that at least the Philippines became prepared to be in a global market:

*There was not enough room to develop our identity. Now there's a separation from indigenous cultures...*

*What is good is that we can now participate in globalization. We can interact with outside countries and we can adjust.*



### **The West is the Standard and the Philippines is the Other**

Both surveys and interviews included questions to examine the participants' CM. In order to examine the survey participants' CM, the surveys included questions that asked to compare Filipino characteristics to Western characteristics. The interview questions were more open-ended than the survey questions, however, the participants felt the need to express comparisons between the Philippines and the West, particularly the U.S. Each interview group discussed how Filipinos' standards of beauty, art, and quality of life were based on standards brought to the Philippines during colonization.

### *Filipino Pop Culture vs. U.S. Pop Culture*

The surveys and interviews asked participants their thoughts on Philippine popular culture. The purpose was to get an understanding on how Filipinos perceive modern Philippine culture today. Approximately 30% more of the survey participants agreed to have a preference for American pop culture over Filipino culture than participants who disagreed. (Figure 2.1) It should be noted that majority of the survey participants chose to remain neutral in answering the question, “I prefer American pop culture over Filipino pop culture.” Also, although there was a higher preference for American pop culture, interview participants in each group revealed a consciousness of CM and how CM shapes Filipinos’ desires.

#### Philippine Artists

Nearly 70% of the artists surveyed agreed to have a preference for American pop culture over Filipino pop culture. Based on the interviews, the preference for U.S. pop culture could be due to how success in the art scene<sup>10</sup> is often defined by how well the West perceives one’s work. For example, as Daniel described, Filipino artists in theatre often aim to be recognized outside the Philippines:

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<sup>10</sup> Art scene in this context should not be mistaken for Philippine art scene. Philippine art purposefully promotes Philippine culture in different art mediums whereas art, in this research paper, does not intend to promote Philippine culture.

*There is a term “world class talent” when talking about Filipino artists. You either are or not. This implies that the goal is to be acceptable abroad before being able to be seen as legitimate here. This frenzy came from Miss Saigon<sup>11</sup>. What does that do to how excellence is defined in theatre? To be seen by a white producer who brings you to London to play an Asian hooker? Who’s Vietnamese? It’s so sayang<sup>12</sup>.*

Andrei also explained Filipinos’ strive to be Western in the art scene. He says that Filipinos in theatre constantly feel the need to compare themselves to European and American actors and actresses:

*There is a lot of focus here on “keeping up with the Joneses” for Western standards, which are self-imposing at this point. People fly to Hong Kong just to audition for Disneyland and Disneyland auditions here too... Filipinos have the capacity to perform because they have been exposed to Americana for so long. We will always have like the “Liz Taylor” of the Philippines.*

### Participants of the Philippine Art Community

Compared to the artists, about 10% less Philippine art participants agreed to prefer American pop culture over Filipino pop culture. Although less Philippine art participants prefer American pop culture, there is a wide gap between those who agree and those who disagree; 57.1% of the participants agreed and 14.3% disagreed while 28.6% remained neutral.

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<sup>11</sup> Miss Saigon is a musical founded in London in 1989. The Philippine actress Lea Salonga portrayed the lead character in its debut although the lead character is meant to be a Vietnamese woman. Salonga won a Tony award from Miss Saigon and continues to be active in the Broadway scene in Europe and the United States.

<sup>12</sup> *Sayang* is the Tagalog word for waste. To describe something as *sayang* is to say “what a waste!”



Based on the interviews, the participants of the Philippine art community argued that the Philippines is heavily exposed to Western cultures, particularly because of the malls and advertisements that make up Metro Manila's landscape. The interviews did not reveal whether they preferred American pop culture but they did provide how the exposure to American culture affected them personally and other Filipinos. For instance, Merselle and Monica both discussed how exposure to the Western culture is saturated throughout Metro Manila and other urban areas of the Philippines. Merselle stated:

*Everyone's ideal is the West... The more urban an area becomes in the Philippines, the more Western it is... One time all of the billboards in Metro Manila featured Anne Curtis<sup>13</sup>. This is because she is a figure from the West and that's the ideal.*

Monica posited that because of the Westernization of Metro Manila, Filipinos' standards are skewed:

*Metro Manila is Westernized. It is the center of entertainment, which is heavily based on the West. Also, malls are a huge part of Manila which limits perception of people—no nature, museums and there are limited options especially because they mostly consist of Western products. This is sad. It is difficult to get nice Filipino products.*

Charisse argued that the Westernization of Metro Manila causes Filipinos to overlook Filipino culture and businesses:

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<sup>13</sup> Anne Curtis is a Filipina-Australian actress

*You go to a Philippine mall. I can tell you which are the best Japanese or Italian restaurants and where the Krispy Kreme is. But, most people can't tell you where the best Filipino restaurant is. Filipino cuisine is just now getting appreciated but it is either super low end or medyo mahal.<sup>14</sup>*

### General Population

The general population group preferred American pop culture significantly less than the other survey groups. While only 20% of the survey participants agreed to prefer American pop culture and 20% of them disagreed, the remaining 60% chose to remain neutral. The interviews, like the Philippine art participants, provided more reluctance towards how American ideals affects Filipinos' own ideals. For example, Chloe described how CM is the reason why Filipinos prefer foreign brands to local brands:

*Colonial mentality is intangible but still affects tangible things like money. For example, local businessmen are affected... Local businesses should grow but we associate foreign brands as high quality. Not local ones. We need to change perspective of quality.*

Xanith questioned Philippine brands' and pop culture's ideals. She wondered why there is a lack of representation of different type of Filipinos in mainstream media in the Philippines:

*[Celebrities] are always foreigners. Why is that the standard of beauty? This affects Filipinos! Like Penshoppe models wants to look international, not Filipino.*

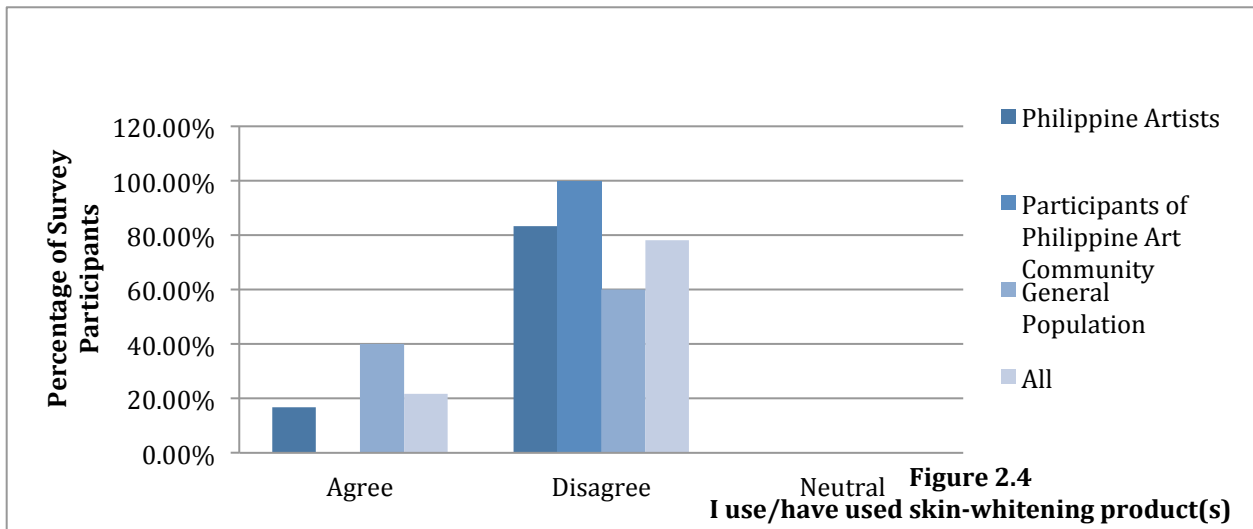
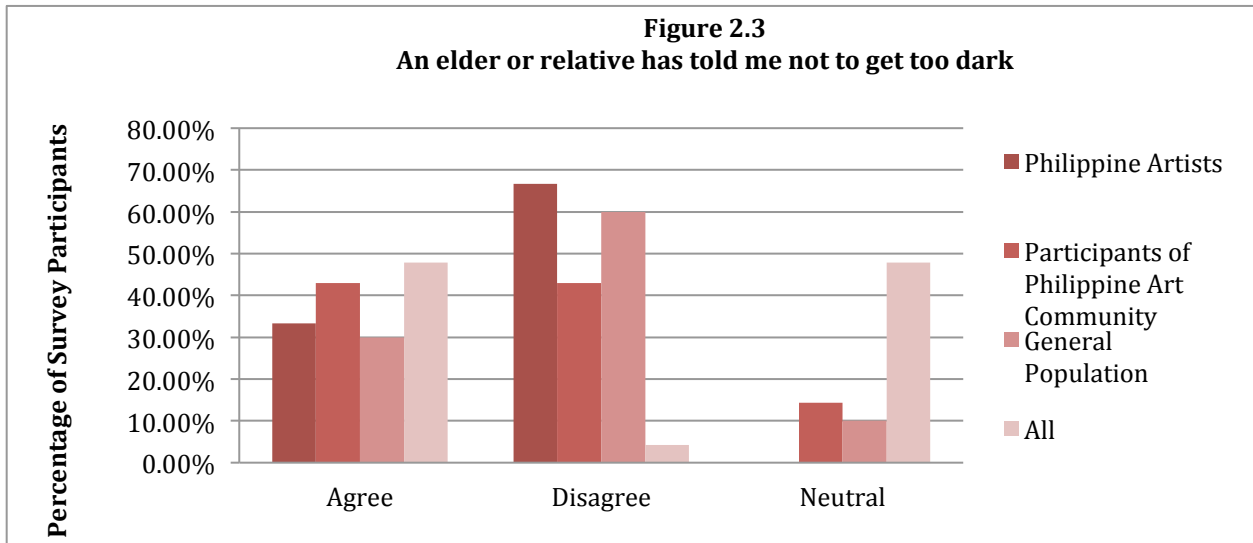
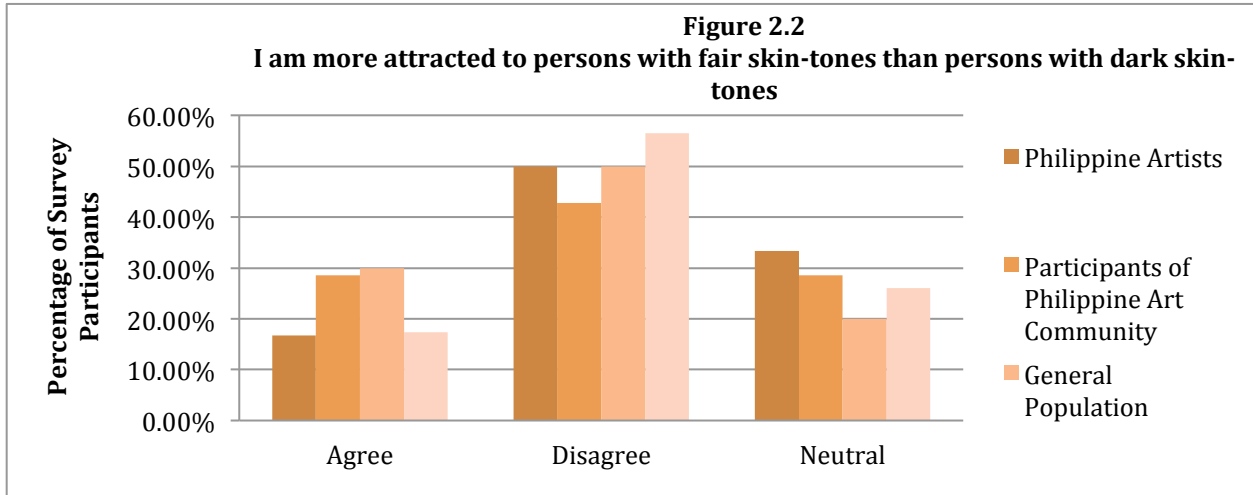
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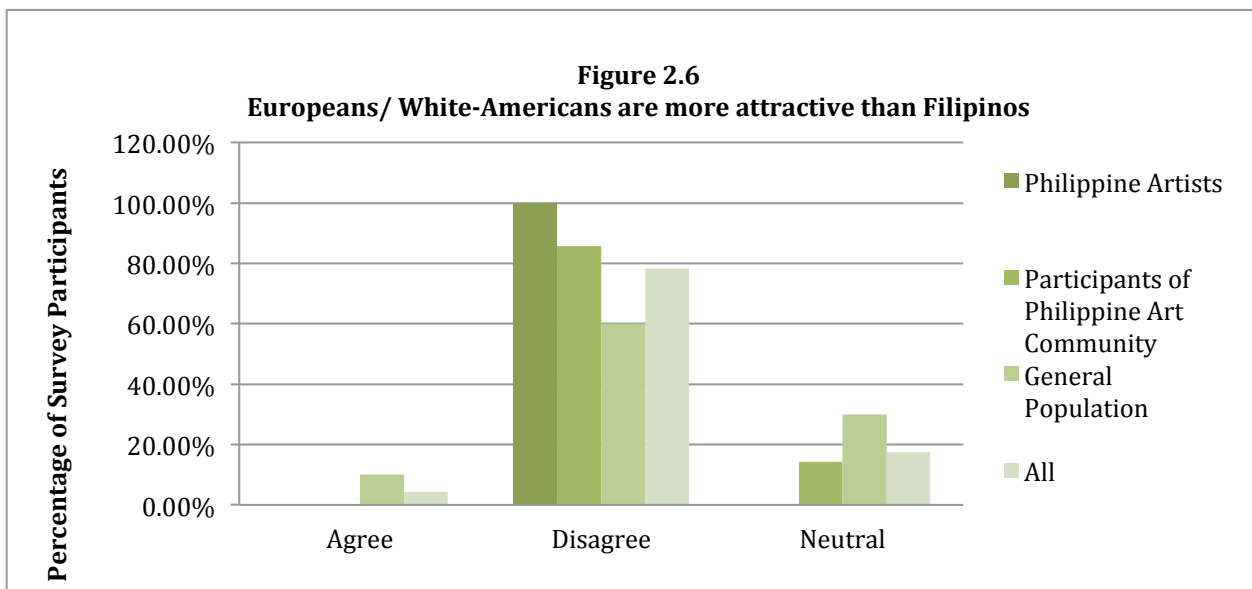
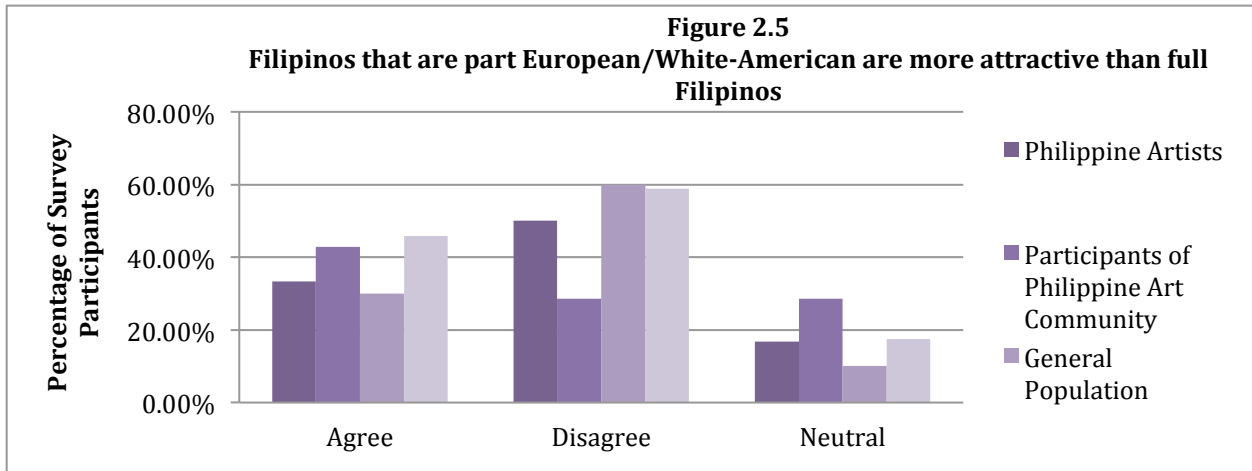
<sup>14</sup> Medyo mahal, from Tagalog, translates to "very expensive."

### *Views on Skin-Tone and its Effects on Self-Esteem*

As the previous section (“Filipino Pop Culture vs. U.S. Pop Culture”) revealed how exposure to Westernization affects Philippine society’s ideologies, this section discusses how Westernization affects Filipinos’ self-esteem and collective self-esteem. The surveys asked the participants to describe their basis of attraction in terms of skin-tone. Overall, the surveys revealed that Filipinos are not more attracted to persons with fair skin-tones than those with dark skin-tones (Figure 2.2) and majority do not use skin-whitening products. (Figure 2.4) However, there were mixed results among all groups as to whether or not an elder or relative has told them to not get dark. The survey participants admitted to having mixed feelings in comparing full-Filipinos to part European or white-American Filipinos,(Figure 2.5) but a strong majority admitted to being more attracted to Filipinos than Europeans or white-Americans. (Figure 2.6)

The interviews provided insight as to why the surveys results came out in favor for dark skin-tones and for full Filipinos versus Europeans and white-Americans. Each group acknowledged the existence of a skin-color hierarchy in the Philippines and expressed feelings of frustration towards it. Along with the interviews going in-depth on the skin-color hierarchy’s affects, a few of the survey participants were vocal as well in sharing their feelings beyond “agree” or “disagree.”





Philippine Artists

According to the surveys, 50% of the artists disagreed to being more attracted to Filipinos with light skin, 66.7% stated that their relatives never told them to not get dark, and 83% have not used skin-whitening product(s). Also, half of them disagreed that part European or white-American Filipinos are more attractive than full Filipinos and none of them found Europeans or white-Americans more attractive than full Filipinos.

A couple of the artists being surveyed made side comments regarding experiences they had due to their skin color. For instance, a 25-year-old artist commented that his family did not worry about his skin color because he is already light skinned. This artist was one out of the two artists who perceive part European-white-American Filipinos more attractive than Filipinos. On the other hand, a 20-year-old artist exclaimed, “my mom!” when asked if an elder or relative has told her not to get too dark. This artist is also the only artist surveyed to admit having used skin-whitening products.

In regards to the artists surveyed, they all indicated to have annoyance towards the Philippines’ desire for light skin and described that this desire is forced upon everyone in various situations. For instance, Daniel explained how whitening skin products are more accessible than regular hygiene products:

*There is the literal bleaching of skin. That is everywhere. I can’t even go to a drug store without seeing [whitening products.] It takes me twenty minutes to find soap that does not bleach your skin. But this is in a lot of places. Basically, anywhere that was colonized.*

Andrei also inferred how the desire for light skin feels forced upon Filipinos. He described advertisers and pop culture as the reinforcement for the skin-color hierarchy:

*I see a lot of whiteness. There is a lack of representation, especially in terms of skin color. Brands bank on whiteness as the premium color. For example, the local brand Pennshoppe has ads right now with Kylie Jenner. It was Kate Hudson at one point. Essentially, mainstream media is not representative of being Filipino.*

Wiji received pressures of the skin-color hierarchy from her family. Because she naturally has fair skin, her family wanted her to avoid situations in which she may tan:

*You would think in this day in age we would be more proud of whatever skin color you have. Why can't we just be comfortable? Can we just sell a lotion that just moisturizes? I grew up in a province where we're near the beach. I love the beach. I'm kind of lighter skin. I really like going to the beach but everyone would tell me sayang ang kutis mo<sup>15</sup>. You're so dark now, what're you doing! I would say I'm enjoying the beach more, sorry.*

### Participants of the Philippine Art Community

While the participants were the smallest group to disagree in preferring light-skin persons, (Figure 2.2) they are also the group with the highest percentage of elders or relatives to tell them not to get dark. (Figure 2.3) They also have the highest percentage of survey participants who find part European or white-American Filipinos more attractive than full Filipinos. (Figure 2.5) Whom the participants find attractive may be linked to the influence their relatives had on them. For example, like the artists of the surveys, one participant of *Walk this Way* noted that her family already liked her light skin thus no one told her she needed to change.

However, like the artist interviews, the participants of the Philippine art community felt frustrated due to the skin-color hierarchy. The participants expressed how the skin-color

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<sup>15</sup> *Sayang ang kutis mo* translates from *Tagalog* to “What a waste of your complexion.”

hierarchy affects their self-esteem and their collective self-esteem. One participant, Katalina, says that she is not represented in the Philippines because she is not part of what looks are ideal:

*I do not feel part of the market. I cannot even shop for make-up because everyone wants to be lighter. Is there even a shade for me? I can't find one. To be mestizo<sup>16</sup> is mas maganda<sup>17</sup> and there is a belief that it is better to marry a foreigner. Your kids will be mestizo.*

Monica shared her concerns on how the skin-color hierarchy harm Filipinos' self-esteems, including her own. She commented that the need for light skin affects Filipinos' values:

*What about teens who are affected by this because they are vulnerable? For example, there are now glutathione injections. If people can spend so much for white skin, what are our priorities? When I lived abroad [in Singapore], I appreciated my skin and thought, "brown skin is beautiful too" but deep inside is this insecurity.*

Glen related the need for lighter skin to how elders were raised; therefore, the belief light that light skin is better is a "norm:"

*[Elders] make me feel like I should follow a certain norm and stick to a particular belief that being fair is good to the eyes of people and having a darker complexion is not that pleasing. I believe elders have become accustomed to the stereotype that there is something better or superior in being light-skinned than in being dark-skinned.*

Despite the passing down of skin-color hierarchy beliefs, Charisse, on the other hand, recognizes that a trend to "celebrate" brown skin is growing:

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<sup>16</sup> *Mestizo* originally refers to lighter-skinned Filipinos of Spanish decent. The term is now used to describe lighter-skinned Filipinos who are often of European/ white-American decent as well.

<sup>17</sup> *Mas Maganda* is Tagalog for "more beautiful."



*More people are celebrating the brown skin... But people still would like the mestizo or mestiza. Even the local groups that celebrate “made in the Philippines” still have mestizo models... Usually you’ll find that when a baby is born, people ask “maputi ba?” People are so used it... I think it’s changing it though... It’s going to take a while.*

### General Population

Only 30% of the survey participants agreed to find fair skin more attractive and having an elder or relative that told them not to become dark. However, they have the highest percentile of survey participants who have used skin whitening products and the only group to have participants that find Europeans or white-Americans more attractive than Filipinos. As shown in the interviews, this could be due to how lack of representation in mainstream media affects Filipinos’ self-esteem.

A 19-year-old survey participant asked if she could share her experience growing up with brown skin. She explained how she loves swimming and swam competitively but her parents were upset that her exposure to the sun made her darker. She ended the story with saying how she no longer cares what they think and continues to swim. But, when asked whether she has or still uses skin-whitening products, she said she did.

The interviewees dived even deeper into how the lack of representation for various Filipino characteristics harms their own self-esteems and other Filipinos as well. For example, Xanith shared what the impact of exclusive representation is in the Philippines:

*The goal here isn't to look like normal Filipinos. People want the foreign look. That lowers our self-esteem because we don't really look like that.*

Paula, on the other hand, acknowledged that Filipinos' desire to look like a "foreigner" comes from colonization. She noted that colonization may have come with benefits but the Filipinos' need to compare themselves to others makes them "feel down":

*We are attracted to foreigners. This comes from colonizers. There is no appreciation for full Filipinos because Filipinos feel down in comparison to foreigners... English is taught in most of my classes. This is good because it is universal and understood by others too. But, it would be great if we can conceptualize in a Filipino setting too.*

Like Charisse, Chloe recognized that there is a growth in appreciation for brown skin in the Philippines. However, the nearly absent inclusivity in mainstream media still harms her self-esteem and other Filipinos' self-esteem:

*The light-skin trend is starting to change. But, definitely not facial features. There's no change in the noses. That lowers my self-esteem. For example, there were three models at the malls. I felt different from them like they are from a higher group of people. Filipinos who don't have those features are lowering themselves...*

### **Social Divisions caused by CM**

One topic that trended among the interviews was how CM enforces social divisions in the Philippines, especially in Metro Manila. The other research findings discussed so far resulted from guided questions such as, "What are your thoughts on skin-whitening products?" Unlike the

previous topics, “Social Divisions caused by CM” trended organically when asked the open-ended question, “Philippines’ colonial history may or may not affect Filipinos today?”

### Philippine Artists

The artists discussed how Western characteristics are automatically paralleled to being characteristics of the elite class in and out the art scene. For example, Daniel argued that the way Filipinos are represented in mass media perpetuates the social hierarchy in the Philippines:

*[Representation here] is compelling and tragic. It is not promoting diversity. The ads are promoting conformity to elite class of people in which vast majority will never have access to. The goal is to look like someone you will literally have no access to.*

Luigi argued how colonization caused Filipinos to be “superficial” towards using their own languages. In describing the suburb of Metro Manila she currently lives in, she said, “Not speaking English is frowned upon. There’s a belief that if you don’t speak English well, you shouldn’t be here.” She added that because of how Filipino languages, Filipino-only speakers are embarrassed to be there and people are surprised if you do speak a Filipino language:

*The other day in the park, my friend was amazed that my son speaks Tagalog so well. Why are you surprised? I’m in the Philippines! ... My friend’s kid, Beyonce, said, Tagalog lang po. This kid felt bad because she didn’t know how to speak English. I told her, “okay lang” and explained to her that she speaks to her son in Tagalog too.<sup>18</sup>*

### Philippine Art Participants

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<sup>18</sup> Beyonce says she can only speak Tagalog. “Okay lang” translates from Tagalog to “it’s okay.”

A couple of the Philippine art participants further explained how the English language is a divider between the upper class and lower class. For example, Merselle described how the cityscape of Metro Manila utilizes English to determine which class they are selling to:

*There are a lot of Western influences in Metro Manila. The buildings, almost everything is in English, even poorer classes have to speak English... Everything is influenced... Even advertisements use English. Usually cheaper brands and products are in Tagalog and the richer people breed kids in English because they believe English is of higher quality.*

Katalina recounted that one can tell what type of school someone goes to based on whether they use Tagalog or English. She related this to how U.S. colonization asserted English as the language of more civilized people:

*I studied in public school so Tagalog is used all the time. Except, English was used for English class and in science. It really depends on your status. Private schools are in English... There were strict English zones in school during U.S. colonization. This contributes to elite associate. To speak English today is to have an edge.*

Globalization in Metro Manila, according to Charisse, is thickening the divide between social classes. She described Metro Manila's city planners as wanting to appease to foreigners and the upper classes thus are building malls and luxury condominiums:

*Who are they making these malls for? They are making it for themselves. Building all these condos and displacing all these people. Who are all of these condominiums for? There are all these empty empty buildings beside a 1000 people in a shanti.*

### General Population

Out of all of the groups, the students talked the least about social divisions caused by colonization. Only one student, Paula, recognized how Western ideals related to classism. In regards to advertisements, Paula said, “The advertisements don’t represent everyone. They are more so for the elite.”

While other groups interviewed criticized the implementation of Western ideologies in the Philippines, Xanith favored globalization as an economic benefit:

*[Metro Manila] is good because it is exposed to other cultures. That gives us a broader perspective. The malls here—compared to other countries—is inclusive of everything you need. It is the gathering place. It is okay to have foreign brands. It is not a hindrance to local brands. It is positive to globalize the Philippines. We level-up the competition.*

### **Philippine Art and Filipino Identity**

Regardless of which survey/interview group a participant belonged in, all participants believe art is a positive tool for increasing appreciation for Filipino culture. And, every single participant surveyed agreed that Filipino history, Filipino culture, and art inspire him or her. The interviews revealed that Philippine art is effective in increasing collective self-esteem because of how it relates to diverse Filipino experiences. The social divisions between classes—according to the interviews— limit Philippine art from decolonizing Filipinos’ CM.

### *Sense of Ownership through Philippine Art*

Because Philippine art is inclusive of various Filipino experiences, the interviewees reveal that they feel a sense of ownership towards their identity as Filipinos. This can be seen throughout all three research groups.

### Philippine Artists

For the Philippine artists, increasing Filipinos' self-esteem is the goal for their artwork. For example, Andrei tries his best to emulate an "authentic" Filipino experience in Metro Manila through his plays' story, setting, and language. He says that plays that are made to mimic Westerners are for pure entertainment whereas his plays are meant to relate to his Filipino audience:

*I want people to start championing Filipino work. Through art, I am assuring Filipinos are empowering themselves. I want to use art to expose Filipino talent... I want the audience to relate to my art since theatre is a genuine form of human experience. Filipinos see themselves in those characters; there is no distance unlike Hollywood film... I write what I know and I am sincere and genuine to myself.*

Not only does Daniel relate to a Filipino audience, he purposefully seeks to challenge how colonialism and globalization affects Filipinos:

*Metro Manila deals with how post-colonialism affects consciousness everyday here but through [the gallery I work with], I have a hand in that discussion. I am prioritizing Filipino artists here in Poblacion<sup>19</sup>. Everything is promoted and run by internationals in Poblacion but I have access to pushing dialogues on Filipino-ness.*

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<sup>19</sup> Poblacion is a district in Makati, Metro Manila.

### Participants of the Philippine Art Community

The participants of the Philippine art community may not be artists themselves, but they extensively shared how Philippine art can impact Filipinos' self-esteem for the better. The interviewees described their experiences in the Philippine art community as learning experiences in which they became more appreciative of their Filipino identity. Merselle described Philippine art as influential in Filipinos' self-esteem:

*Art can influence Filipinos in a lot of ways. Art shows people we are more. It helps their appreciation of everyday Filipinos especially because we are very underrepresented and misrepresented... Art is trying to change to be very non-exclusive.*

Through her business, Charisse has a gallery and creates events that promote Philippine “pre-history” and indigenous groups. She said that Filipinos in Metro Manila are not well versed in pre-colonial history nor indigenous cultures; therefore, she bridges Metro Manila Filipinos with indigenous cultures to increase their appreciation for the Philippines' diversity:

*I love what I do. I am working with indigenous people and empowering individuals, my audiences. I love seeing how happy and excited they are to learn what they have here in the Philippines.*

In regards to the participants who attended Philippine art events, they shared how their experiences helped appreciate their identity as Filipinos. For example, Glen explained that attending *Cinemalaya* made him realize that Filipinos are more than colonized people:

*From the two movies I have watched, I have come to realize that a Filipino's identity can never be boxed...One can never define a Filipino as someone who's been colonized by Spain or US or Japan years ago, or someone who's plainly a follower of Western culture... A Filipino, I believe, will always take from its roots a distinct quality of family-oriented-ness, resilience, and passion.*

Monica, who attended *Walk this Way* said that the tour made her realize that there is more to Manila than “air pollution and traffic” but that it is “beaming with culture and history.” She admitted that she was sad that many Filipinos overlook the city of Manila’s rich history but because of *Walk this Way*, there are more Filipinos enticed to learn about it:

*The tour makes you appreciate Manila more... If people who were participating in [Walk this Way] did not find it effective, Intramuros<sup>20</sup> would not be popular like it is now. More and more people are becoming interested in learning about Intramuros so there is a ripple effect. More people want to check it out.*

### General Population

The students interviewed stated that they appreciate Philippine art because of its representation and uniqueness to Filipinos. For example, when asked about her opinion on Philippine art, Chloe immediately responded with “tattoos!” She began excitedly talking about the oldest indigenous tattooist in the Philippines, Wang Od, who continues to traditionally tattoo at 93 years old:

*With Wang Od—she represents Filipinos. She's unique solely to us. I like [art] that are unique to us. It's cool because, like Wang Od's tattoos, the process is different. It is ours. We own that tradition.*

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<sup>20</sup> Intramuros is the oldest district of the city of Manila in which the *Walk this Way* tour takes place



Paula praised Philippine art for its uniqueness to Filipinos as well. She first discussed how she wishes more could be done to increase other Filipinos' cultural appreciation. To exemplify Filipinos' low collective self-esteem, Paula described how the lack of appreciation towards the Filipino language contributed to the end of its script:

*Thailand has their own writing. Same with Vietnam. Here in the Philippines, you have Baybayin. For me, I think it's sayang. Why don't we use it? It is something from pre-Spanish period... I hope they try to give more value to the Filipino language. Maybe that's why it is taking too long to develop here.*

Paula stated that there is an effort from museums throughout the Philippine to increase appreciation for Filipino culture. But for Paula, more can still be done:

*What's interesting is that museums are trying to be free like the National museum, which helps us appreciate more the works of our fellow Filipinos. I mean some of the influences are really foreign. But, it is becoming a trend in which people are going to museums. I think it is a really good way to share the Filipino culture but it is not yet enough.*

### *Limitations to Philippine Art*

Although the three research groups expressed how Philippine art benefits Filipinos' sense of self and identity, the participants of the Philippine art community recognized limitations to Philippine art's benefits. The most common limitation discussed is accessibility to Philippine art. For example, Kat explained how learning about Philippine art and indigenous cultures can give Filipinos a sense of connection but it is a matter of being able to:

*We are bombarded with the West! That makes it really hard to learn about pre-colonial times. What's cool about learning about those times is learning how Filipinos already had our own system of government, can sustain themselves, and were already functioning before... We're surrounded by colonialism now but it is nice to know we can do that without colonists. Learning makes us feel connected to our ancestor. If [other Filipinos] are open to that—they need to be open—they can learn about it. Art is good especially because that's how our ancestors communicated.*

Charisse also argued that globalization restrains Filipinos to learn about Philippine art:

*Manila is very global. We can have the newest restaurant from France, the newest store from the States. Filipinos in Manila are not even exposed to our indigenous sounds. They have no sense of our indigenous music. Filipinos here are more exposed to the States...*

On the other hand, Monica and Merselle recognized the lack of accessibility to be due to the division between classes. Merselle appreciated how Philippine art can enhance one's perspective but lower classes do not have the opportunity to experience that:

*There is an idea that arts is only for the rich and that someone cultured is someone who was well educated and elite. Filipino expression is beautiful but people aren't exposed..how can you include [lower classes] in the art movement? We can't proliferate in all classes unless the mindset changed. Basic education doesn't have art education here. Art helps you see things better. You see beauty everywhere. It makes you appreciate things better. But poverty is the greatest wall.*

Monica discussed how lower classes cannot afford to enjoy Philippine art, therefore, mainstream media should promote Filipino culture since it is more accessible to the public:

*The problem is promoting art here... it is not a priority- only those who can afford it will go and they're already the educated ones. The poor would rather buy food... Art can be a good way to promote Filipino culture but we should start with mainstream media however. It is still not reflective of all Filipinos...*

## CONCLUSION

Fifty years after centuries of colonialism, colonial teachings continue to thrive in the Philippines today because of Filipinos' colonial mentality (CM.) CM refers to an internalized oppression among Filipinos in which they experience an automatic preference for anything Western—European or U.S. American—and rejection of anything Filipino. An example of Filipinos' CM is the existence of a skin-color hierarchy in the Philippines. The skin-color hierarchy— institutionalized by colonists—perpetuates the belief that the lighter one's skin is, the smarter and more beautiful they are. Effects of CM, such as the skin-color hierarchy, continues to damage Filipinos' self-esteem and collective self-esteem. CM also contributes to the neglect of marginalized communities in the Philippines, such as indigenous groups.

This research project proposes that Philippine art can be a tool for decolonizing CM. In order to study how effective Philippine art is in decolonizing CM, I studied three groups through surveys and interviews in Metro Manila: 1) Philippine artists, 2) participants of the Philippine art community, and 3) students from the University of the Philippines, Diliman whom were used as a basis of comparison to the Philippine art community.

The research findings show that all three groups have a consciousness of how colonialism dictates Filipinos' standards today. The Philippine artists and participants of the Philippine art community expressed more criticism on how much colonialism affects Filipinos today compared to the students. For example, both Philippine artists and participants of the Philippine art community recognized the link to CM and Filipinos' preference for Western products versus local products. The students recognized the

Westernization of consumer culture in the Philippines but did not make connections to how colonialism may have influenced that. Also, all groups expressed how Western standards of beauty and intelligence (based on the use of the English language) harms their own self-esteem and other Filipinos' self-esteem. They all explained feelings of bombardment with Western standards through mass media and advertisements. But, again, the Philippine artists and participants of the Philippine art community associated the imposing of Western-like standards to colonialism.

In regards to Philippine art itself, the three groups expressed appreciation of how Philippine art increases their collective self-esteem as Filipinos. Because Philippine art is inclusive of various Filipino cultures and experiences, Filipinos gain a sense of ownership and pride because they can identify themselves with the artwork. However, because of social divisions between classes, Philippine art is not evenly accessible among all Filipinos. Therefore, not everyone has the ability to challenge his or her CM with Philippine art.

### *Recommendations*

The purpose of this research project is to emphasize how post-colonized groups continue to be oppressed internally and externally by colonial teachings. As exemplified in the "Literature Review," there are other ethnic groups who face similar cases of low self-esteem because of their colonial history. Therefore, although this project focuses on the Philippines, its findings can be transferrable to other post-colonized ethnic groups who face similar mental health risks. I propose the promotion of art education in basic education systems to increase populations' critical thinking skills and individuals' sense

of self-confidence. By building better critical thinking skills and self-confidence, people can better decolonize their CM thus being at less risk of depression.

This research project also demonstrates how critical inclusive representation is in increasing a wider array of people's self-esteem and deconstructing internal and external racism. Philippine art granted Filipinos' feelings of gratitude because of inclusion. With inclusive representation in advertisements, for example, the advertisements can deconstruct the stigma against darker-skinned Filipinos whom are currently portrayed as unattractive and unintelligent. Diversifying representation can influence people to accept each other's differences and themselves.

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