A PORTRAIT OF FILIPINO LEARNING COMMUNITIES AND STUDENT SUCCESS PROGRAMS AT CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A RAPID AND CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

A Dissertation By

NAOMI QUERUBIN-ABESAMIS
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-5368-7585

California State University, Fullerton
Summer, 2021

In partial fulfillment of the degree:
Doctor of Education, Community College Leadership

Department:
Department of Educational Leadership

Committee:
Rebecca Gutierrez Keeton, Chair
Tony Hwang, College of Education
Rowena Tomaneng, Expert Practitioner, San Jose City College

DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.5111011

Keywords:
Filipino, Filipino American, community college, learning communities, student success programs, culturally relevant pedagogy

Abstract:
This is a qualitative study with rapid and critical ethnography as a research design to determine the lived experiences of Filipino and Filipino American community college students, as well as their success and challenges in a Filipino learning community or student success program at Skyline College, Southwestern College, and City College of San Francisco. Because Filipinos are aggregated into the overall Asian category, research on Filipinos at community colleges is limited despite the fact that Filipinos are the second largest Asian subgroup in the United States and the largest Asian group in California. This research study was a first of its kind to study the only three Filipino learning communities and student success programs in California: Kababyan Learning Community, Bayan Scholars Learning Community, and Tulay Filipino Student Success Program. Using ethnographic field notes from participant observations of virtual program events, in-depth interviews, and analysis of site documents and artifacts, results found that Filipino and Filipino American students wrestled with their identities due to generational effects of colonial mentality and grappled with biculturalism. Filipino community college students also experienced financial hardship and struggled during the COVID-19 global pandemic, trying to balance identity, home, and the college environment. Filipino community college students’ success resulted from (a) pipelines that Filipino learning communities and student success programs established to transition students from high school to college, (b) infusion of Filipino critical pedagogy into academic instruction and culturally relevant student activities, and (c) wraparound student services. Filipino community college students experienced a cultural awakening or “kapwa” which led to a sense of belonging and community.

© 2021, NAOMI QUERUBIN-ABESAMIS, CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................. v

LIST OF FIGURES ............................................................................................................. vi

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ....................................................................................................... vii

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................. 1

   Background of the Problem ......................................................................................... 3
      Asian American and Pacific Islanders .................................................................... 3
      Filipino Americans ................................................................................................. 4
   Problem Statement .................................................................................................... 6
   Purpose Statement ..................................................................................................... 7
   Research Questions ................................................................................................... 7
   Significance of the Study ............................................................................................ 7
   Scope of the Study ....................................................................................................... 8
      Assumptions of the Study ....................................................................................... 9
      Study Delimitations ............................................................................................... 10
      Study Limitations .................................................................................................. 11
   Definitions of Key Terms .......................................................................................... 11
   Organization of the Dissertation ............................................................................... 13

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ..................................................................................... 14

   Philosophical, Historical, and Theoretical Foundations ........................................ 15
      Historical Foundation ............................................................................................ 15
      Philosophical Foundation ..................................................................................... 22
      Theoretical Foundation ......................................................................................... 25
   Review of the Scholarly Empirical Literature ........................................................ 29
      Asian American and Pacific Islander and Filipino Students ................................ 29
      Filipinos and Higher Education ......................................................................... 33
      Gaps in the Literature ........................................................................................... 35
      Learning Communities in Higher Education ..................................................... 36
   Conceptual Framework ............................................................................................. 41
   Chapter Summary ...................................................................................................... 43

3. METHOD OF INQUIRY .................................................................................................. 45

   Qualitative Research ................................................................................................. 46
   Research Design ......................................................................................................... 48
   Research Methods ...................................................................................................... 49
      Setting ..................................................................................................................... 50
      Sample ................................................................................................................... 54
   Data Collection and Management ........................................................................ 55
   Data Analysis and Interpretation ............................................................................. 59
   Chapter Summary ...................................................................................................... 65
4. FINDINGS .................................................................................................................. 67
   Ethnographic Vignettes ................................................................................................. 67
      Vignette 1: Bayan ........................................................................................................ 69
      Vignette 2: Kababayan ............................................................................................... 71
      Vignette 3: Tulay ........................................................................................................ 73
   First Research Question ............................................................................................ 75
      Theme 1: Wrestling with Filipino/a/x Identity ............................................................. 76
      Theme 2: Transitioning from High School to College ................................................. 79
      Theme 3: Using Culturally Responsive Filipino Critical Pedagogy ............................ 80
      Theme 4: Cultural Awakening and Sense of Belonging ............................................. 85
   Second Research Question ......................................................................................... 89
      Theme 5: Student Success and Support Services ....................................................... 87
      Theme 6: Financial Hardship for Filipino/a/x Community College Students .......... 89
      Theme 7: Balancing Filipino/a/x Identity with Home and College Environment in the
                  COVID-19 Global Pandemic ............................................................................. 90
   Significant Findings .................................................................................................... 92
   Chapter Summary ........................................................................................................ 94

5. DISCUSSION ................................................................................................................ 96
   Summary of Findings ................................................................................................... 97
   Interpretations or Conclusions .................................................................................... 99
      The Filipino Identity Crisis ......................................................................................... 99
      Financial Hardship for Filipino/a/x Community College Students ....................... 101
      Balancing Filipino/a/x Identity with Home and College Environment .................. 102
      Transition from High School to College ................................................................ 103
      Use of Culturally Responsive Filipino Critical Pedagogy ......................................... 104
      Access to Student Support Services ....................................................................... 106
      Cultural Awakening and Kapwa (Unity of Self or Sense of Connectedness) ........... 107
      Significant Findings: Filipino Immigrants ............................................................... 108
   Implications .................................................................................................................. 109
      Implications for Policy .............................................................................................. 110
      Implications for Practice ......................................................................................... 110
      Implications for Theory ........................................................................................... 111
      Implications for Future Research .......................................................................... 111
   Limitations and Delimitations of Findings ................................................................. 112
   Recommendations ..................................................................................................... 113
      Recommendation 1: Invest In and Institutionalize Filipino Learning Communities, Student
                       Success Programs Locally, and Statewide ...................................................... 113
      Recommendation 2: Establish Filipino Learning Communities and Student Success
                        Programs at California Community Colleges ................................................ 114
      Recommendation 3: Provide AANAPISI Grant Funding for Filipino Learning Communities and
                        Student Success Programs ............................................................................. 116
      Recommendation 4: Pilot a Filipino Learning Community on a Small Scale ............. 117
   Summary of the Dissertation ....................................................................................... 118
APPENDICES

A. RECRUITMENT FLYER ................................................................. 119
B. SOCIAL MEDIA POSTING ............................................................. 120
C. PRE-INTERVIEW INTEREST SURVEY ......................................... 121
D. EMAIL INVITATION ................................................................. 123
E. CONSENT FORM ................................................................. 124
F. FIELD NOTES TEMPLATE ........................................................... 126
G. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL ............................................................ 127

REFERENCES ............................................................................. 128
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Filipino Learning Communities and Student Success Programs in California</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Colleges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Interview Participants</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Top 15 California Community Colleges with High Filipino Student Population</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Conceptual framework</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Throughout this personal journey of writing my dissertation, I reflected on the deeper meaning of my maiden name and the higher purpose I was given long before I entered this doctoral program. I thought about the profound spiritual awakening I experienced in 2007, one year after my youngest son was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis, a genetic, life-threatening disease that attacks the lungs and digestive system. In my darkest hour, my search for answers to the soul’s deeper questions led me inward to what has been an extraordinary journey thus far. My maiden name, Querubin, is a Spanish last name that means cherubim. In one of the greatest, literary works written of all time; the bible shows the cherubim in the book of Genesis as angels, a protective presence at the gates of paradise. The holy space and inner place that the cherubim guards is the source of the purest, unconditional love. From this holy space, the cherubim reminds us that we can never be separated from the “One.”

I dedicate this scholarly labor of love to my parents, Erlinda Callao Querubin and Rosario Reyes Querubin, Jr, the literal and figurative cherubims in my life who sacrificed everything for me so that I may have the wings to fly. Thank you Mom and Dad for loving me, protecting me, and being the source of my inspiration not just in this particular journey to attain the terminal doctoral degree, but for modeling throughout my life what it meant to command inner strength and fortitude. You taught me lessons about life that school could never teach me, especially in taking care of Melissa, and how challenging that was and still is for you. Even as loving parents of a special needs child, you always showed us (Charlene, me, and Abigail) that we were still important. I love you!

To my husband and partner in this lifetime, Romeo Abesamis Jr., thank you for your patience and unconditional love. Thank you for choosing every day to stay in this journey with me, to continue taking care of our family no matter how difficult it has been or continues to be, no matter how many times we have wanted to give up…thank you for staying and loving me through it all. I have been in school since you and I first met in 1996 in pursuit of my first master’s degree, a second master’s degree from 2009 to 2013 when we were raising our children, and now this final doctoral degree. I
know it has been a lot of sacrifice on your end too. Thank you so much for supporting my dreams. I love you, Honey and I am proud to put the “Dr.” in front of the Abesamis name!

To my first-born daughter, Rianna Juliet Querubin Abesamis, my fellow Titan who started her undergraduate experience at Cal State Fullerton the first year of my doctoral program, thank you for being true and authentic to who you are and being brave enough to be unapologetically “you.” As I have watched you grow into a beautiful and talented young individual, you are a warrior who has a deeper purpose to fulfill that will only add value and richness to others. You are destined to be the next generation who will take this work forward as a Filipinx American, and I am really proud of you and the transformative work you have already done with Sama Sama Cooperative in the Bay Area, Bayanihan Kollective, PASA (Pilipino American Student Association) and the Diversity Initiatives & Resource Center (specifically the LGBT Queer Resource Center) at CSUF! I love you and I will always be here for you.

To my last-born son, Noah Ryan Querubin Abesamis, who fights every day for his life, to whom I am thankful, for teaching our family how to be stronger for each other, and is another warrior who displays courage that only a few can attain in this lifetime. I wish I could switch places with you so you would not have to endure all that you have had to endure with cystic fibrosis, but I know it is your divine purpose to fulfill here on earth and I am so proud of how you continue to persevere every day. Thank you for your courage Noah and thank you for teaching me how to see life through a different lens, being absolutely and totally present in each and every moment, because none of us are promised tomorrow. I love you and I will always be here for you.

Rianna and Noah, for all that I have already accomplished in this life, I hope you both know and feel that bringing you into this world through the experience of motherhood, has always and will always be my greatest accomplishment.

To my beautiful golden retriever, Snowball Twinkie Abesamis, thank you for keeping me company as I wrote at three o’clock in the morning this past year. Thank you for being the canine
cherub that brings our family so much joy when we wake up, when we come home, and when we need the healing love that only you can provide.

I would like to thank my loving family who has been there for every moment that has ever mattered in my life: Charlene, Roman, Cali and Coco Samiley; Abigail, Edwin, Lucas, Joshua, and Elijah Villareal; my sister Melissa Joy Querubin; Mom (Abesamis) and Dad in heaven (Abesamis); Áte Rosemarie and Kuya Job Pangilinan; Rose Lynn, Forrest, Sofia and Nora Bell; and my best friend Angela “Gin” Cabañeros Ramones. I love you all!

I was so blessed to have a “barangay” (Filipino village) support network of friends, colleagues, and faculty who lifted me up and believed in my ability to persist and succeed. I would like to thank my dissertation committee: my chair, Dr. Rebecca Gutierrez Keeton whom I have known for many years when we worked together at Cal Poly Pomona before I went into the community colleges. I am so thankful that our paths crossed again! You have made this entire dissertation journey so meaningful in ways that I will forever cherish. To Dr. Tony Hwang, thank you for the many pep talks via Zoom and text chat to remind me that I was on my own journey, and to enjoy how that journey would unfold. Thank you for believing in me! To Dr. Rowena Tomaneng, thank you for being one of the most important role models for me as a Filipina American in community college leadership. Thank you for the insights you shared with me, for holding my study close to your heart and for doing the hard work that Filipinx educators in the California community college system are doing every day to change it for the better.

This study would not have been possible if not for the collaboration and newfound friendships from my colleagues at Southwestern College Bayan Scholars (Crystal Alberto, Henry Aronson, and Arlie Ricasa), Skyline College Kababayan (Dr. Liza Erpelo and Dr. Nate Nevado), and City College of San Francisco Tulay and Philippine Studies (Dr. Lily Ann Villaraza, Francesca Mauricio, and Bo Aleonar). Each of these Filipino learning communities and student success programs have been the heart of my study all the way through. Thank you for welcoming me into your communities, and entrusting in me to do this important study to highlight the profound impact you are making on
Filipino/a/x community college students every day! Thank you sisters and brothers for inviting me to be change agents alongside you as part of the Filipinx Community College Collaborative group! *Isang Bagsak! Dalawang Bagsak! Tatlong Bagsak!*

I would like to thank the Cal State Fullerton Ed.D. Program faculty, staff, and Cohort #11 “Energizers” for motivating me, lifting me up during the hardest moments of my life in the program, and for pushing me to make it all the way to the finish line. Thank you, especially, to CSUF faculty Dr. Ding-Jo Currie, Dr. Meri Beckham, Dr. Erika Leon, and Dr. Audrey Yamagata-Noji.

Thank you to my extended family and colleagues at Fullerton College, who were part of my success and gave me the support in the last three years while pursuing a doctoral degree, especially to the team I have the pleasure of leading, Student Life and Leadership. I would never have considered a doctoral program if not for the sincere encouragement and care that Fullerton College has shown me, to which I am so grateful. Once a Hornet, Always a Hornet!

Two deans showed me that it was possible for Filipino Americans to be in critical leadership positions, just like the students in my study who needed Filipino/a/x mentors in college who looked like them, and believed in them. Thank you to Dr. Albert Abutin (Dean of Enrollment Services, Fullerton College), who saw potential in me as I took on my first management position as director of student life and leadership. Thank you, Dean Abutin, for reminding me to reach for the stars even in unchartered territory, and to always bet on myself (and the L.A. Chargers!). Thank you to Dr. Derek Vergara (Dean of Students, Orange Coast College), my former dean at Fullerton College in 2016, who first encouraged me to consider the CSUF Ed.D. Program. Applying to this specific doctoral program was one of the best decisions I ever made, thanks to you, Derek! You had me at LV!

Finally, I wish to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Cystic Fibrosis Care Center and medical team at Loma Linda for taking care of my son, Noah, since he was a baby and especially during these last 3 years while I was in the doctoral program. Noah was hospitalized for lung infections and digestive complications six times while I was in this program. Each of those hospitalizations were as short as 5 days and as long as 14 days, followed by weeks of intravenous...
antibiotics. Through the care and encouragement of the CF team at Loma Linda, especially Dr. Kimberly Otsuka, I was encouraged to keep going as Dr. Otsuka promised me that they would take good care of Noah. Much of my dissertation study was written at Loma Linda Hospital by Noah’s bedside.

Indeed, I have had the running theme of cherubs or angels in my life, lifting me up and carrying me through when I needed the most strength. Thank you, God, for blessing me and being with me so that I may fulfill my divine purpose here on earth as it is in Heaven. As above, so below.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Filipinos have been a part of U.S. history since the late 1500s and the U.S. education system since the early 1900s; however, this important part of history is absent and silent in higher education, as Filipinos are lumped together in a homogenous group with Asian Americans (Nadal et al., 2012). Filipinos comprise 3,400,000 of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) population and are arguably the second largest Asian subgroup in the United States (Halagao, 2010; Maramba & Museus, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010); yet, they are often left out of the picture, and out of research in higher education (Buena vista et al., 2009; Yeh 2004). Bonus and Maramba (2013) echo this invisibility on the labeling of Filipinos as the “other” (p. xv) or “forgotten” (Takaki, 1989, p. 315) group because of the numerical insignificance when included in aggregated data collection or simply being deemed as different from the majority.

On a national level, Filipinos tend to be underrepresented at selective colleges and universities and are more concentrated in at low-selectivity institutions in comparison to other Asian groups (Maramba & Museus, 2012). Despite their increased numbers and complex history in the United States, Filipino students have remained underserved, misunderstood, and overlooked in education (Libarios et al., 2018), with high drop-out rates and low attainment of college degrees (Halago, 2010). Consequently, Filipino students also have lower success rates than other Asian American ethnic groups in states with the largest representation of Filipinos, such as California and Hawai’i (Egloria, 2011; Maramba & Museus, 2012).

With the highest population than any other racial group for AAPIs in California and Hawai’i, Filipinos are a significant population whose needs have not been met and can no longer be ignored. In California, community colleges have the largest numbers of Filipinos in comparison to the University of California (UC) system campuses and the California State University (CSU) system campuses (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 2008; Egloria, 2011). On a general level, the UC system has openly supported the establishment of California community colleges
because they alleviate enrollment pressures for students who need the remedial education that can be found at the community colleges (Cohen, 1999). The UC system and the CSU system are then free to concentrate their higher education efforts on other functions (Cohen, 1999).

In Hawai‘i, Filipinos are a major ethnic group and deserve closer exploration, especially their underrepresentation at 4-year universities (Libarios & Bachini, 2016). Filipinos who choose to pursue higher education tend to enroll in the University of Hawai‘i community colleges due to affordability, as finances are an important factor in the higher education persistence of Filipino families (Libarios & Bachini, 2016). Libarios and Bachini’s (2016) recent study revealed further research is needed to understand why community colleges are the main choice for Filipino students, and why they do not fare well in transferring to 4-year universities. Filipino college students have a record of underachievement and remain a socioeconomically, disadvantaged, and underserved group in Hawai‘i (Libarios & Bachini, 2016).

A plethora of research has been conducted on improving student success and developing effective practices for community college students (Acevedo-Gil & Zerquera, 2016; Hatch & Bohlig, 2016), especially for students who are underprepared academically (Barnes & Piland, 2010); however, Buenavista et al. (2009) stated Filipino college students are not targeted or eligible for postsecondary access or retention programs. Moreover, there are no studies conducted on specialized Filipino student success programs that intentionally focus on Filipino Americans at community colleges. Beyond the need to examine a student population that has been historically ignored in higher education, these disparities warrant more research of Filipino students and their lived experiences (Libarios & Bachini, 2016; Maramba & Museus, 2012). As the population of Filipinos increases nationwide, there is no guarantee they will adequately be represented and successful in society including higher education (Castillo, 2002). Castillo (2002) further stated Filipinos endure sociocultural complexities and challenges; this directly impacts and influences their academic experiences and ability to be resilient in higher education. There are significant differences between Filipinos born in the Philippines and those born in the United States, which vary in cultural
beliefs, identities, and experiences. As a result of these differences, Filipinos enter college already at-risk (Castillo, 2002). Castillo reported data collected at the state level and nationwide showed Filipino students suffer from disparities in educational progress. Without taking a closer look at the needs of Filipino college students and fostering retention strategies that will help promote their educational success, Filipino college students will continue to have their educational experiences shaped by inaccurate information, misrepresentation, and stereotypes that prevent colleges from providing necessary resources and support services for them (Castillo, 2002).

**Background of the Problem**

In the United States, over 1,200 community colleges provide access to higher education for 10,000,000 students each year (Bailey et al., 2015) and attract high proportions of students from low-income backgrounds, students of color, and first-generation college students—groups typically underserved in higher education (Roman, 2007). The state of California has further extended this commitment to higher education and met the growing demands for education by establishing over 100 community colleges, consequently creating a port of entry for students from disproportionately impacted groups (Thelin, 2011). With the focus on community college student retention and persistence over the last decade, there is a proliferation of research that addresses the struggles of marginalized students of color; however, research is limited on the educational experiences of AAPI students (Alcantar et al., 2020; Orsuwan & Cole, 2007; Yeh, 2004).

**Asian American and Pacific Islanders**

Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) represent 5.5% of the population in the United States, according to the 2010 U.S. Census (Pang et al., 2011). Lee et al. (2018) reported Asian Americans are the fastest growing group in the United States and now represent 6% of the population—up from .7% in the 1970s. Asian Americans include 17,300,000, while Pacific Islanders include 1,200,000, with the largest number of AAPIs residing in Hawaii, California, and New York. Based on the 2010 Census, AAPIs will represent more than 10% of the U.S. population by 2050 (Pang et al., 2011). Yet in this number of a combined 18,500,000 AAPIs, there are large numbers of
similarities and differences in language, cultural beliefs and values, and history in the United States. The ethnic subgroups in the AAPI population include Asian Indian, Bangladeshi, Burmese, Chinese, Filipino, Guamanian, Indonesian, Iwo Jima, Japanese, Korean, Lao, Malaysian, Maldivian, Marshallese, Native Hawaiian, Nepalese, Okinawan, Pakistani, Palauan, Singaporean, Samoan, Tahitian, Taiwanese, Thai, Tibetan, and Vietnamese (Pang et al., 2011).

Researchers have attempted to explain the educational outcomes of AAPI students. However, due to the lack of adequate or disaggregated data of subgroups, the grand narrative expressed for AAPI students does not include the full picture of their success and struggles in higher education (Teranishi et al., 2013; Nguyen et al., 2018) because they are treated as a single, homogeneous racial group (Teranishi, 2002). This practice of inaccurately counting Asian Americans has been regarded as a civil rights issue that needs to be resolved (Lee et al., 2018; Teranishi et al., 2013).

In U.S. community colleges, the AAPI population is a sizeable force and continues to grow (Lew et al., 2005). From 1980 to 2000, the enrollment for AAPI students at community colleges increased 224% from 124,000 students to 402,000 students (Lew et al., 2005). Lew et al. (2005) reported the number of conferred associate degrees for AAPI students grew by 229%, with California being the state with the largest AAPI population.

Filipino Americans

Of the 17,300,000 Asian Americans recorded on the 2010 U.S. Census, Filipino Americans comprised 3,400,000, the second largest of the Asian American subgroups (Hernandez, 2016; Maramba & Museus, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), and Filipino Americans are one of the fastest growing populations in the United States (Libarios et al., 2018). The highest number of Filipinos in the nation live in California at 43% and Hawai‘i at 10% (Libarios et al., 2018). Filipino students are also one of the subgroups in the AAPI population that are part of disproportionately impacted minority groups in higher education and encounter specific barriers to college persistence (Egloria, 2011; Libarios et al., 2018; Libarios & Bachini, 2016; Yeh, 2004). According to the Asian American Policy Review (2013), there is intergenerational downward mobility of Filipinos who have been identified as
being at risk. Second-generation or U.S.-born Filipinos have markedly lower college completion rates than their immigrant parents who received bachelor’s degrees from the Philippines (Asian American Policy Review, 2013). Even in the late 1990s, Okamura and Agbayani (1997) confirmed institutional barriers restricted access and persistence for Filipinos in higher education. Libarios et al. (2018) outlined in detail the seven types of challenges Filipinx American college students face that not only inhibit their student engagement but also pose serious challenges to their success in higher education: (a) myth of the model minority, (b) marginalization, (c) invisibility and isolation, (d) ethnic and racial identity, (e) family and parent influence, (f) financial hardships, and (g) immigration and language barriers.

One of the main institutional barriers to college persistence is the limited number of Filipino faculty who could serve as role models and mentors (Nadal et al., 2010; Okamura & Agbayani, 1997). With the lack of Filipino role models in higher education, Filipino students may experience feelings of alienation and not belonging to a campus that caters predominantly to White students (Okamura & Agbayani, 1997). A second barrier Filipino college students encounter is the lack of guidance and direction on navigating the higher education system in the United States, as many of their parents received their postsecondary degrees in the Philippines (Lew et al., 2005). Another barrier to college persistence are the familial obligations that require Filipino students to work and contribute financially to the family unit, or to care for younger siblings (Lew et al., 2005). Finally, Ocampo (2013) identified a fourth barrier: Filipino American college students feeling marginalized among East Asian students, experiencing lack of social support and underrepresentation in majors such as STEM, where there was an overrepresentation of East Asian Americans. One of the themes that emerged in Nadal et al.’s (2010) a study was the lack of distinction in the experiences of Filipino Americans and Asian Americans across of number of areas, with one of the study participants expressing higher education institutions needs to “recognize Filipino Americans as a group separate from Asian Americans and as such a community in need of its own support services, pedagogical approaches, etc.” (p. 701).
The model minority myth disguises the educational challenges that Filipino college students face (Libarios & Bachini, 2016). Filipino students feel pressured by the model minority myth, which is the assumption that all Asian Americans achieve academic and occupational success (Libarios & Bachini, 2016; Museus & Maramba, 2011); hence, the invisibility of Filipino students in higher education. Because Filipinos are an AAPI ethnic subgroup, the model minority stereotype also victimizes them (Okamura & Agbayani, 1997); they may identify as a struggling student who needs retention services, thus, resulting in Filipino Americans who have developed a panminority identity (Ocampo, 2013). A panminority identification among Filipino Americans reflects an ethnic background, cultural upbringing, and education experience akin to the Latinx and Black cultures and experiences—rather than Asian Americans—in a university setting (Hernandez, 2016).

Maramba and Museus (2012) conducted a quantitative study on the sense of belonging for Filipinos at a college and found race, gender, and generational status played a huge role for these students and their college experience. As expected, third generation Filipino Americans displayed the most positive and cross-cultural interactions, followed by second generation Filipino Americans—however, first generation Filipinos felt the least connected to the college and to their culture (Maramba & Museus, 2012). Nadal et al. (2012) stated a more detailed examination of the Filipino student population must take place to identify any specific barriers to college persistence for these students, as the needs of Filipino college students remain unknown, resulting in a lack of culturally competent support services for this subgroup. To close this gap, student success programs and policies that help Filipinos enroll directly into 4-year institutions or assist them with the transfer process would help them in obtaining the bachelor’s degree and would in turn lead to improved social mobility opportunities for Filipinos (Libarios & Bachini, 2016).

**Problem Statement**

Filipinos are the largest ethnic group of Asian American and Pacific Islanders in California; yet, the focus on the model minority stereotype and aggregated data of AAPI conceals the racial and
ethnic disparities in socioeconomic status and educational attainment for Filipino community college students and leads to a lack of culturally competent support services.

**Purpose Statement**

This qualitative study contributed to the knowledge base by (a) exploring the lived experiences of Filipino and Filipino American community college students enrolled in a Filipino culture-based learning community or student success program, (b) identifying the specific needs and barriers that exist for this marginalized student population, and (c) highlighting the success and challenges that Filipino community college students face.

**Research Questions**

To further examine and explore the lived experiences of Filipino and Filipino American community college students, the following research questions guided this qualitative study:

1. How do Filipino community college students experience a culture-based Filipino learning community or student success program?

2. What do Filipino students identify as their success and challenges at community colleges?

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study stretches far and wide, as only a few empirical studies have been dedicated to Filipino students in higher education. In the last 14 years, only 1% of articles published in the five most common peer-reviewed, academic journals in the field of education have been about AAPIs (Libarios & Bachini, 2016). Researchers in academia have neglected Filipinos, although Filipinos have had a valuable place in the history of the United States, especially in states where they represent large numbers such as California and Hawai‘i (Libarios & Bachini, 2016). Perspectives and findings gained in this study include a deeper understanding of the college experiences of Filipino students, who must often make adjustments to understand and become a part of the foreign campus culture that does not know much about them (Museus & Maramba, 2011).

Findings generated from this study on cohort models in learning communities and student success programs also provide valuable insight and information for student services practitioners who design and seek exceptional funding for learning communities and student support programs.
and Piland (2010) confirmed the cohort model adds to positive student involvement and engagement and contribute to college success when students are enrolled in linked courses that have a shared theme (e.g., culture)—similar to the same models that have been applied to Puente and Umoja learning communities for Latino and Black students (The Puente Project, n.d.; Umoja Community, 2020).

Libarios and Bachini (2016) stated it is critical for colleges and universities to create linkages and relationships with high school counselors, faculty, administrators, and community colleges to create a bridge from high school to college for first-generation college students. Given data that show there are more Filipino students enrolled in California community colleges than the UC and California State University systems (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 2008), findings from this study provide research needed to advance the need for funding to implement and institutionalize Filipino learning communities that have “presence of Filipino faculty and staff” (Libarios & Bachini, 2016, p. 25) that will contribute to the overall, positive higher education and student success of Filipino American college students (Libarios & Bachini, 2016). The next section provides an overall summary of the scope of the study that includes details of assumptions, delimitations, and limitations.

**Scope of the Study**

This study was a qualitative study using rapid and critical ethnography, focused on the Filipino learning communities or student success programs at three California community college campuses. Though there are various approaches and methods of using ethnography, each with its own merits and limitations, I chose to use “rapid ethnography,” as Millen (2000) coined it, to meet the increasing time demands, undertaking a short and well-defined timeline of 1 to 2 months to rapidly gain an understanding of the entire setting and phenomenon (Reeves et al., 2013) of Filipino learning communities and student success programs. I also chose to use educational ethnography as an approach to studying problems, processes, and programs in education (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Critical ethnography has been very important in educational research to examine how groups use symbols, social practices, and rituals to maintain inequitable distributions of power, prestige, and
resources (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Researchers use critical ethnography as a starting point to leverage transformation and initiate change in existing power asymmetries (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993; Reeves et al., 2013).

Traditional ethnography is highly time intensive and takes place over a period of months with the same amount of time for data analysis and observation (Millen, 2000), and researchers have adapted it to a number of disciplines (e.g., education, business, social sciences; Ranabahu, 2017). Because this study was part of a doctoral program subject to limitations in time, budget, and a global pandemic, I could not apply the time needed for a traditional ethnography. Moreover, Hammersley (2006) stated fieldwork for most ethnographers actually takes months rather than years. The choice to use rapid, educational, and critical ethnography was based on the need to document in a short period of time the personal and lived experiences of Filipino community college students enrolled in a Filipino learning community or student success program and how they experienced being part of these student support programs.

Assumptions of the Study

This study used qualitative research methods of rapid ethnography, which is a form of multimethod ethnography (Baines & Cunningham, 2011), using a combination of the scientific and artistic approaches of observational data, in-depth interviews, and site documents (Reeves et al., 2013). Students were interviewed using in-depth interview techniques. I assumed although participants were assigned pseudonyms so they could express their own voices and opinions, there might be a possibility of the researcher’s voice influencing the dialogue. A second assumption was participants would be prepared to answer questions on their experience of being in a Filipino learning community or student success program at the time of the in-depth interviews. A third assumption was participants would provide accurate and truthful information on the phenomenon of being a Filipino community college student enrolled or involved in Filipino learning community or student success program; yet, not be interpreted as the lived experiences of Filipino American college students in
general. A final assumption was that students who participate in this study and self-identify as Filipino are in fact biologically part of the Filipino race in origin.

**Study Delimitations**

To define the population of interest, this study was delimited to three community colleges in California that had a Filipino learning community or student success program. As part of my selection process, I visited each of these learning community and student success programs and met with faculty and program coordinators prior to my decision to undertake this study. There are various student success programs in higher education used as a framework or model for the type of educational experience students should have, such as Puente, Umoja, or other student success programs for AAPIs. However, no college or university in the United States other than the three community colleges in California have a specific learning community and student success program for Filipino students focused on Filipino culture, diaspora, and experience.

Within the boundaries I set for this study, I delimited participants to students who identified as Filipino, enrolled in one of the three community colleges, were active in their Filipino learning community or student success program, and finished 1 academic year or 2 consecutive semesters (fall and spring) in the program. I focused on the three community colleges in California because there have been no studies to date conducted simultaneously about the lived experiences of all three Filipino learning community and student success programs.

The 1st year of completion on a college campus with involvement in a student support program gives students the ability to reflect on their lived experience and the impact of being part of a culture-based Filipino learning community or student success program on their academic journey. Using the ethnographic cultural lens to study these students’ lives in their communities, through this study I captured how Filipino community college students interacted with each other and their environment to understand their culture.

My study was stronger with these delimitations because I sought to gain an emic perspective, or “native’s point of view” (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p. 150), about what happens in a culture-
based Filipino learning community or student success program. I studied not only one community college with a Filipino learning community or student success program, I studied the only three community colleges in California and nationwide that have such a program.

**Study Limitations**

One of the main limitations of the study was the COVID-19 global pandemic that directly impacted and altered this research study, with universities and colleges forced to offer virtual instruction and student support services. Researchers conducted research remotely and on-site visits were not possible until college campuses reopened. A second limitation was this research study being a rapid ethnographic study whereby I undertook fieldwork and data collection in a short and relatively well-defined timeline of one to two months (Reeves et al., 2013). Given the global pandemic and the use of rapid ethnography as a research design, final limitations were the unpredictability of everyday life that disrupted data collection activities at times and withdrawal of access to research sites due to the global pandemic.

**Definitions of Key Terms**

**Baybayin.** Baybayin was an Indigenous, native script and syllabic alphabet of Precolonial Philippines before the arrival of the Spanish in Manila in 1571 (Arguelles, 1999; Potet, 2018). Baybayin is now known as *alibata* and is a sign of resistance for many Filipino Americans (Arguelles, 1999). The original written language of the Philippines was advanced before the arrival of Spaniards.

**Colonized or Colonial Mentality.** This term refers to the intellectual captivity of the 400-year rule of Spaniards over the Philippines which has also been referred to as a “cancer of the mind” (Leonardo & Matias, 2013, p. 4) that continues to spread its disease in the hearts and spirits of the Filipino people. Colonial mentality results in a lack of ethnic pride and produced a cultural inferiority complex rooted in the Philippines’ colonial history, with Filipino Americans being an extension of that history (Leonardo & Matias, 2013). It also represents a lack of historical self-understanding, in which the colonizer has forced the colonized to assume a role as subjugated people, losing years of Filipino identity and history. In addition, scholars refer to colonial mentality as being prevalent in Filipinos,
displaying any cultural behaviors, values, or physical appearance that are American or Western due to ethnic and cultural inferiority of colonization (David & Okazaki, 2010).

Filipina/o or Pilipina/o. I used the term F/Pilipina/o throughout this dissertation to recognize individuals with backgrounds from the Philippines in various regions and different stages of identity; I will use both Filipina/o and Pilipina/o as ethnic (Nadal, 2004) and gender identifiers. The “P” in “Pilipino” is a reclaimed version of “Filipino,” and used as a political statement, as there is no “F” sound in the Tagalog/Pilipino language (Nadal, 2004). Spaniards brought the “F” sound and spelling of Filipino after they colonized the Philippines.

Filipinx or Pilipinx. The use of “Filipinx” and “Pilipinx” is based on individual preference and can be used interchangeably. The “x” at the end of “Filipino” or “Pilipino” allows for the terms to be unisex or nonbinary, remaining gender neutral (Vera, 2018). Individuals of Filipino descent use this term simultaneously to refer to male or female, and an acknowledgement of all genders and intersections that exist in the Filipinx community and go beyond the normative conceptualizations of gender type (Libarios et al., 2018).

Libarios et al. (2018) stated there are passionate debates and complexities that exist on the use of language, terms, and culture in identifying with either Filipino, Filipina, Pilipino, Pilipina, Filipinx or Pilipinx ancestry. Students who identify with backgrounds from the Philippines will continue to evolve when claiming these various identities in terms of the use of the language, terms, and culture (Libarios et al., 2018). For the purpose of this study, I primarily used Filipino, Filipino American, and Filipino/a/x, the most commonly used terms in academic literature, understanding limitations, and used all interchangeably throughout the dissertation.

Learning Community. A learning community is a well-documented pedagogical tool that enhances student involvement and engagement; combined with academic support, it can be especially helpful for specific student populations, such as students of color, first-generation students, and other historically underserved student populations (Laanan et al., 2013).
**Model Minority Myth.** The model minority myth is a belief that Asian Americans are an example of immigrants who have achieved the “American dream” and have been hailed as “America’s greatest success story, viewing all Asian Americans as intelligent and hardworking” (Takaki, 1989, p. 474).

**Puente.** The Puente Project was started over 30 years ago at Chabot College, a community college in California. It has improved the college-going rate of thousands of underrepresented and economically disadvantaged students. The program—which includes a rigorous academic program and support from academic counselors—has expanded to middle schools, high schools, and community colleges in California (The Puente Project, n.d.). It is a state program cosponsored by UC and California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO).

**Umoja.** Umoja is a statewide, student success program open to all students but designed to increase the retention, academic success, and self-actualization of African American college students (Umoja Community, 2020).

**Organization of the Dissertation**

In this chapter, I provided context on the need to study Filipino community college students enrolled and involved in a Filipino learning community or student success program. I then defined the problem and purpose of this study. I further discussed the significance and the scope of the study and provided definitions for key terms. In Chapter 2, I present a critical review of the literature pertaining to the research questions. In Chapter 3, I focus on the research design, including data collection and analysis methods. In Chapter 4, I present the study’s findings, and in Chapter 5 I discuss conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations for practice.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Filipino Americans comprise more than 3,400,000 of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) population and are arguably the second largest Asian American subgroup (Maramba & Museus, 2012; Nadal, 2008; Ocampo, 2016; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010); yet, they are often overlooked and absent from research in higher education (Buenavista et al., 2009; Nadal, 2008; Yeh 2004). Because Filipino Americans tend to be lumped together with AAPIs, they become invisible and forgotten; their numbers are insignificant as a result of aggregated data collection (Bonus & Maramba, 2013; Nadal, 2008). On a national level, Filipino Americans are underrepresented at selective colleges and universities and are more concentrated at low-selectivity institutions in comparison to other Asian American groups (Maramba & Museus, 2012). Filipino American students have the largest representation in both California and Hawai‘i; yet, suffer from lower success rates than other Asian American ethnic groups (Egloria, 2011; Maramba & Museus, 2012). Despite their increased numbers, Filipino American students have remained underserved in education, with high dropout rates and low attainment of college degrees (Halago, 2010). In California, Filipino Americans have a higher high school dropout and noncompletion rate in comparison to other Asian American subgroups (Okamura & Agbayani, 1997). Libario and Bachini (2016) reported though Filipino American students most often choose community colleges, they struggle in transferring to 4-year universities. Maramba and Museus (2012) found further evidence that Filipino American students suffer from disparities at colleges and universities and are underrepresented at 4-year institutions. Various scholars in the field have acknowledged invisibility occurs in the larger societal views of Filipinos and also in the foundations and curriculum they receive in educational institutions (Andresen, 2013).

To promote the educational advancement of Filipino students, it is critical to understand the specific needs and experiences of Filipino community college students. The purpose of this study will be to explore the lived experiences of Filipino community college students enrolled in a Filipino...
culture-based learning community or student success program, identifying the unique successes and challenges for this marginalized group. At the beginning of this chapter, I review the historical, philosophical, and theoretical foundations that establish the significance of initiating research on Filipinos in higher education. Next, I provide an extensive review of the empirical research related to Filipino Americans, Filipinos in higher education, and learning communities. Collectively, these sections lay the foundation for the study. Finally, I conclude with a chapter summary.

**Historical, Philosophical, and Theoretical Foundations**

This section begins with a historical foundation and frames the forgotten history, stories, and voices of Filipino Americans, highlighting beginnings of colonialism and how colonialism has negatively manifested and affected the psyche of Filipinos today. It is followed by the philosophical foundation of Freire (1972), with fundamentals in existentialism and phenomenology, emphasizing the need for liberatory education. This philosophical foundation focuses on the need for critical pedagogy in higher education for students of color who have been oppressed by colonialism, such as Filipino Americans (Freire, 1972). By using Freire’s philosophy on critical pedagogy for this study, I will underscore a transformation in education for cultural dialogue and critical reflection. Lastly, the theoretical foundation provides a critical race theory (CRT) framework intersected with racial and ethnic identity development theory for me to further examine the community college experiences of Filipino American students.

**Historical Foundation**

As early as 1587, Filipinos arrived to the United States in what is now Morro Bay, California, as enslaved people aboard a Spanish galleon ship (David & Nadal; 2013; Nelson, 1999; Pido, 1997). According to David and Nadal (2013), Filipinos were the first Asians on U.S. soil and were also the first Asians to establish settlements in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1763. These Filipino immigrants escaped from the Spanish galleon ships and built small communities comprised of only males (Pido, 1997). At the time these incidents occurred, California and Louisiana were not territories of the United States (Pido, 1997).
After the United States annexed the Philippines in 1898, Filipinos who migrated to the mainland were primarily college and university students (Melendy, 1974). The colonization of the Philippines made it a U.S. territory, making it possible for Filipino nationals to go to the United States (David & Nadal, 2013; Melendy, 1974) as products of a Thomasite school system that praised the best U.S. ideals (Bacho, 1997). Filipino students, although few in number, were welcomed by U.S. citizens as trainees for democracy with hopes that they would bring these ideals back to the Philippines and instill democracy there (Melendy, 1974).

In the 20th century, there were two distinct groups of Filipinos who immigrated to the United States (Melendy, 1974). The first wave of immigration occurred in the 1920s, with immigrants consisting mainly of agricultural workers, and the second wave was in the 1960s—who came after the change in the immigration law of 1965—with most of these immigrants being highly skilled (Melendy, 1974). However, the Immigration Act of 1924, which excluded Japanese labor, paved a way for an influx of Filipinos immigrate to the United States in the early 1920s and 1930s (Melendy, 1974). Though some Filipinos were hired as cheap labor and allowed to work in the Western states (e.g., Alaska, Hawai‘i, Oregon, Washington, and California), there was still a small scholarly group of Filipinos called pensionados that were sent by the United States to study in U.S. universities in hopes of bringing that knowledge to influence the Philippines (David & Nadal, 2013).

Hence, Filipinos have been a part of the U.S. history since the late 1500s and the U.S. education system since the early 1900s. Unfortunately, this important part of factual history is absent and silent in higher education, as Filipinos are aggregated together in a homogenous group with Asian Americans (Nadal et al., 2012).

**Colonial Past of the Philippines**

The internalization of colonialism that lies deeply rooted in Filipinos makes the search for identity confusing, because Filipinos must first acknowledge the struggle for a sense of belonging is inextricably linked to having been uprooted (Leonardo & Matias, 2013). The Indigenous history of the Philippines was ripped from them by 381 years of Spanish, American, and Japanese colonialism
(Larkin, 1982). Indigenous Filipinos were a harmonious group until Spaniards invaded their archipelago and changed their social, political, economic, and spiritual climate (Mulder, 1994; Qian & Shah, 2015). The arrival of Spaniards was the end of freedom as Filipinos knew it; the Spanish also dismantled their language, religion, and resources and stripped them of their self-governing, independent communities (Mulder, 1994). Spain’s denigration of the Philippine native culture created a superiority complex among Spaniards and led to a manipulative and coercive attempt to pacify Filipinos and opened the door for future foreign powers (Leonardo & Matias, 2013).

In 1898, the Philippines became a U.S. territory as a result of the Spanish–American War (Qian & Shah, 2015); the United States purchased it for $2,000,000 from Spain under the terms of the Treaty of Paris (Andresen, 2013). The suppression of Philippine nationalism continued under U.S. rule, forcing the people to speak English and preparing Filipinos to become citizens of a democratic state with an expansive education system (Mulder, 1994; Qian & Shah, 2015). Colonial education became a continuous means of oppressing the Filipinos, used for further capitalist gain, racist relations, and cultural imperialism (Leonardo & Matias, 2013). This was most apparent in the colonial relationship that Spain and the United States had with the Philippines (Leonardo & Matias, 2013). Filipinos soon found themselves in another fight for independence from the United States in the Filipino–American War, described in U.S. history books as a rebellious “Filipino Insurrection” (Andresen, 2013, p. 70). The wording in U.S. history books have implications that give way to colonial mentality, suggesting Filipinos were incapable of attaining their own freedom from Western dominance and had no role in the victory over Spain (Andresen, 2013; Elizalde, 2016).

**Filipino American History in the United States**

Filipinos were in the New World much longer than any other Asian groups as sailors, scouts, enslaved people, and builders of large, state-of-the-art vessels known as the *Manila galleons* (Mercene, 2007). For 250 years, beginning in the 16th century, the Spaniards controlled a trade monopoly between the Philippines and Mexico (Mercene, 2007). Every year between 1570 and 1815,
two galleons sailed from Manila, Philippines to Acapulco, Mexico to conduct a flourishing trade for Spain, with as much as 50–80% of the crew being Filipinos in the later years (Mercene, 2007).

In 1587, a noted California historian named Henry Wagner documented the first landing of a small expedition aboard a Spanish galleon on Sunday, October 18 by a bay in the central California coast with a large protruding rock, now known as Morro Bay (Mercene, 2007). Filipino scouts and slaves were aboard this ship and were the first documented Filipinos to touch U.S. soil. Little is known about the early Filipinos, or “Manilamen,” who deserted the Spanish galleons and established communities in the Louisiana bayous as early as 1763 (Mercene, 2007; Takaki, 1989). Even less is known about Filipino college students in the United States, given the limited access to resources in centers or institutions of higher education (Andresen, 2013).

**Immigration of Filipinos in the United States.** In each of the subgroups of the APPI category are complex and deeply rooted histories, life experiences, languages, and cultures (Lew et al., 2005; Pang et al., 2011). This is the case for Filipinos and their multifaceted history with 381 years of Spanish, American, and Japanese colonialism that has pervaded the culture and the people (Larkin, 1982). As a result of Spanish and U.S. influences, Filipino immigrants have had access to Western education, ideas, and values (Qian & Shah, 2015).

The 1920s wave of Filipinos—called the “Manong generation” (Takaki, 1989, p. 316)—were brought from the Philippines to the United States as cheap labor to help with plantations in Hawai‘i and, thereby, control Japanese workers who wanted higher wages. Because the Philippines was a U.S. territory at that time, Filipinos were classified as U.S. nationals, which allowed them entry into the United States (Bacho, 1997; Takaki, 1989). In the book *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, Takaki (1989) explained the massive 1930 Filipino immigration pattern in which approximately 110,000 Filipinos immigrated to the then U.S. territory of Hawai‘i and another 40,000 to the mainland. Filipinos on the mainland had very different experiences from Filipinos in Hawai‘i.
In Hawai‘i, there were tensions between Japanese plantation workers and Filipinos, but management controlled the rivalry between them so there were no violent outbursts (Takaki, 1989). However, on the mainland and especially in California, Filipinos were met with sharp hostility from White employers. Approximately 25% of Filipinos in the 1930s became service workers, including janitors, valets, dishwashers, and busboys (Takaki, 1989).

In the early 1900s, 9% of U.S. Filipinos worked in Alaskan canneries earning only $34.58 monthly as their take-home pay after rent and other expenses. Most of the cannery workers were in debt and had to sign up for another year of work in Alaska the following season to pay off their debt to the contractors (Takaki, 1989).

The largest percentage of Filipinos (approximately 60%) worked in agriculture to fill the labor gaps as a result of the exclusion of Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Asian Indians (Takaki, 1989). They worked in weather conditions that were hotter than 100 degrees, earning only a dime a day, and being squeezed into sleeping quarters with wood cots and no sewage disposal (Takaki, 1989). Anti-Filipino hate and violence were most pervasive in California with increasing attacks against Filipino laborers as White males feared they would lose their jobs and women to Filipino men (Takaki, 1989).

In the process of their struggle to fight economic and violent racist forces in the United States, the Manong generation began an organized, powerful labor movement and were the main force behind the creation of United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America (Bacho, 1997). More of these labor unions were also created in California as Filipinos were constant victims of racism, being called “little brown monkey” and abused by White police officers (Takaki, 1989). After the Immigration Act of 1965, Filipino immigrants with professional interests and skills (Takaki, 1989) led the number of new immigrants out of all the Asian countries (Melendy, 1974).

**Filipino Immigration and Educational Experiences.** Rumbaut (2008) states that more immigrants come to the United States more than any other country in the world and more come to California more than any other state, settling in southern California more than any other metropolitan region (p. 196). Filipinos who immigrate to the United States are considered first-generation and
Filipino children who were born in the United States are considered second-generation (Monzon, 2013). Moreover, second-generation and third-generation Filipinos normally spend their entire lives in the United States (Monzon, 2013). Filipinos considered 1.5 generation immigrated to the United States as children, are more acculturated and have completed their education in the United States (Rumbaut, 2008). In Rumbaut’s (study on second-generation immigration and ethnic mobility, there were significant differences in parents whose children were born in the Philippines (1.5 generation) than the parents whose children were born in the United States (second-generation). Filipinos are also able to adapt more than other nationalities as English is one of two official languages in the Philippines, and they are more likely to be naturalized U.S. citizens (Rumbaut, 2008).

Second-generation Filipino Americans are limited in their ability to understand life in the Philippines because they never lived there, and that country is technically not their home (Gutierrez, 2018). There is also a sense of being in between two cultures for second-generation Filipino Americans as they may not fully perceive themselves as part of their ancestral homeland and feel separated from the experience of first-generation Filipinos because of class and national privilege being raised in a developed country (Gutierrez, 2018).

First-generation Filipinos do not need to rely on their parents to tell them the stories of the motherland as they have facilitated connections with family and living in the Philippines before immigrating to the United States (Gutierrez, 2018). They are able to speak the Filipino language and they are actively engaged with family back home in the Philippines either by sending money or some other form of familial support.

The culture clash emerges when Filipinos and Filipino Americans are under pressure to honor the Filipino family structure and values while in pursuit of higher education. A Filipino student must put the needs of their family first above their own (Monzon, 2013), a cultural value called utang ng loob which means a debt of reciprocity (Nadal, 2010). The hierarchical structure of the Filipino family has authority which flows downward, and a high emphasis is placed on respected elders (Monzon, 2013). Moreover, Filipino students are not allowed to question their elders or parents as to “why they
Filipinos and Filipino Americans enter college with a strong sense of loyalty and obligation to their families about which choice of college and educational or career goal they must have. It is only until they enter college and begin learning more independence that the conflict occurs. Filipino American students spend a lot of time and energy trying hard to balance their true desires and choices for their educational path with the expectations of their parents (Monzon, 2013). However, second-generation Filipino Americans are able to engage in social ties regardless of cultural divisions and their connections are stronger to their parents than they are to secondary, familial ties in the Philippines (Gutierrez, 2018). Carancho’s (2020) recent study on first-generation Filipinos showed that these students are not fully prepared for college because their parents did not receive their college degrees in the United States but in the Philippines. This created challenges for first-generation Filipino students in trying to navigate through college in pursuit of the American dream to show their family back in the Philippines that they are a success story.

**Colonial Mentality**

Colonial education has shaped the Filipino diaspora despite the suffering it has brought on the Filipino people (Leonardo & Matias, 2013). The internalization of Western ideas and colonialism lay out a challenging path for Filipinos or descendants of what is called the Philippines. Whether these individuals define themselves as *indios, negritos,* savages, Pilipinos, or Filipinos, what is authentically Filipino identity is confusing (Leonardo & Matias, 2013) and many Filipino American students find themselves deconstructing an immense history of oppression as a result of colonialization (Andresen, 2013). Educators must be cognizant of their own life-worlds and those of students and provide them with the educational tools to construct the best life-world possible (Ozmon, 2012). This can be achieved by emphasizing the past, the present, and focusing on the possibility of the future. Ozmon (2012) stated education that liberates is not from the perception that the oppressed are in a trapped world they cannot escape, but rather in a limited situation that can be transformed.
Philosophical Foundation

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1972) stated education is a liberating force, challenging the traditional role of teachers who provide knowledge for students to memorize. As a phenomenologist and existentialist, Freire understood oppression would be a present and constant stream in the consciousness when the oppressed found themselves in a condition in which they served as hosts to all of the oppressors (Ozmon, 2012). In the case of Filipinos, they have served as hosts to oppressive, colonizing countries such as Spain, Britain, Japan, and the United States (Ozmon, 2012). In this passive state, nothing is risked. However, if education becomes the tool to liberate Filipino Americans from a history of oppression, Freire stated education that liberates is painful and synonymous to childbirth—for through this process, a new person is brought into the world (Ozmon, 2012). Higher education, from an existentialist point of view, is not just an ideal to reach for, but something transformative to be achieved through purposeful activity and action (Ozmon, 2012).

Critical Pedagogy

Freire’s (1972) critical pedagogy focused on the struggle to liberate the poor and advocated education for liberation, as education is the practice of freedom (Shih, 2018). Freire contrasted his view of the liberatory concept of education with the “banking concept” (Beckett, 2013, p. 50) in which a banking education is monological, problem solving and consists only of the teachers’ view of the world (Beckett, 2013). In this outlook of traditional “banking education” (Beckett, 2013, p. 50), knowledge is the property of the teacher rather than critical reflection shared between teacher and student.

Freire (1972) believed education is dialogue and the process of dialogue required love, humility, trust, hope, faith, vulnerability, and critical thinking (Beckett, 2013; Shih, 2018). It was also the ability for educators and students to be able to examine each other’s views and set their intentions on developing a new view that could be shared (Beckett, 2013). For Freire, though students’ views were seen as problematic, they were also the very thing that constituted education.
(Beckett, 2013). It allowed educators and students to wrestle in this dialogue of critical reflection. This type of critical reflection is needed as there are still manifestations of the oppressor consciousness that must be challenged (Beckett, 2013). More specifically, Freire examined how the dialogic process enabled students and educator to rediscover ways to liberate and transform themselves by exposing the dominant ideologies and examining the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed (Shih, 2018). In this way, those power relations are renegotiated and education can be viewed as a cultural forum, as Freire argued it should be, allowing students to be free to express their own cultural views and experiences (Shih, 2018).

Educators can implement cultural dialogue and critical reflection in Filipino learning communities and student support programs, presenting accurate versions of history so that Filipino students have the opportunity to deconstruct, discuss, and use these facts in understanding and creating their truth. Educators can also redefine curriculum through the use of multicultural curricula into structured linked courses, allowing students to find a sense of belonging in college. Jehangir (2009) specified using the holistic elements of learning community design, critical pedagogy, and multicultural curricula are successful and important to creating a safe space in which students were allowed to cultivate a sense of belonging and use their personal voice to be part of an academic community. The use of ethnic studies pedagogy goes much deeper and focuses on the experiences, perspectives, and histories of traditionally underrepresented ethnic and racial groups (Dee & Penner, 2017).

**Ethnic Studies Pedagogy**

Ethnic studies emerged from the social movements of the 1960s in which students, educators, and scholars of color demanded that universities offer curricula that reflected diversity and the complexity of the U.S. population (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015) and was multicultural, antiracist, and guided by a strong sense of decolonization and self-determination (Dee & Penner, 2017; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). Dee and Penner (2017) stated ethnic studies refers to the “interdisciplinary programs of study that focus on the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities with a
particular emphasis on historical struggles and social movements” (p. 128). Tintiangco-Cubales et al. (2015) defined ethnic studies as a deconstruction of structural forms of domination and subordination that challenges the reproduction of essential categories of race, class, and gender. Through the development of ethnic studies, K–12 schools, colleges, and universities established multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy that affirmed cultural identity and critical social engagement for racial and ethnic minorities (Dee & Penner, 2017).

Using ethnic studies as context, culturally responsive pedagogy is teaching that responds directly to the diverse cultures and specific needs of students of color, allowing the development of their agency as producers of culture and focusing on the multiplicity in people of color (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). Culturally responsive pedagogy adds student culture to the center of the curriculum and must include three parts: (a) building upon students’ experiences and perspectives, (b) developing the critical consciousness of the students, and (c) creating caring academic environments (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015).

Tintiangco-Cubales (2013), inspired by her study on Filipina/o American youth, began Pin@y Educational Partnerships, a program for Filipina/o students, in San Francisco in 2001. Pin@y Educational Partnerships began as a lunchtime program with workshops and activities focused on Filipina/o American history and culture. Students from San Francisco State University met with students at Balboa High School in the Excelsior neighborhood to assess their academic and personal needs. One of the main needs these Filipina/o high school students identified was a course that centered on the Filipina/o American experience to be taught and included in their high school curriculum. With collaboration and negotiation with Balboa High School’s administration, a pilot course, Filipino American Experience, was inaugurated with 11 teachers and 30 students (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2013). This became an educational pipeline and partnership between public K–12 schools, San Francisco State University, the Filipino Community Center, and the Filipino American Development Foundation and had a wide, positive impact on underserved and marginalized Filipino communities (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2013).
Jocson (2009) also shared the use of teaching a high school social studies class through an ethnic studies framework by making use of narrative storytelling called kuwento, or story in the Filipino language. Jocson (2009) referenced an urban high school in northern California that established a Filipino heritage studies course in 1997 to meet the growing needs of Filipina/o American students and was the first of its kind to be part of a public school curriculum in the United States. The curriculum included literature written by and about Filipino Americans, empowering students to engage in dialogue in the classroom, and using kuwento because it is part of the Filipino cultural tradition that passes down stories, history, and lived experiences (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015).

Theoretical Foundation

For this study, I used the aforementioned, culturally responsive pedagogy derived from ethnic studies and CRT intersected with racial and ethnic identity development theory (Johnston-Guerrero, 2016), and Filipino critical theory (FilCrit; Viola, 2014). Both theories were used to critically examine the educational experiences of Filipino community college students, serving as a guide to challenge the dominant discourse on race and racism in education (Teranishi, 2002).

CRT

CRT in education places race and racism on intersecting axes of oppression (Cristobal, 2018); thereby, making them tools to deconstruct the educational inequities that Filipino college students face. Chavez and Guido-DiBrito (1999) stated racial and ethnic identity are “critical parts of the overall framework of individual and collective identity” (p. 39); and for underrepresented student groups, racial and ethnic identity can be manifested in conscious ways. This manifestation becomes a combined push and pull of social and cultural influences: (a) one is positive through deep immersion in cultural traditions and values from family and community that instill pride in ethnic identity and (b) the other is negative from the lens of media messages and treatment from others because of their race and ethnicity (Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999).
Therefore, the relationships between race and ethnicity are complex and researchers must further examine these relationships (Ong & Viernes, 2013). Cristobal (2018) stated “colonization and occupation are far from being phenomena of the distant past” (p. 34) with survival being an act of resistance and cultural thriving. In the case of Filipinos who were colonized for hundreds of years, they do not realize “there is no box to check, because the box that was placed before them was not designed by them and now they have an opportunity to revolutionize and redefine their identity” (Leonardo & Matias, 2013, p. 12). Ong and Viernes’s (2013) study found second-generation Filipino American college students are at risk and experience a pattern of downward intergenerational mobility because of racialized assimilation. The use of CRT framework helps to critically examine educational experiences of Filipino Americans.

In the mid-1970s, CRT was developed from the work of Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman, who had concerns about the slow pace of racial reform in the United States and were eventually joined by other legal scholars who wanted to advance civil rights (Ladson-Billings, 1999). CRT grew from a separate and earlier legal movement of critical legal studies that challenged traditional legal scholarship focused on doctrinal and policy analysis (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Reyes, 2018). CRT begins with the concept that racism is normal and not atypical in U.S. society because it is so deeply enmeshed that it appears normal and natural (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Because racism functions as a permanent fixture in U.S. culture and way of life, the charge of social justice advocates is to unpack and expose racism in its many forms (Ladson-Billings, 1999). When advocates use CRT in education, they challenge higher education institutions’ traditional claims of meritocracy, color and gender blindness, objectivity, race and gender neutrality, and equal opportunity (Teranishi, 2002). Bradbury (2014) stated CRT focuses on the “lived experience, the micro-practices of discrimination and disadvantage that people from minoritised groups experience on a daily basis, and their cumulative effects” (p. 18).
**CRT and Intersectionality of Race and Ethnicity**

*Intersectionality* is a term widely used and addresses the question of how various forms of race, ethnicity, inequality, and identity interrelate in various contexts over time (Gillborn, 2015). CRT also challenges ahistoricism, which is a lack of concern for history, historical development, or tradition, and stresses the need to understand race in its social, economic, and historical context (Gillborn, 2015). Previous research on racial and ethnic identity development provided various definitions of race, ethnicity, racial identity, and ethnic identity (Ponterotto & Park-Taylor, 2007).

Although there is no consensus about how to specifically define the terms of race and ethnicity, it is important to distinguish the commonalities and differences. *Race* is a term that refers to individuals placed into groups perceived to have “physical and behavioral characteristics that are often imagined to be negative, innate, and share associated differential value, power, and privilege with these characteristics” (Johnston-Guerrero, 2016, p. 45). People see skin color as a surface-manifestation of race and it has deep implications for how they treat others based on race (Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999).

Ethnic identity development is more internally claimed (Johnston-Guerrero, 2016) when an individual moves toward a more highly conscious identification with their own cultural values, beliefs, and traditions (Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999). *Ethnicity* refers to when groups are viewed on a more positive level and the group instills a sense of belonging, pride in their culture and ethnicity, and are motivated to be part of this collective (Johnston-Guerrero, 2016). Students who focus on the positive aspect of their ethnic identity will do better academically and psychologically, with these higher levels of ethnic identity acting as buffers against other forms of stress not related to race (Ponterotto & Park-Taylor, 2007).

Ethnic identity is also a social construct whereas racial identity is often a framework in which others are categorized based on their skin color. In Chan’s (2017) study on whether geography influenced racial identity, one finding revealed Microsystems such as peers, parents, and teachers wielded the most impact on how students defined race and racial identity. Johnston-Guerrero (2016)
expressed the difficulty in distinguishing between race and ethnicity in the United States, which has led to complications on the concepts of racial and ethnic identity.

Positionality refers to how differences in social and political context shape identity and affect how one will conceptualize race and ethnicity (Johnston-Guerrero, 2016). Race also intersects with other axes of oppression in different spaces and different contexts (Gillborn, 2015). For example, Johnston-Guerrero (2016) wrote about being a Filipino American who identified with the Pan-AAPI community, but recognized the separate identity of being Filipino American. For students who identify as part of the AAPI community or broader “Asian” (Johnston-Guerrero, 2016, p. 44) category, ethnicity refers to the disaggregated national origin or heritage groups (e.g., Filipino, Hmong, Vietnamese). However, one must never assume ethnic groups among racial groups are alike, with the assumption that one student among a particular racial group will identify with another from the same background or culture (Teranishi, 2002). There are many complexities and intersections in identity that can shape personal experiences (Gilborn, 2015).

**Asian Critical Theory.** Asian critical theory (AsianCrit) centers on the racialized experiences of Asian Americans in the history of the United States and its intersections in citizenship and immigration (Rodriguez & Kim, 2018). AsianCrit and CRT in higher education provide frameworks that foster research that centers on race and racism, and gender and class from individual and subjective perspectives (Liu, 2009). One facet of the AsianCrit approach is contesting the model minority stereotype, which suggests Asian Americans are seen as the ideal minority group and successfully overcomes all obstacles to achieve economic and education success with Caucasians (Liu, 2009).

**FilCrit.** Building upon critical pedagogy (Freire, 1972) and the dialogue of Asian American Studies or AsianCrit, there is an alternative framework I intend to use for this study: FilCrit. FilCrit is tied to Freire’s concepts of critical pedagogy alongside Asian American Studies. FilCrit provides an avenue for Filipino American activists to rise up and create culturally relevant forms of knowledge (Viola, 2014). This activism is manifested in contesting the unjust social relations in the United States for Filipinos and the resistance of U.S. neocolonialism in the Philippines (Viola, 2014). FilCrit focuses
on ways to educate, intervene, and challenge the asymmetrical power relations between the United States and the Philippines (Viola, 2014). Although Viola’s advancement of FilCrit is still in its early stages, it will allow me to cut through ideological illusions about Filipinos and explore the intersections of the various theoretical frameworks branched from the tree of CRT; thereby, contributing to a deeper consciousness of the Filipino American diaspora.

**Review of the Scholarly Empirical Literature**

At the time of the study, there was little research on Filipino community college students and how they experienced a Filipino learning community or student success program. Filipinos have the largest representation in California and Hawai’i; yet, suffer from lower success rates in comparison to other Asian American ethnic groups (Egloria, 2011; Maramba & Museus, 2012). To promote the educational advancement of Filipino students, it is critical to understand the needs, challenges, barriers, and lived experiences of Filipino community college students. This study added to scholarship with focuses on the intersections of race, gender, education, and student support programs for Filipino community college students, as well as the impact of support services.

**Asian American and Pacific Islander and Filipino Students**

In comparison to other major racial groups, AAPIs have been given inadequate attention in higher education research, resulting in being the most misunderstood and misrepresented student population in higher education (Maramba & Museus, 2012; Teranishi, 2002). Despite the rapid growth and diversity in demographics for AAPIs, very little is known about them except common misconceptions of their universal success (Maramba & Museus, 2012).

**Model Minority Myth**

As a homogenous group that has been lumped together, Asian Americans have often been referred to as a “model minority”—a term Peterson coined in 1960 as praise for Chinese and Japanese Americans during the Civil Rights era (Egloria, 2011; Ng et al., 2007). There is a dominant view and assumption that Asian Americans are overachievers; yet, further examination of the history and struggles of each subethnic group indicates very diverse stories and facts that debunk the model
minority myth (Wu, 2002). The myth suggests Asian Americans are able to achieve the “American Dream;” whereas, other ethnic groups are viewed as incapable and inferior (Nadal et al., 2012). The model minority myth also gives Asian Americans the image of being passive, quiet individuals who will not speak up for their rights or protest against group norms, causing tension with other people of color (Nadal et al., 2012). Wu (2002) stated there are two implications to this myth: (a) AAPI are given the title of model as an extraordinary racial group for people of color and (b) they are placed on a pedestal or are considered an ideal—too high a standard that cannot be reached. Both statements are condescending toward racial minorities and mask disparities among Asian ethnic groups (Wu, 2002).

In the 2018–2019 academic year, AAPIs made up 8% of the student population at public, 4-year universities and just 6% at community colleges (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2021). In addition, 22% of Burmese adults, 26% of Laotian adults, and 27% of Cambodian adults, in the United States have completed an associate degree or higher in contrast to 64% of Japanese, 65% of Korean, and 80% of Asian Indian adults and who have completed an associate degree or higher (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2021). Teranishi and Nguyen (2011) stated there has been a large proportion of AAPI subgroups (e.g., Cambodian, Laotian, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiians) attending college, but not persisting to degree attainment. For example, at Guam Community College, more than 80% of the students were eligible for financial aid and were older than the traditional college-age student (Teranishi & Nguyen, 2011). These data show significant challenges for marginalized AAPI subgroups and the need for the colleges and universities to be responsive to their unique needs and challenges (Ternanishi & Nguyen, 2011). The model minority myth assumes incorrectly that Asian Americans experience no racism in their personal lives, despite research that shows Asian Americans experience discrimination, causing significant amount of psychological distress (Nadal et al., 2012; Pang et al., 2011).
**Disaggregation of Data on AAPI College Students**

AAPI students represent a diverse segment of the college population in the United States and are often left out of higher education research and discourse (Maramba & Museus, 2012). The term AAPI includes over 20 different ethnic and national-origin groups (Ong & Viernes, 2013), including Asian Indian, Bangladeshi, Burmese, Chinese, Filipino, Guamanian, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Native Hawaiian, Vietnamese, and other subracial groups (Pang et al., 2011). The AAPI umbrella represents over 48 different ethnic groups, with a diverse range of languages, English proficiency, colonial history, immigration patterns, socioeconomic status, and status as first-generation college students (Maramba & Museus, 2012; Ocampo, 2013). The act of lumping these groups together can pose a barrier to these subracial groups and a closer look at the intragroup differences will reveal a wealth of diversity existing in the singular group labeled AAPI (Ong & Viernes, 2013).

When combining Filipinos with the homogenous Asian American group, they account for only 4% of the Asian American population, and although they are heavily concentrated on the West coast, Filipinos still account for less than 1% of the total population (Egloria, 2011). This offers one reason for major surveys aggregating Filipinos into one Asian category: In comparison to other ethnic groups such as Blacks and Latinx, Filipinos do not compare to those numbers in population; however, there is still sizeable ratio that warrants studying Filipinos in higher education (Egloria, 2011).

Tumale (2016) indicated the majority of research on community college students focuses on Black and Latinx students and demonstrates the pervasiveness of the model minority myth. The lack of research on Asian American and Pacific Islander students once again implies this homogenous group is part of a successful elite in college (Nishimoto, 2004). However, AAPIs also contribute to the community college student population and in 2007, they represented close to 7% of all community college students (Tumale, 2016). Pang et al. (2011) underscored the need for departments of education and school districts to disaggregate data so the needs of each specific ethnic group in the AAPI group can be clearly identified.
Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions

In an effort to enable institutions of higher education to improve and expand their capacity to serve AAPI students and challenge the model minority myth, Congress in 2007 established the Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI, 2018) program as part of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007. It was expanded 1 year later under the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (AANAPISI, 2018). To achieve the goals of serving AAPI students, the U.S. Department of Education advocated for $8,600,000 to support colleges and universities that were designated as AANAPISIs (Duncan, 2010).

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2018), colleges and universities could qualify for AANAPISI grant funding if they met the following: at least 10% of the students enrolled must have identified as AAPI, and at least 50% of the students seeking a degree must be awarded financial aid. For an institution to be eligible to apply for the AANAPISI grant, it must qualify for designation of eligibility and be federally recognized as an AANAPISI. Through the funding of the AANAPISI grant, each college would receive financial support for faculty and curriculum, renovation or construction of program space, and student services (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Nguyen et al. (2018) asserted the inclusive narratives shared in AANAPISI programs lead to achievements of underserved AAPI students through (a) the validation of culture, (b) the affirmation of life experiences, and (c) a sense of belonging in learning communities with other AAPI peers. AANAPISIs directly confront and debunk the model minority myth by connecting students culturally and engaging them academically.

AANAPISIs are critical to educating AAPI students because immigration and students who face many challenges in developmental education and English language fluency shape AANAPISI enrollment patterns (Alcantar et al., 2019). A significant number of AAPI students who are enrolled at AANAPISIs are from low-income backgrounds and have competing familial and financial responsibilities (Alcantar et al., 2019). AANAPISI grants give higher education institutions the opportunity to know the AAPI student population better and not view them in a monolithic category, but as unique groups with multiple histories, distinct communities, and many cultures (Catallozzi et
al., 2019). Catallozzi et al. (2019) highlighted one urban community college in Massachusetts was awarded a 5-year AANAPISI grant that was embedded into a successful learning communities program, enrolling more than 4,000 students per year.

Not only has AANAPISI funding pushed for disaggregating data, it has also allowed institutions to look more closely at each subgroup and confront the racial and ethnic disparities they face; thereby, increasing the knowledge needed to better serve these students (Maramba & Museus, 2012). More importantly, AANAPISIs can focus on implementing institutional change, curriculum building for Asian American studies, and expanding faculty professional developments, especially in light of the absence of Asian American studies courses and programs at community colleges and universities (Catallozzi et al., 2019).

Filipinos and Higher Education

Most research conducted on Asian American students focused on groups of East Asian descent, which include Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans (Nadal et al., 2012; Yeh, 2004). Most literature on AAPIs in higher education has emphasized the 4-year college experience, with hardly any research conducted on 2-year community colleges (Nishimoto, 2004).

Filipinos are the second largest Asian group in the United States, after Chinese Americas, and the sixth largest ethnic group in the United States (Egloria, 2011). Lott (1997) reported 71% of Filipinos are primarily concentrated in California and Hawai‘i. In research literature, Asian Americans are aggregated together as a homogenous group and are portrayed as high achievers (Pang et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2009). However, Yeh’s (2004) article referenced a study in which high school dropout rates were approximately 46% for Filipinos, 50% for Southeast Asians, and 60% for Samoans. While there has been an increase in literature for African American and Latinx students on retention and persistence, literature is scant for Asian American students, and even more so for the Asian American subgroups underrepresented and underperforming such as Filipino students (Yeh, 2004).
In comparison to other AAPI groups, Filipino students tend to be underrepresented in colleges and universities on a national level; yet, they are the fastest growing ethnic group in the Asian American racial category (Maramba & Museus, 2012; Pasamonte, 2015). With the combined growth in population for Filipinos and the limited studies of Filipinos in higher education, it is critical that research be conducted through the framework of CRT to understand the historical context when examining the education issues and systemic challenges that Filipino students face (Pasamonte, 2015).

Filipino students are racialized differently than other groups in the Asian American homogenous category based on the events of Spanish and U.S. colonialism and globalization (Tumale, 2016). To understand the ethnic and academic identity development of Filipino students enrolled in community colleges, one must understand the historical and colonial context of the Philippines. This is part of the Filipino diaspora narrative, which led to the immigration and education of Filipinos in the United States (Tumale, 2016). Okamura and Agbayani (1997) reported although there was high level of educational attainment in Filipinos reflected in 1990 U.S. Census data, this is a result of the college-educated Filipinos who came to the United States as post-1965 immigrants. The Filipinos who were part of the immigration influx after 1965 were referred to as “Philippine foreign aid” (Okamura & Agbayani, 1997, p. 184) to the United States; however, their children, who are considered second- and third-generation Filipinos, continue to be underrepresented in colleges and universities and are not achieving the same educational levels.

As little research as there is on AAPIs, it is focused primarily on East Asians such as Chinese and Japanese, resulting in the needs of non-East Asian subgroups remaining unknown (Nadal et al., 2012). Filipinos experience microaggressions and are often perceived as and mistaken for Latinx, Blacks, Native Americans, and other non-Asian groups (Nadal et al., 2012).

Literature on Filipinos has suggested they are vastly different from other Asian American groups in a number of ways: (a) they experience colonial mentality and see Spanish and U.S. colonizers as superior, due to the 381 years of Spanish colonial rule and 50 years of U.S. colonial
rule, and (b) with the colonial influence of Catholicism, Filipinos may develop a unique set of cultural values and express emotions differently from other Asian American subgroups (Nadal et al., 2012). One of these values is the emphasis on being obedient, respectful, and dependent on the family (Watkins & Gerong, 1997). Surla and Poon (2015) showed Filipino students must stay in close proximity to their families in the search for colleges to attend and development of college aspirations is a collective choice that affects not just the Filipino student but their family’s well-being. As a result, Filipino students tend to experience exclusion from the Asian American community by not being referred to as Asian or feeling as though they are treated like an afterthought or a second-class citizen (Nadal et al., 2012).

**Gaps in the Literature**

Despite the limited research available on the academic success of Filipinos, there are two studies available. In a quantitative study, Orsuwan and Cole (2007) measured seven significant interactions between race and ethnicity, household income, and parental education with academic integration as the dependent variable. Academic integration had a pronounced effect on the satisfaction of Filipino students and was larger in magnitude than for other racial or ethnic groups (Orsuwan & Cole, 2007). However, Filipinos experienced a significant decrease in educational satisfaction when household income was considered in the medium-to-low socioeconomic group (Orsuwan & Cole, 2007).

Orsuwan and Cole (2007) also found race and ethnicity did not necessarily have a direct influence on a student’s experience but became much more dynamic when race and ethnicity were intentionally integrated into college processes (e.g., academic integration, opportunity structures, and sense of belonging). The study was conducted at an institution with a relatively high number of Filipino students and the researchers concluded factoring in race and ethnicity would help Filipino students adapt successfully to the college (Orsuwan & Cole, 2007). They also suggested integrating race and ethnicity into the college experience would further encourage Filipino students to have higher aspirations and higher academic integration.
David and Okazaki (2010), in another quantitative study, examined the effects of colonial mentality for Filipino students and the need to examine its psychological impact on Filipinos. In the Filipino culture, colonial mentality is deeply embedded, involving ideas of inferiority, undesirability, or unpleasantness (David & Okazaki, 2010). In an attempt to further understand Filipino students, their cultural and ethnic experiences involve constant denigration and internalized oppression, with the “American culture being idealized and uncritical preference for anything American” (David & Okazaki, 2010, p. 851). It is a narrative that continues to run deep in Filipino culture and psyche, contributing to a sense of affinity and indebtedness to the United States (David et al., 2017).

Both studies suggested the need for more cultural awareness among Filipino Americans. Orsuwan and Cole’s (2007) study took place at an institution with a large Filipino student population, suggesting this “may help Filipino students adapt to college life” (p. 81). Because both of these studies were quantitative, the authors did not mention how to integrate race and ethnicity into community college processes and what form this integration would take to further develop academic integration and sense of belonging. However, one effort gaining increased attention is learning communities and the collaborative pedagogy that restructures the learning environment for college students.

**Learning Communities in Higher Education**

Learning communities began in the early 1980s and were immediately recognized for the nontraditional ways of reaching out to students, restructuring the learning process, and providing instructional opportunities and community building for students to be highly engaged in and out of the classroom (Rocconi, 2010). Learning communities are a restructuring of the instructional curriculum by linking two or more courses together for a cohort of students, with the intent of building a community among students through their combined time together, earned units, and connections with faculty and peers (Barnes & Piland, 2010; Rocconi, 2010).

A qualitative study was conducted at a 4-year, midwestern university with 1st-year, first-generation college students who were enrolled in a multicultural learning community. This learning
community was for students who had historically experienced isolation, marginalization, and were from low-socioeconomic backgrounds (Jehangir, 2009). The students were enrolled in three linked academic courses: (a) a social sciences course with a focus on race, class, and gender in the United States; (b) a humanities course with a focus on creativity and art; and (c) a 1st-year student composition course (Jehangir, 2009). In the formation of the multicultural learning community, three themes served as the foundation of the curricular and pedagogical design: identity, community, and agency. These themes were derived from the critical pedagogy framework in response to the students’ challenges of feeling isolated and marginalized and addressed the challenges in the following ways: (a) it attempted to create a new form of knowledge by taking advantage of interdisciplinary knowledge; (b) it raised questions of power in education by challenging educational neutrality; and (c) it invited the voices of the students who were part of the multicultural learning community to contribute to the overall scholarly dialogue of race, class, gender and personal experiences (Jehangir, 2009). This process created an open invitation for students to become reflective of their own lived experiences and invited them to pause, reflect, consider, evaluate, and apply connections from theories they were learning in class to their personal experiences (Jehangir, 2009).

In higher education, learning communities can offer a very powerful connection for students because they dedicate resources that help advance the institution’s goals of diversity, and contribute to student success through the focus on multicultural objectives (Firmin et al., 2013). According to Barnes and Piland (2010), learning communities have often focused on a common theme (e.g., culture, academics) and offered to a specific student population (e.g., 1st-year students). These students will reap the benefits of learning communities (e.g., increased retention, peer group involvement, increased student engagement; James et al., 2006; Jehangir, 2009). Pasque and Murphy (2005) concluded living–learning community programs have many positive outcomes for academic and intellectual engagement, specifically for students from underrepresented groups. Beachboard et al. (2011) also noted students who were part of learning communities took more
ownership and responsibility over their learning, generating higher grades and learning outcomes for their classes.

For community college students, involvement in learning communities has been positively linked to student success, retention, and increased engagement in extracurricular activities (Barnes & Piland, 2010; Jehangir, 2009). Students who participate in learning communities have greater access to faculty-student interaction, thereby, promoting student retention (Adkison, 2011; Barnes & Piland, 2010; Beachboard et al., 2009). These relationships with faculty and peers further enhance their learning and persistence efforts.

Much research has been linked to the benefits of learning communities for underprepared students in community colleges, especially for students who have struggled at college-level courses (Barnes & Piland, 2010; Huerta & Bray, 2013; Jehangir, 2009). Moreover, Jehangir (2009) stated learning communities directly benefit community college students who are first generation and from low-income backgrounds. The primary objectives for learning community cohorts are to improve students’ critical thinking skills, learning in all of the linked courses, and the ability to work collaboratively in teams (Beachboard et al., 2009). Students who are more invested in their education and learning environment through participation in learning communities are more likely to experience educational gains at their college (Hill & Woodward, 2013). One of the gains for students is the connection to something larger than themselves; thus, being accountable for their own educational journey (James et al., 2006).

**Themed Learning Communities**

Learning communities that have a featured theme related to a common interest or focus on a shared ethnic background have fostered positive interactions and gains between students and peers, and between students and faculty (Barnes & Piland, 2010). Closely related to providing a positive impact on a student’s sense of belonging is interpersonal relations with other ethnic groups and the ability to find connections with their own culture and heritage (Maramba & Museus, 2012). Relationships can be created for learning community participants, providing students with a sense of
belonging on campus with peers and faculty. Barnes and Piland's (2010) research indicated learning communities with a featured theme (e.g., shared ethnic background) fostered positive relationships and interaction between cohort members who would not have otherwise interacted.

**Culture-Based Learning Communities**

Researchers have recognized learning communities at 4-year institutions as effective for promoting student learning outcomes and success; however, there is a gap in scholarship on how learning communities affect first-year students of color (Huerta & Bray, 2013). Learning communities provide a springboard for students of color to be successful their 1st year of college and serve as powerful connectors, especially with the challenge of fostering meaningful multicultural connections (Firmin et al., 2013).

Historically, students of color have not received much support, resulting in less academic integration and educational gains at their institution (Firmin et al., 2013). The establishment of multicultural learning communities is one way of addressing the concerns of underrepresented students and for colleges to uphold their commitment to be open and inclusive for all students and cultures (Firmin et al., 2013). In a study by Firmin et al. (2013), underrepresented students were challenged with navigating through a college campus when their culture and values were not in congruence with the dominant culture of the campus. Students of color seek out higher education institutions that will provide opportunities to engage in student life and encouragement and support for their academic and personal goals (Jehangir, 2009).

Huerta and Bray (2013) reported in their quantitative study that Latinx students benefit from being involved in a learning community, especially one that features collaborative learning. They found Latinx had a higher, statistically significant mean value for collaborative learning than White students that impacted their GPA in a positive way. This resulted from meaningful connections that Latinx students developed by participating in learning communities that provided a motivating factor for them academically and socially (Huerta & Bray, 2013). This study showed learning communities can positively benefit other students of color, such as Filipinos.
Learning communities have an opportunity to flip the narrative for students of color who have historically been marginalized by repackaging how learning communities are formed and what they focus on. One example is a culture-based learning community that deepens the relationship between the college, educational practitioners, and students through investing in culturally focused learning communities with engagement from students of cultural–linguistic minority communities (Kana’iapuni et al., 2017). Kana’iapuni et al. (2017) stated Indigenous critical theory will unveil the invisible struggles for power in the educational system, by deploying colonist and assimilationist policies that harm students of color, rather than help them progress. Colleges and universities can play a vital role by focusing scholarship for underrepresented students on social justice and self-determination. In this way, it will bring to light where culture and language was lost from colonization in the following ways: (a) acknowledging the legitimacy of various cultural languages and heritages, (b) engaging student through culture by respecting their Indigenous culture as content worth of learning, (c) building meaning connections between experiences at home and at school, (d) using a variety of teaching pedagogies to connect with various learning styles, (e) teaching students who know and praise their own cultural heritages, and (f) incorporating multicultural information, resources, and materials into subjects taught in the educational environment (Kana’iapuni et al., 2017).

Another way to reframe the educational system is by incorporating artistic expression (e.g., visual arts, music, dancing) into a learning community model. This mode of nonverbal and affective knowledge becomes a bridge to the verbal academic language. Special events such as spoken word, which are embedded into learning communities, offer alternative ways of knowing and representing knowledge; thereby, allowing students to better understand their own identities, while also providing insight into other cultures and ethnicities (James et al., 2006).

Finally, learning communities can redefine curriculum by creating a safe space for the cohort, building peer networks with peer advisors and classmates, and providing access to an interdisciplinary multicultural curriculum (Jehangir, 2009). This study examined existing Filipino
learning communities and student success programs at California community colleges that create this same academic and support space to build community for Filipino American students.

**Conceptual Framework**

To provide guidance to my research, from the aforementioned literature on the philosophical, theoretical, and historical foundations, I created a Filipino learning community conceptual framework for this study. The framework is a holistic model that incorporates philosophical, historical, and theoretical foundations, using FilCrit and critical pedagogy that centers on the Filipina, Filipino, and Filipinx experience.

Based on Kana’iapuni et al.’s (2017) conceptual framework and Indigenous culture-based education and cultural advantage, the Filipino learning community conceptual framework model depicts three main components that together link the educational experience for a student: (a) culturally responsive pedagogy specifically using FilCrit pedagogy that centers on the Filipino American experience through two or more linked academic courses such as ethnic studies, English, and counseling; (b) program support and space that provides students with a sense of belonging and access to support staff, academic counselors, and office hours with faculty; and (c) student life and engagement that focuses on culture-based events, activities, and leadership opportunities. I have expressed graphically this holistic, intertwined process in Figure 1. The model shows the intersections that influence and depend on each other—bringing the student full circle after being part of a learning community and student success program. The student’s experience in a culture-based Filipino learning community is at the center, leading to positive educational outcomes.
Figure 1. The conceptual framework for the study includes aspects of a Filipino culture-based learning community, depicting the influences in-classroom and out-of-classroom support toward a student’s educational outcomes.

The conceptual model begins with the first circle of influence, which are the linked academic courses, using culturally responsive pedagogy and FilCrit pedagogy through the ethnic studies lens to inform students of colonial history and cultural context. The intentional use of culture-based education and multicultural curricula in academic courses (e.g., Filipino American studies, history, and literature) in linked learning community courses seeks to reframe the educational system for Filipino students. These frameworks simultaneously foster research that emphasizes and affirms socioemotional development and identity, the intersectionality of race, racism, culture, gender, and class from various perspectives. Instead of assimilation, the focus on culture-based education and multicultural curricula is a direct approach to sustaining and revitalizing culture—restoring culture and identity to a healthy place (Kana’iapuni et al., 2017).
Through culturally responsive pedagogy such as FilCrit, the new knowledge influences the student’s identity development, which then positively affects the student’s educational outcome. The second circle of influence is the program support for students, consisting of counseling support, faculty support, and staff support—an entire community that integrates and aligns their syllabi, curricula, and assignments to help the student persist in the learning community. The third circle of influence focuses on student life and engagement outside of the classroom, with intentional, culture-based activities, events, field trips, and leadership opportunities that center on the Filipino American experience and are rooted in Filipino history and context. The largest circle that encompasses the three inner circles is the Filipino learning community space that is a catalyst for intellectual, personal, and emotional growth. The student gains transformed knowledge of history and culture, a renewed sense of positive ethnic identity; thereby, leading to successful educational outcomes.

**Chapter Summary**

The history of Filipinos in what is now the United States dates to the 1500s and Filipino Americans represent one of the largest subgroups in the Asian American population. Although Filipinos were given access to colleges and universities in the early 1900s, Filipinos remain widely misunderstood and invisible in institutions of higher education, as they are aggregated together in a homogenous group with all Asian American subgroups. Filipinos are perceived as well adjusted, high performing college students (David et al., 2017). However, the research shows Filipino students face several barriers and challenges (e.g., model minority myth, invisibility and isolation, familial influences, financial responsibilities; Libarios et al., 2018).

For this study, I provided the historical, sociopolitical, and psychological context of Filipino learning communities and student support programs at community colleges in California and explored their impact on Filipino American students. There have been no studies conducted on specific student support programs for Filipino community college students. I built scholarship on Filipino community college students and pioneered the way for examining the benefits of learning communities and
student support programs for Filipino students. In Chapter 3, I explain the methodology for this qualitative study.
CHAPTER 3
METHOD OF INQUIRY

With the focus on community college student retention and persistence over the last decade, there is a proliferation of research that examines the struggles of underrepresented minority students; however, rarely will one see research that includes the plight of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) students (Lew et al., 2005; Pang et al., 2011; Yeh, 2004). Filipino students are one of the subgroups in the AAPI population underrepresented in higher education that encounters specific barriers to college persistence (Yeh, 2004). A closer examination and disaggregation of data in the larger AAPI umbrella group reveals some students who identify with an AAPI subgroup (e.g., Filipino Americans), suffer from low completion and persistence rates (Yeh, 2004). This research study focused on the student services and student support programs offered to Filipino students such as learning communities and student success programs that focus on the Filipino American experience.

I used a rapid, educational ethnography for this qualitative study to apply a cultural lens to the examination of lives of Filipino college students in their communities (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Reeves et al., 2013). This ethnographic research study took place at the familiar setting of Filipino community college students who have been part of a Filipino learning community or student success program, in an attempt to observe and analyze how people interact with each other and their environment to understand their culture (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

Using the lens of critical race theory (CRT), and specifically Filipino critical theory (FilCrit), I used the following research questions to guide this study:

1. How do Filipino community college students experience a culture-based Filipino learning community or student success program?

2. What do Filipino students identify as their success and challenges at community colleges?

In this chapter, I first present the methodology for this study. Next, I provide a description of the research design in my selected methodological approach. Following the research design, I detail specific research methods including setting, sample, data collection (including instrumentation and
procedure), and data analysis (including trustworthiness and the role of the researcher). I conclude with a chapter summary.

**Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is an effective research methodology that occurs in a natural setting and enables researchers to be involved in the details of actual experiences of students whom they will interview (Mohajan, 2018). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated the main tenet of qualitative research is the reality created by individuals from interactions with their social world. Using qualitative research as a methodology gives researchers a lens and understanding into how people interpret their world and the meaning found in their personal experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Transformative worldview is one philosophical foundation that contributes to this study and my use of qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Transformative philosophical worldviews are sets of beliefs that guide action and are also paradigms or broadly conceived methodologies that the researcher brings to the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This position came to the forefront in the 1980s and 1990s when researchers felt other philosophical worldviews—particularly the postpositivist assumption—did not address the needs of marginalized individuals or groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this worldview, the transformative or critical approach will help advance the research agenda to change the lives of individuals and the institutions in which they are part of, bringing the focus on issues that must be addressed such as oppression, inequality, domination, and alienation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By applying a critical worldview to this qualitative study, I went farther and deeper into uncovering people and their understandings of their world, with influences from Freire’s (1972) transformative and emancipatory education (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). With this philosophical approach, the goal is to “critique and challenge, and transform and empower” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 10).

Consequently, qualitative studies have strengths but also limitations. A critique by Grant (2013) proposed that qualitative studies have assumptions that it is possible to trust in the lived experience, even within and between the ambiguity and contradictions of individuals and their lives. It is this
assumption and limitation of qualitative research that becomes problematic for research participants as these voices can be contradictory and subjective (Grant, 2013).

The in-depth nature of qualitative studies and analysis of data requires a small research sample, and a limitation may be the influence of the researcher’s predisposition, and—despite a small sample size—an overwhelming amount of data (Carr, 1994). Another limitation of this type of data collection is that it provides indirect information through the lenses of each of the participant in the study with the researcher’s presence possibly creating a bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

However, this approach has a strength when the sample is well defined (Carr, 1994) and when a large population (e.g., ethnic minority group) is studied. This study had a well-defined sample population of Filipino American college students who shared their experiences of a Filipino learning community or student success program at their campuses. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) conveyed another strength in qualitative research: the product of inquiry becomes richly descriptive when participants use symbols, words, and pictures to convey and describe their experience about a phenomenon. Creswell and Creswell (2018) elaborated further, stating a strength of qualitative data collection is the ability of participants to provide historical and in-depth information, allowing the researcher to direct the line of questioning.

Based on the research questions, I chose a qualitative research design as the most appropriate for understanding the dynamics and role of influence that a specific Filipino student success program or learning community plays in the lives of Filipino community college students. Because Filipino Americans are often referred to as the forgotten minority among the AAPI group (Bonus & Maramba, 2013), it was important to choose a methodology that provided a space for the expression of these lived experiences and how these students make sense of their lives and their worlds (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) in the learning community or a student success program. As the researcher, I developed a keen sensitivity to the lived experiences of Filipino students and impacts on their success. I will use this information to reveal to practitioners the types of student support programs Filipino students need and how community colleges can aid in providing culture-based
education with Filipino critical pedagogy, socioeconomic development and identity, and educational outcomes for this student population.

**Research Design**

To capture the essence of this phenomenon, the qualitative design of ethnography provided a way forward, telling a credible, rigorous and authentic story about Filipino community college students (Fetterman, 2020; Reeves et al., 2013). Reeves et al. (2013) defined ethnography as the study of social interaction and culture groups, including organizations, teams, communities, or societies. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) stated ethnographic research can take place in many types of communities that are either formal or informal organizations such as workplaces, urban communities, shopping centers, or social media. The term ethnography comes from the Greek words of *ethnos* meaning people, and “*graphei,*” which means to write (Reeves et al., 2013). Since the conception of ethnography in the 1930s (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008), ethnography has evolved into diverse methodological practices used in several academic disciplines including anthropology, sociology, and education (Reeves et al., 2013).

The task of the ethnographer is to adopt a cultural lens to interpret and document behaviors “to ensure that the behaviors are placed in a culturally relevant and meaningful context” (Fetterman, 2020, p. 1). To document the culture, perspectives, and practices of individuals in these contexts, the ethnographer must get inside the way the group of people see the world (Reeves et al., 2013), all the while keeping an open mind (Fetterman, 2020). To further understand the culture of the group, the ethnographer must spend time with the group being studied, speaking the same language in that setting, and having first-hand participation in the group’s activities (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Most importantly, the ethnographer must rely on intensive work with a few informants or gatekeepers from the setting (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Fetterman (2020) stated ethnography can be written in many styles and formats, and describes the “history of the group, the geography of the location, kinship patterns, symbols, politics, economic systems, educational or socialization systems, and the degree of contact between the
target culture and the mainstream culture” (p. 14). This study was rapid ethnographic study with a timeline limited to a few months (Reeves et al., 2013). Because of the COVID-19 global pandemic, resources were not available to conduct the research on the campus sites as originally planned; therefore, I entered the field with very well-defined research questions and study cases (Reeves et al., 2013). I used the approach of critical ethnography to advocate for economically marginalized groups and people of color who experience inequities in K–12 schools or higher education (Creswell, 2012). Creswell (2012) stated researchers who engage in critical ethnography conduct studies that will bring a critical perspective, not further marginalize groups or individuals they study.

This study is a starting point for social critique and transformation (Reeves et al., 2013). I sought to understand the unique success, challenges, and overall experiences of community college students in a Filipino culture-based learning community or student success program that specifically highlighted the Filipino cultural phenomenon. I accomplished this understanding with a toolbox of methods used for each of the three Filipino learning communities and student success programs: (a) observational data of online, virtual events, and activities; (b) in-depth interviews with Filipino student participants who finished 1 academic year (fall and spring semester) in the Filipino learning community or student success program; and (c) analysis of site documents.

Using ethnography for this study allowed me to engage firsthand in seeing and experiencing a culture and phenomenon in action (Murchison, 2010). Creswell (2012) stated ethnographers study a culture-sharing group, “one that has been together for some time and has developed shared values, beliefs, and language” (p. 462). Moreover, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) said an ethnographic study must have the lens of culture to understand the phenomenon. Ethnography is a research strategy I used to explore and examine the culture-based Filipino learning communities and student success programs that are a fundamental part of California community colleges and the human experience.

**Research Methods**

In this section, I describe in detail the specific research methods I used to apply the ethnographic research design to this study. In the ethnographic toolbox, there are a range of methods
to employ—different from, yet complementary to, each other (Fetterman, 2020; Reeves et al., 2013). Specifically, I discuss the setting, sample, data collection, data analysis, and steps I will take to ensure validity or trustworthiness.

**Setting**

The ethnographer is always seeking opportunities to learn and experience (Murchison, 2010). To fully engage myself in exploring the possible campus sites for this study, the ethnographic process informally began in the summer and fall of 2018 when I traveled to San Diego, San Bruno, and San Francisco to share my genuine research interests with the people who were part of these spaces. I met and consulted with the faculty coordinators and counselors at each of the colleges to begin evaluating the future research opportunities to study their Filipino learning communities and student success programs. Murchison (2010) stated that “ethnography involves studying the culture and social phenomena that exist prior to the advent of research” (p. 60). With the informal blessing to study their programs, the proposed study took place at three community colleges in California (one in southern California and two in northern California) in divisions of student services and instruction that supported a Filipino American learning community or student success program.

Southwestern College is located in Chula Vista, in the southern part of San Diego. In addition to its main campus, its four other sites are higher education centers offering courses to the surrounding communities. Southwestern College had an enrollment of 19,000 students, with the largest ethnic group being Latinx at 67% (Southwestern College, 2019). The Filipino student population at this campus was 6% and the Asian student population was 4% (Southwestern College, 2019). Southwestern College had a grassroots Filipino American learning community named, in part, Bayan, which means hometown or homeland in Tagalog. Bayan Learning Community was founded by faculty from counseling and English in 2006 and became the first of its kind at a community college in southern California. The learning community provided a home for students who wished to learn about the Filipino American experience through literature and history. Students must commit to participation for 1 year and be enrolled in one English class linked to a counseling class for the fall
semester, followed by the second half of the same courses in the spring semester. At Southwestern College, Bayan was among nine other learning communities at the college that supported Latinx, Black, athletes, and 1st-year students. Bayan also provided students an opportunity to be part of the Bayan student organization that was an extension of the learning community. A calendar of events was provided each semester for students enrolled in the learning community to participate in new student orientations, family nights, cultural leadership conferences, and field trips. Club members from Bayan Student Organization (BSO) were also encouraged to take advantage of these student leadership and engagement opportunities.

Skyline College is located in a suburban neighborhood in San Bruno in northern California and enrolled more than 16,000 students (Skyline College, 2019). The demographics for ethnicity at this college were: 20% multiethnic, 19% White, 19% Latinx, 18% Asian, 18% Filipino, 3% Black, and 1% Pacific Islander students (Skyline College Annual Report, 2019). Skyline College had a Filipino American learning community named Kababayan Learning Community (KLC), which means townmate or compatriot in Tagalog. KLC was established originally as a mentorship program and founded by an Educational Opportunities and Programs Support counselor and English faculty member in 1993. The program was dormant for several years and was redesigned as a learning community modeled after the Puente Program for Latinx students. KLC officially became a designated learning community in 2013 and a full-time faculty coordinator operated the program at the time of the study. KLC was also supported by counseling faculty to assist Filipino students with transfer and increase English skills. KLC focused on the Filipino and Filipino American cultural experience with activities intentionally designed to encourage students to transfer to a 4-year university. This learning community featured peer mentors, tutors, cultural activities, a cultural dance troupe, and a student club (i.e., Filipino Student Union) that all focused on the Filipino American cultural experience. Students enrolled in this learning community produced a Pilipino Cultural Night each year and published literary works from the English course taught as part of this program.
City College of San Francisco is in northern California in a highly concentrated urban area, and had more than 62,000 students, with 41,000 students enrolled in credit courses (CCCCO, 2019). The largest population of students at City College of San Francisco identified their ethnicity as Asian at 28.6%, followed by 25.2% Hispanic/Latino, and 24% White (CCCCO, 2019). City College of San Francisco had 5.7% Filipino students enrolled and had a Filipino American student success program named Tulay Filipino American Student Success Program. Tulay means bridge in Tagalog. Tulay offered counseling and mentoring services, along with linked courses in English, math, and Philippine studies. City College of San Francisco was the only community college in California and nationwide that featured its own Philippine studies program in the Ethnic Studies department established in 1970. Tulay was a 1st-year experience program geared toward Filipino students and featured peer cohort courses in English, college success, and collaboration with the Philippine studies department for linked classes such as “The Filipino Family.” Tulay focused primarily on recruitment and retention of Filipino American students. The program also provided peers mentors, student ambassadors, and an annual Fil-Grad recognition event to celebrate students who graduated and transferred to 4-year universities.

The study took place in students’ natural setting, at each of the college campuses. Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, all three college sites were in a virtual and remote working environment, so the natural setting for these campuses was captured online via Zoom or other web platform used by the site. Table 1 shows the Filipino learning communities and student success programs at each campus.
Table 1. Filipino Learning Communities and Student Success Programs in California Community Colleges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Program name</th>
<th>Year of program establishment</th>
<th>Total college student enrollment</th>
<th>Student enrollment by ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skyline College</td>
<td>Kababayan Learning Community</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>Filipino: 2,499 (14.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AAPI: 3,298 (19.4%) (Asian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Latinx: 5,406 (31.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White: 3,281 (19.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Black: 408 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pacific Islander: 238 (1.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwestern College</td>
<td>Bayan Learning Community</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>28,397</td>
<td>Filipino: 2,282 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AAPI: 719 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Latinx: 19,485 (69%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White: 2,907 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Black: 1,276 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City College of San Francisco</td>
<td>Tulay Filipino American Student Success Program</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>39,222</td>
<td>Filipino: 2,314 (5.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AAPI: 11,688 (29.8%) (Asian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Latinx: 9,805 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White: 9,491 (24.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Black: 2,863 (7.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pacific Islander: 275 (.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Demographic information is from 2019–2020 for Skyline and Southwestern Colleges, and 2017–2018 for City College of San Francisco. AAPI = Asian American and Pacific Islander.
Sample

Ethnographers use participant observation, field notes, one-on-one interviews, and site documents (Reeves et al., 2013). Each of these learning communities and student success programs enrolled a cohort of 25–30 students each year that began in the fall semester and finished in the spring semester. Students who participated in the program more than 1 year before the study period but completed 1 full year or 2 full consecutive semesters were considered ideal candidates for this study. I had one to two key informants per campus site, selected a maximum of five participants at each campus for one-on-one interviews, and had a sample size of five to 15 students who participated in a virtual event for participant observation. I used a big-net approach conducive for participant observation to ensure a wide-angle view of program events and classes before narrowing to the point at which specific interactions began through in-depth interviews (Fetterman, 2020). The interview sampling design was purposeful sampling.

I incorporated snowballing methods and organizational recruiting to identify a pool of interested prospective participants at each site who met the criteria for participation in this study (Creswell, 2012; Tisdell, 2016). Through purposeful sampling, my goal was to focus on the particular and unique characteristics of the Filipino American sample population of interest. Snowball sampling occurs when the researcher accesses additional participants through contact information provided by informants (Noy, 2008; Suri, 2011). Snowball sampling can also be used by seeking information from various stakeholders interested in the phenomenon or introducing an expert bias, capitalizing on expert wisdom (Suri, 2011).

Krueger and Casey (2015) stated organizational recruiting is the most effective recruiting strategy; it entails using the faculty and staff of the organization itself. Connections with expert practitioners, ethnographic informants, or key actors (Fetterman, 2020) helped me identify students who were actively involved in each of the colleges’ Filipino learning communities and student success programs. I provided the recruitment flyer (see Appendix A) and the social media posting infographics (see Appendix B) to be posted on the programs’ Instagram or Facebook pages. I distributed a short,
pre-interview interest survey (see Appendix C) to all potential participants to confirm eligibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2015). The sample was delimited to students who: (a) identified ethnically as Filipino or at least 50% Filipino, and (b) finished 1 academic year, or 2 semesters, as part of a Filipino learning community or completed 1 academic year of linked courses—ideally, two to three linked courses per semester—in a Filipino student success program.

**Data Collection and Management**

This section provides an overview of my data collection and management procedures. I identified multiple and extensive types of data that addressed the research questions (Creswell, 2012) to fully understand the phenomenon of Filipino learning communities and student success programs. Steps for data collection also included setting boundaries.

**Instrumentation**

In ethnography, the researcher is the human instrument relying on all of their senses, thoughts, and feelings, thus making the researcher the most sensitive and perceptive data-gathering tool (Fetterman, 2020). I was the key instrument and served several functions in this ethnographic research study, including investigator, observer, interviewer, and listener.

**Participant Observation.** Participant observation is the main data collection method in ethnographic research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Reeves et al., 2013). Participant observation makes the study unique and the researcher open to various information that would otherwise be difficult to obtain or access (Murchison, 2010). Experiencing a site or organization from the inside assists the researcher in obtaining the “insider’s view” (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p. 150) along with knowledge and experience of groups being studied. Fetterman (2020) stated participant observation is “immersion in a culture” (p. 48) and ideally the researcher lives and works in the community for 6 months to 1 year. However, because I used rapid ethnography, I applied techniques of ethnography and participating and observing one or more virtual program events for 1 to 2 weeks. As a participant observer, I was given a different perspective by seeing the society and culture of
Filipino learning communities and student success programs in action (Murchison, 2010). I observed and participated as part of a larger group at one event at each study site.

Some implications were associated with my presence, which Emerson et al. (2011) referred to as “consequential presence” (p. 4), that affected how the group members acted and behaved when I was there to observe. The challenge of participant observation is to balance observation and participation to gain understanding of the program as an insider and describe this new understanding to outsiders (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Hence, this working knowledge enables a better understanding of the culture being studied (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

In-Depth Interviews. Though participant observation is the main ethnographic method, the one-on-one interview is the most important data-gathering technique and allows the researcher to explain what they see and experience (Fetterman, 2020). An in-depth interview also complements the participant-observation method by engaging participants to converse and explore their experiences (Reeves et al., 2013). Qualitative interviews generally involve unstructured and open-ended questions that give participants a chance to directly reflect on their behavior, action, circumstances, events, and identities (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

Site Documents and Artifacts. A variety of site documents and artifacts can be relevant to ethnographic researchers, including advertisements, newspaper releases, newsletters, annual reports, memos, photographs, recordings, and electronic communications such as a webpages, blogs, or social media (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Fetterman, 2020; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These site documents and artifacts help to place the study participants in a much larger context and also provide general information about demographics and historical events (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

Procedures

To initiate the study, I submitted proposals to the institutional research review boards at four campuses: California State University, Fullerton; Southwestern College; Skyline College; and City College of San Francisco. Upon approval of the proposal at each campus, I met with the faculty and
program coordinators in charge of programs to begin marketing the study to students in each of the Filipino learning communities and student success programs through social media, word-of-mouth, and flyers. I asked gatekeepers (Creswell, 2012), such as faculty and program coordinators, to assist in identifying one to two core learning communities or student success programs events I could join as a participant observer. These same gatekeepers also identified former students who could complete the initial interest survey to determine eligibility. I sent an email invitation (see Appendix D) to prospective participants who completed the interest survey. Interested students replied to my email or contacted me to confirm that they met study criteria after I reviewed their pre-interest and participation survey. I invited eligible students to the one-on-one, virtual interview and emailed them the consent form (see Appendix E) to review and complete prior to the interview.

**Online Participant Observation.** Observation is a key data collection method to understand how a particular phenomenon unfolds and focuses on the examination of culture (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For this study, I combined ethnographic methods with knowledge and understanding of how the virtual worlds work because the online and virtual world is an entire culture in itself (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, all colleges and universities were forced to go online and as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated, “Online communities are typically subcultures of larger communities made of people with a particular interest” (p. 158). Although fieldwork and field notes are most commonly conducted face-to-face, they can also be conducted on the internet and are referred to as online or digital ethnography (Fetterman, 2020). Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) validated the use of virtual ethnography stating the ethnographer should experience the life of the study participants regardless of how those experiences are mediated. I took field notes in a template that I created on Google Docs (see Appendix F) during the time I observed a particular virtual event or class, and when the event or class ended to reflect on any relevant details I may have missed the first time.

My field notes had four main parts, which were kept distinct from each other (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The first part was brief words or phrases written at the virtual event or online
These key words served to jog my memory of things I wanted to write more complete notes on later (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The second part was writing every detail I could remember after the event or class and any conversations I might have had in the observation settings (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Details helped me link related phenomena to one another later in the process. The third part was emerging questions and analysis, which is described in the data analysis section. Lastly, the fourth part was reflection on observations made and whether I felt comfortable or felt any negative emotions during the observation (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Reflection is relevant in ethnographic research and the writing of field notes is personal. I made sure that in my system of note taking, I remembered to separate description from interpretation or judgement.

**Virtual In-Depth Interviews.** Ethnographic interviews are typically unstructured, yet focused, using a method that does not use structured or fixed questions, but seeks to engage the interviewee in conversation to elicit their understandings and interpretations (Reeves et al., 2013). However, Fetterman (2020) stated a structured or semistructured, retrospective interview is most valuable when the researcher has the insider perspective. For this study, I conducted individual, semistructured, retrospective interviews with open-ended questions included in my interview protocol (see Appendix G) to help guide the conversation, including introductory questions, transition questions, and key questions related to the research questions (Krueger & Case, 2015). I asked interview participants to recall personal historical information and experiences (Fetterman, 2020) of being part of a Filipino learning community or student success program.

I captured the virtual in-depth and in-person interviews in a variety of ways, including through the use of Zoom, the virtual online meeting platform, and written field notes. To provide holistic and multiple observations, I used another observational protocol for recording information while observing: a single page with a dividing line to write descriptive notes on participants and my reflexive (e.g., personal thoughts, feelings, speculations) notes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

**Site Documents and Artifacts.** In ethnographic qualitative research, documents are used as an umbrella term to refer to a wide range of written, visual, digital, and physical material relevant to
this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Artifacts are usually three-dimensional physical things or objects in the environment which is meaningful to the program or setting being studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I analyzed public record documents, newsletters, brochures, web blogs, and organizational charts for each of the Filipino learning communities and student success programs and took notes on how the artifacts were relevant to the study and how these programs presented themselves to their campus community.

**Data Management**

For virtual in-depth interviews, data were recorded through manual notetaking as requested by each of the colleges in the study. Data for all interviews and field notes were managed from the various surveys, notes, and transcriptions through a secure server. A pseudonym was assigned to each participant in the study to ensure confidentiality. In addition, I stored data in a password-protected computer. I kept written notes stored and locked in a file cabinet located in my home office. I was the only person with access to this locked cabinet.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Using qualitative research methods, I gathered data and field notes from the participant observations, in-depth virtual interviews, and site documents and artifacts. I used Dedoose, a computer software program, to store and locate qualitative data. Along with manual transcription of data, I also used Dedoose in identifying common themes from interviews. In the following sections, I discuss data analysis, the trustworthiness of the study, and my role as the researcher.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis in ethnographic methodology is unstructured and continual (Reeves et al., 2013); however, good ethnography involves insightful analysis rooted in the data collected (Murchison, 2010). Therefore, identifying key moments and experiences was important in telling the story in this ethnographic research study—these research moments were influential and offered clarity and epiphanies (Murchison, 2010). It was important for me to aggregate the data into smaller themes captured from all participants, using five sequential steps to analyze and interpret the data.
Themes that emerged into a list also helped code the ethnographic record (Murchison, 2010). Creswell (2012) described five steps for qualitative data analysis: (a) organization and preparation of data, (b) analyzing and reading all data through transcriptions and notes, (c) coding of data, (d) generating descriptions and themes, and (e) representing the description and themes by organizing into subcategories.

Organization and Preparation of Data. Organization of data will began soon after I studied participant observations, in-depth interviews, and site documents and artifacts at the three campus sites. I gave each participant a pseudonym and coded and organized data using manual charts on Excel, separate file folders with pre-interest surveys and consent forms, and my observational notes. These files contained scanned copies of PDF documents stored on my password-protected computer. I saved information from each campus site by creating electronic, campus-specific file folders with field notes of participant observation, site documents, and artifacts typed in and stored in a password-encoded computer.

Analyzing and Reading of Data. Ethnographers typically look for patterns of thought and behavior in data, as patterns are a form of ethnographic reliability (Fetterman, 2020). As I went through my field notes, written data from interviews, and collected pieces of documents, artifacts, and other information, I began to compare, contrast, and sort through categories until a behavior or thought is identifiable (Fetterman, 2020). After reading through the entire interview transcripts, I selected the first question I wanted to analyze, which was the first question during the interview. I continued this process for each question until all data was exhausted.

Coding of Data. Saldaña (2016) stated, “a code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 4). Assigning a one-word code to transcribed text allowed me to watch for key words and phrases I could use to condense data and add value to the research story (Saldaña, 2016). From this point, I arranged the codes into categories that I was able to use to move data into consolidated meaning.
Generating Themes. As part of making sense of the information I collected, I began thematic data analysis for ethnography by extracting how things worked and named themes in the cultural setting (Creswell, 2012). Theme analysis in ethnography moves away from reporting facts and instead allows interpretation of people and activities. The categories I generated during coding contained clusters of coded data that I used to generate themes and concepts, based on the frequency, extensiveness, intensity, specificity, consistency, and participant perception of importance (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Overall, themes highlighted shared patterns of behavior, thoughts, and conversations for this ethnographic study (Creswell, 2012).

Organization of Themes. The use of manual notes transferred into a spreadsheet helped me to organize chunks of similar responses into like themes. I began by analyzing the broad themes and then narrowed them down into core themes to avoid overlap or redundancy. Themes began with subcategories (e.g., unexpected themes, hard-to-classify themes, major, or minor themes). Overall, the research questions provided a theoretical and historical framework for data analysis; thereby, allowing me to make connections between the study participants’ experiences and scholarly literature.

Procedures to Ensure Trustworthiness

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasized the importance of conducting a qualitative study in an ethical manner by ensuring trustworthiness, knowing standards of rigor for qualitative research are different from quantitative research. To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the insights I discovered and the conclusions I reached had to be authentic to readers, practitioners, and other researchers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It was important for me to understand the phenomenon of the study participants and their experience, unpacking and unfolding the complexity of their human behavior in a contextual framework; thereby, presenting an authentic interpretation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I employed four safeguards to ensure the trustworthiness of this study: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) confirmability, and (d) dependability (Shenton, 2004).
Credibility. I used triangulation as an analytical technique to incorporate all of the data collection methods and provided insight into how the three Filipino learning communities and student success programs represented messaging, language, and discourses (Reeves et al., 2013). Reeves et al. (2013) reported triangulation is an important way for ethnographers to establish rigor and quality in the methodology, and is also an important element of the data synthesis for a rich and articulate representation of the study. At the heart of ethnography, triangulation allowed me to test validity and one source of information against another; thus, improving the overall quality of data and accuracy of ethnographic findings (Fetterman, 2020).

Transferability. In qualitative research, the researcher selects a nonrandom, purposeful sample because they want to find what is unique about a particular sample, and not what is generally true of the many (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, to enable transferability of this research study, I provided precise details of the setting and sampling method. Another strategy I employed for transferability was giving careful attention to selecting each of the study samples at the three campus sites, to allow for the possibility of a greater range of application by readers of this research study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Confirmability. In qualitative research, Shenton (2004) stated the concept of confirmability is to ensure the experiences and ideas of participants are their own and not the characteristics or preferences of the researcher. Although there was difficulty in maintaining true objectivity and knowing the intrusion of the qualitative investigator’s biases were inevitable, triangulation reduced the effect of bias (Shenton, 2004). Being completely aware of my own biases was critical to decisions made, methods adopted, and techniques employed during the study (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability. I reported the research study processes in detail, with the same context and methods, to allow me to repeat steps for each campus site. It was important for me to build an audit trail of this research study, so that the same processes were used for each focus group. It was not necessarily to gain the same results but establishing a solid procedure for this study gave me a
“prototype model” (Shenton, 2004, p. 71) that will enable readers of this study to develop a thorough understanding of the effective methods I used.

**Role of the Researcher**

Contributions made to this study can be useful and positive when the researcher requires the identification of personal values, assumptions, and biases from the very beginning of the study, during, and after (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Because qualitative work requires much reflection on the part of the researcher, it will be important for me to be aware of my own world view, perspectives, and biases so that readers can better understand filters from which I asked the research questions and how I gathered, analyzed, and interpreted data (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

I identify as a second-generation Filipina American, born and raised in southern California. My parents immigrated to the United States after the Immigration Act of 1965 and were part of the “brain drain” (Pido, 1997, p. 28) generation that filled gaps in the U.S. labor force. My father served in the U.S. Navy to escape poverty in the Philippines and was a Vietnam War sailor aboard the U.S.S. Constellation. My mother came to the United States as a professional registered nurse and my parents met in Los Angeles and lived in San Diego before settling in Walnut, California. I am the second daughter of four daughters. My youngest sister was born with severe intellectual disabilities and has the mental age of an 18-month-old, and my working parents heavily depended on me during my formative and young adult years to help them care for my sister’s extreme special needs. I chose to apply to colleges that were close to home, so that in the event my parents needed my help, I was nearby. Even though I ended up attending the University of California, Riverside, which was just 30 minutes from home, there was a huge sense of guilt I felt for going to college knowing my parents depended on me so much.

During my college years, I went through a huge cultural awakening after being actively involved as a student leader and serving as president of Katipunan-Filipino Student Union, a student organization at the University of California, Riverside. Although I did not know it at the time, Filipino American college students in the 1990s were part of a cultural movement that began in the 1970s at
San Francisco State, UC Berkeley, and UCLA, and gave underserved and underrepresented Filipino Americans a form of cultural expression and wealth to share with their campus communities by creating a highly visible performance called the Pilipino Cultural Night (PCN; Hernandez, 2020). This rite of passage for many Filipino college students has been coined the “Pilipino Cultural Night genre” (Gonzalvez, 2009, p. 26). Because there were very few or no Filipino history courses offered at colleges nor cultural support programs that focused on the Filipino American experience, we created our own support and learning environments through the Katipunan-Filipino Student Union organization on campus, producing Pilipino Cultural Night shows every year.

As a full-time student, I held two part-time jobs as a peer counselor for Educational Opportunities and Programs Support (EOPS) and the Asian Pacific Islander Student Programs offices, and a student assistant for Student Life and Leadership office. During my senior year at University of California, Riverside, my peers and I accomplished dreams and goals that changed the landscape for the university forever: (a) we cowrote and produced a playwright for the Pilipino Cultural Night on the first wave of Filipino immigrants who came to the United States, educating the campus about the history of Filipino Americans, (b) produced Kislap, which means light in Tagalog, a pilot campus radio station program through KUCR to give a voice on the radio to Filipino students, (c) advocated for a Filipina professor who was in the running for a faculty position at the Ethnic Studies department and had experience in teaching a Filipino American experience course, and (d) started the first Pilipino Graduation, which still continues today at University of California, Riverside. Finally, with the support of students and the Asian and Pacific Islander Student Programs office, the very first Filipino American Experience course was offered in the fall of 1994 under the Ethnic Studies division. I volunteered to be the teaching assistant for this inaugural class.

The running theme of student affairs followed me throughout my career after obtaining my bachelor’s degree. I have over 24 years in higher education, with 15 years as a community college practitioner in student services. I served as the program coordinator for the Bridge Program at Mt. San Antonio College with experience in learning communities and student support programs for over
7 years. I was also part of the Asian American Native American Pacific Islander (AANAPISI) grant-writing team that funded the ARISE Program, a new Asian and Pacific Islander student support program at Mt. San Antonio College. This program was created when Mt. San Antonio was awarded a $2,000,000, 5-year grant in the fall of 2011. Prior to my current position at Fullerton College, I was an English faculty intern and team taught a basic skills writing class and a creative writing class at Long Beach City College for 1 semester. Currently, I am the director for student life and leadership in the student services division at Fullerton College for the North Orange County Community College District.

I believe my understanding of the context of the Filipino American experience and my role enhanced my awareness, knowledge, and sensitivity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) of what Filipino American and Filipino community college students encounter today. I brought knowledge of both the structure of higher education, challenges of navigating through community colleges, and the leadership vision of creating and building programs that will support, impact, and advance student success. However, prior to interviewing participants who had a direct experience with the phenomenon, I explored my own experience and revisited former experiences before embarking on and throughout this study to become acutely aware of any personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Another strategy I employed was peer examination from a colleague who was familiar with the research study reviewed my codes and assessed if findings were plausible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Lastly, I wrote in my reflective journal throughout this entire process, detailing the research journey and questions, decisions, and any issues or ideas I encountered in collecting data. Murchison (2010) stated “good ethnography often draws heavily on the skills of storytelling” (p. 176). Using a reflective journal allowed me draw out the important moments and experiences that occurred during this study.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided a general overview of the methodology for this qualitative study on Filipino learning communities and student success programs, using the ethnographic lens to capture
the lived experiences of community college students who identify as Filipino or Filipino American. The data collected provided a holistic interpretation and explanation of the unique success and challenges of Filipino and Filipino American students at California community colleges. In Chapter 4, I present findings based on the research questions and emergent themes.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

Qualitative research is an effective methodology that occurs in the natural setting and allows the researcher to be engaged in the details of the lived experiences of the people who are interviewed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research as a methodology also offers researchers a lens to focus on and understand how people interpret their world and the meaning enmeshed in their personal experiences. Using ethnography as a research design, the task of the ethnographer is to convey their own experience and immerse themselves deeply into the field and paint a picture of moments that stand out, along with descriptive details that carry a particular meaning.

In this chapter, I present the findings based on the research questions and identified themes, using the ethnographer’s voice to capture the revealing moments as they happened ethnographically. These moments were vignettes, in-depth student interviews, participant observations, and analysis of documents and artifacts from two Filipino learning communities at Southwestern College and Skyline College, and one Filipino student success program at City College of San Francisco (CCSF). The chapter begins with a summary of the methodology, followed by ethnographic vignettes to paint a portrait of significant moments of each Filipino learning community or student success program. The findings for both research questions are then presented in thick, descriptive, narrative form with a total of seven themes that emerged. An additional section on significant findings for this study is also presented. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings to set the stage for the recommendations and implications in Chapter 5.

Ethnographic Vignettes

When a person has a vivid and nostalgic memory, they spend a lot of time flipping through the past, like a photo album in their brain, or in today’s time, screen swiping through images on their iPhone. These memories are like animated scenes listed as movies streamed on Netflix and if I wanted to, I could transport myself back to the past and watch the unfolding of these moments over and over again. Before the COVID-19 global pandemic shut the world down and the way we
experienced normal life, I had the opportunity to visit each of the campuses that had a Filipino learning community or student success program. The visits gave me a bird’s eye view before embarking formally in the study.

I vividly recalled my personal visits to each of the colleges and geographic moments in time that stood out for me, like the drive to sunny San Diego when I was invited to the Bayan Learning Community new student orientation at Southwestern College, accompanied by the creaking noise of the plastic container that held Filipino desserts for the students. I had driven this route countless times over the years, and yet, every drive to San Diego had always been an inward journey because I was never the same person going in as I was coming out.

Three months later, I took an impromptu solo trip to the Bay Area to meet with Skyline College and CCSF. I remember the nervous energy I felt landing at San Francisco International Airport and prayed for signs or symbols that somehow, I was on the right path. After picking up my rental car and making it out of the airport maze, I stopped to get Filipino food at South San Francisco before heading back to my hotel to get ready for my late afternoon meeting at Skyline College. On my way back from lunch to my hotel, I missed a right turn at one of the streets, was completely lost and disoriented in my rental car, then saw Daland Auto Body on the corner of another street where I could turn. I thought I was lost, but realized I could never really been lost, because synchronicity always had some way of finding me, much like a North Star leading the way. I set my temporary panic aside, quickly freshened up at my hotel room, and eventually found my way to the steep hills of San Bruno en route to Skyline College. The distinct architecture of the suburban track homes surrounding the campus reminded me of many summers spent with my cousins in Vallejo and Benicia. As I walked on the campus atop a hill through the thick, moving fog and howling wind, I thought to myself how symbolic the college name was, for it felt like I was literally in heaven touching the sky.

The next morning, I was eating an early breakfast with my cousin at the hotel. I shared the doubts I had about my potential research topic and how important it was for me (on a personal and spiritual level) to connect with each campus for this study to work. The third and final campus I was
visiting that day before flying back to southern California was CCSF. My cousin simply said, “I think it’s worth it if you check it out because, who knows? This might be your final confirmation that you are supposed to do this research.” And with that, I got in my rental car and navigated through the freeway to an urban side of San Francisco I had never seen before. I have lived in suburban neighborhoods my entire life, but the urban scenery of the densely populated community where CCSF is located was awe-inspiring, to say the least. I was lost again and asked a student passing by where Cloud Hall was. She pointed to the long ascent of four to five sets of concrete steps. I felt like I was at the base of a Greek temple, and my eyes were drawn upward to begin the trek up these enormous steps. I journeyed up to the top platform, giving me a stunning view of the metropolitan city. Exactly as an ancient Greek temple in all its might, there stood the massive building of Cloud Hall where the Tulay Filipino Student Success Program was located.

Having these visual images etched in my mind and heart made all the difference when conducting my research in a virtual environment. It took the sadness and disappointment away of not being able to connect with people in person as I had originally planned. In retrospect, it was a blessing that I visited each of the campuses because I had no idea that the COVID-19 global pandemic would later prevent me from connecting with people in person. Technology became the vehicle to transport us into each other’s worlds and spaces. I held on tightly to these images like a movie in my mind, while I connected with the students and programs virtually, hoping that one day soon, I would have the honor of visiting them again in person. I wrote three vignettes because ethnographies present a “slice of life” (Fetterman, 2020, p. 136) and “motionless image” (Fetterman, 2020, p. 136) or literary illusion that helps the reader experience a culture that stands still through time even after the time has passed.

**Vignette 1: Bayan**

When I was in junior high school, I used to dig through my collection of cassette tapes and pass over the stack with traditional Tagalog and Ilocano folk songs that belonged to my mom and dad. I must have heard the traditional song, “Bayan Ko” more times than I can count, as it was a song
in one of the parent’s cassette tapes. The translation of this song title from Tagalog to English means “my dear country.” The melody was familiar and comforting, like its own version of a Filipino lullaby, I would often hear, along with an Ilocano folk song my Lola taught me called “Manang Biday.” I had never paid attention to the lyrics nor the translation of this song until this study, especially in understanding the deeper symbolism behind the name of the learning community at Southwestern College.

“Bayan Ko” (Corazon de Jesus, 1929, as cited in Lozano, 2010) was a poem originally written in Spanish. Constancio de Guzman later converted the poem into a kundiman, a type of traditional Philippine love song (Solidarity Philippines Australia Network, 2008). The kundiman song served as a secret battle cry with strong anticolonial sentiments, to protest the U.S. occupation of the Philippines (Aguilar, 2011). Though the translation of the song from Tagalog to English can never do justice to the true meaning, the first stanza of the song speaks of the Philippines as a land of gold and flowers. The motherland is a country that overflows with love, and offers virtue and beauty to all. The next stanzas focuses on how the beauty of the motherland intoxicated foreigners and as a result, they enslaved the Philippines. Enmeshed in this battle cry song are the yearnings of the Filipino people to be set free, to not be like a bird that is caged and cries, but to break through the shackles of colonialism once and for all.

The same yearnings were found in the study of Bayan at Southwestern College with students who were a direct extension of the motherland, and wished to learn more about their culture during their 1st year in college. On top of wrestling with the intersections of culture and identity, what it meant to be Filipino, Filipina, or Filipinx in search of a community or home, Bayan students were going through major life changes by transitioning from high school to college and navigating through the COVID-19 global pandemic. They yearned for personal connection in-person during the pandemic and remembered their annual field trips before the COVID-19 global pandemic to Agbayani Village in Delano to learn more about the Filipino migrant workers. One Bayan student, Trisha, shared her disappointment in not being able to be a mentor for new Bayan students because of the pandemic,
saying, “COVID took a big toll. Me and my friends were looking forward to being Átes or Kuyas for the incoming freshmen. It would have been better if it were in person.” Kuya means “older brother” and Áte means “older sister” in Tagalog and they are always used as signs of respect for elders in the Filipino culture. Trisha’s immediate family was in the Philippines, so she did not have direct familial support here in the United States. Even though she yearned for her family thousands of miles away in the motherland, she expressed, “Bayan helped me not feel alone. I wish I was in the Philippines. I wish I was with my family. I’ve said that Bayan was my second family because that’s the way they always made me feel.” This vignette emphasized the Bayan experience was critical to the academic and personal success of Filipino/a/x community college students, by connecting them to their culture and incorporating Filipino history as culturally responsive pedagogy into the curriculum.

Vignette 2: Kababayan

Watching how the Kababayan Learning Community (KLC) works is like being a guest in an audience to experience your first Pilipino Cultural Night (PCN). As you sit among massive Filipino families who are there to support students and begin watching this rite of passage, you are in awe of how Filipino college students execute and perform the entire production. There is creative playwriting of the entire show, actors who bring the script to life and connect the stories to each of the Philippine dance suites, performances of dances to live percussion music, intricate set design, and the fanfare of colorful costumes that light up the stage. Singkil is a dramatic and theatrical dance from the Philippine Muslim Suite, and a depiction of an epic poem written in the 14th century by the Maranao people of Mindanao. Singkil tells the story through dance of a royal wedding with multiple dancers playing various roles. An entourage of fan dancers (who mimic butterflies) and scarf dancers (who are diwatas or fairies) accompanies the Maranao princess. The dance is perfectly synchronized to the beat of the bamboo sticks and percussion instruments. Dancers step in and out of clapping bamboo poles following the Maranao princess, as she gracefully and skillfully moves across multiple sets of poles, hearing only the sound of a bell attached to her ankle. Another dancer follows the princess everywhere she goes, while holding an umbrella over the princess’ head. The intensity heightens and
the prince now joins the bride as they dance in unison, moving faster and faster to the thunderous finale of the pounding drums and clapping bamboos. As a spectator in the audience, a person can feel the rhythmic beating of their heart escalate, as if their heart is also dancing along with the performers on stage. They take you with them on this magical and mystical journey through visual dance, and you come out of this trance mesmerized and transformed.

KLC is a model template of Filipino learning communities to follow in California community colleges. They have planted their roots firmly in the rich soil of higher education for years and celebrated their 15-year anniversary in the fall of 2019. Instead of letting the COVID-19 global pandemic control how they connected with their students, KLC extended that connection to Bayan Learning Community at Southwestern College and Tulay Filipino Student Success Program at CCSF. Their leadership during the pandemic has provided mentorship for two newly created Filipino learning communities at the College of San Mateo and Napa Valley College. Together with CCSF and Southwestern College, they have founded the Filipinx California Community College Collaborative group for Filipinx educators across the state. KLC student leaders have created a template for their other sister Filipino learning communities and student success programs to follow such as the “Tara Na!” (“Let’s go!” in English) virtual events. Kababayan’s root word in Tagalog means “compatriot” or “fellow colleagues” from the same town or country. KLC has modeled the way for thriving during the COVID-19 global pandemic. To watch KLC advance their learning community for their students is like watching a dynamic, synchronized, and transcendent Singkil dance. Every meeting and event closes out with a cultural energizer and loud clapping of the hands in unison to represent solidarity and the future journey together: Isang Bagsak! Dalawang Bagsak! Tatlong Bagsak! My heartbeat is once again escalating to the beat of the clapping hands, and I learn something profound at the Kababayan events: Tatlong Bagsak is the united heartbeat of the Filipino people. This vignette reminded me of the dynamic ways in which Filipino learning communities and student success programs naturally connected with each other as they continued to operate their own programs as well as rising above the geographical barriers of the pandemic to bring forth statewide unity and support to each other.
Vignette 3: Tulay

I often share my story of being born “for free” at the Balboa Naval Hospital in San Diego because my dad was in the U.S. Navy at the time. Shortly after I was born, he was stationed in the Philippines. I was only 1 month old when my mom traveled with me as a crying infant—she had a newborn baby and my older toddler sister in tow—to visit my dad halfway across the world. I was baptized in Quezon City, Philippines and had a christening reception at Max’s of Manila restaurant. It would be another 40 years before I returned to the motherland.

Before my return, I had a lucid dream. I had never been to other countries in Asia before, but while I was watching this dream unfold, I knew instinctively that I was somewhere in Asia and there was a bridge perched in between two buildings, high above a busy, narrow street full of cars. When I arrived in Manila, Philippines months later with my dad in December 2012, my aunt had her driver pick us up from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. I was present, taking in the sad sights of the densely populated slum housing near the airport and the complete opposite change in scenery a few miles away at a premier shopping mall in Metro Manila. I had never seen so many people who looked like me in one place, where I was part of the majority and not the minority. It was confusing, validating, and heartbreaking all at the same time. We stopped at a small, nearby restaurant to get something to eat. After eating a hearty meal, and quickly realizing we even had the privilege to have a meal, the driver picked us up and began driving down a street that was oddly familiar to me, as if I had been there before. We were at a stoplight, and I watched a crowd of Filipinos cross the street in front of us. Some of them were beggars or mothers who were dragging their toddler children to ask for money, but others obviously had money to spend. The hazy memory of my dream months before began to come back with more clarity. The stoplight changed from red to green, the driver turned the corner to the left around the Green Hills shopping center, and it was instantly familiar to me. I gasped, remembered my dream months before, and whispered to myself silently, “If this was accurate in my dream, there should be a bridge coming right up once we turn the corner.” Sure enough, there was a
pedestrian bridge. I predicted correctly in my dream I was in Asia, and more specifically, I was in the Philippines and it was, without a doubt, a homecoming.

In literature, bridges are spiritual symbols to represent transformation, the overcoming of obstacles, or symbolic connections between two places, two worlds, and two states of being. I was invited to an event hosted by Tulay student ambassadors called “Ang Atin Tulayan,” which means the “bridges we cross” in English. It was part of a weekly series of workshops for Tulay students at CCSF. It was an open space with students who presented topics on social justice, but with additional and timely discussions on mental health, the U.S. capitol insurrection, anti-Asian violence, and trying to survive in the pandemic. As soon as the students began talking and sharing their thoughts and feelings, I forgot I was in a virtual setting, and it no longer mattered that every connection during this COVID-19 global pandemic was through virtual means. I felt like I was in their physical space at Cloud Hall, talking in a circle around the main center study table. I was deeply moved by each of them, holding space and time the way they did. They listened intently to each other and were there for each other in the most raw and authentic way. When they spoke of perseverance during this time of the COVID-19 global pandemic, racial injustice, and the threat of losing the only Philippine studies program at a community college in the nation, one Tulay student ambassador expressed, “We persevere because we were taught this from standing on the backs of our ancestors.” I was profoundly touched by that statement and just like that, they ushered me across an unseen, motionless bridge which literally translated to the name and meaning of Tulay. I was keenly aware of the shift in my state of being and in each of their states of being, while the Filipino spirit of our motherland flowed through us, timeless and eternal.

This vignette reminded me of how much Filipino community college students need support from faculty, staff, and programs. At the time of this study, a tenured faculty and department chair of Philippine studies—one of 163 tenured faculty—was issued a layoff notice as due to budget cuts, but ultimately, CCSF was able to avoid layoffs after the Board of Trustees and the American Federation of Teachers 2121 agreed to implement wage cuts in a one-year agreement (Hom, 2021). The
Philippine studies department is the only one of its kind in the nation at a community college, and has had a profound impact on the past, and current Filipino/a/x community college students.

**First Research Question**

The analyses of ethnographic data captured from in-depth interviews, participant observations of events, and artifacts from three Filipino learning communities and student success programs at Southwestern College, Skyline College, and CCSF are presented in response to the first research question. All interview responses and data analyses from participant observations of events and artifacts initially guided the production of codes, and were later categorized into seven themes overall. The themes that emerged were: (a) Wrestling With Filipino/a/x Identity, (b) Transitioning From High School to College, (c) Using Culturally Responsive Filipino Pedagogy, (d) Cultural Awakening and Sense of Belonging, (e) Student Success and Support Services, (f) Financial Hardship for Filipino/a/x Community College Students, and (g) Balancing Filipino/a/x Identity With Home and College Environment in the COVID-19 Global Pandemic. The first four themes emerged from the first research question: How do Filipino community college students experience a culture-based Filipino learning community or student success program?

A total of 10 one-on-one, in-depth interviews were conducted with Filipino/a/x students who completed at least 2 semesters at a community college enrolled in a Filipino learning community or student success program. All interviews were conducted through video conferencing using Zoom and lasted 30–60 minutes. No video or audio recording was allowed for in-depth interviews and notes were taken manually. Data were analyzed, coded manually, and organized into themes. The student participants shared their experiences and described their experiences being involved in a Filipino learning community or student success program. Table 2 provides a summary of the 10 participants.
Table 2. Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/pseudonym</th>
<th>Race/ethnicity</th>
<th>Pronouns</th>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>First semester</th>
<th>College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christine</td>
<td>Filipina</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Fall 2019</td>
<td>Skyline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marc</td>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>he/him</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Fall 2019</td>
<td>Skyline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>he/him</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Fall 2019</td>
<td>Skyline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan</td>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>he/him</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Fall 2019</td>
<td>Skyline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erwin</td>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>he/him</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Fall 2019</td>
<td>Southwestern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trisha</td>
<td>Filipina</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Fall 2019</td>
<td>Southwestern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahlia</td>
<td>Filipinx</td>
<td>they/them</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Fall 2018</td>
<td>Southwestern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darren</td>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>he/him</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Spring 2017</td>
<td>CCSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>he/him</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Fall 2018</td>
<td>CCSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>he/him</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Fall 2017</td>
<td>CCSF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theme 1: Wrestling with Filipino/a/x Identity

Findings showed cultural identity, which was woven like fine thread throughout the entire study, was the main running theme for the 10 study participants. Filipino/a/x identity was at the heart of everything the student participants had to say. All of the students I interviewed felt like an alien in their own land, whether they were born in the United States, had just immigrated to the United States, or immigrated at an early age. Prior to their experience enrolled in a Filipino learning community or student success program, these students felt left out, indifferent, confused, and sad about their Filipino/a/x identities.

Christine was 18 years old, about to start her 1st semester in college, and was visiting the Museum of Ice Cream in San Francisco with her family and cousin. Her parents held a spot in line for them while Christine and her cousin stepped away for a few minutes. When Christine came back in line, there was a White woman and her child positioned behind them. Her son said, "Mom, they are cutting in line!" The woman responded, comforted her son, and said, "It's okay, they are foreigners." Christine identified as a second-generation Filipina American, used pronouns she/her and was born in the United States. She was raised in Daly City, California; yet, she and her family were made to
feel as though they did not belong in the United States because of the color of their skin. Christine later attended Skyline College and was part of Kababayan. She said:

"My friends were at Kababayan Learning Community and I went with my friends to some of the KLC events. They had icebreakers, activities, classes . . . it was fun. Kababayan talked about Filipino issues and gave us an outlet to talk about these issues."

Jonathan was another Filipino student interviewed with Kababayan and used he/him pronouns. He immigrated to the United States when he was in third grade. His dad came to the United States ahead of the family and Jonathan was left behind in the Philippines with his brother and mom. Jonathan expressed:

"My dad was in the U.S. and my mom raised me and my brother in the Philippines. I was an immigrant from the Philippines and came to the U.S. in 2009. I was more with Filipinos who were born here. I would say that when I moved here to the U.S. in third grade, I think I was bullied because I was Filipino. This boy didn't want to play with me or welcome me, so my mom talked to the teacher. In high school, I got a glimpse of Filipino culture at Westmoor High School. I was homesick, missing a piece of Filipino culture."

Trisha, who used she/her pronouns, identified as a Filipina American who was born in the United States but lived in the Philippines for 5 years. Trisha shared her experience of growing up as Filipina American before attending Southwestern College. She stated:

"In the U.S. when I was living here, I lived in a very White community. I felt very left out. Most of the people I hung out with were White or Mexican. There were not many Filipinos where I grew up. I grew up in Temecula, California. I got categorized as being Asian. As a kid, it felt like I was different, “Oh the Asians.” They only referred to us as “the Filipinas.” There was a lot of confusion."

Similar to Trisha, another student also struggled with the intersections of identity and culture before coming to Southwestern College. Erwin identified as a third-generation Filipino American with pronouns he/him and felt indifferent toward his Filipino culture. When asked what it meant to him to be Filipino before attending Southwestern College, he expressed:

"Growing up, I noticed I looked different from other kids. My skin wasn't white, but it was not really brown. I wasn’t white enough, yet not brown enough to fit in with my other peers. I was always in that middle ground. My teachers pointed out my big eyes and said Asian people do not really have my eyes. I was ashamed to be Filipino. You know you’re Asian, but people would say, “Filipinos want to be Asian, but they are not really Asian.” Where do I fit in? I know I am not White. Even if the Philippines is literally in Asia. I was always in that in-between of not understanding who I was. I was just trying to suppress it. I didn’t think too much of it, but I understood it was my culture. My parents didn’t grow up in the Philippines, they were raised
here. They were Americanized. I also grew up with my grandmother who was very Filipino. I
had a mix of a Filipino and American household. Before Southwestern, I went to Olympia High
School in Chula Vista, and I wasn’t really talkative. I really wanted to go to my classes and
come home and didn’t do anything else after that. I did pretty well in my classes, straight As or
straight Bs. I had a normal school experience, more on the loner side rather than the
socialization side.

Dahlia was another student from Southwestern College, majored in music education, and identified
as Filipinx American. Dahlia shared the following about their experiences before college:

I was just a regular high school student who discovered too late what to major in when I first
entered college. When I was in high school, I just tried to pass my classes with as much effort
as I can. I’ve always been hyper aware . . . I knew I was Filipino by just saying it. I just didn’t
know what it actually meant until I matured a bit more, prior to college what it meant to be
Filipino.

Darren was a student at CCSF, identified as Filipino American and used the pronouns he/him.
He was also a student ambassador for Tulay. He shared the following about growing up:

Honestly, just to quickly go back . . . I didn’t know what Filipino was until eighth grade. I
thought I was White. I listened to rock and roll. I didn’t speak that much slang. I didn’t even
know what color I was . . . it didn’t come to mind. I was oblivious.

Jason was another student interviewed from CCSF. He identified as Filipino, used pronouns
he/him, and was a student ambassador for Tulay. Jason recalled his life before college, saying:

My life before City College of San Francisco was different in a way. I was born in the
Philippines in the northern part [of the region]. I came to the U.S. in 2006. It was more for
tourist reasons to see what another country was all about. That August I was going to be
staying in the U.S. in San Francisco. It was a crazy move back then because I had to leave my
life back home. It was a culture shock to me because of how different people are. My
hometown in the Philippines was different. I switched schools here in the U.S. a lot due to
various reasons . . . public to private schools for various reasons. During elementary and
middle school, it was depressing because I had lack of interaction with people. It was hard to
find people to relate with. I had very little way to converse with people. Since my family started
over, I wasn’t experiencing things. During that time period, it was rough . . . socially and
financially. During high school, things changed for me. I began to grow out of my shell. I had to
do something for myself. It was a fresh start. In a way I tried to do something with my high
school life such as join college programs. I pushed myself to make up for my missing
experiences from elementary and middle school such as finding friends and joining
organizations. I was looking for community my whole life. Even if I know I should be grateful, I
am longing for a community that I can be with.

The running theme of wrestling with Filipino/a/x identity has been prominent in my own journey
and was more profound before attending college. In this first theme, interview data showed Filipino
students needed positive role models who looked like them, especially other Filipino community
college students. Filipino students in the community college system were carrying heavier burdens that many were not informed of because they remained invisible and forgotten. These students were often underprivileged and desperately needed to know that higher education had not forgotten about them. Most importantly, these students needed validation that there was nothing wrong or alien about them being Filipino.

**Theme 2: Transitioning from High School to College**

Two community colleges in the Bay area were intentional about their outreach efforts to Filipino high school students and created a direct pipeline from local feeder high schools into their Filipino learning community or student success program. Tulay worked directly with the Philippine studies department faculty and Pin@y Educational Partnerships to outreach to Filipino/a/x high school students. Dean was a Filipino American student from CCSF, used the pronouns he/him, and was a student ambassador for Tulay. He shared:

> I had the honor of being part of [Pin@y Educational Partnerships] at Balboa High School. It focused on Filipino learning, and I spent 2 years in that program. I had the honor to be in the group that advocated to include ethnic studies curriculum in high schools. Being part of that Filipino program added to my Filipino identity and the passion for the Filipino community. This is what drove me to find Tulay at City College, so I could be around people with like-minded experiences.

Kababayan at Skyline College had an outreach program called Kapatiran, which translates from Tagalog to English as “sisterhood” or “brotherhood.” Kapatiran program was an afterschool, dual enrollment program Skyline College offered to Filipino students from Westmoor and South San Francisco high schools. It gave high school students the opportunity to earn high school credit and free college units. The program offered a class that was taught in a cohort model, and students were encouraged and taught to create community. Skyline College provided two faculty who taught at Kapatiran Program at Westmoor High School and South San Francisco High School. The curriculum included Filipino/a/x and Filipino/a/x American history, identity, culture, social justice, college readiness and success, and other life skills which prepared students for the transition from high school to college. As part of the Kapatrian website, quotes were shared from students who expressed
how the class impacted them. One quote that was shared on the website was, “This class has allowed me to get in touch with my Filipino roots that I lost a long time ago. I also learned to always take a stand and always continue to spread the knowledge I learn.”

Marc, a second-generation Filipino American, with pronouns he/him, and a student at Skyline College, shared the importance of being part of the Kapatiran high school program that led him to Kababayan, saying:

I had a high school connection to Kababayan. I was in the Filipino club (Filipino Barkada) at Westmoor High School in Daly City where I learned about culture and mythology. I took an after-school program . . . a Kapatiran class with Mr. G. It gave me college credit and was transferrable to the CSU. I enrolled in KLC and learned about mental health, life skills, colonial mentality . . . that family is more important than friends.

The second theme of transition from high school to college triggered a memory for me. I remembered asking my high school administrators if it would be possible to start a Filipino cultural club, and was utterly disappointed to hear the answer, “If you start a Filipino club, then others will feel left out.” At the time, I did not have the cultural competency nor appropriate rhetoric to challenge or negotiate this, even if deep inside I knew that the Filipino community of peers around me desperately needed positive role models. The only image these White high school administrators had of Filipinos were negative, and they assumed all of us were gang bangers and troublemakers. This was not the case at Skyline College and CCSF because faculty understood the need for teaching Filipino history at the high school level and used the ethnic studies framework to engage students at this vulnerable age. In doing so, these students were able to see themselves and their Filipino/a/x identities in a positive light.

**Theme 3: Using Culturally Responsive Filipino Critical Pedagogy**

In each of the Filipino learning communities and Filipino student success programs, the faculty implemented cultural dialogue and critical reflection into English, counseling, and ethnic studies courses. The ethnic studies course as part of Kababayan was centered on Filipino history and the Filipino American experience with an ethnic studies framework. Marc was a Kababayan student at Skyline College and majored in social justice. At the time of the interview, Marc was en route to
transferring to San Francisco State with a major in Asian studies. Marc talked about the linked courses he took with Kababayan:

I took History of the Philippines [Ethnic Studies], English 105, and Counseling 100. In Dr. L’s English class, I get to free write and write a lot. I have improved in my writing, and I began to be more interested in writing essays. I can say that Kababayan got me more politically involved, such as the Black Lives Matter movement, education, and issues happening in the Philippines such as the antiterrorism law.

**Philippine Studies Department**

The connection that Tulay had with the Department of Philippine Studies at CCSF was unique. Philippine studies was the only department of its kind in the United States and was started alongside African American studies in the 1970s under the umbrella of the Ethnic Studies department. The connection between Tulay and Philippine Studies was akin to an infinity symbol in that there was a constant flow and exchange for students who were in Tulay and for students who were taking courses in Philippine studies. They were both independent departments and programs that stood on their own; yet, they were also interdependent. Jason, a Tulay student ambassador, shared:

Philippine Studies faculty Professor V is always with us. We encourage students to take Philippine Studies classes. Professor V is really good at teaching the content of different subjects and topics of Philippine history. She is usually a part of the events when there are huge Tulay events. She’s involved in some capacity because we are intertwined in a way . . . Philippine Studies is intertwined with Tulay.

Darren was also a Tulay student ambassador and spoke about the connection between Tulay and the Philippine Studies department at CCSF:

In the Tulay program, you get priority registration and access. We also provide a book loan program. We work with Professor V and she helps us organize events. Those are pretty much the main things that we offer: their courses and we promote their courses. It’s a program with open doors. We don’t have any specific classes that Tulay offers, we’re like the center that the classes want to partner with. Tulay is a support space.

**Connecting with Filipino/a/x Faculty**

Throughout the in-depth interviews, it was evident that connection to Filipinx faculty in a Filipino learning community or student success program made a difference in the success of the students. Darren from CCSF said his favorite professor was Professor V and he considered her like a
second mother. Jonathan from Skyline College shared his connection to Filipinx faculty was similar to a relationship with best friends, saying:

Before I went to college, I thought it was going to be hard. With KLC, it was different. Teachers are so different . . . you vibe with them, they know what’s up. With Dr. L. and Manong R, they are like best friends. It’s a lot but it’s broken down into manageable pieces. First day you do brainstorming, then peer rough drafts . . . more bite size. It’s more engaging. It’s reading a box and reading slides, acting out. If you can teach it, you can understand it. It’s very interactive. It’s been a year since I was at Skyline . . . a lot of laughter. It’s different. It’s not going to hit you like a bus. I would recommend it to my friends.

Jonathan also conveyed one of his professors were critical to pursuing an additional academic major centered on the Filipino American experience:

It’s a maybe . . . a big maybe but Manong R opened up my eyes to Filipino history with ethnic studies. I feel like I want to venture on that side as well. If I go to SF State, what if I want to side major as ethnic studies?

In addition to the peer support and community, the faculty support the Bayan students received was invaluable. Dahlia from Southwestern College had been resigned to accepting college life would be similar to the experience in high school, and shared:

Professor C was teaching but was also a counselor as well. She really helped me. If I went to a different counselor, I don’t think it would have as much effect. Having a counselor as a teacher as well is helpful. They are teaching other subjects but teaching students how to interact with a counselor and get help if they need to reach an educational goal. The counselors are there for you. Even outside of Bayan, Professor C was extremely helpful to the Bayan alumni. Professor H, he kind of reminded me of my old high school history teacher. He is very passionate about the subject he is teaching. He makes us learn other than reading a textbook. If we have to stay on a subject for 2–3 weeks before we move on, we still do that because he wants the students to really absorb the material we are learning. In the fall semester, he provided a tutor for us after our classes. The tutor would sit in our class and if we were in discussions, the tutor would help us. It was actually really helpful. During my time at Southwestern College, I was fine being by myself, but then again I knew in my mind that I had to make some friends, if not a lot of friends. I think fitting in is what I struggled with. And with Bayan at first, I actually felt like the only person I could talk to was Professor C by herself. But then during spring semester, I actually found myself being confident enough to talk to friends in Bayan . . . and I could say this with confidence. I’m not really a people person. I was able to find friends, not just in Bayan, but in Southwestern College as well.

**Culture-Based Activities and Events**

Before the COVID-19 global pandemic, each of the Filipino learning communities and student success programs offered culture-based activities and events in tandem with their academic instruction as out-of-the-classroom experiences for students. Kababayan featured an English class
focused on playwriting skills, and part of the final product of the spring semester was to produce, direct, and perform a Pilipino Cultural Night showcased to the campus community. Pilipino Cultural Night shows have been rare in the community colleges and have been mainly a production of Filipino clubs and organizations at 4-year universities. Kababayan took this cultural rite of passage and immersed it into the curriculum for English so students would learn playwriting skills, but in the context of Filipino history, culture, and identity.

**Web Blogs.** At Southwestern College, the English course was linked with counseling, and embedded Filipino history and culture into the curriculum. Part of the Bayan experience was captured in written posts and video blogs on their online web blog called Sariling Atin, which means “our own” in English. The web blog was part of the data collection of public documents and artifacts that I analyzed for Bayan. Bayan scholars engaged in this web blog through written and audio discussions, such as anti-Blackness and addressing colorism in the Filipino culture, as part of discussions about the damaging effects of colonial mentality. Video clips were uploaded into this web blog as part of the English class that Bayan scholars took during their 1st year.

**Field Trips.** Kababayan and Bayan also provided annual cultural field trips to meaningful places in California that had rich Filipino history. During Filipino History Month, Bayan took their cohort of students on an annual field trip to visit Delano, California to learn more about the first wave of Filipinos who were farm workers in the early 1900s. Class readings were on Mabalon’s *Little Manila is in the Heart* and familiarized the Bayan students with the experience of Filipino farm workers or the Manongs, the first generation of Filipinos who immigrated to the United States. Erwin shared this experience with his dad, a culture-based activity that provided a generational bridge for his family, saying:

> There was one event . . . we watched a documentary about the Manongs and the labor movement. I watched this with my dad. We also took field trips to UC Santa Barbara, and the grape fields. We were supposed to go see the L.A. colleges but then COVID happened.

Christine, a student at Skyline College, completely lit up when she shared, “In September 2019, it was the 15-year anniversary of Kababayan and we took a trip to Little Manila in Stockton and took
Filipino martial arts workshops.” One of the highlights that all students from Skyline mentioned was the 15-year anniversary of Kababayan. Jonathan shared:

We went to Little Manila in Stockton and it was really fun . . . that is one thing I remember there. The 15-year celebration was really fun because the people who started Kababayan in 2004 were there. Everyone was there. We had traditional Itak tattoos and influential speakers.

**Filipino Graduation Ceremony.** Each of these programs celebrated the end of the academic year with a culminating event called Filipino Graduation or “Fil-Grad.” When I visited CCSF and met with Professor B, he gave me a folder of Tulay events and programs, which was part of my data collection on document and artifacts. When I opened the glossy, red CCSF folder, I was completely moved by the flyer of their second annual Fil-Grad, titled “Sa Wakas” which means “finally fulfilled,” and the photo of the graduates wearing their traditional Philippine flag stoles draped over their graduation regalia. Part of the tradition of Fil-Grad—or Pilipino Graduation (P-Grad)—was to drape graduating students with a stole of the Philippine flag. It was a highly personal and life-changing ceremony where graduates had the opportunity to speak to and thank their families for the support given during their educational journey.

The COVID-19 global pandemic did not derail the plans for Bayan, Kababayan, and Tulay for their annual Filipino graduation. In fact, the pandemic made them a stronger force together. One of the main events they planned was the first-ever, statewide, virtual Fil-Grad ceremony with other California community colleges. The three community colleges in this study led the efforts and modeled this leadership for the two newest Filipino learning communities at the College of San Mateo and Napa Valley College.

When I started the first-ever P-Grad at UC Riverside in 1994, I never imagined it would continue as it does today. I remember being present at my sister’s P-Grad ceremony at UC Berkeley in 1993 with my mom and dad. My dad was in tears hearing the stories of many students who came from single-parent families, whose parents struggled to put their children through college, and how much the celebration belonged to the graduates’ families as it did to the students who worked hard for their degrees. I remember standing next to my dad, watching my older sister with her P-Grad stole
on, and just being blown away by this profound cultural experience and awakening. I realized there was so much work to be done and the only reason I was successful in implementing a P-Grad at UC Riverside was because I had role models to follow: my sister, and a newly hired ethnic studies Filipina faculty, Dr. Steffi San Buenaventura. “Dr. Steffi” was due to teach the first-ever Filipino American studies class at UC Riverside. Students no longer had to rely on themselves to bring culturally relevant pedagogy to their higher education experience. Students had one faculty member they were able to connect to, and who looked like them.

The Filipino/a/x faculty at Skyline College, CCSF, and Southwestern College functioned like the beating heart of Filipino learning communities and student success programs. Filipino community college students were the lifeline, like the blood that ran through the veins, pumped the heart, and infused energy into it so it could have that heartbeat. The Filipina/o/x faculty at these three community colleges were positive role models who made it their life’s mission to saturate Filipino critical pedagogy daily into academic instruction and student life.

**Theme 4: Cultural Awakening and Sense of Belonging**

It was a full circle for students who experienced a Filipino learning community and student success program. Some students started off indifferent to their culture and identity, which was a major challenge coming into college. Other students felt like aliens in their own land, or felt they were never accepted into the United States. However, after being involved in a Filipino learning community and student success program, these students were left with a cultural awakening, and a sense of belonging and community, akin to being in a safe place they called home.

When Jonathan first joined the Kababayan at Skyline College during his 1st year in college, he was afraid of losing his identity:

> I was scared of losing my Filipino identity and culture. Kababayan was a gateway for me to regain the identity and fill the gap that was missing the past few years. I'm proud . . . I'm learning about my Filipino culture and at the same time, they are setting you up for your future. It's an experience to have gone through it and I'm very proud of it.

Erwin joined Bayan during his 1st year at Southwestern College. He recalled:
I felt very proud to be part of Bayan. Prior to being in Bayan, I really didn’t know about my Filipino culture history wise. After learning everything in class, I started to be connected to my culture. I felt even more connected to the Bayan Learning Community.

Trisha also shared the same experience and echoed the appreciation for Bayan, saying:

My 1st year in college . . . I didn’t really know anyone. Bayan gave me friends that I was really close to. It gave me a safe space, not as big as a university, but I was able to meet people I had classes with. We could hang out and we had class at the same time, and we got out of class at the same time. Bayan actually introduced me to a lot of good friends. I have friends whom I encouraged to join Bayan and now they wished they joined Bayan. They didn’t have a good first year. You get to feel like you belong somewhere.

For a student like Dahlia, Bayan provided an extended family they needed in college. They said:

You almost have that sense that you found your calling, you finally felt like you belonged somewhere. What I mean by this is no matter how many non-Filipino friends you have, whenever you are with friends in a learning community, you feel like you are home, and with those who are struggling with what it means to be Filipino, and to be proud of being Filipino . . . and it should be something near and dear to you.

Jason credited Tulay for assisting him at CCSF and was included in the community space of Tulay Filipino Student Success Program. He said:

It helped me . . . what helped me be part of Tulay was the community aspect. The first time I was in the place, it was pretty lively. People were talking freely. I’m more of a conservative person. I can go to the library and do my homework there, but at the end of the day, I chose to stay there at Tulay. It’s like a community. You’re not directly in there, but you are in the circle of sphere of Tulay.

Dean also felt a sense of belonging with Tulay and its community:

I think it’s pretty cool. You just feel a little more accepted and around similar people. It’s definitely unique and I wouldn’t have been successful if I didn’t have people around me to support me. It’s interactive. It makes the college experience a lot smoother. Outside of that, you make connections with other people, connections with SF State. A lot of people I’ve known in the community have ties to Tulay so we are rebuilding some old bridges.

When I listened to these students’ positive experiences and how they were impacted by the Filipino learning community and student success program, I felt sad and disappointed because at the moment this study took place, there was nothing like this at community colleges in the Los Angeles or Orange County areas. At the time of this study, my son was in high school and was 2 years away from attending college. Because my son has battled with cystic fibrosis his entire life, he would best thrive in a community college setting. I wish it was a community college that had a Filipino learning community or student success program to give him a culture-based, 1st-year experience, and sense
of belonging. This theme showed me that having a community that encourages further development of cultural, racial, and ethnic identity is critical to a student’s success and sense of belonging. In the Filipino culture, we call this sense of belonging *kapwa*, the space we share and the sense of connectedness with fellow Filipinos.

**Second Research Question**

Seven themes emerged from both the first research question and the second research question. These themes were identified as: (a) Wrestling with Filipino/a/x Identity, (b) Transitioning From High School to College, (c) Using Culturally Responsive Filipino Critical Pedagogy, (d) Cultural Awakening and Sense of Belonging, (e) Student Success and Support Services, (f) Financial Hardship for Filipino/a/x Community College Students, and (g) Balancing Filipino/a/x Identity with Home and College Environment in the COVID-19 Global Pandemic. In this section, I present the last three themes that emerged and further captured what Filipino students identified as successes and challenges at their community colleges. All themes had intersections with the second research question: What do Filipino students identify as their success and challenges at community colleges?

**Theme 5: Student Success and Support Services**

At the time of the interviews, two of the Filipino learning communities and student success programs —Kababayan and Tulay—had office and program space on their campuses. Bayan was slated to have a space alongside other affinity groups in a new student union, which will be built in the near future at Southwestern College.

**Physical Space on Campus**

At Tulay, having a physical space on campus was beneficial. Jason shared the services and programs that were offered to him and to other Tulay students at CCSF. He said:

In terms of services and programs Tulay offered, they have two counselors that were stationed there, scholarships that they offered, a meeting room that can be reserved for other folks, furniture, refrigerator, small store to sell snacks to fund things for our space, computer lab, and student ambassadors. You become more knowledgeable about Tulay and the outreach to different high schools. They are also connected with other retention centers with even more resources.

Darren expressed that being in a space with other peers was critical to his success. He commented:
Just being around students that are accessible and being comfortable with making community in that space . . . I didn’t realize that just talking to other students could help you succeed in school. I realized communicating and utilizing community can make you successful tenfold. Having people around you, to get you through, who have knowledge around you. Tulay had counseling, available internet, nine desktop computers around the perimeter of our space, and two study tables. And honestly, being around a group of friends every now and then helps a lot with homework . . . for success. Community is the biggest thing Tulay offers. We have this energy of family and productivity.

**Academic Support Services**

Bayan provided additional academic support for students both in and out of the classroom.

Erwin validated the feeling of being in a Filipino learning community and expanded on the support services provided for Bayan students that helped increase academic and personal success:

It was being in a class situation with people I could relate to. We all come from the same culture. I wasn’t trying to fit in, but I was already “in” so I was able to be comfortable and I didn’t have to read the room before I got settled. The community aspect of Bayan was similar to my experience growing up and it’s just home. Bayan provided tutoring after each class, every Tuesday and Thursday were power studies, and you could get together to work on assignments or to continue socializing after class.

Being in a community with peers who shared the same courses provided more confidence for Dahlia to trust others and work collaboratively and successfully in groups. They stated:

I found it really helpful in the Bayan learning community, the way the class comes together and works as a group. Even if sometimes we have in-class activities that allowed us to be in separate groups. Normally I don’t really like working in groups. But Bayan for some reason, helped me open up a little more and I was able to work with students in Bayan. This is what I found really helpful because most of the time when I worked in groups, it’s not just that I felt out of place, but I wanted to do all of the work by myself because some people don’t do their part in group projects. But with Bayan, it’s different. Everyone did their part. I was able to help everyone, and they helped me do my part.

**Access to Campus Resources**

Students from Skyline College were able to take advantage of resources on campus prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic and even during the pandemic as Marc shared:

Skyline College provided programs that were for financial aid, free food from SparkPoint, which I used during the pandemic, Disability Resource Center, but they have now changed their name to Educational Access Center.

Having a physical space on campus for Filipino/a/x community college students, where they could engage academically with peers and access student support services, was also critical to success. However, there were also challenges they identified as community college students. In this
section, I present two themes that emerged and the thick narratives of the challenges through the voices of the students.

**Theme 6: Financial Hardship for Filipino/a/x Community College Students**

From the group of 10 students who were interviewed, only two applied to one local, 4-year California State University prior to enrolling in community college. The other eight students mentioned the community college was their only option for their 1st year in college to get through the general education courses at a minimal cost. Two students attempted their first semester at CCSF and Skyline College through the Promise Program for free tuition, but for various reasons, did not finish with the program. Ryan, who used the pronouns he/him, was a recent Filipino immigrant and a Skyline College staff member first directed him to the Promise Program. He said:

> Mr. G introduced me to several resources at Skyline College. I was eligible for the Promise scholarship which was tuition free. But I was not a California resident yet. I had a meeting with the program coordinator. I think I have to pay the same amount of tuition for out-of-state students.

Christine’s parents wanted her to attend CCSF because of the Promise Program and free tuition, but her friends were at Skyline College, and she felt more connected to Kababayan. She attended one semester at CCSF and took 1 year off before enrolling at Skyline College with Kababayan and had a part-time job while attending Skyline College. Jonathan also held a part-time job while going to school at Skyline College. He shared:

> I only applied to Skyline. My coworkers told me, “Don’t go straight to a 4-year” and “Go to a community college.” Most of the people working there were in student debt. I would save a lot of money going to a community college. My parents told me, “Don’t ever go straight to a 4 year. There’s good debt and there’s bad debt.” I can take a break from college, but just don’t be in debt.

Jason, a Tulay student ambassador, had this to say about deciding to attend CCSF:

> My senior year of high school, I decided to apply to CCSF because of financial reasons. I was not able to get accepted to other colleges like SF State and I wanted to attend CCSF to save money and finish my GE.

Dean started initially at CCSF in 2015, and missed 2 semesters because he had two knee surgeries in the span of 2 years. He shared:
Aside from my knee surgeries, it was being able to afford resources and finding the will to want to stay and be there. I just felt like I was a student paying money to stay in class. But when you have a community, you’re not just a student that is alone. Tulay definitely helped me in school and had tutors there to help. People made it easier to stay and come back.

Dean’s younger brother, Darren, attended CCSF as a full-time student, but worked two part-time jobs on the side. Because Darren was balancing two jobs and full-time school, it was more challenging for him to hang out at the Tulay program office with other peers because of time constraints.

What stood out to me from this theme was the perception these students had of higher education because they were caught in between the educational experiences their parents had in the Philippines and what it meant to have a U.S. education. Although there was obvious familial responsibility with expectations their parents placed on them, there was a misunderstanding of the path to attaining a college degree and challenges in paying for tuition. The financial hardship these students and their families experienced drove the decision to choose only the community college as a route to higher education. The theme also reminded me of a core Filipino cultural value of utang ng loob, which means “a debt of gratitude.” Filipino children are expected to respectfully follow what parents ask them to do because of the many sacrifices that parents made for their children. Although there might be a desire to be completely independent, the U.S. value of independence clashes with the Filipino cultural value of utang ng loob because a Filipino student’s decisions always has a direct effect on their family.

**Theme 7: Balancing Filipino/a/x Identity with Home and College Environment in the COVID-19 Global Pandemic**

The student participants in this study, along with students who were in the virtual events and spaces I observed, spoke in length about the various challenges of balancing their cultural identities with home and college. These challenges were even more heightened in the middle of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Christine spoke of this balance when she attended both CCSF and Skyline College, saying: "It was hard balancing my personal life and balancing that with school. I felt overwhelmed with schoolwork at CCSF. At Skyline, I was working an outside job and trying to balance things outside of
school with school assignments." When I asked Christine a follow-up question to learn if it would have helped to have an on-campus job, she replied with a resounding, “Yes!” Marc was also a Kababayan student at Skyline College and shared similar sentiments of balancing school in the middle of the pandemic. He said:

One of my biggest challenges was prioritizing during my 1st year in college. I would get insecure about what I am going to write about. I would write big chunks of text and I would see my classmates only had small chunks of text. Statistics was challenging, especially during online learning. But when I got my report card, I was able to pass my classes. With online learning, the pandemic has made it harder, what is given in class . . . I can communicate better in person than on email.

Ryan, another Filipino student at Skyline College, expressed if there was anything he could change about his experience at Skyline College, it would be not having to deal with the COVID-19 global pandemic, as he said he was more comfortable being on campus. Jason, a Tulay student ambassador from CCSF, balanced all these challenges. He conveyed:

Something that is a challenge to this day is balancing Tulay, school stuff, and family. I’m still living in my grandparent’s home with my family. We are still struggling in San Francisco because the cost of living is very high. My mom would push her experiences onto me. It’s kind of hard really . . . and having my own space in this situation. Only when my parents are at work, I get my space. My mom came to the U.S. in 1999 because her family made the choice to move to the U.S. She left me during my infant years up until I was 3 years old in the Philippines so she could go to the U.S. first. She was there for me for a bit of my life. She is very religious. I am religious, but it’s a tough thing to have. On one hand, it’s a religion that is a big thing in her province. She is imposing a lot of her ideologies on me, and I can’t speak up. It’s a hard situation to deal with but I guess it’s a part of life.

The COVID-19 global pandemic was an adjustment for all students, as they lost access to campus connections in person and resources that were readily available every day. Like most colleges, Southwestern College, Skyline College, and CCSF transitioned their entire campus to a virtual format with faculty, staff, and managers who worked remotely. Bayan, Kababayan, and Tulay took the opportunity to partner and collaborate with each other. Though the COVID-19 global pandemic presented a huge, initial challenge for all students with virtual learning and connecting to others online, Bayan, Kababayan, and Tulay turned these challenges into success by creating dynamic virtual events and workshops for students.
I had the opportunity to be a participant observer of the virtual events each Filipino learning community and student success program led as a statewide collaboration with other California community colleges. The events were all held virtually through Zoom and were titled “Tara Na!” Tara Na means “Let’s go!” and was a term Kababayan coined for their student-led events. Each of the colleges led a special Tara Na event, which was open to other community colleges in California and each event had up to 30 students, faculty, staff, and administrators who participated. These virtual events gave Filipino students an additional platform and space to discuss heavy topics weighing on them during the pandemic (e.g., challenges of learning online, recent anti-Asian violence, natural disasters taking place in the Philippines).

**Significant Findings**

In this qualitative study, a significant finding emerged from in-depth interviews with two students who presented particular challenges as first-generation and 1.5-generation Filipinos. Jonathan identified as a 1.5-generation Filipino and shared he spent more time living in the United States—a total of 11 years—than he did in the Philippines. He shared:

> Being a Filipino is all about positivity, even if you are going through obstacles. My parents were very strict. My dad was in the U.S. before my family came and my mom raised me in the Philippines on her own . . . my brother and I. I kinda matured as a 19 year old. Mentally, this is a challenge for myself. I beat myself up, but I see it as only a small part of my life. If I worry about it too much, it will haunt me in the future. I have to learn from my mistakes.

Jason identified as a first-generation Filipino who immigrated from the Philippines to the United States in 2006 and had an extremely difficult time adjusting to U.S. life. He candidly shared the effects of immigration and assimilation:

> One of the challenges I faced was looking for Filipino people. When I was in public school, it was a different experience. There are many people from different backgrounds. Public school wasn’t as bad as private school. Private school in seventh and eighth grade was worse. They were all Filipinos but even then, I felt like I didn’t belong. It was a combination of being unfamiliar with your own surrounding and even your expectations of peers. I guess in terms of being Filipino, I was teased in a way . . . in terms of what I would wear. Filipino Americans that I met in high school would tease me in terms of my clothing. Most of the private schools had families that were well off. It’s kind of hard to say. Even to this day, financially . . . this is something I still struggle with. I got bullied in public school. But it hit me more when I transferred to a private middle school.
Ryan was a first-generation Filipino student enrolled in Kababayan at Skyline College. Ryan shared his experience before attending Skyline College:

I am a FOB . . . fresh off the boat. I immigrated from the Philippines to the U.S. on December 27, 2018. I was looking forward to college in the Philippines. I was a state university scholar for the University of the Philippines because of my high GPA and I didn’t have to pay tuition. In 2016 or 2017, I had to skip school to finish documents that the immigration lawyer was asking for. I thought this process would take longer and I ended up immigrating to the U.S. by surprise when I was 3 months from graduating from high school in the Philippines. In the Philippines, Filipinos have American first names and Spanish last names because we have been colonized by the Spanish, the U.S., and the Japanese. Being Filipino is being southeast Asian, a nation touched by Christianity due to Spanish influences. There is the colonial mentality . . . when I came here to the U.S., I no longer felt as Filipino, but as an immigrant. I was not on my own land.

Although Ryan ultimately found an extended home with Kababayan, he also expressed his challenges with socializing and communicating with other Filipino American peers, saying:

When it comes to language and communication, it helps to have another Filipino who speaks the [Tagalog] language more frequently. I am more confident in writing than I am in speaking. I am not eloquent with the English language. I don’t know if I said it correctly. I approach people here the same way that I approach people in the Philippines. I don’t know if I am being too fresh or too creepy.

Ryan gave a more descriptive example of what he meant: “If I say, ‘Some Filipino parents get fat,’ I should have said, ‘Some Filipino parents gain weight.’ I need to work on that.” Ryan further expressed the struggle of connecting with second- or third-generation Filipino Americans, saying:

The education system here is the Western perspective of Filipino Americans. There are some experiences . . . I can’t relate to them [Filipino Americans] and there are some they can’t relate to me, because I know they won’t really understand it. I see Filipino American and Filipino identity as similar, but not identical.

During my virtual, one-on-one interviews with Jason and Ryan, I felt an overwhelming sense of sadness when they shared the struggles and feelings of isolation from their immigration experiences. It hurt them more to have fellow Filipino American peers alienate them and discriminate against them for language barriers, choice in clothing, or communication style. Jason and Ryan’s experiences brought up a deeper issue of being marginalized in your own Filipino community when there are generational differences of being first-, 1.5-, second-, and third-generation Filipino.
This theme highlighted the larger struggles in each of the generational experiences for Filipino/a/x college students. No matter which generation a student identified with, there was still a common feeling of not being Filipino enough or confusion about what it meant to be Filipino as first, 1.5, second, or third generation. My daughter was often teased in high school by her Filipino peers who were first generation and would comment, “Oh, you are so third gen!” and made her feel like she was not Filipino enough because of the perception that she was “too Americanized.” When I was the advisor for Tambayan, a Filipino student club at Mt. San Antonio College, first-generation Filipino students did not take me seriously as an advisor because I could not speak the Tagalog language fluently and I was also perceived as too Americanized. Only the students who were Filipino American felt comfortable with me because we had a shared experience of being born and raised in the United States. This significant finding speaks to what Ryan said about Filipino and Filipino American identities being similar, but not identical.

Chapter Summary

The objective of this research study was to explore how Filipino community college students experienced a Filipino learning community or student success program. Some of the major findings of the study were the following: Filipino/a/x students wrestled with their Filipino identities, felt like aliens on their own land, and experienced microaggressions; Filipino community college students struggled financially; and tried hard to balance their Filipino/a/x identities with home life and the college environment all at once. The most significant finding was profound for first generation or 1.5 generation Filipinos who emigrated from the Philippines to the United States and experienced severe challenges with acculturation. These students needed extra support to help them navigate through the culture shock and cultural barriers they experienced. These students also experienced the most financial hardship.

However, it was clear that participation in a Filipino learning community or student success program with culturally relevant pedagogy and culture-based activities and events was key to the success of all 10 students interviewed. These Filipino learning community or student success
programs also expanded their on-campus services to virtual events and services during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Because of the collaboration that Bayan, Kababayan, and Tulay had with each other, students learned how to plant roots in the ground, cultivate those roots, and toil the land so they could bloom and thrive.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

This qualitative study centered on how Filipino community college students in California experienced a culture-based Filipino learning community or student success program. The purpose of this study was to contribute to the knowledge base by exploring the lived experiences of Filipino and Filipino American community college students enrolled in a Filipino learning community or student success program while identifying the specific needs and barriers that exist for this marginalized student population and highlighting the successes and challenges of Filipino community college students. The methodology of the study was qualitative, with a rapid and critical ethnographic approach that allowed to me engage firsthand in seeing and experiencing a culture and phenomenon in action of the Bayan Learning Community at Southwestern College, the Kababayan Learning Community at Skyline College, and the Tulay Filipino Student Success Program at City College of San Francisco. Data were collected through participant observation of virtual events and activities, documents and artifacts, and in-depth interviews with 10 Filipino/a/x student participants who finished 1 academic year (fall and spring semester) in a Filipino learning community or student success program. I analyzed the data for themes that aligned with the concepts of multicultural curricula (Jehangir, 2009), the internal claiming of ethnic identity development and consciousness (Johnston-Guerrero, 2016), and contesting the model minority stereotype (Liu, 2009).

In this qualitative study, the use of Filipino critical pedagogy (FilCrit; Viola, 2014) allowed for advancing the curricula of the Filipino learning communities and student success programs. FilCrit gave Filipino/a/x community college students an opportunity to deconstruct, discuss, and use cultural dialogue and critical reflection to understand and create their own truth. The major findings of the study were: (a) Filipino/a/x students wrestle with their Filipino identities, feeling like aliens in their own land, and experiencing microaggressions; (b) Filipino learning communities and student success programs are able to establish a direct pipeline to local feeder schools to successfully transition Filipino/a/x students from high school to college; (c) the need for, and the use of, culturally responsive
FilCrit pedagogy by Filipino/a/x faculty into the academic courses that are part of the Filipino learning communities and student success programs; (d) access to student success and support services through a physical space on campus for the Filipino learning community and student success program; (e) Filipino/a/x community college students struggle financially, often working one or more part-time jobs while attending college, and community college was their only option for higher education; (f) Filipino/a/x community college students also struggle with balancing their Filipino identities with home and the college environment during the COVID-19 global pandemic; and (g) Filipino/a/x students experience positive educational outcomes as a result of being awakened to a new cultural consciousness and sense of belonging by being part of a Filipino learning community or student success program.

This chapter provides a discussion and analysis of findings. The chapter begins with a summary of findings, followed by a section on interpretations and implications, and limitations and delimitations of findings. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future practice and research.

**Summary of Findings**

The findings of this qualitative study address two research questions:

1. How do Filipino community college students experience a culture-based Filipino learning community or student success program?

2. What do Filipino students identify as their success and challenges at community colleges?

The findings of this study are based on how Filipino students experience a Filipino learning community or a Filipino student success program, along with the success and challenges they identified as Filipino community college students. The findings were gathered from 10 in-depth student interviews, participant observation of virtual events or workshops, and analysis of documents or artifacts from Southwestern College, Skyline College, and City College of San Francisco. The first major findings from this qualitative study fall under challenges and barriers that Filipino community college students experienced.
Filipino/a/x community college students wrestled with their ethnic and racial identities and experienced microaggressions growing up during their formative years, their teen years in middle school and high school, and as young adults. They were left with an identity crisis they grappled with, attempting to balance two different cultures and what it meant to be Filipino and American at the same time. Secondly, it was clear that Filipino/a/x students struggled financially, and the cultural values of their families and financial needs informed their decision to attend a community college. For most of the student participants interviewed, the community college route was the only option for them in attending college to save money on tuition. Lastly, Filipino/a/x students also had challenges with balancing their ethnic and racial identities with home life and the college environment all at once, especially in the COVID-19 global pandemic. Managing college coursework with the expectations of family and home life, working part-time jobs, and navigating through the pandemic were barriers to the success of Filipino/a/x community college students.

The second set of findings of this qualitative study focused on the success of Filipino/a/x community college students who participated in a Filipino learning community or student success program. Success began primarily with the successful outreach to local, feeder high schools, through which a pipeline was established to transition Filipino/a/x students to a Filipino learning community or student success program. Prospective or incoming students attended a new student orientation at their community college and were able to identify and connect with Filipinx faculty who looked like them. When these students were part of the Filipino learning community or student success program at their community college, their courses were permeated with culturally responsive FilCrit pedagogy. The faculty were able to implement cultural dialogue and critical reflection into English, ethnic studies, and counseling courses and complemented learning in the classroom with out-of-the-classroom cultural events and activities. Having a physical space on campus with access to staff and resources for the Filipino learning communities and student success programs was critical to the students' success and ability to build community with peers and mentors at their campuses. Finally, the last major finding showed a cultural awakening and sense of belonging that Filipino/a/x community
college students experienced by being part of a Filipino learning community or student success program.

A significant finding came through from in-depth interviews with two Filipino community college students who identified as first-generation Filipino and 1.5 generation Filipino. There were profound challenges, barriers, and trauma that these first-generation and 1.5 generation Filipino/a/x students experienced as immigrants to the United States. These students needed additional support to help them navigate through college and the entire U.S. higher education system as they balanced and straddled two cultures.

**Interpretations**

In this section, I present interpretations for each of the major findings of this qualitative study. I highlight the strengths and limitations of each finding and draw connections to my literature review, noting the similarities and differences to other studies.

**The Filipino Identity Crisis**

Of all findings from this qualitative study, this is by far the most important finding: Filipino/a/x community college students grapple with their Filipino/a/x identities for a long time. It is not just in their formative years or in their teens. It is a running thread throughout their entire lives leading up to their college experience. This finding also intersects with every other finding in this qualitative study and is significant for a number of reasons. Filipino/a/x community college students have felt invisible, forgotten, or feel like an “alien in their own land.” They also feel ashamed to be Filipino, are confused by their racial and ethnic identity, and experience racial microaggressions for being Filipino. Nadal et al. (2012) defined racial microaggressions as “subtle forms of verbal and behavioral discrimination towards people of color” (p. 156). Filipino/a/x community college students are also in a constant flux of balancing two cultures—Filipino and American—resulting in a confusing set of ideals, values, and expectations for first, 1.5, second, and third generations. David and Nadal (2013) addressed the constant balancing of cultures in their study on the psychological experiences of Filipino American immigrants, highlighting that years of colonialism have shaped generations of Filipinos and their
experiences in a myriad of ways. This colonial mentality begins for Filipino immigrants in their home country although there is an assumption that when immigrants move to the United States, the acculturative stress such as racism starts the moment they are on U.S. soil (David & Nadal, 2013). This study showed colonial mentality is a pervasive, generational affliction that affects all Filipino community college students, no matter which generation they identify with.

Moreover, I remember Erwin, a Bayan student from Southwestern College who participated in this qualitative study. Erwin felt ashamed to be Filipino and noted how his teachers pointed out his features, such as his big eyes that did not look like typical Asian features, these statements were racial microaggressions. He did not know where he fit in and he shared, “I wasn’t White enough yet not Brown enough to fit in with my other peers. Where do I fit in? I know I’m not White.” Nadal et al. (2012) emphasized Asian Americans have diverse physical appearances with variations in skin color, hair texture, and facial features such as small, almond eyes to large, oval eyes. Erwin experienced another blatant microaggression from someone who told him, “Filipinos just want to be Asian, but they are not really Asian.” Erwin’s response to me during our in-depth interview was, “Even if the Philippines is literally in Asia.” The experience of racial microaggressions that Erwin experienced aligns once again with the study by Nadal et al. on the various, diverse physical appearances among Asians, which led to exclusion from the Asian American community, use of racist language, mistaken identity, and being treated like a second-class citizen.

I also remember Christine, who was a Kababayan student from Skyline College and had an unfortunate encounter with a White woman at the Museum of Ice Cream in San Francisco. Christine’s parents were holding a spot in line for both Christine and her cousin. When a young White boy complained to his mom that they cut in line, this boy’s mother comforted her son and said it was okay if Christine and her family cut in line because “they are foreigners.” Christine expressed in the interview, “As if Filipinos don’t have manners.” However, what was more striking for me was the microaggression and racist assumption that because they were Filipino, they were automatically labeled as “foreigners.” Leonardo and Matias (2013) reminded us that no matter how individuals
define themselves as Pilipinos or Filipinos, they are confused by what is considered authentically Filipino. Christine was a second-generation Filipina American, which means she was born and raised in the United States. Christine was far from being a foreigner as she was a U.S. citizen, but she was made to feel that she was an alien in her own land, a second-class citizen, that there was something wrong with her Filipino culture, and experienced the use of racist language.

Future studies should include a quantitative study that contains survey data from Filipino community college students at all 115 California community colleges. The quantitative survey should include a series of survey questions that are specific to the Filipino American experience. Although this finding emerged from a group of 10 Filipino community college students, it broadens the perspective on the experience of Filipino/a/x community college students.

Financial Hardship for Filipino/a/x Community College Students

The second finding is financial hardship for Filipino/a/x community college students posed a major challenge for many of these students and their families. All 10 study participants who were interviewed had only one option when graduating from high school, the community college. Two participants applied to one other California State University close to them, but emphasized that the community college was their first choice because of the money they would save on tuition. One student needed additional guidance on how to fill out the California State University application because it was incomplete, and as a result he was not accepted to San Francisco State. One Filipino American student from Skyline College was given strict advice from his parents to not attend a 4-year university and go into student debt, but to finish his general education requirements at a community college because it was much more affordable. Two more students depended on the Promise Program and its tuition-free scholarship at Skyline College to create a pathway to college. It was clear to me that each of these students’ decisions to attend their local community college was a collective decision made with their families. They did not mention having an array of colleges and universities to choose from. The community college was simply the only option. Half the student participants who
were interviewed struggled financially before coming to college and needed to work part-time jobs to assist their families and pay for college.

Although this finding is from one in-depth interview question, more qualitative data was gathered from other interview questions in this study that showed finances were a major reason why these Filipino/a/x students attended a community college. However, a strength of this finding is that it aligns to the historical framework in my literature review from Surla and Poon's (2015) qualitative study, which showed developing an aspiration for college among Filipino Americans and Southwest Asian American students was not an individual choice, but a collective decision and one that was in the best interest of the entire family.

**Balancing Filipino/a/x Identity with Home and College Environment**

The next finding articulates the challenges that Filipino/a/x students have in balancing their cultural, racial, and ethnic identities with home and college. Because this study took place in the middle of the COVID-19 global pandemic, this heightened the challenges even more. In my participant observation with the Tulay Filipino Student Success Program, they invited me to a workshop presented by their student ambassadors. There was a lot of discussion on how the pandemic magnified the stress of finances, living conditions, mental health, social justice issues, and ultimately, how relationships were compromised. These students were under a severe amount of stress because of the pandemic, and when factoring in virtual learning—whether it was synchronous or asynchronous—students were having a hard time balancing all these challenges together. One student was truthful and shared, “Who has the luxury to care for mental health? Therapy is hella expensive at $150 per hour. Do you have the luxury to practice self-care if you are middle class or lower class?” Another student shared that his anxiety was high and he felt his home life was a “judgmental area.” He spoke candidly and said, “I am going through some stuff right now with family and I am in a different space right now.” This student also mentioned depression and being “stuck in a room.”
My findings advance the struggles that Filipino/a/x community college students face as they balanced cultural identities with home life and college in a global pandemic. This finding also aligns with my philosophical foundation on the importance and need for critical pedagogy (Freire, 1972). Freire (1972) believed education was dialogue between teacher and student. At this Tulay workshop, the student ambassadors were the presenters, with the support and guidance of a program manager and counselor present in this virtual space. The program manager and counselor were able to take the students through the process of dialogue with the required love, humility, trust, hope, faith, vulnerability, and critical thinking so they could examine each other’s views and set their intentions on the new knowledge attained (Beckett, 2013; Shih, 2018).

**Transition from High School to College**

One finding that was a success for Filipino/a/x community college students was the intentional outreach and pipeline established to transition them from high school to college. Kababayan Learning Community had a successful afterschool, dual enrollment program called the Kapatiran Program. This program featured a Filipino American ethnic studies class that provided units that were transferrable and was offered to local feeder schools. The classes were taught by Filipino/a/x staff from Skyline College and at the same time, provided a direct outreach opportunity and pipeline to interested students to be excited for what was waiting for them at Skyline College’s Kababayan Learning Community. Four students from Skyline College were interviewed as part of this study and all of them were enrolled in the Kababayan Learning Community during their first year in college as a direct result from their high school participation in the Kapatiran Program.

Tulay, in tandem with the Philippines Studies department worked closely with Pin@y Educational Partnerships (PEP), founded by Dr. Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales in 2001 (Tintiangco-Cubales 2013). PEP started as a pilot mentorship program in which students from the San Francisco State University outreached to Filipino/a/x students at Balboa High School in the Excelsior neighborhood during lunchtime to gather assessment on their personal and academic needs (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2013). PEP soon offered workshops on Filipino American history and culture,
and PEP faculty created a partnership with the high school administration and officially began courses on the Filipino American experience in the spring of 2002 (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2013). PEP is now a successful educational pipeline for Filipino/a/x students and provides dual enrollment, credit courses on Filipina/o American studies, and ethnic studies courses at various P–12 schools and City College of San Francisco. The strength of this finding is directly connected to my theoretical foundation in embedding culturally responsive pedagogy derived from ethnic studies and critical race theory (CRT), intersected with racial and ethnic development theory (Johnston-Guerrero, 2015) and Filipino critical theory (FilCrit; Viola, 2014), to critically examine the educational experiences of Filipino community college students.

**Use of Culturally Responsive Filipino Critical Pedagogy**

All three community colleges in this qualitative study embedded FilCrit at the heart of their Filipino learning communities and student success programs. The Filipino learning communities at Skyline College and Southwestern College linked courses in English, counseling, and ethnic studies. FilCrit was at the core of their pedagogy, because it highlighted the Filipino American experience in these courses, whether it was composition course that taught students how to recognize and critically evaluate ideas in short and long book length texts, a counseling class that taught students how to navigate through college while integrating personal growth, or an ethnic studies survey course that focused on the history of the Philippines and the history of Filipinos in the United States. The Philippines Studies department at City College of San Francisco was naturally connected to Tulay. City College of San Francisco is the only community college in the nation that has a longstanding Philippine Studies department and was established alongside African American Studies department in 1970 (The Action Network, n.d.). The Philippines Studies department offers the following courses: The Filipino Family, Philippine Society and Culture through Film, Contemporary Issues in the Filipino Diaspora, and Introduction to Philippine Arts (City College of San Francisco, 2021).

This finding is significant for a number of reasons: (a) students are successful and feel connected to Filipino/a/x faculty at community colleges, and they are able to identify with someone
who looks like them; (b) students have academic support in courses centered on Filipino culture, history, and current issues with an ethnic studies framework; (c) students are exposed to culture-based events and activities that are an extension of the curriculum learned in class and that highlight Filipino history and culture; and (d) students are able to engage in critical reflection and dialogue, applying this new knowledge to social justice movements such as Black Lives Matter, anti-Asian violence, and human rights issues in the Philippines. This finding aligns with studies conducted on the impact of learning communities and how involvement in learning communities is positively linked to student success, retention, and increased engagement in cocurricular activities (Barnes & Piland, 2010; Jehangir, 2009). Students who participated in learning communities had greater access to faculty–student interaction, thereby, promoting student retention (Adkison, 2011; Barnes & Piland, 2010; Beachboard et al., 2009). These relationships with faculty and peers further enhanced their learning and persistence efforts. This finding also further aligns with a Jehangir (2009) qualitative study on 1st-year, first-generation college students who enrolled in a multicultural learning community and were invited into scholarly dialogue to challenge the powers in education and invited to give their student voices on race, class, gender, and personal experiences. My study advances the FilCrit pedagogy Viola (2012) coined and positions Freire’s (1972) philosophical framework by using culturally relevant tools and culturally responsive pedagogy in Filipino learning communities and student success programs to further empower and transform the educational experience for Filipino/a/x community college students. The students and their cultural identity and experience are at the center of these Filipino learning communities and student success programs. The educational outcomes of Filipino/a/x students are a direct result of culturally responsive pedagogy, such as FilCrit, that allows students to critically examine and challenge dominant ideologies in higher education.

This study differed from Huerta and Bray’s (2013) quantitative study on Latinx students who were involved in a learning community that featured collaborative learning and positively impacted their GPA from the meaningful connections developed. Moreover, my study was a qualitative study that shows a snapshot of Filipino learning communities and student success programs. Future
studies should look at quantitative data that shows the success rates of Filipino community college students enrolled in a Filipino learning community or student success program.

**Access to Student Support Services**

Having an academic space or program space on campus with available faculty and staff for Filipino students in Bayan, Kababayan Learning Community and Tulay positively contributed to each students’ connection to the campus community and generated successful educational outcomes. One should remember two Tulay students who shared that having a designated space on campus was critical to their academic success. Darren shared being in community with other students helped him succeed in school and said, “I realized that communicating and utilizing community can make you successful tenfold. Having people around you, to get you through, who have knowledge around you.” Because the Tulay space had two dedicated counselors that students had access to and resources such as desktop computers, internet and study tables, students such as Darren were motivated to persist academically. Jason was another student ambassador who worked at Tulay and stated that being in a building on campus that also housed other cultural retention centers provided additional resources and support for students.

At the time of my study, Bayan did not have a dedicated program space. However, they were slated to be in a new student union at Southwestern College with other affinity groups. Even without the physical program space on campus, Bayan created an inclusive environment and continued fellowship with students through study groups and tutoring sessions after the English or counseling classes. The experience Dahlia and Erwin shared as Bayan students affirms the importance of building community and a second home; thereby, increasing academic and personal success. Erwin said it was helpful to be in a class situation with peers he could relate to because they came from the same culture, “The community aspect of Bayan was similar to my experience growing up and it’s just home.” Dahlia shared that it was different with Bayan when working collaboratively in groups, saying “Everyone did their part. I was able to help everyone, and they helped me do my part.” Bayan helped Dahlia become more trusting of others and opened them up to new experiences with peers.
My finding shows academic integration was positive for Filipino/a/x community college students and aligns with research by Orsuwan and Cole (2007), who conducted a quantitative study on interactions between race and ethnicity and household income and parental education, with academic integration as the dependent variable. Their findings demonstrated academic integration had a pronounced effect on the satisfaction of Filipino students more than any other racial group, but Filipino students experienced a decrease in educational satisfaction when household income was in the medium-to-low-socioeconomic group (Orsuwan & Cole, 2007). Future studies should look closely at how the integrations of race and ethnicity into the college experience encourages Filipino community college students to work toward higher aspirations and higher academic integration.

**Cultural Awakening and Kapwa (Unity of Self or Sense of Connectedness)**

Findings show Filipino/a/x community college students who are involved in a Filipino learning community or student success program experience a cultural awakening, or kapwa. In the indigenous Filipino culture, kapwa is a sense of connectedness to others, shared community space, and shared identity (Tomaneng, 2015). Findings show that no matter which generation Filipino/a/x community college students were a part of—whether first, 1.5, second, or third generation—there was an identity crisis. This identity crisis manifests itself as an indifference to the Filipino culture, shame associated with being Filipino, a feeling of being an alien in one’s own land, or experiencing microaggressions that show Filipino/a/x students they do not belong and are not accepted.

Jonathan, a 1.5-generation Filipino student from Skyline College, was afraid of losing his Filipino identity and culture and shared, “Kababayan was a gateway for me to regain the identity and fill the gap that was missing the past few years.” At the end of Jonathan’s first year enrolled in Kababayan Learning Community, he was left with a sense of pride for the Filipino culture and shared, “I’m learning about my Filipino culture and at the same time, they are setting you for your future. It’s an experience to have gone through it and I’m very proud of it.” Erwin shared the same sentiments as a student at Southwestern College, “I felt very proud to be part of Bayan. Prior to being in Bayan, I really didn’t know about my Filipino culture, history wise. After learning everything in class, I started to
be connected to my culture. I felt even more connected to the Bayan Learning Community.” Erwin also shared his experience of being profoundly awakened after learning about the history of Filipino Americans and the invisibility of Filipinos, saying, “I think they could have more Filipino American-centered events because I know they [Southwestern College] do that a lot for Puente and other learning communities. They could have some informational events, or have any Filipino American students share history and stuff. There is a Cesar Chavez building at Southwestern College . . . there could be some part of the building or informational space where they could talk about Larry Itliong, who actually started the farm labor movement.”

Similarly, my findings add depth to Nadal’s (2010) study on Filipino Americans, who were not exempt from struggling with identity issues and had a shared experience with other students of color. Nadal’s study on students’ assimilation showed that in an attempt to dismiss their Filipino selves by conforming to the dominant culture, they may have identified more with a pan-ethnic Asian American identity or may have steered away from it and felt even more isolated. Other students may have developed an ethnocentric Filipino identity, choosing to associate with peers who had the same shared experience and placing importance on Filipino American communities and culture (Nadal, 2010). My finding is also aligned with Tomaneng’s (2015) work at De Anza College when she implemented the Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) initiative in 2008. Tomaneng found Filipino youth suffer from double consciousness and negotiated their ethnic and cultural identities both in and out of their educational environments.

As Filipino/a/x community college students enter their first year in college, as part of a Filipino learning community or student success program, they realize the importance of affirming their Filipino/a/x and Filipino/a/x American identities. They find a second home at their community college forge a stronger sense of identity, a sense of belonging, and kapwa.

**Significant Findings: Filipino Immigrants**

The most significant findings from this qualitative study are the stark differences between first-, 1.5-, second, and third-generation Filipino community college students. Although first-generation
Filipinos have a very acute experience and knowledge of living in the Philippines and mastering the English language, these students struggled heavily with culture shock and trying to navigate through a different educational system in the United States. This finding aligns with Carnacho’s (2020) study on first-generation Filipino students who were not fully prepared for college because their parents did not receive their degrees in the United States, but in the Philippines; yet, there was an expectation for their children to navigate the college choice process on their own and at the same time, make a collective decision that took the entire family into account.

Future studies should look at the following: (a) the immigration experiences into higher education for first-generation and 1.5-generation Filipino college students; (b) the trauma of immigrating to the United States, as two of the Filipino students I interviewed indicated they did not have a choice in immigrating; and (c) students who are immigrants but do not fit in the category of receiving F-1 international student services. These students are similar to international students and need onboarding to life and college in the United States.

Support can be provided to first-generation Filipino community college students through English language fluency courses. The literature review for this study demonstrated that AANAPISIs are critical to educating Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) students because immigrants and students who face challenges in developmental education and English language fluency shape AANAPISI enrollment patterns (Alcantar et al., 2019). A significant number of AAPI students who are enrolled at AANAPISIs are from low-income backgrounds and have competing familial and financial responsibilities (Alcantar et al., 2019). This Alcantar et al. (2019) finding aligns with the significant findings in my qualitative study on the profound financial, familial, psychological, and cultural challenges first- and 1.5-generation Filipino students experienced.

Implications

In this section, I present the implications and further extend the interpretations for the major findings of this qualitative study. I include steps for action in terms of policy, practice, and theory, and draw connections to my literature review. Finally, I discuss the findings and their implications for
administrators’ leadership in the community college system, and how these findings and implications could be useful for other community college practitioners.

Implications for Policy

Based on the major findings of this qualitative study, the following may be important for educational policy at California community colleges: (a) continued disaggregation of data on Filipino students from the Asian category, (b) continued collection of data on Filipinos that are part disproportionately impacted groups, and (c) statewide partnering across the California Community College system to share data on Filipino learning communities and Filipino student success programs. These actions would continue to debunk the harmful effects of the model minority myth for Filipino community college students and reduce equity gaps through faster improvements among traditionally underrepresented student groups such as Filipinos.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this qualitative study suggest Filipino community college students struggle with their racial and ethnic identity and family cultural values, are confronted with financial problems, and struggle with balancing familial responsibility with the college environment and managing mental wellness during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Filipino community college students need student-directed recruitment and retention programs and intentional student success programs to assist them. One example of this implication and how it can inform educational practice in the community colleges is having financial aid workshops for parents and their children with representatives that speak fluent Tagalog and can answer questions that parents may have. Filipino students can rely on the information on financial aid to help communicate to their parents that higher education can be pursued and achieved even if they are considered to have low socioeconomic status. Bayan at Southwestern College hosted a parent orientation for all parents of new Bayan students at the beginning of every fall semester. An onboarding orientation for parents and students was helpful in showing Filipino families how to help support their students in college. The orientation created a comfort level for first-generation students and their parents, as well as parents of second-generation
Filipino students. Secondly, there should be intentional hiring of Filipino/a/x faculty, staff, and administrators for California community colleges who have a high percentage of Filipino/a/x students. Lastly, administrators and instructional deans should continuously gather data to determine whether Filipino students fall under disproportionately impacted groups displayed statewide on the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s website. This ensures that Student Equity and Achievement funds are distributed to close equity gaps for Filipino community college students.

**Implications for Theory**

FilCrit, an avenue for Filipino American activists to rise up and create culturally relevant forms of knowledge (Viola, 2014), is the main theoretical framework for this qualitative study. This activism is manifested in contesting the unjust social relations in the United States for Filipinos and the resistance of U.S. neocolonialism in the Philippines (Viola, 2014). FilCrit focuses on ways to educate, intervene, and challenge the asymmetrical power relations between the United States and the Philippines (Viola, 2014). Although Viola’s (2012) advancement of FilCrit was still in its early stages in 2012, I used it as a theoretical framework for this study of Filipino learning communities and student success programs. FilCrit works as a pedagogy that is no longer in its early stages because it adds to the concept of Freire’s critical pedagogy and expands and recreates it to place Filipino American history at the center of the curriculum. It is also a theory that broadened ethnic studies frameworks by teaching Filipino American studies courses, contributing to a deeper consciousness of the Filipino American diaspora.

**Implications for Future Research**

Given the major findings of this qualitative study on Filipino learning communities and student success programs, this study is the beginning for more in-depth research on Filipino community college students and their student success outcomes. Educational practitioners can further study educational outcomes for Filipino/a/x community college students through both quantitative and qualitative research studies to measure and assess how Filipinos are doing in higher education. Specifically, these studies can measure how Filipinos are performing in community colleges at the
associate degree level, or study individual Filipino learning communities and student success programs as case studies. The findings of this study are important for future research because they present a more accurate story and reality of how Filipino community college students navigate through college and indicate the specific academic and student support services needed. Filipino cultural values and diaspora should be shared with community college practitioners, especially faculty who can teach courses with FilCrit pedagogy and administrators who can help advance critical programs such as Filipino learning communities and student success programs that positively contribute to Filipino students’ educational outcomes.

**Limitations and Delimitations of Findings**

As first stated in Chapter 1, the study is delimited to three community colleges in California that had a Filipino learning community or student success program. The boundaries were set to facilitate study of the three colleges simultaneously, using the ethnographic cultural lens to study these students’ lived experiences and how they interpreted their environment and understanding of their cultural identity within the scope of the Filipino learning communities and student success programs. I did not choose to study just one of the colleges that had this unique program but included three community colleges, as it was important to see the common threads and intersections they shared.

One of the major limitations of this study and its findings is the COVID-19 global pandemic, as I had originally planned to conduct in-person focus groups at each of the campuses. Because all community colleges closed down and began to operate remotely and virtually, this research study became a rapid ethnography with a timeline of 1–2 months of data collection. Even though the limitation of the COVID-19 global pandemic prevented me from conducting the research study directly on site, I was still able to reach saturation, as I triangulated three ethnographic instruments together for field notes and data collection. The findings discussed were a result gaining an *emic* perspective or native’s point of view (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Murchison, 2010), in being a participant observer at events; conducting in-depth, virtual interviews with three to four students at each community college; and analyzing site documents and artifacts that were readily available online. The
use of these ethnographic instruments provided stronger findings of not just one community college, but all three colleges that have a learning community and student success program for Filipino/a/x students.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings and experiences of Filipino/a/x community college students, I provide recommendations for community college practitioners, especially those who serve in leadership roles, to advance and support Filipino learning communities and student success programs. In light of what I learned from the literature review and the findings of my study, I present four recommendations to best support the needs of Filipino/a/x community college students at California Community Colleges.

**Recommendation 1: Invest In and Institutionalize Filipino Learning Communities and Student Success Programs Locally and Statewide**

While I was writing up my findings on three California community colleges with a Filipino learning community or student success program, two more colleges, Napa Valley College and the College of San Mateo, started Filipino learning communities. Both community colleges are located in northern California. Skyline College, City College of San Francisco, and Southwestern College faculty and staff mentored these the newest Filipino learning communities, which then led to the establishment of a statewide support group called the Filipinx Community College Collaborative.

In 2020 and at the height of the COVID-19 global pandemic, a new and informal group of Filipinx community college educators in California, comprised of faculty, staff, and administrators, came together to collaborate and support the cultural and educational experiences of Filipino/a/x students in the California Community College system. My first recommendation is the Filipinx Community College Collaborative group create an officially recognized, statewide organization similar to Puente and Umoja—complete with mission and vision statements, a board of directors, bylaws, and a strategic plan (The Puente Project, n.d.; Umoja Community, 2020). This organization should establish a formal membership base to ensure the transformative work being done is not just sweat equity, but also an organization whose value is clear, specific, and measurable. Moreover, the Filipinx
statewide organization should begin the steps of obtaining funding from California legislators and seek additional funding from the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office. This formal Filipinx organization should provide (a) professional, statewide leadership conferences, programming, curriculum, training, and assessment; and (b) knowledge sharing across California community colleges to close the gap on Filipinos being a disproportionately impacted group.

To support local and existing Filipino learning communities and student success programs, college administrators need to allocate funds that are ongoing and institutionalized. College administrators also need to model leadership by advancing just, equitable, diverse, and inclusive policies and programs that will support Filipino/a/x faculty, staff, and students. I further recommend that monies from the Student Equity and Achievement campus budget be allocated to fund these programs so they can expand and grow their learning communities and student success programs by enrolling more students. Filipino learning communities and student success programs are severely underfunded and this equity gap must be critically examined, as it has a direct impact on future Filipino/a/x community college students.

**Recommendation 2: Establish Additional Filipino Learning Communities and Student Success Programs at California Community Colleges**

The system identified the top five California community colleges that have the highest demographics of Filipino students at their campuses as of Fall 2019: (a) Ohlone College at 9.67% in Fremont; (b) Solano College at 9.51% in Fairfield; (c) Napa Valley College at 9.07% in Napa; (d) Mission College at 8.22% in Santa Clara; and (e) Chabot College at 7.92% at Hayward (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2021). All of these community colleges are located in northern California. Napa Valley College is on this top five list and implemented a Filipino learning community for the 2020–2021 academic year, working closely with the Kababayan Learning Community at Skyline College.

I recommend the other four community colleges adopt effective processes from the colleges that I researched and implement a Filipino learning community or student success program at their
These campuses should reallocate resources and provide the institutional support to successfully implement a Filipino learning community or student success program. Furthermore, the next 10 community colleges with a Filipino student population over 5% can be identified through the California community college data systems because the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office already disaggregated the Filipino student population from the AAPI category. These 10 colleges should look closely at equity gaps and consider adopting effective practices to serve Filipino/a/x students, such as the implementation of a Filipino learning community or student success program. The College of San Mateo was number 10 out of the total 15 community colleges that had a high percentage of Filipino students (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2021). This college recently implemented a Filipino learning community (Katipunan), collaborating with their sister campus at Skyline College. Table 3 shows the top 15 California community colleges with total student enrollment as of Fall 2019 and the number and percentage of Filipino students.

Table 3. Top 15 California Community Colleges with High Filipino Student Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Fall 2019 total enrollment</th>
<th>Filipino students</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ohlone College, Fremont, CA</td>
<td>8,670</td>
<td>838</td>
<td>9.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Solano College, Fairfield, CA</td>
<td>9,308</td>
<td>885</td>
<td>9.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Napa Valley College, Napa, CA</td>
<td>5,735</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>9.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mission College, Santa Clara, CA</td>
<td>8,148</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>8.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chabot College, Hayward, CA</td>
<td>13,065</td>
<td>1,035</td>
<td>7.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>San Diego Miramar College, San Diego, CA</td>
<td>13,288</td>
<td>1,008</td>
<td>7.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>L.A. Harbor College, Wilmington, CA</td>
<td>8,351</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>6.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Evergreen Valley College, San Jose, CA</td>
<td>9,593</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>6.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Cypress College, Cypress, CA</td>
<td>15,487</td>
<td>981</td>
<td>6.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>College of San Mateo, San Mateo, CA</td>
<td>7,992</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>6.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Contra Costa, San Pablo, CA</td>
<td>7,017</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>6.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>San Joaquin Delta College, Stockton, CA</td>
<td>18,870</td>
<td>1,011</td>
<td>5.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>De Anza College, Cupertino, CA</td>
<td>18,102</td>
<td>949</td>
<td>5.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Los Medanos College, Pittsburg, CA</td>
<td>9,344</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>5.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Diablo Valley College, Pleasant Hill, CA</td>
<td>19,266</td>
<td>967</td>
<td>5.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Recommendation 3: Provide AANAPISI Grant Funding for Filipino Learning Communities and Student Success Programs**

To help close the achievement gap and address Filipino/a/x students who are part of disproportionately impacted groups, the AANAPISI grant can provide funding to implement an entire program, complete with funding for resources, physical spaces on campus, and staffing. Recently, President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris’ administration unveiled the American Families Plan, which will earmark $1.3 million and is said to be a game changer for community colleges and minority-serving institutions (Weissman, 2021). The Biden plan includes funding of $39 billion to provide subsidized tuition to historically Black colleges, tribal colleges, and minority-serving institutions for students in families earning less than $125,000 per year (Mangan, 2021). A press statement was released by APIA Scholars (2021), a nationwide nonprofit organization that provides college scholarships to AAPI students in need. In their press statement, they praised Biden and Harris for the American Families Plan and stated:

> While comprising only 5% of the colleges and universities in the country, AANAPISIs enroll 40% of all APIA students. This plan’s $46 billion investment in AANAPISIs and all other MSIs will support the educational opportunity and success of the many low-income, first-generation APIA students who attend an AANAPISI. (APIA Scholars, 2021, p. 1)

Considering the recent changes that may be forthcoming for AANAPISI funding, I recommend community colleges newly eligible for AANAPISI funding or those both eligible and currently funded institutions, set aside a portion of AANAPISI funds to allocate for a pilot Filipino learning community with a cohort of 30 students. Because AANAPISI funding is for a period of 5 years (U.S. Department of Education, 2018), 5 years gives a community college enough time to follow the pilot cohort from start to finish and measure the students’ educational outcomes.

Moreover, I recommend the top 15 California community colleges with high student populations of Filipino students draw on the AANAPISI best practices that have been researched and published, using these best practices to apply to the implementation and growth of a Filipino learning community or student success program. The AANAPISI best practices are identified as follows: (a) establishing a student services operation or success program that provides a supportive environment
and physical space for students, (b) embedding critical and culturally responsive pedagogy into the learning community or student success program, (c) student leadership development, and (d) assessment and cross-campus community collaborations (Maramba & Fong, 2020).

**Recommendation 4: Pilot a Filipino Learning Community on a Small Scale**

My last recommendation is to pilot a Filipino learning community on a smaller scale by starting with a cohort of 30 students recruited as part of high school outreach to local feeder schools. This pilot would allow for culturally relevant pedagogy and programming, advising, and wraparound student services for Filipino/a/x students. Even in the preliminary and experimental stage, a pilot Filipino learning community would connect Filipino/a/x students to key agents of the college, provide opportunities for student leadership development, and build community and a sense of belonging. Administrators must invite Filipino/a/x faculty and staff into the conversation of starting a pilot program by identifying a Filipino/a/x counselor, English professor, and ethnic studies professor. The Filipino/a/x faculty would work as an instructional team to align their syllabi and embed FilCrit pedagogy into their courses, complemented with out-of-the-classroom leadership activities and events that center on the Filipino American experience. A longitudinal approach should be adopted to critically examine the pilot cohort, collecting qualitative and quantitative data of success and persistence rates, from the time this cohort begins their 1st semester at the college until they successfully transfer to a 4-year university.

Furthermore, I recommend student services administrators implement a student leadership pipeline by offering a specialized Filipinx student leadership retreat for incoming and potential new students from local feeder high schools. This leadership retreat would bring in elements of the Filipino culture and embed FilCrit into the curriculum for leadership development by touching on values, culture, and the history of Filipino Americans. Student leadership and civic engagement opportunities for Filipino/a/x students will immediately connect them to the college and empower them to build community and seek mentorship from Filipino/a/x faculty and staff who look like them. This
mentorship validates for Filipino/a/x students that there are mentors on the college campus who will be invested in their academic and personal success.

Summary of the Dissertation

Filipinos have been absent, invisible, and forgotten in higher education and cast into the historical shadows for hundreds of years. The battle for the Filipino soul began when the Philippines was colonized by Spain (Larkin, 1982; Mulder, 1994); when two enslaved Filipinos aboard a galleon ship escaped at what is now Morro Bay, California (David & Nadal, 2013); and when Filipinos were displayed as an exhibit at the U.S. World’s Fair in 1904 (Vergara, 2013). Filipinos have been part of the U.S. education system since the early 1900s when the Philippines was a colony of the United States (David & Nadal, 2013), and are the true leaders of the Delano Grape Strike through the work of Larry Itliong (Bacon, 2018). Filipinos have been aggregated with Asians, yet remain unique in their own right because they are the only Asian subgroup that has been colonized for close to 400 years by Spain, the United States, and Japan. Filipino students are ignored even when they have higher numbers of enrollment in California community colleges in comparison to 4-year universities.

Although California community colleges pride themselves on open access for all students, this group is underserved and overlooked. The lived experiences of Filipino/a/x community college students who are part of a Filipino learning community and student success program wrestle with their Filipino/a/x identities and struggled with immigration, finances, college, and familial obligations during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Filipino/a/x community college students who are involved in a Filipino learning community or student success program will thrive, because they will find a home, a community, and Filipino/a/x mentors. Through the findings in this rapid and critical ethnography, the faces and stories of these students are no longer forgotten and cast into historical shadows, but illuminated and painted on a portrait, and written into an important story that finally gives Filipino/a/x community college students a voice.
LOOKING FOR FILIPINO STUDENT PARTICIPANTS FOR RESEARCH STUDY

FILIPINO LEARNING COMMUNITIES AND STUDENT SUCCESS PROGRAMS AT CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

- Are you a student enrolled in a Filipino Learning Community or Student Success Program at your community college?
- Did you finish at least two semesters in this program?
- Looking for Filipino students to be part of virtual in-depth interviews to share your experience of being involved in a Filipino learning community or student success program.

For more information, please contact:

Naomi Querubin Abesamis
Cal State Fullerton Doctoral Candidate / Researcher
APPENDIX B
SOCIAL MEDIA POSTING

FILIPINO STUDENTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH STUDY ON
Filipino Learning Communities and Student Success Programs

For more information, contact:
Naomi Querubin Abesamis
Researcher & Doctoral Candidate
Cal State Fullerton
APPENDIX C

PRE-INTERVIEW INTEREST SURVEY

INTEREST SURVEY FOR RESEARCH STUDY ON:
“Filipino Learning Communities and Student Success Programs at California Community Colleges: A Rapid and Critical Ethnography”

Dear Student,

Thank you for your interest in this study. The purpose of this research is to explore the lived experiences of Filipino American community college students who have been a part of a Filipino learning community or student success program, and successfully completed one academic year (fall and spring semesters) in the program. In preparation for the selection of participants to be invited to a one-on-one, in-depth interview on Zoom, this survey is used to obtain background information to confirm eligibility of the interested student. *This research study has been approved by the Institutional Research Board of the California State University, Fullerton and the Institutional Research Board of your campus.

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your name (first and last)?
   ____________________________________________________________

2. What is your email address?
   ____________________________________________________________

3. What is your contact telephone number?
   ____________________________________________________________

4. What community college do you attend?
   ____________________________________________________________

5. What was your first semester and year at this college?
   ____________________________________________________________

6. How many semesters have you completed at this community college? ________________

7. Are you part of a Filipino learning community or student success program at your college?
   ____________________________________________________________

8. Have you finished at least two semesters (fall and spring) in this program, enrolled in linked courses or themed courses as part of the Filipino learning community or student success program?
   ____________________________________________________________
9. What semester(s) and year(s) did you finish? (i.e. Fall 2019 and Spring 2020)

10. Do you identify as Filipino American or do you identify as at least half-Filipino? If you are half-Filipino, what is your other ethnic background?

11. What are your preferred pronouns? (i.e. she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/their/theirs)

12. What is your major?

13. Do you plan to transfer to a 4-year university? ___________. If yes, which university or universities?

14. Do you have any other questions, concerns, or comments?

Thank you for your participation! For any questions, please contact the researcher:

Naomi Querubin Abesamis
xxxxx@xxx.xxxx.edu
(XXX)XXX-XXXX Cell
APPENDIX D

EMAIL INVITATION

Dear Student,

My name is Naomi Querubin Abesamis and I am a current doctoral student at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF). I am conducting a research study that explores the lived experiences of current Filipino American community college students who are part of, or have been part of, a Filipino learning community or student success program.

The purpose of this study is to explore how Filipino students experience a Filipino learning community or student success program, and the success and challenges that Filipino Americans face at community colleges. This study will add to current literature on culture-based learning communities and will be the first of its kind to study Filipino learning communities and student success programs. The findings can better inform community college administrators, faculty, and staff on the importance of instructional and student support programs such as these.

I am Filipina American and have over 24 years of experience in higher education and 14 years in the community college system. Currently, I am the Director of Student Life and Leadership at Fullerton College, a community college in North Orange County. I am very passionate about learning communities and student success programs with eight years of prior experience coordinating learning communities for the Bridge Program at Mt. San Antonio College. In addition, I have also served as a professional mentor for the Aspire and UMOJA programs for African American students at Mt. San Antonio College and Fullerton College. While at Mt. San Antonio College, I was part of a grant writing team, which funded the Arise Program for Asian, and Pacific Islander students. For one semester, I taught English and creative writing at Long Beach City College.

The study of Filipino learning communities and student success programs at California community colleges is of great interest to me, and I would like to know how Filipino community college students experience this type of student support program.

The participants for this study must meet fit the following criteria:
- Identify as Filipino or at least 50% Filipino
- Finished one academic year (fall and spring semester consecutively) enrolled in a Filipino learning community or student success program
- Willing to participate in a 60 to 90 minute, in-depth interview online via Zoom.

If you are interested in participating in my study, please contact me at xxxxx@xxx.xxxx.edu. I will send you an additional information regarding the interview process and expectations. Your identity will be kept confidential. If you have any further questions, you may also contact me at (XXX)XXX-XXXX. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Naomi Querubin Abesamis, M.A., MBA
Doctoral Candidate and Researcher
California State University, Fullerton
APPENDIX E
CONSENT FORM

Study Title: A Portrait of Filipino Learning Communities and Student Success Programs at California Community Colleges: A Rapid and Critical Ethnography

Protocol Number: HSR-20-21-26

Researcher: Naomi Querubin Abesamis, College of Education, Educational Leadership Department

You are being asked to take part in a research study carried out by Naomi Querubin Abesamis, under the advisement of Dr. Rebecca Gutierrez Keeton (Associate Professor of the College of Education, Cal State Fullerton). This consent form explains the research study and your part in it if you decide to join the study. Please read the form carefully, taking as much time as you need. Ask the researcher to explain anything you do not understand. You can decide not to join the study. If you join the study, you can change your mind later and leave the study at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of services or benefits if you decide to not take part in the study.

What is this study about?

This research study is being conducted to explore the lived experiences of Filipino American community college students who are part of a Filipino learning community or student success program, and to understand how students experience this phenomenon along with challenges faced at California community colleges.

You are being asked to take part because you are student who is part of, or has been enrolled in, a Filipino learning community or student success program. Your participation will involve one, in-depth interview online via Zoom. Taking part in the study will take about 60 to 90 minutes.

You cannot take part in this study if you are under 18 years of age or if you have not finished at least two semesters (Fall 2019 and Spring 2020) in a Filipino learning community or student success program.

What will I be asked to do if I am in this study?

If you take part in the study, you will be asked to participate one, in-depth interview online via Zoom. The one-on-one interview will take place with you as the student participant and myself as the interviewer, lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

Are there any benefits to me if I am in this study?

There is no direct benefit to you from being in this study.

Are there any risks to me if I am in this study?

There is no more than minimal risk for participation in this study. Recalling past events and situations may cause some discomfort. Study participants will be asked to have their camera on during entire in-depth interview.

Will my information be kept anonymous or confidential?

The data for this study will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. No published results will identify you, and your name will not be associated with the findings. Under certain circumstances, information that identifies you may be released for internal and external reviews of this project.
The data for this study, including recordings, will be kept on a password-protected computer and/or in secure cloud storage. I am the only person who will have access to the study data.

The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain confidential.

The data for this study will be kept for a minimum of three years as required by CSUF, and then indefinitely, for future educational use, presentations, and publications. Data will be kept to ensure accuracy in future analysis.

**Are there any costs or payments for being in this study?**

There will be no costs to you for taking part in this study.

**Who can I talk to if I have questions?**

If you have questions about this study or the information in this form, please contact the researcher:

Naomi Querubin Abesamis  
xxxxx@xxx.xxx.edu or (XXX)XXX-XXXX Cell

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or would like to report a concern or complaint about this study, please contact the Institutional Review Board at (657) 278-7719, or e-mail irb@fullerton.edu

**What are my rights as a research study volunteer?**

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to be a part of this study. There will be no penalty to you if you choose not to take part. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

**What does my signature on this consent form mean?**

Your signature on this form means that:
- You understand the information given to you in this form
- You have been able to ask the researcher questions and state any concerns
- The researcher has responded to your questions and concerns
- You believe you understand the research study and the potential benefits and risks that are involved.

---

**Statement of Consent**

I have carefully read and/or I have had the terms used in this consent form and their significance explained to me. By signing below, I agree that I am at least 18 years of age and agree to participate in this project. You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep.

Name of Participant (please print) _____________________________________________________________

Signature of Participant __________________________________________ Date ____________
# APPENDIX F
## FIELD NOTES TEMPLATE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE OF PROJECT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># OF PEOPLE:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLACE:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DURATION:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVENT:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLANNED AGENDA:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1. KEY PHRASES, WORDS, ETC.

### 2. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY
Who, what, when, where, why, how

### 3. EMERGING QUESTIONS/ANALYSES
Potential lines of inquiry, theories, common narratives

### 4. REFLECTIONS
Document your own activities, circumstances, and emotional responses
APPENDIX G
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Filipino Learning Communities and Student Success Programs

Date:
Time of Interview:
Interviewee:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study. As you have read in the Consent Form, your participation is voluntary, and you may decide to withdraw from the study at any time. Your responses will be kept confidential, and I will be the only person who will have access to your information. Before we begin, are there any questions or concerns you might have?

I will ask you a few questions about your pre-college experience and then about your experience at your community college being involved and enrolled in a Filipino learning community or student success program.

Interview Questions

Pre-College

1. Tell me a little about yourself before coming to college.
2. What did it mean for you to be Filipino before you came to college?
3. When you were growing up, can you recall any experiences you had in which you felt conscious or aware of your racial and ethnic background?
4. Did you apply to any other colleges and universities other than the current community college you attend today?

College:

1. Think back to the experiences with this program and tell me how you first heard about the Filipino learning community or student success program?
2. What attracted you to participate in this program?
3. What do you find most helpful about the Filipino learning community or student success program?
4. What types of services or programs do they provide to you?
5. How has this program influenced your college experience? What difference did this program make to you or others?
6. How could the program be improved?
7. What is it like to be a member of a Filipino student community on your campus?
8. Could you give me an example of a challenge that you’ve had to face and overcome at your community college?
9. What could your institution do to better serve Filipino students?
10. If you could change anything about your experience here, what would they be and why?
REFERENCES


Bacon, D. (2018). How Filipino migrants gave the grape strike its radical politics: Honoring Larry Itliong and a generation of radicals whose political ideas are as relevant to workers now as they were in 1965. Dollars & Sense, 336, 18–25.


