

**A Multiple Case Study on the Identities of Immigrant
College Students in a Filipino Language Club**

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Abstract

Immigrants make up just less than one-fifth of the State of Hawai'i's overall population, with the largest portion of that faction migrating from the Philippines. Filipino immigrants have to incorporate the influence of their new host culture and environment into their identities. This multiple case study of immigrant college students in a Filipino language and culture club explored how eight students developed their multiple identities, with a highlight on their ethnic identity. Nadal's (2004) Pilipino American Identity Development Model and Bosma and Kunnen's (2001) Model of Development of Commitment to Identity guided the study. Data were collected through two focus groups and three individual interviews. Responses suggested that the multiple environmental contexts immigrant adolescents interacted with affected how they developed their identities. Analysis led to the main themes: cultural influences, peer relationships, academic experiences and complexity of identities. Results indicated that a persons' identity adjusts when faced with an unfamiliar context, either by developing a restructured identity or by generating higher commitment for the existing identity. Implications support Bosma and Kunnen's model of identity development, with a recommendation of creating sharing spaces as motivation for discussing cultural knowledge.

Keywords: multiple case study, identity development, cultural influence, college student, Filipino students

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A Multiple Case Study on the Identities of Immigrant College Students in a Filipino Language Club

While all adolescent students may experience turmoil in developing identities that fit their multiple roles, students who have emigrated from another country may experience an additional level of uneasiness - going through all of these experiences in a secondary culture. This leads to the question: How are immigrant students going through this process when they live in a community where they are a larger part of the population, yet they are considered a minority in their host country? According to the American Immigration Council (2017), in Hawai'i, 253,414 immigrants make up just under 18% of the State's total population, and 46.1% of the immigrant population is from the Philippines. Many immigrants enter the US during their grade school years and have to develop their identities in a land that may be foreign to them.

At the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Filipino students' enrollment is 10.6% of students in undergraduate programs and 4.2% of those in graduate programs (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2016). Both of these figures are considerably lower than the 25.1% of Filipino people in the State and the 22% of the student body represented by Filipinos in the Hawai'i Department of Education system (UHM, 2016). These statistics might reflect different challenges that immigrants face such as a lower quality of education available to Filipino and other immigrant students, parental factors, and preconceived notions from peers and educators that affect the educational performance of these students (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008).

The goal of this study was to create a deeper understanding of how the college student members of the Filipino language and culture club developed their multiple

identities, through personal and academic experiences. The Filipino language and culture club is part of the Filipino language and literature program at a four-year public university in Hawai'i. I aimed to understand how these immigrant students developed their identities, and how their experiences affected that process. This study describes the environmental factors and personal experiences of Filipino students as they developed their identities from childhood into young adulthood. The term "immigrant" is broadly defined in this study as a person who themselves immigrated into the US, or a person with parents who immigrated, which is considered to be a second-generation immigrant (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Kumi-Yeboah (2018) proposed, in her study on Ghanaian-born students, that immigrant students are capable of using their multiple worlds to achieve positive academic success. Kumi-Yeboah found that the students' willingness to succeed led them to make use of their educational opportunities, allowing them to adapt easily to the differing worlds of their teachers, peers and families. They were able to create strategies to cross between their worlds as needed, such as using classroom discussions as opportunities to interact with both the teacher and their peers.

An advantage that Filipino immigrant students in Hawai'i have, similar to the Ghanaian students, is that they live in communities where they are already largely represented. Research has shown that students' peer relationships in school promote socially competent behaviors in class and can motivate academic engagement among immigrant students (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Since Filipino students in Hawai'i often live with other immigrants who share similar home cultures, it might be easier to create those peer relationships. Filipino peers, whether immigrant or national,

may have a deeper understanding of Filipino immigrant students' needs and may be able to help clarify academic readings and assignments (Kumi-Yeboah, 2018).

Low Quality Education

When a family migrates to a new country with a different culture, finding a home in a neighborhood that offers opportunities for high quality schooling for children can also be a challenge. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008) found that immigrant students often experienced a low quality of education. The researchers believed this was due to segregation in the schooling system, not just because of skin color, but also due to economic standing and linguistic isolation – which was labeled triple segregation. I will discuss two problems that may result from triple segregation: (a) the difficulty for peers to assist each other if they receive a less-than-optimal education, and (b) the possible negative educational outcomes associated with the communities in which these immigrants live.

Immigrant students create peer relationships within their classes that can lead to mutual peer assistance. However, if students live in a low socio-economic status (SES) community, then they are more likely to connect with other students who also have a low socioeconomic status, and therefore, a low quality of education (Orfield, 1998). Along with the issue of peers depending on each other when neither might be prepared for the lessons given in class, immigrant students are often put into classrooms that are overcrowded and given lessons that are outdated (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). In these cases, faulty information may spread amongst the students.

Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008) explained the negative outcomes of segregated schools as, “including climates of low expectations and academic performance, reduced school resources, lower achievement, greater school violence, and higher drop-out rates” (p. 89).

The possible negative educational outcomes for those who live in communities with higher poverty can also create a vulnerability to psychological distress, potentially further decreasing the students' access to education. Lower educational opportunities and poverty can combine to decrease students' access to higher education. With the likelihood of immigrant families living in poor communities without real opportunities to move on to higher education, the immigrant student is at a higher risk of dropping out of school all together (Abrego, 2006).

Familial Factors

Within the different worlds and experiences of immigrant students, an important facet to improve student achievement or engagement is parental involvement in the student's education. Parents are faced with a myriad of responsibilities, which may cause a lack of consistency when it comes to being engaged in their child's education. Many families are migrating in order to have the opportunity to live a more financially prosperous life (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). While immigrant children are in need of their parents' help with homework assignments and motivation, the parents may be experiencing stressful events such as looking for employment, finding a home, and grasping a new culture and language. Unfortunately, the expectation teachers have of parents is to be involved in supporting their children's education. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008) found that while teachers' opinions varied about expectations for immigrant students' parents, there was a common theme of believing that the parent should come to the school to check on how the student is doing, help the student with homework assignments, and find ways to invest time in the students' education. With this belief comes additional expectations that parents have enough time to assist their children with school assignments, and also

that they understand how to help their children. While parental involvement in students' education can be beneficial (Kurt & Tas, 2018), Teranishi (2010) found that many immigrant parents either had no formal schooling in their home countries or were unfamiliar with the U. S. educational system and expectations of parents by the schools.

Immigrant families have other factors working to their advantage when it comes to showing their children support. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008) found that immigrant adolescents were highly dependent on their families and were emotionally supportive of them at a higher rate than expected of mainstream American adolescents. While factors such as a lack of academic hands-on support can be a challenge for the immigrant student, the emotional stability that families can offer can benefit their children's academics.

Administrative Inequalities

As immigrant parents decide to move to another country, expectations about the move can fuel their resolve. The expectation to have a better or more prosperous life is common amongst immigrant families, along with expectations for their children to have access to better educational opportunities (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). However, the reality of the type of communities that families migrate into once they have relocated often does not match these hopes. Immigrant students are often placed in academic environments that hinder minority students' access to high quality education, present inequitable treatment in classrooms, and provide an imbalanced distribution of rewards for students' scholastic achievements once they complete their educations (Ogbu, 2001).

Ogbu (1991) proposed a triadic structure to explain the treatment of minority and immigrant students in their academic environments. The first level of the structure described how educational policies and practices allow for segregation of students by their

economic standing, which leads to “. . . unequal school funding, and staffing of minority schools” (p. 161). The second level portrayed the unequal treatment that minority and immigrant students receive in their classrooms, such as “level of teacher expectations, teacher-student interaction patterns, grouping [of students by perceived academic levels] and tracking” (p. 161). The third and final level depicted the rewards these students would receive in the working world once they complete their high school education, such as lower wages and employment opportunities available to them. Ogbu (1991) posited that the treatment of minority and immigrant students in society reflects the unjust treatment given to them in their academic environments. I want to discover how immigrants’ multiple identities contributed to their success in academic and occupational domains.

Attaining Second Language Literacy

With the move to a new culture, immigrant students often face the difficulty of attaining literacy in a new language. While literacy in a second or dominant language will help students understand academic material (Somers, 2017), there are barriers to attaining a high level of literacy in a new language. Somers (2017) found that the students’ literacy levels in their home languages affected their second-language literacy attainment. Immigrant students who were literate in their home languages, whether they used their literacy on a frequent basis or not, were more successful in their acquisition of French as a new language. Somers suggested that, since there were significant differences in listening and speaking skills, the benefits of literacy in a home language were not confined to academic reading and writing alone.

In spite of the findings that a high level of home-language literacy can have a positive effect on second-language literacy and acquisition, there are suggestions in other

research that home-language proficiency and literacy may not be practically beneficial for immigrants. Tegegne (2018) suggested that while English-language proficiency has been recognized as a “linguistic social capital” (p. 218), the value of this social capital is dependent on the range of use of this newly attained language. Tegegne claimed that “English-language proficiency is, in fact, often a necessary but not sufficient condition for English-language use in social interactions, and living in a community of coethnics reduces the odds of English-language use in various social settings” (p. 218). Therefore, while second-language attainment and literacy may come more easily to immigrant students who are literate in their home languages, the value of the second language is dependent on the environment in which they live and the language that is being used most frequently by others in that environment.

Low Academic Achievement

Many Filipino immigrant students are already at a disadvantage when they arrive in the US, as they try to achieve academic and financial success. The State of Hawaii Department of Education (2019) reported that for the 2017-18 school year, Filipino students met proficiency expectations at the same rates as their Caucasian and Asian (non-Filipino) peers in all three categories: Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science. Yet, there was a significantly lower proportion of students who exceeded expectations among the Filipino group. For example, 22% of Filipino students exceeded proficiency in language arts, compared to 39% of other Asian students and 34% of Caucasian students. Similar patterns were reported for mathematics and science. Such low scores may reduce the chances of Filipino students continuing into higher education compared to other groups. Students who perform at levels reflected these findings may spend an increased amount of

time in community college remedial classes in order to qualify to transfer to four-year universities. The low percentage of Filipino students who continue on to higher education in Hawai'i suggests that there may not be enough done to increase performance scores (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2015).

One integral factor that affects students' academic outcomes is the school environment. While students have a responsibility to complete assigned schoolwork, the teacher has a role to motivate students to fulfill school expectations. Teachers need to create a positive climate in the classroom to increase student motivation. Crawford and Arnold (2017) emphasized the importance of a positive academic climate that "facilitates learning, a sense of connectedness among people within the school, and teaching and learning that supports collaboration, mutual trust, and respect" (p. 122) is important.

Strategies for Academic Success

As immigrants relocate to communities where they connect with others of similar ethnic backgrounds or immigrant statuses, they may be forced to choose how they will interact with their new majority culture—to assimilate or acculturate. Acculturation is the process in which the minority culture of an immigrant is merged into the majority culture of their new home, but there is still recognized representation of the minority culture in the overall presentation (Choi, Park, Lee, Yasui, & Kim, 2018). Assimilation is the process by which the minority culture has also merged into the majority culture; however, the majority culture is represented most and the minority culture gradually loses all representation (Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008). I will use this description as the operational definition for the remainder of this paper, with the exception of any reference to Bosma and Kunnen's (2001) Model of Development of Commitment to Identity. A

separate definition will be described in the ‘theoretical perspective’ section for their use of the word ‘assimilation.’ Acculturation into a new host culture has been found to benefit first-generation immigrant students in their academic performance in contrast to the common belief that assimilation results in greater language proficiency (Moní, Mealy, Del Ama, & Conway, 2018). Asian-American adolescents have been found to experience positive developmental processes if they are able to retain their heritage (Choi et al., 2018).

In studies that explore the outcomes of acculturation on immigrant adolescents, the immigrant paradox, or the finding that first-generation immigrants have a higher tendency to attain “more positive developmental and educational outcomes than later generations,” demonstrates the complex effects of social and academic environments (Moní et al., 2018, p. 221). First-generation immigrant students often have greater success in their academic performance and a more positive attitude towards school than second and third-generation students. Choi et al. (2018) posited that, for students of later generations, “positive adolescent outcomes diminish as assimilation into the host country increases.” (p. 2183). It is possible that as we look into later generations of immigrants, there is a greater level of assimilation to the dominant culture. This may cause later-generations of immigrants to have a greater disconnect from their home cultures and the benefits of those cultures.

Immigrant optimism. The phenomenon known as “immigrant optimism” is described as the belief of immigrant students that attaining higher academic achievement can lead to upward social mobility (Núñez, 2014). Voluntary immigrants are those who emigrated in search of opportunity for financial prosperity or a calmer political climate than they experienced in their home country, but do not hold the status of “refugee” (Ogbu, 1991). Although voluntary immigrants often experience the lower end of the

socioeconomic hierarchy upon their arrival in the US, immigrant optimism leads to the belief that this standing is not necessarily permanent (Kao & Tienda, 1995). Ogbu (1991) claimed that immigrants are able to overcome challenging situations in a new country and construct a mindset for possible change because they have a comparison point from their home country where conditions were often much harsher.

Optimism occurs because first generation students are less exposed to discrimination than their national peers (born of immigrant families), such as exposure to the effects of stereotypes in relation to their scholarly aptitude (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Matute-Bianchi's (1986) study found that second- and third-generation Mexican high school students had higher awareness of such stereotypes in their academic environment, due to being cognizant of the differing cultures in their home and academic environments. While first-generation students also experienced such stereotypes, they felt less internal pressure to find methods of dealing with the differing cultures. This led to a more cohesive pattern of thinking within both worlds for the first-generation students, yet, resulted in the later-generation students needing to decide whether to be consistent with their home cultures or to "act white" as a measure of discrediting stereotypes. With the combination of their optimism and less contact with perceived discrimination in their environments, first-generation immigrant students often have tools that allow them to achieve greater academic success than their later generation peers.

External support systems. External support systems can assist immigrant students in their academic progress. External supports could include "after-school programs, mentoring opportunities, and community-based organizations" (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008, p. 373). Support programs are beneficial to all students who are looking to enter higher

education, but can especially benefit immigrant students for whom entering higher education can be complex “due to undocumented, immigrant, or refugee status” (Kring, 2017, p. 104). Mentorship programs, such as the one in place at the Metropolitan State University of Denver, help immigrant students enroll into college courses and navigate the college administration process (Kring, 2017). The effectiveness of these programs depends on the diversity of the mentors and advisors, since representation of a diverse student population may not match the faculty of a university. Filipino immigrant students may not meet a Filipino university professor or mentor, which could hinder their desire to join academic support systems (Nadal, Pituc, Johnston, & Esparrago, 2010). To be effective, support systems should include a diverse ethnic faculty to aid immigrant students.

Another form of external support that has been found to benefit immigrant and minority college students is clubs or groups on campus where students are able to connect with others of the same ethnic background (Nadal et al., 2010). While immigrant students may not have the opportunity to take a course with a professor who shares the same ethnic background, there is opportunity for other spaces that allow students to express their cultures and views. Nadal et al. found that students also benefitted from spaces where they were exposed to the cultures of other students. While many immigrant and minority students may not have previous experience with people of different ethnicities, participants in Nadal et al.’s study showed “an appreciation for the exposure to and interaction with people from diverse backgrounds” (p. 700). This opportunity provided potential for personal growth. This perception of growth generally occurred among the students who came from communities that were considered not very diverse. Students

were able to expand their support systems to people who they might not have interacted with prior to attending the university.

Home culture as a tool. Immigrant students may not want to lose their home cultures and identities as they create new social and student identities in order to be academically successful. From this perspective, it might seem that integrating the students' home cultures and identities into school experiences would be an efficient approach to facilitate students' achieving academic success. Teachers' observations of students' homes can give cultural insight into how the teacher can engage the students (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). In Gonzalez et al.'s study, teachers learned about the students' home languages, such as patterns of speech and dialects, as well as other forms of knowledge inherent in their home settings, through observations. By learning the forms of home language that the students were exposed to at home, the teacher could better communicate with the students. This type of information can also help the teacher arrange lessons that would be more relatable to the students, which may lead to students having higher academic success.

If it is considered too difficult to conduct home visits for every student, teachers may also create lessons that encourage the students to share about their home cultures in school. Teachers can assign projects that let the students demonstrate their home experiences through "drawings, . . . skits, role playing, . . ." (Halagao, 2004, p. 46). This approach to lesson construction will give the teacher easier access to the students' home lives, will help the teacher contextualize lessons to what the students already know, and also may give the chance to see which students need a creative approach to express their knowledge.

Social Capital

While the current study examined the relationships among the multiple identities of Filipino immigrant students, there is precedent to believe that their social identities and associated relationships may have more immediate value to them than their academic identities. Immigrant students may value their relationships with peers and the identities connected to them over their relationships with teachers due to the benefits of social connections; these benefits are labeled “social capital.” Bourdieu (1986) described social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (p. 248). DeMatthews (2018) stated that social capital comes from the idea that the relationships and networks a person builds can be applied as a resource by an individual or a group. Social capital may contain benefits that are additional to pre-existing experience and educational levels, and is reliant on the social connections that person has built (Suseno & Pinnington, 2017). Loury (1977) posited that people with more social capital might attain more prosperous outcomes than others with similar educational backgrounds, but less social capital.

Social capital for immigrants can reduce stress when dealing with the tasks of moving to a new culture, such as looking for a new home (Tegegne, 2018). Social systems can be helpful when searching for employment, as networking creates a support structure for immigrants. When people from the Philippines immigrate to Hawai‘i, they often move into a space where they are largely represented in the population. These immigrants have social support available to them, what Tegegne (2018) described as a “multidimensional concept that include(s) not only instrumental (e.g., time and resources) and emotional (e.g.,

empathy and concern) support but also informational (e.g., advice and referral) and appraisal support (e.g., praise, feedback, and affirmation)” (p. 218). While immigrants are able to apply social capital as a means to gain employment, these relationships also ensure a support system for other needs.

Ethnic Identity Development

The construction of identity comes from multiple experiences throughout a person’s life (Pérez-Torres, Pastor-Ruiz, & Ben-Boubaker, 2018). While they are developing their identities in association with their education, students experience other roles that will call for them to develop different identities, such as their ethnic identity. Most people recognize the ethnic group to which they belong as seven or eight-year-olds, but revisit what their ethnic identity means to them during their adolescence (Phinney, 1988). The process of creating an identity is internal; the person figures out the meanings and expectations that are linked to specific roles they take on (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Like with other identities a person develops, ethnic identity development begins in early childhood and continues through adolescence, through the influences of their home culture and parents (Nadal, 2004).

The rediscovery of ethnic identity for adolescents occurs as a result of “increased cognitive abilities, increased interactions outside their own community, greater concern with appearance and dating, and thoughts about their futures in terms of job prospects and marriage” (Phinney, 1988, p. 4). Phinney offered a theory of ethnic identity development, which is in line with Erikson’s (1968) broader model of identity development. She proposed that ethnic-minority adolescents complete their identity development in five stages. The first stage, Preencounter/Conformity, is when adolescents begin to undertake

the culture and values of the dominant group and internalize negative attitudes towards their own ethnic group's culture and values. The second stage, Encounter/Crisis, occurs when people recognize that their features do not fit the standards set by the dominant culture that are valued by society. The third stage, Immersion/Moratorium, describes how ethnic minority group members search and explore the deeper meanings of their ethnic identities. Activities that support this process include talking with family members to better understand the home culture and reaching out to sources that can provide education on socio-political issues affecting the ethnic group. The fourth stage, Internalization/Identity achievement is when people accept the home ethnic identity and are able to encourage a positive view of the different aspects of this identity. The fifth and final stage, Generativity, occurs when adolescents begin to feel a greater responsibility for the home ethnic group as a whole. This stage also allows for people to empathize with the struggles of other ethnic minority groups, greater strengthening their own ethnic identity.

Student identity. In addition to developing their ethnic identities, adolescents also have identities they must develop in relation to their academic lives. As individuals internally organize the expectations of others and the meanings of their interactions with teachers, they are simultaneously developing their identities in congruence with their classroom peers. An identity becomes embedded through the many ties that are connected to the student's role, that are based on how the person connects with others in accordance to that identity (Stryker & Burke, 2000). If students engage with peers more frequently and more positively than they do with their teachers, their social identities may be more important than their student identities. However, cultural factors may determine what interactions would be considered positive or significant for the student identity. This

process of commitment to social over academic identities may lead students to speak back to a teacher, not complete assignments, or not attend classes, if these actions are in accord with their social identities (Stryker & Burke, 2000; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008).

Influence of social media on adolescents. While adolescents are creating identities in relation to their educational environments, external forces also influence them. Pérez-Torres et al. (2018) proposed that adolescents' relationships to social media influence their identity constructions. They studied the influence of YouTube, on adolescents' identities, because "around 70% of young people between 14 and 17 years of age prefer this network [YouTube]" (p. 61). YouTube viewers perceived themselves as having relationships with content creators, with the viewers recognizing the creators as having equal status to them. Videos that focused on the YouTubers' personal lives, and that included family and friends, shaped this perception of relationships between viewers and creators of content. Viewers felt connected to content developers, encouraging them to watch other videos by the same creators. While viewers watched the video, they provided feedback and interacted with other viewers through the comment section. Although viewers could choose to make surface-level comments in this section, many relayed personal experiences of their own and showed emotional support for the content creators. Pérez-Torres et al. stated that the viewers' experiences of connecting to the video content and expressing their interpersonal processes for other viewers was significant in the construction of their identities.

Theoretical Perspective

I applied two models of identity development in this study: Nadal's (2004) Filipino American Identity Development Model and Bosma and Kunnen's (2001) Model of Development of Commitment to Identity. First, I applied Nadal's model for the structure of the study and the construction of the interview guide, since I presumed that ethnic identity would be prevalent and should be considered during the development of the study. Then, I utilized Bosma and Kunnen's model to understand how participants' life experiences directed them in developing and committing to their multiple identities, including their ethnic identities.

Filipino identity development. Ethnic identity was central in the participants' commentaries on their multiple identities, which is why I employed an explicit identity development model related to ethnicity. Nadal's (2004) Filipino American Identity Development Model is exclusive to Filipino people, and is applied to both native-born people who immigrated to the US and second-generation people, born in the US. The model includes six stages that are "nonlinear and nonsequential" (p. 52). The model explains the different stages a Filipino person goes through in developing ethnic identity, and attitudes they may experience about themselves, and others of different ethnic backgrounds.

The first of the six stages, Ethnic Awareness, is based on the child's earliest memories, normally between two and five years old. Filipino American identity development begins when people are influenced by different aspects of their Filipino day-to-day life, such as food, language, clothing, and music, that encompass their home lives. This stage, without a set timeline, is dependent on the strength of Filipino culture in

people's surroundings. Often, the Filipino culture will be the only culture that children are exposed to during these early years, since they have not yet started school. So, they will likely have a favorable view towards Filipino culture due to lack of exposure to other cultures.

The second stage is termed Assimilation to Dominant Culture. It begins as young as five-years-old, and may continue throughout a person's adult life. The Filipino person will begin to hold a higher value for White American values that are seen in society, than the values shared by his or her own ethnic group. This tendency towards White societal values "can be triggered by the need to be "light-skinned," which is considered to be a cultural honor in the Philippine culture" (Nadal, 2004, p. 54). The Filipino person begins to notice the White-dominant society, leading the person to uphold the values of the dominant group and work towards assimilating into the dominant culture. The third stage, Social Political Awakening, does not occur during any specific age range, but rather after the person has become aware of the "social injustice and racial inequality of the world around him or her" (Nadal, 2004, p. 55). This stage can be sparked by an occurrence of racial prejudice, such as receiving racially charged insults by a White counterpart. It can also be started through educational experiences that expose people to unjust treatment towards minority groups, and lead them to see that they are seen as being "beneath" the White dominant group by the rest of society. This stage often results in the Filipino person resenting the White dominant culture and beginning to empathize with the treatment of minority groups in society, in addition to denouncing any form of assimilation into the dominant culture.

The fourth stage, Panethnic Asian American Consciousness, occurs when Filipino people acknowledge that they are part of the greater racial category of Asian American,

rather than just Filipino. This process differs by where the Filipino person lives, and the size of the Filipino population in the area. If a person lives in a community where there is a large Filipino population, such as Hawai'i, then claiming the Asian American identity is often "a means of coalition, not as a term of identity" (Nadal, 2004, p. 56). This process is contrary to the process of people in communities without much representation of the Filipino population, so claiming the identity of Asian American can be a means of being considered part of a larger community.

The fifth stage, Ethnocentric Realization, is engendered when a positive or negative event sparks people to recognize that they have been "unjustly classified in the Asian American paradigm" (Nadal, 2004, p. 57). Examples of a possible event could include a disparaging comment by another Asian American person or participating in a group discussion about Filipino culture. These events can result in the person recognizing that the Asian American community has disregarded Filipinos and that there are "social injustices and invisibility specifically to F/Pilipinos in American society" (p. 57). Attitudes and acts during this stage may be rooted in anger, but people are often reacting towards perceived injustices and are angry at their treatment in society. They want the Filipino American community to be seen in a positive light, and as a significant part of society, rather than overlooked.

The sixth and final stage of the model is Incorporation, in which people start to build a positive association with a Filipino American identity and culture, in addition to valuing other cultures. People are able to create a more positive connection their part in the Asian American category, but work towards building recognition of Filipino Americans as a distinctive group. They will work to motivate other Filipino Americans to reach this level

of identity development as well, in a respectful and patient manner. This final stage of identity development incorporates the ethnic identity of being “Filipino American” as a primary identity.

Development of multiple identities. While preparing the methodology for this study, I presumed that ethnic identity would be dominant in participants’ responses. I did not anticipate the significance of the multiple other identities that were emphasized by participants. Bosma and Kunnen’s (2001) model addresses the development of multiple identities, and how new identities may take priority over an existing identity. The model is cyclical and allows for diverse transactions to forge different paths in how a person commits to an identity (Figure 1). Transactions are operationally defined as “an interaction between a person and the context, for how a person changes the context, and how contextual changes affect the person” (p. 41). Bosma and Kunnen reviewed research on identity development to develop a conclusive model focused on person-context interactions. Huhtala, Lämsä, and Feldt (2019) found alignment with this model in their study on managers’ moral identities. Participants shared a specific conflicting personal experience, which changed their identity in ways that were predicted by the model.

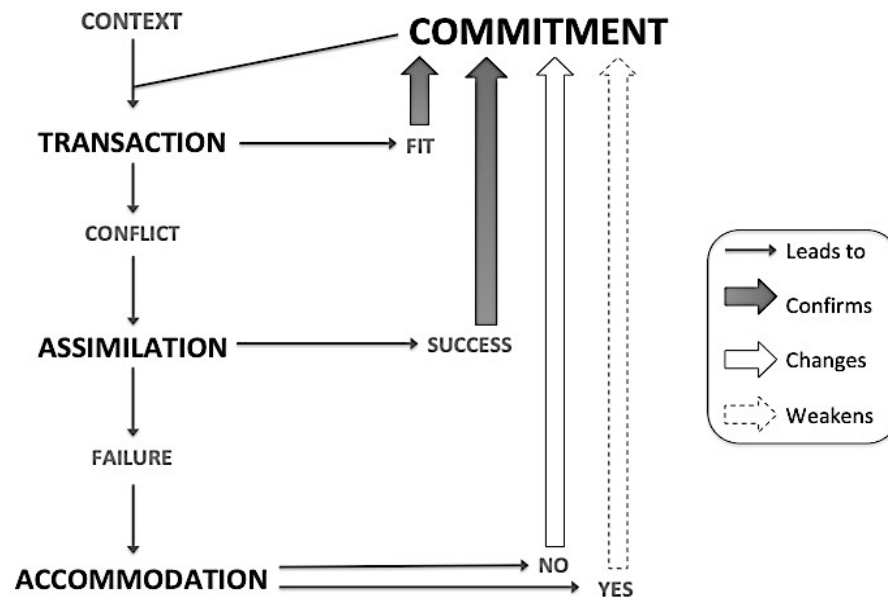


Figure 1. A graphic model of Bosma and Kunnen’s (2001) model of development of commitment to identity.

The model starts at the micro level, where people interact with their environments. An interface between people, their existing understanding of their identity, and the latest context they encountered; this occurs repeatedly as people face new challenges within the environment. After a particular transaction, which is the interaction of the context being integrated into the identity, each person recognizes whether the new context fits within his or her existing identity or if there is a discrepancy with the previous understanding of his or her personal identity. If the transaction fits within the established identity, the person will commit to this identity until the next occasion of facing a challenging context. If the transaction creates conflict with the person’s current understanding of his or her identity, then the person will be forced to either assimilate this new information or reject the

context. Assimilation in reference to this model will be operationally defined as an “interpretation of [an] event in term of existing cognitive structure” (Netti, Nusantara, Subanji, Abadyo, & Anwar, 2016). If the information is used to reconstruct the person’s perception of individual identity, then the individual will commit to the latest conception of identity. Yet, if the context continues to create conflict, the person must accommodate the new information into the identity. This accommodation will cause a weakening in the person’s existing commitment to individual identity and he or she will lose that sense of identity; this weakening generates an opportunity for a new identity to form. It is necessary for old commitments to dissolve in order for new commitments to come about.

Since the model is cyclical, the process will recur for an individual when trying to define and commit to an identity if facing a new context.

Research Question

This study addresses one research question: How did Filipino college students in the Filipino Club develop their multiple identities, including their ethnic identities?

Method

Study Design

This qualitative study uses a multiple case study design, providing the opportunity to hear the stories of multiple participants who have shared similar backgrounds as an approach to demonstrating a unique topic of interest (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants may have encountered comparable challenges in their lives. Analysis of multiple case studies gives greater insight to recurring themes across participants, resulting in a more representative discussion of the outcomes.

Recruitment and Setting

Participants were recruited using purposeful sampling from a Filipino language and culture club at a four-year university in Hawai'i, where members were currently enrolled in Filipino Language and Philippine Literature Program courses offered at the university. In addition to being members of the Filipino language and culture club, participants must have been enrolled in at least two university classes at the time of their individual interview. I recruited participants by having the club president send out an email to active club members informing them of the study and that I would attend an upcoming club meeting to give additional information. The email included a short description of the study, requirements for participation, and my contact information.

I chose the Filipino language and culture club because of its mission for students to gain a richer understanding of the Philippines and its cultural attributes through Filipino language courses and program affiliation. Eisen, Takasaki, and Tagayuna (2015) described this program as an attempt "to redefine the cultural narrative about being Filipino by highlighting "core Filipino values" and transforming a negative framing of Filipino into a positive one" (p. 27). Club membership was mandatory for any student registered in a Filipino language course, whether learning Tagalog or Ilocano, with approximately around 400 members. Students' earned four credits for each language course in the program, since the mandatory club meetings and events, such as potluck events at a public park, were considered as the laboratory portion of the course. The club's leadership model is based on a traditional student body government model, with a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and other supplemental positions. Eisen et al. asserted that although the intention for the program was to "present 'positive' representations of ethnic and cultural

heritage” (p. 27), there might be gatekeeping around defining ethnic identities, resulting in a rift between immigrant Filipinos and Filipino-Americans. Despite this potential negative attribute, the club setting offered a continuous cultural immersion. Exposure to culture in the club, through directed events and meeting discussions, ensured that participants received some cultural context that would contribute to the formation of an ethnic identity.

Participants

I attended a club meeting of approximately 60 student members within the same week the recruitment email was sent to the roster of members. I presented a short summary of the study’s purpose and invited interested members to write their information on a sign-up sheet after the meeting concluded. I told students to expect an email confirming their interest and an interview time. I collected the sheet at the end of the meeting. Sixteen club members showed interest in participating; eight were chosen based on similar availability for the study. I conducted two focus groups; the first group was comprised of five participants and the second group was three participants. Four participants stated their interest in participating in an additional individual interview; three were chosen based on their availability. See Table 1 for the participants’ demographic information, including their status as an immigrant. All names are pseudonyms. For the purposes of this study, participants who was born outside of the US and emigrated themselves were defined as first generation, and children of parents who was born outside of the US and emigrated themselves were defined as second generation.

Table 1

Participants Demographics

<u>Name</u>	<u>Year Level</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Immigrant Generation</u>
Ruby *	Junior	20	1 st
Marisol	Junior	20	1 st
David	Junior	20	1 st
Perla *	Junior	21	2 nd
Marc *	Sophomore	23	2 nd
Lily	Sophomore	19	2 nd
Maggie	Sophomore	19	2 nd
Jasmine	Senior	22	2 nd

Note. Names with asterisks next to their participated in both the focus group and individual interview.

Procedure

Focus group sessions took place in a conference room on the university campus. The focus group discussions addressed student members' perceived development of their multiple identities, with a focus on their student identities. I began each focus group by asking participants to complete a paper demographic survey. The survey inquired if participants were willing to take part in a supplementary individual interview, and to list their multiple identities. I gave participants five minutes to complete the survey, and asked them to keep it for the duration of the group discussion in case they wanted to make additions to their identities list. Some participants did add on to their list, but they were not required to notate which identities were added after the discussion started. See Appendix A for the survey.

I began the group discussion by sharing a brief description of Nadal's (2004) identity development model. Then, I shared a list of my own identities, which were: Latina

(ethnicity), in my mid-twenties (age), grad student (academic), artist (personal interest), daughter (family), psychology major (academic), Honduran (nationality), social justice advocate (personal interest), and a mentor for students with disabilities (career). I then asked participants to discuss the identities they listed or stories related to their identities. The remainder of the group discussions were centered on their reflections on their identity development, and I asked follow-up questions based on their responses. For example, I asked, “When did you first realize that identity?” and “Why did you list [identity] first?” Each focus group lasted approximately one hour. I made video and audio recordings of the sessions in order to assist with transcription of the group discussion, and to attribute statements to the correct participants.

After each focus group, I contacted the four participants who stated an interest in being further interviewed, and chose three based on their availability. Interviews were held in private study rooms in one of the main libraries on the university campus and lasted between 20 – 30 minutes. I used a semi-structured interview guide to gather information elaborating on the stories that were shared in the focus groups, or that were not discussed in the focus group sessions. The interview questions reflected concepts introduced by Nadal’s (2004) model and Suárez-Orozco et al.’s (2008) study of immigrant students in American society. Interview questions covered the students’ demographic backgrounds, family life, school experiences, and other factors relevant to the development of their multiple identities (See Appendix B for interview questions). All individual interviews were audio recorded.

Pilot study’s influence. I conducted a pilot study to test the effectiveness of the first draft of the interview guide questions. I interviewed one participant, who was the child of

Filipino immigrants and attended a local community college. After the analysis of the participant's responses, assessment of my notes on the process of the interview, and further review of past research, I revised the interview guide to be more efficient in fulfilling the purpose of the study. An example of a revision was expanding my initial question "When did you emigrate to Hawai'i?" to "How long has your family been in Hawai'i?" and "How did your family immigrate? As a whole family unit, or individuals came over separately?" This expansion created more clarity in the questions; giving the participants a reference for the type of response I was looking for. The intention was to dig deeper for information, rather than putting the responsibility on the participants to articulate their stories. I learned from the pilot interview and continuing reviews of Suárez-Orozco et al.'s (2008) research that while immigrant students might recognize the significance of their family's experiences in their home countries before emigrating, that the influence of those experiences on students' identity development varied.

Data Analysis

I transcribed all recordings from the focus groups and interviews using dictation software, and further edited for accuracy. I analyzed transcriptions using a thematic analysis approach. I used Bosma and Kunnen's (2001) Model of Development of Commitment to Identity as a guide. I searched for themes in the participants' experiences that assisted in developing their multiple identities. I open-coded the transcriptions to find categories in participants' responses, and then used axial coding to find relationships among responses and decreased the number of codes to fit into broader groups (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I then used selective coding to find the relationships among the themes in participants' responses, telling their stories.

Positionality

I am a 26-year-old graduate student in the Educational Psychology department at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I identify as a Honduran-American female who was born in Los Angeles, California and raised by two immigrant parents. Both of my parents immigrated to the US at the age of 10, but had different experiences in their migration. My father immigrated at the same time and with both of his parents and all six of his siblings, by flying into California from Honduras and attaining permanent residency status shortly after arrival. My mother immigrated to California after she and her younger sisters were in the care of their grandmother for two years, while their mother found a home and job in Los Angeles. After their mother returned to Honduras to bring her children to the US, they were snuck into the country, crossing mountains late in the night and finally arriving in Los Angeles by bus after crossing the Mexican border. I was told my parents' immigration stories early in my life and started recognizing the effects of being from an immigrant family on my identity development during my time in high school.

My decision to research the Filipino student identity development experience came from my personal experience of developing my identities within two different cultures: my ethnic Honduran home culture and the Americanized culture I experienced when I interacted with others outside of my family. My high school was in a primarily Latino community, with a significant percentage of the population being from ethnic-minority families themselves. Although I am not Filipino, I believe that my encounters in the Latino immigrant community in California may be similar to those of Filipino community members in Hawai'i. My experiences benefitted me in developing the current study and analyzing the participant's responses.

My own experiences let me look at Filipino students' identity development encounters through the lens of an ally, as I want to learn about possible similarities and differences among diverse ethnic minority groups. As Tillman (2002) discussed, it is not necessary for only members of a certain minority group to be allowed to study said group for the research to be considered valid. As a member of another ethnic minority group, I have a foundation of my own experiences in the Latino community to understand the experiences Filipino students may have gone through. This can begin to address concerns in past research of ethnic minority groups and people of color being misrepresented in research (Stanfield, 1995). Being a cross-cultural researcher, I attempted to limit my bias from personal experiences, such as thinking that all 2nd generation students speak English as their primary language at home. These biases may have affected my data analysis in my follow-up questions, if I perceived the participant as being a native English speaker. I hoped to produce research that could provide a checkpoint for Filipino researchers regarding if their findings are consistent with another ethnic minority researcher's conclusions.

Findings

The findings illustrate how the Filipino college students interacted with their environments to construct their identities, and how they had to adjust identities when their contexts changed. This reflects the theoretical perspective of Bosma and Kunnen's (2001) Model of Development of Commitment to Identity. Participants' contexts included moving from the Philippines to Hawai'i or to the continental US for college. They also included moving from community college to the university setting, and taking online versus face-to-face classes. While participants came from diverse backgrounds, they shared similar

experiences when it came to cultural and social influences, and when they described negotiating changes in their identities.

The findings of this study were determined from the participants' survey responses and interview transcripts. First, I explain how written identities were clustered into categories and present these categories in Table 2. I then display the main themes and subthemes of the identities discussed in the focus groups and individual interviews, with the surveys being used for reference as to how each participant titled their identities.

Survey List of Identities

The majority of the participants listed an identity that was related to having an ethnic identity such as 'Filipino' or 'Filipino American' on their surveys. While these two identity designations may be perceived as dividing immigrant generations (Eisen et al., 2015), I will consider them as one broad group since Nadal's (2004) model utilized a combination of the identities that would be reflective of multiple generations. The next two most commonly listed identities were those of student and those related to a personal interest. The category of student consisted of designations such as 'student,' 'college student,' or a major like 'Chemistry major.' Personal interest identities were related to hobbies that were significant to the participants, such as being an 'artist,' 'writer,' or 'photographer.' If the identity was listed as a way to connect a hobby to career goals, then the designation was also categorized under 'job.'

Three out of eight participants listed designations in the five categories: immigrant, job, gender, family, and religion. The category of 'immigrant' was comprised of any identity similar to 'immigrant' or 'first gen immigrant.' The 'job' category was made up of designations related to career goals or current employment. Identities were categorized

under 'gender' if associated with being a woman or female, while neither of the males listed an identity related to gender. The identity category of 'family' included categories related to the participants' family roles such as son, mother, or spouse. The 'religion' category included religious identifications such as 'Christian' or 'Catholic.' Only two participants identified with their race, and both were ethnically mixed also listing their racial identity of being Asian.

Table 2

Participants Identities on Survey

Categories	Perla	Marc	Ruby	Lily	Marisol	David	Maggie	Jasmine	Total
Family	X						X	X	3
Filipino	X	X	X	X	X		X		6
Gender	X			X	X				3
Immigrant			X	X		X			3
Job		X				X		X	3
Personal Interest					X	X	X	X	4
Race	X			X					2
Religion	X			X	X				3
Student			X		X	X		X	4

Identities

Findings from the focus groups are presented as main themes and sub-themes. The four main themes include (a) cultural influences; (b) peer relationships; (c) academic experiences; and (d) complexity of identities.

Cultural context. Culture influenced how the participants viewed their Filipino language ability, how they related to their family members in meaningful circumstances,

and in the formation of their personal goals. These elements led to the construction of the participants' Filipino ethnic identities. Cultural context was the most prominent theme in participant's responses. Participants often highlighted experiences where language was a driving force in the development of their ethnic, family, and student identities.

Language. Participants shared similar experiences of valuing acquisition of Filipino language, whether it was Tagalog, Ilocano, Bisayan, or another regional language. While all participants were required to be members of the Filipino language and culture club because of their enrollment in a Filipino language course, participants differed in language fluency before beginning their first language courses at the university. They varied between having minimal linguistic proficiency to being highly fluent in the home language.

Although the significance of language was steadily expressed throughout the participants' responses, the motivations to learn a Filipino language differed among participants. Participants experienced either one or both of the following motivations:

- Learning Tagalog or Ilocano because they are the most commonly spoken Filipino languages
- Learning their Filipino home language in order to connect with their family

Each of these motivations had its own benefits for participants. Benefits included networking with peers who were also fluent, being able to understand Filipino films and media, and either holding on to or gaining a connection with the Filipino culture.

Multiple participants considered the regional language they spoke to be impactful in how they were able to connect with others in the Filipino community. For example, Lily was a Bisayan speaker who practiced frequently at home with her mother and when visiting the Philippines. She valued her attainment of a Filipino language, noting that it had

expanded her appreciation for her culture in addition to giving her the tools to distribute that linguistic knowledge to her own children in the future. However, she noticed that due to Bisayan not being a main language spoken within her surrounding Filipino community, she felt a division from her peers. She exclaimed, “Even if you do identify as Filipino, you might not be the same Filipino as someone else. You might not be able to [converse]. I can’t converse with people in Ilocano.” She chose to learn Tagalog as a means to connect on a richer level with her community, and to counteract her feeling of isolation.

For another participant, not speaking Tagalog created an obstacle in developing more than just his ethnic identity. As it did for other participants, Marc learned his ethnic language for the potential benefits, such as being able to connect on a deeper level with his community members. He found that learning Tagalog improved his communication with Filipino community members, and improved trust with them since he identified as a community advocate. Since Marc came from a mixed-culture family where members did not speak their Filipino language on a daily basis, learning Tagalog gave him a path to connect with his heritage. Marc felt that language acquisition was essential to his identity development, and he recognized that the different regional languages played a role in how Filipino people viewed their ethnic identity. He stated, “There’s like Bisayan speakers, Tagalog speakers, Ilocano speakers. That’s the majority. I’ve noticed that they always try to make sense of who’s who, and separate based off of what they say.... That makes it a little difficult to immerse yourself.” Marc clarified that he viewed this phenomenon as occurring in Hawai’i because of the large population of Filipino people, compared to areas on the continental US where there were significantly smaller Filipino communities. Marc explained, “I thought that [learning] Tagalog would be the best option because if I couldn’t

speak Ilocano, the Ilocano speakers would know Tagalog because it's the national language."

Other participants were fluent in a major regional language before enrolling at their university, and valued maintaining this proficiency due to their drive to preserve their ethnic identity. Ruby was highly fluent in Ilocano prior to enrolling in a language course, since Ilocano was her first language. However, she was taking the language course as a method of staying connected to her family. Ruby emigrated from the Philippines to Hawai'i when she was seven-years-old, and relocated to Las Vegas, Nevada for a year when she was 14-years-old. During her time in Las Vegas, she felt disconnected from her peers because they did not speak Ilocano. This led to Ruby feeling that her identity was starting to switch from being Ilocano to being Asian, since that was the racial category in which her new peers placed her. She stated, "In that time period, I kind of started losing my language; I wasn't as fluent as I was when I was living here [Hawai'i]. . . . I missed talking in Ilocano. It was really difficult because I really couldn't relate to them." She benefitted from her fluency through her love for watching Filipino films and speaking Ilocano with family members who spoke the language daily. Each of these activities benefited the development of her Filipino and Ilocano identities. She listed "Ilokano" first on her list of identities, and said it was her most important identity.

Family. Family was a notable factor in the participants' reflections of how language played a part in their ethnic identity development. Yet, family experiences were central in the formation of other identities as well. Parents' expectations regarding participants' undergraduate majors were a shared element between participants, and affected their student identities.

All participants agreed that their parents shared similar expectations of future professions that were based on cultural values, primarily financial stability. Most participants stated that their parents preferred professions in the medical field, but they differed in how they let those expectations affect their final decisions about careers. Some decided to align their major with their parents' expectations, such as Marisol when she described pressure from her parents when it came to determining her academic focus, to the point of ignoring her own interests. She clarified that her parents' expectations for her academics were rooted in their wanting her to be financially stable later in life. She explained:

When I was younger I would be thinking about it, you know how "be a nurse, be something medical, do something that makes a lot of money." Your parents want to make sure you're secure... [After graduation]. Sometimes a lot of us are like, "I'm not happy, but I'm just doing what my parents want me to do."

Marisol talked about how she rejected her interest in creative writing, which was important to her from childhood into her college years, a result of these expectations. She never shared her interest in writing with her parents due to fear of dismissal and lack of support. Marisol minimized her commitment to becoming a writer, and conformed to her parents' expectations by declaring psychology as her major. Despite this parental influence, Marisol wrote both 'Psychology major' and 'writer' as two of her identities on her identity list. So, while parents' expectations and influence played a part in her academic choices, her innate interests also contributed to her academic identity.

In contrast to Marisol's story, other participants fulfilled certain parts of their parents' wishes but followed their own desires, such as Marc being influenced by parental

expectations regarding his commitment to his education, yet he didn't let them guide his educational path. He explained, "In the beginning of high school, I always wanted to make sure I pleased my parents about being there in class, making sure my attendance was good." Participants' academic identities were determined by their commitment to academic achievement and their actions toward being educationally successful. Yet, parents' expectations partially directed how participants defined the type of student they were. Even when the participants' actions met their parents' expectations through commitment, this did not mean the student would go into a career field their parents agreed with. Marc experienced conflict regarding choosing whether to merge or detach the interests of his parents into his decision-making. He compromised and assimilated his parents' wishes into his existing student identity, allowing himself to maintain high commitment to the identity while accommodating his parent's wishes. Marc's parents wanted him to choose a career path that they believed would allow him to be financially stable, yet he chose to study culinary arts, an interest he held before entering college.

Alternatively, he could have let his current identity weaken by neither assimilating nor accommodating the new context of his parents' hopes for him to be in the medical field, which could have created low commitment, like Maggie did. Maggie chose her college experience based on her mothers' opinions, by attending a four-year university and committing to the Chemistry major so she could be nurse, despite not having her own interest in the field. Her mother viewed community colleges as less than four-year universities in quality of academics and course offerings, despite Maggie wanting to attend a community college in order to take time to find the right major. She was not able to accommodate the context of her mother's expectations of being a nurse into her identity as

a student, even though she had made decisions in line with those expectations. Because she did not accommodate her mother's expectations, Maggie had troubles connecting her identity to her college major, which led to decreased commitment to her college pathway as a nurse and uncertainty about her student identity.

Peer relationships. While cultural influences appeared to have had a strong effect in molding the students' identities, peer relationships were also meaningful in their identity development. Participants reflected on their peer relationships in different areas of their lives, such as their time in the Filipino language and culture club, creating a support system through peers, and the difference between community college and four-year universities.

Clubs and organizations. Every participant who spoke of the significance of peer relationships indicated that experiences with other members of school clubs and organizations were beneficial in the development of their identities. The Filipino language and culture club was an environment where all participants felt they could connect over common interests or similar experiences. Social contexts, such as the club, gave the participants an opportunity to expand their immersion into their ethnic identities, strengthening their commitment to the Filipino culture. Multiple participants, especially when talking about how they connected with their ethnic culture, brought up the Filipino language and culture club. Marisol described, "Having the . . . club, for some people, is probably really good. It's like one big family." By connecting with the club as a means of support, Marisol reinforced her previous conceptions of her Filipino and Ilocano identities and established support for these identities. She went on to explain how Filipino people may not have a chance to connect with others through their ethnic culture; yet, sharing

spaces like the club allowed Filipino students to bond while reminiscing about childhood familiarities, such as Tagalog jokes they heard from family. Ruby also talked about the club as an approach to find her “clique” in the school and as a means to relate to her Filipino culture.

While I selected all participants for their active membership in the Filipino language and culture club, many also participated in other campus organizations. For example, Perla, a junior from a mixed-race family in California, chose to attend the university because of its highly diverse student population. She signed up for the Hānai program that connected students with alumni who lived near the university campus. This led to meeting her best friend at the orientation for new students. Meeting new friends through the Hānai program where she was mentored by university alumni during her first year helped Perla to find her space in her new school and to expand her existing identities.

Support system. Participants reported being exposed to cultural information and bonding through the Filipino language and culture club, as well as connecting with their Filipino identity and peers. The participant group was diverse in regard to their origins, with some raised on O’ahu and others moving to Hawai’i for university study. Lily was neither born nor raised on O’ahu, but she did grow up in a community with substantial Filipino representation in a country outside of the US and the Philippines. She clarified how Hawai’i and her home country differed in their acceptance of her Filipino identity, particularly regarding the societal views of her being mixed-race. She supposed that the acceptance she received in Hawai’i was related to her peers coming from a melting pot, whereas she didn’t experience the same acceptance at home. The recognition she received

from her peers led her to embrace her Filipino identity more throughout her stay in Hawai'i.

Maggie knew the importance of peers as a support system when entering college, and this guided her evaluation of the university she should attend. When she visited prospective college campuses, Maggie found that cities on the continental US were not as diverse as she was accustomed to back home on O'ahu. She described her trip to a university in Minnesota as being very clear in the separation of social cliques based on ethnicity. She explained:

When I was over there, everyone from the same ethnicity stuck together. I didn't really have any one to fit in with. Cause over here I have a bunch of friends from different ethnicities, like Japanese and everything. But over there I couldn't mix in with the other Japanese or White people.

She concluded that she would not be comfortable living in a town where it would be harder for her to make friends and develop a support system because of social boundaries. Once she returned from her trip, she decided to attend university in Hawai'i.

Community college vs. four-year universities. The group of participants included students who transferred from community colleges and those who started college in a four-year university. Those who transferred had varying recollections of their peer relationships when comparing their time in community college versus the university. Ruby described how she did not get the chance to make new friends within her academic environment at her community college because she predominantly took online courses. Her predominant experiences with online courses made her feel isolated and lost opportunities to have a transaction with new context: peer support in live academic

interactions. Since her transfer, she networked with like-minded peers who shared her values and academic interests through her major and club affiliations. By successfully integrating this new context into her existing student identity she has gained high commitment for her student identity.

Jasmine, a creative media major who was born on O’ahu, experienced a different peer interaction before she transferred to the university. Jasmine took the majority of her classes in person at her community college, allowing her to interact with others in her department and fellow artists. She continued to find peers who were on the same academic track after transferring, however, she was initially overwhelmed by the larger size of the university campus. She stated, “It was overwhelming when I first transferred here.... But I eventually started making new friends that weren’t from the community college I came from, which is interesting.” While her new peers were assets in her process of becoming more comfortable in her new academic setting, they were also influential in the development of her student and artist identities.

Academic experiences. For many, entering college is a transitional period into becoming a member of a diverse community. With the option of taking courses online, students are no longer obligated to interact in person with challenging circumstances that occur in lectures and peer interactions. Participants reported that live interactions with their teachers and peers were opportunities to progress their understanding or to question how their views related to others. The participants’ academic experiences, such as the type of high school they attended and the influence their teachers had on their career choices and on their confidence, were valuable in constructing their student identities. Academic

experiences promoted participants exploring who they were and who they wanted to be, from elementary school all the way to college.

Type of high school. Participants attended different types of high schools, such as traditional schooling versus progressive education. Perla attended a progressive high school in California, where the educational standards were based on a project-based model. She experienced a traditional approach to academics prior to high school, leading her to compare her experiences in order to determine which environment suited her better. Perla explained that, while a project-based method was meant to push students to learn to work in groups, as is expected in an office work environment, there were flaws in the structure. She explained, “We’ve all encountered being in a group that you’re forced to be in, and having to do all the work. I think that’s always my thing, I always ended up doing all the work.” She learned that a group project arrangement does not always result in equitable work for group members, and chose to be proactive in engaging others to contribute in group projects. She told a story about how she was a coordinator for a group assignment, and she had complications getting her team members to participate. She announced the issues of her team in class, which encouraged others to start sharing the workload. Occurrences such as these influenced Perla to reexamine the significance of her student identity, and she decided which actions were needed to preserve the identity. Perla described herself as being non-confrontational early in her individual interview, but acted contrarily as a tactic to preserve her student identity, resulting in her being academically successful.

Marc went to a public high school in a low-income area in the southern region of O’ahu. He described the community members as not considering education to be

important. His high school gave students different academic foci to choose from with clear curricula to meet their goals. Marc explained that even though his high school was in a community where education was not considered a priority, the students were still able to grasp why their academics would benefit them. He reflected that if he had attended a different high school where there was no encouragement to be academically successful, he might not have held a high value for his academic growth. Since Marc lived in a community that did not share this value for academics, it was the school environment that helped him develop his student identity. He credited his high school with producing opportunities for students to “progress well beyond their potential,” such as his schoolmates who went on to enroll in Ivy League universities.

Significance of student identity. Ruby started her college career in community college, despite her original plans to go to the University of Washington. This decision caused complex feelings of uncertainty and slight shame in her student identity, because she viewed community colleges as being less than four-year universities. Her family members shared this opinion, and advised her to hide from others that she attended community college. Since her commitment to her student identity was significant during her high school years, Ruby detected her student identity waning, as she got further into her community college courses. This change in her identity was a result of her perception of what it was to be a community college student, leading to the decision to limit her college experience to online courses and to rush to complete transfer requirements. Ruby’s student identity strengthened after she transferred to the university. She credited her newfound investment in this identity to her choice of becoming more immersed in campus life.

David was a junior, born in the Philippines, who declared that his student identity was the most prominent in his life. On his identity list, he wrote “student” as his first identity and then expanded by writing “first-gen college student.” David expressed that he held being a student so dearly because he was the first in his family to do it. Since both of his parents were born in the Philippines, as was he, they were not able to complete their high school educations. As a way of appreciating all they had done to move their family to the US in hopes of more opportunity, David planned to continue to work on completing his higher education on his way to becoming an entrepreneur.

Relationships with teachers. Marc came across teachers and counselors in high school who were able to support him through challenges in order to accomplish his goals. His teachers encouraged him to make good decisions in order to achieve his culinary goals, however, their comments also limited his view of his future prospects. He recalled that his culinary teachers would make comments such as, “you’re not going to even use economics in culinary school – why do you need it?” While Marc was certain in high school that he wanted to pursue the culinary field, he felt that he would have profited from having teachers who pushed him to explore other possible vocations.

Ruby experienced the benefits of her relationships with teachers early on in her education. She emigrated from the Philippines to Hawai’i when she was 7-years-old, and had to learn English when she started elementary school in the US. After starting at her new school, Ruby was assigned to an English Language Learner (ELL) course and began working with an instructor who taught her English and shadowed her. She expressed that while she “kind of felt displaced” when trying to bond with the other Filipino children in her grade. She was able to connect via the Ilocano language with her Ilocano-fluent ELL

instructor. Ruby gradually reduced her interactions with the instructor as her English acquisition improved. Her instructor gave her the opportunity to help teach English to a new Filipino student once she showed proficiency, which gave her assurance in her English skills, along with the confidence she needed to start reaching out to other children in her grade level.

Complexity of identities. All participants experienced some form of complex feelings about the development of their identities, particularly when required to choose one identity over another. While participants listed multiple identities that looked similar or redundant to an outsider, responses showed that environmental context influenced which identity with which the participant associated. The immediate environments of the participants helped them form new identities, even when attempting to hold on to older identities at the same time.

Layers of identity. As the participants absorbed material shared with them about their ethnicity from family, peers and environmental influences, they merged this information into their own ideas of who they should be. When they entered new environments, they were forced to reassess how their ethnicity played a part in who they were. While all participants were raised in communities with high representations of Filipino culture, most were exposed to contradictory environments where they were viewed as the “other.” These conflicting occurrences led to either a reconstruction of their current identity through assimilation of the new context, as seen in the model in Figure 1. Or if the newfound context failed to assimilate into the participants’ existing perceptions of their identities, then there was an opportunity for new identities to emerge.

An example of the latter is how Ruby, who lived in Las Vegas, Nevada during her freshman year of high school, was one of the few Asian students in her school and began to adopt an Asian identity since she had no Filipino peers in that environment. She explained, “Over there I didn’t say I was Filipino, I said I was Asian, because that’s what other people called me. They didn’t know that Asian was comprised of Japanese or Filipino. I didn’t say I was Filipino at first, I said I was Asian, so they could understand it.” Since Ruby had no Filipino peers during her year in Las Vegas, she had no means to connect to her Filipino ethnic identity in her academic and social environments. This context made her feel disconnected from her culture and at a loss for ways to bond with her peers. As Ruby accommodated the new context, she developed and embraced her Asian identity over her Filipino identity, in order to relate with peers who identified as Asian, and those who understood the Asian context, but not the Filipino one. Ruby switched from a racial identity of Asian to an ethnic identity of Filipino when she moved back to Hawai’i, after being able to reconnect with a large Filipino community. Since relocating back to Hawai’i, Ruby further identified as being Ilocano rather than Filipino. She explained, “The thing is we have so much culture in one culture. We say we’re Tagalog, Ilocano, whatever. We can’t even agree that we’re Filipino. I’m not Filipino; I’m Ilocano.” While Ruby said that she might identify as Filipino if she visited an environment with a smaller Filipino community, she holds her Ilocano identity as being precious in her day-to-day life.

Mixed ethnicity identities. While the majority of participants were born to two Filipino parents, two of them were raised in mixed-ethnicity households. Both of these participants had White fathers and Filipino mothers who immigrated in their youth. Perla came in contact with others’ confusion about her mixed race when classmates questioned

her ethnic background. She recalls the first time she was questioned about “what she was” in second grade when her mother came to pick her up, and the other children didn’t believe a Filipino woman was her mother. She remembers feeling that everyone in the room was staring at her when she ran up to her mother. Perla described this occurrence as the beginning of a sequence, with all of these events forcing her to become aware of how ethnically ambiguous she looked, as others consistently reminded her that she didn’t look “Filipino enough.”

Lily shared common experiences with Perla, when it came to the confusion others had over how “someone who looked like her could have a White dad.” She formed her ethnic identity based on these occurrences, in addition to her interpretations of how others viewed people who were White. Lily stated, “People tend to see being White with a negative connotation. So, there’s a [pressure to] [em]brace your other side more.” As she grappled with these negative associations, she held on to her Filipino identity. Before immigrating to the US, Lily already perceived her Filipino culture as being richer than her “White side.” She credited this grasp of her Filipino identity to all of her time spent visiting the Philippines and immersing herself into her local Filipino community. Yet, she was viewed as a White person when visiting the Philippines, influencing how she constructed her mixed ethnic identity of being half-White, half-Filipino. Lily has been able to maintain a high commitment to her Filipino identity with the support she received after she emigrated from the other club members who were also mixed-ethnicity, since they underwent similar experiences. A supportive environment such as the Filipino language and culture club produces context that is reinforcing of their members’ ethnic identities, as the new context

they face aligns with their previous understandings of their Filipino identities, which leads to high commitment to the ethnic identity.

No recognition of Filipino identity. Bosma and Kunnen's (2001) model did not characterize either the adoption of a new identity or holding on to a current identity as being better than the other. However, all of the participants' identity development processes were aligned with the model. Their life experiences influenced how they viewed themselves and how they identified; yet their identities served their personal needs and goals. David exemplified this power by finding comfort in his environment and not feeling the need to define each of his identities in order to understand himself. David, who was born in the Philippines and emigrated to Hawai'i as a child, spent the majority of his life in environments where a large Filipino population surrounded him. While other participants talked about incidences where they faced being labeled "other" by their peers, David did not think of his Filipino identity when defining himself since he had not yet faced a conflicting context. He described, "It's not something I think about a lot, because I already know. It's the world I revolve around already. So, it's nothing really to point out, nothing pretty special in my opinion." Since David did not define being Filipino as one of his prominent identities, it appeared that he had not yet perceived himself as having an ethnic identity. While lack of recognition of an identity might be considered parallel to having low commitment to an identity, this may just mean that a future context will be more easily assimilated into his existing identity to produce a reformed perception and higher commitment.

Discussion

Bosma and Kunnen's (2001) model was easily applied to the participant experiences, no matter if the context was in line with participants' prior conceptions of identity or if the conflicting contexts created a lower commitment to an identity. The model was able to emphasize that while many people share a similar experience, it is how they perceive that experience that defines the context as either complimentary or conflicting. This difference in perception is determined by the unique differences among individuals, including the differences in past contexts. The model is cyclical and isn't considered to end at any specific point in a person's life; therefore, different contexts may continue to change or strengthen a person's idea of his or her identity.

Exposure to Positive Context

Participants such as Lily, who weren't born into an environment with a large Filipino population, were exposed to Filipino culture through their small group of family members and friends. Yet, these participants were able to include the cultural context into their ethnic identity development and had a high commitment. The findings suggest that the size of their Filipino home community was not as important as the opportunity to be exposed to the culture in the first place. People who were isolated from their culture, for example, Ruby, when she moved to Las Vegas, could not maintain the high commitment to their ethnic identity.

Changes in Identity Commitment

When participants were exposed to a context that did not fit with their conceptions of their identities, their level of commitment often changed. Maggie, for example, experienced her commitment to her academic identity waver due to her parents'

expectations for her that conflicted with her own aspirations. Maggie attended a four-year university and selected her major based on her mother's wishes for her. This led to a decrease in commitment to her student identity.

Ruby, also, had a decreased commitment to her student identity when she began to attend community college, since it was not in line with her desires for a four-year university. After Ruby transferred to a four-year university, she began to make decisions that would compliment her student identity. An example of this is her switch to face-to-face, rather than online courses, which increased her commitment to her student identity.

Implications

The current study will benefit the field of Educational Psychology by furthering research on Filipino college students and the significance of their identities. Although the purpose of this study was to explore identity development in Filipino students, I did not originally consider the benefit of conducting the discussion in a shared group space, such as the Filipino club, that was perceived as being supportive of students' attitudes towards their culture. While the participants had opportunity to bond with other Filipino college students during their time in their language and culture club, it was not a requirement for culture to be the focus of all of their conversations. In the safe space of the club, the participants were able to share their experiences developing their identities. They felt comfortable disclosing personal stories. Taira and Yamauchi (2018) had similar findings when researching Okinawan college students in Hawai'i. They interviewed members of a university's Okinawan Club, similar to the cultural club in the current study. Okinawan students reported that they enjoyed speaking in their dialect and sharing their cultural heritage with other members of their club.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As a researcher who does not share the same ethnicity as the participants in this study, there was the possibility of participants viewing me as an outsider. Participants may have felt that I would not be able to understand the experiences that I asked them to share with me (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000). To tackle this potential barrier, I used prior research on Filipino identity development as a foundation to develop and phrase the interview questions. While I am not part of the Filipino ethnic group, I am part of an ethnic minority group and have experienced similar challenges as the participants. This helped me to recognize the importance of such challenges and the benefits of this research.

It was my responsibility to ensure that I found a way to show participants the potential benefits of this research so they understood why their participation was crucial (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000). Participants were all university students and members of a club that focused on Filipino culture and identity. While including only university students as participants may be a potential limitation (Hanel & Vione, 2016), this study focused on these participants' identity development with a focus on their student identities, using purposeful sampling. Including university students who were Filipino for this study was necessary to fulfill the purpose of the study.

Another limitation was my potential influence on participants when listing my own identities during the focus groups. Other participants may have also influenced them when discussing their identities, since participants were allowed to add to their list of identities on their survey sheet throughout the focus group. As stated earlier, participants did add identities to their list after the discussion started, but there was no record keeping of which were added. Keeping note of which identities were added would have been helpful in

having a clearer idea of which identities were inherent when the participant started writing their list, versus which identities became acknowledged through the influence of others.

Suggestions for future research. Although I found that the size and location of the community in which participants grew up did not affect their cultural identity, future research on this subject should continue to explore the influence of geographical locations where the students were raised and different places where they lived. Future studies should also consider interviewing students who were raised outside of their cultural contexts, such as adopted children and families who completely assimilated into American culture. This may give more insight into the gaps such students may experience in embracing their home cultures.

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Appendix A

Focus Group Survey

Name:

Age:

Class level (ex. freshman, sophomore):

Homeplace (place you were born):

Interest in individual interview (circle one): YES NO

My identities are... (Please list more than numbered spaces allow, if you'd like)

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

9)

Appendix B

Individual Interview Guide

Demographics

- What is your name?
- How long has your family been in Hawai'i?
- How did your family immigrate? (Whole family or individual members)
- What was your first language?
- Did you know English when you first started school?
 - If not, how did learning English start for you?

Cultural Awareness

- How would you describe your family?
- What did you learn about your family's culture when you were little?
- How did you learn more about your culture after you started school?

School Experiences

- How was your social life in school?
 - Did you naturally fit in or it took time to make friends?
- How was your relationship with your teachers in school?
- Describe what type of student you think you were before starting college.
 - How do you think that's changed since starting college?

Social Capital

- How would you describe your relationships with your friends in high school?
- How do you think those relationships affected your views on your culture?
- If you think your relationships with friends have changed since entering college, how would you describe it?

Identity Development

- How would you list the most important parts of your life when you were a teenager?
 - Has any of that changed?
- Would you consider being a student an important part of who you were in high school, and how?
 - How may that have changed since entering college?
- How did social media influence who you are?

Academic Success

- What do you think helped you be a good student in school?
- Do you remember there being barriers to you being academically successful?
 - How did you overcome those barriers?
- How do you think you have changed as a student since you have gotten to university?
- How would you describe your academic performance in high school? In college?