

# **FAMILY MATTERS:**

## The Effects of Filipino U.S. Air Force Membership Across Generations

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*For my parents*

### *Abstract*

In my thesis, I explore the effects of Filipino U.S. Air Force membership on the family by analyzing the experiences of Filipino enlisted parents and their children. Through the lens of Filipino psychology terms *utang na loob* (“debt of gratitude”) and *kapwa* (interconnectedness, sharing an identity) and studies on “demilitarized domesticity” (Suarez, 2015) and “emotional transnationalism” (Wolf, 1997), I discuss the dissonant perspectives of Filipino parents and children regarding military membership. While Filipino parents willingly embraced the Air Force because it “took care” of them and their families, their children experienced more negative side effects, including parental absence and increased responsibility. My research presents a situation in which Filipino parents perceived the Air Force as the best option now *and* for their children in the future despite the real and significant cost on the family and children’s attempts to demilitarize their lives as young adults.

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## INTRODUCTION

Long before the Filipinos in my study enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and ended up in Colorado Springs, the Philippines had already experienced a nuanced and complicated relationship with the U.S. military. Preparation for World War I and World War II during American colonization called for strategic military use of the Philippines, and the United States negotiated American military bases through multiple agreements and an alliance following Filipino independence. Ultimately, the unusual position of the Philippines as a former American colony not only opened the door for out-migration for overseas work, but for U.S. military service. Military bases cooperated with local Filipino troops, and eventually, recruitment programs for Filipino nationals gained popularity. In the eyes of the Philippine government and many of its citizens, joining the military was respectable and rewarding. The paradox is almost tangible: the U.S. military is entrenched in colonial history—it has been used as a tool for control and influence, and to this day its very presence around the world flexes soft power—but thousands of Filipinos choose a military occupation for its benefits and reputability anyway.

There have been several informative studies on Filipinos in the U.S. military and the effects of their membership (Suarez, 2015a; Enloe, 2000; Espiritu, 2003). However, these studies inadvertently have tunnel vision. The vast majority focus on Filipinos in the U.S. Navy in California, thus excluding Filipinos in other military branches and Filipino military members in less diverse and less populated areas. My research seeks to mitigate these limitations through the study of a Filipino U.S. Air Force community in Colorado Springs. In selecting this community, my thesis complicates past findings of how Filipino families interact with the U.S. military and how family and community are restructured in consideration of U.S. Air Force membership.

My research revolved around two questions: What motivates Filipinos to join the American military? Moreover, how does the military membership of Filipino parents and the militarization of the entire family come to shape the careers and identities of their children? For Filipino U.S. Air Force parents I hypothesized that the motivations for choosing membership in the U.S. Air Force over other overseas work would include that 1.) the U.S. Air Force usually permits service members to move with their partners or families as opposed to the long-term separation common among Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), 2.) the U.S. Air Force allows for career advancement, and 3.) the U.S. Air Force offers benefits that other occupations do not, including American citizenship and education. (In the beginning, I did not solidify a specific hypothesis for Filipino children in U.S. Air Force families because I originally planned to only interview the parents.) More generally, this study sought to clarify why Filipinos join the U.S. military, an institution deeply rooted in colonialism, while exploring how the U.S. Air Force meets the priorities of Filipino parents when joining the global workforce today.

Ultimately, I found that these motivations applied to the Filipino parents in my study. The ability to move as a family, be promoted, and receive certain benefits made the Air Force very appealing to those who enlisted. However, there were two significantly different perspectives of Filipino U.S. Air Force membership, and the implications of this dissonance revealed that military membership was imperfect and enjoyed unequally. I argue that while enlisted Filipino parents willingly embraced the Air Force because it “took care” of them and their families, their children experienced the more negative side effects of their membership and relied less on the institution in adult life as a result. Although the Air Force did provide welfare to a remarkable degree, it still required sacrifice from children in the family, including increased responsibility and acceptance of parental absence. Unlike past studies, my research presents a situation in

which Filipino parents perceived the U.S. military as the best option now *and* for their children in the future, despite the very real and significant cost on the family.

## **BACKGROUND**

### History of the United States-Philippine Relationship

In order to understand the dynamic relationship between Filipinos and the U.S. military, it is important to understand the Philippines' past as an American colony.

In 1898, Spain's defeat in the Spanish-American War resulted in the Philippines trading one colonizer for another, the United States. The exchange did not occur without resistance. In the following several years, a bloody war between the Philippines and the United States claimed the lives of over a million people and smothered the Philippine nationalist forces that had revolted against Spain in the first place (Espiritu, 2003). Under American rule, Filipinos faced a sobering new identity as re-colonized, U.S. nationals.

In domestic politics, the United States was split in deciding what to do with the newly acquired territory. Anti-imperialists strongly opposed the induction of the Philippines as an American colony while other Americans felt that the United States had a moral obligation to teach the Filipino government about self-rule before granting them independence (Pomeroy, 1974). In general, the Philippines' potential for American trade and extraction of raw materials warranted guidance and occupation by the United States more than any moral reasoning (Pomeroy, 1974). The environment in the Philippines was ideal for growing sugar, tobacco, and coconut, and its populace provided an opportunity for the United States to exploit the Filipino market for distribution of American-manufactured goods. In the decades before World War II, these benefits proved disadvantageous to U.S. agricultural producers. American farmers

eventually pushed for concrete policy for Philippine independence due to the colony's competitiveness in providing cheap agricultural products (Pomeroy, 1974). In 1934, the agriculture-backed Tydings-McDuffie Independence Act kickstarted the ten-year transition for the Philippines to become an independent country (Meyer, 1965). The act established the Commonwealth of the Philippines, an administrative body that worked in conjunction with the American political system and governed until 1946 upon formal independence.

World War II shifted the relationship between the Philippines and its new colonizer dramatically. In President Franklin Roosevelt's view, the territory's newfound importance for strategic military use as well as the vulnerability of the Filipino government warranted an expansion of American military protection of the Philippines. In June 1944, President Roosevelt approved Joint Resolution No. 93 which called for the acquisition and retainment of military bases for as long as it took to neutralize the threat of the Japanese and stabilize domestic government (Meyer, 1965). Naval and air bases were then set aside for the mutual benefit of American and Filipino armed forces, and ultimately, both parties contributed to a decisive victory in the Pacific by the end of World War II.

On July 4, 1946, the Treaty of General Relations recognized Filipino independence and assured the withdrawal of the United States and surrender of "all rights of possession, supervision, jurisdiction, and sovereignty over the territory and the people of the Philippines," not including the use of military bases for continued mutual protection of the United States and the Philippines (Meyer, 1965). Within the next year, the Philippines and the United States signed another document that solidified base control and granted some American authority in military affairs in the Philippines. The Military Bases Agreement of 1947 entailed the installation of U.S. military bases for current and potential future use, far from highly populated areas to avoid

friction and misunderstanding between military personnel and Filipino civilians. Sixteen sites were set aside for American use, seven of which were operational as army, air force, and naval bases (Meyer, 1965). The agreement was technically set to last 99 years, but in 1956 under President Carlos Garcia it was shortened to 25 years with a possibility to renew. When the Philippine government refused to extend the agreement in 1991, the Military Bases Agreement expired and shut down the last operational military installation, Subic Bay Naval Base (Maligat, 2000).

Arguably, the Military Bases Agreement was one of two of the most important documents between the United States and the Philippines because it allowed American military influence for nearly fifty more years after Filipino independence. The Mutual Defense Treaty in 1951 had a similar impact, committing the Philippines to support the United States (and vice-versa) if there were an armed attack in the Pacific (Pomeroy, 1974). Both documents later determined actions taken during the Cold War, especially when the U.S. military installations proved advantageous in deterring the Soviet Pacific Fleet by providing access to naval bases and air support. Essentially a launch point for American forces to defend any non-communist states in the Pacific and Southeast Asia, the commitment of the United States to containment was made credible by its physical proximity to countries vulnerable to Soviet influence (Asian Studies Center, 1984).

Article 27 in the Military Bases Agreement made the military even more of a central concern in U.S.-Philippine relations. Although Filipinos had served in the U.S. military since 1901, Article 27 established what would become the impactful U.S. Navy Philippine Enlistment Program (PEP). In general, the program allowed for the U.S. Navy to recruit and enlist a certain number of Filipinos annually without “the requirement of U.S. immigrant credentials” (Rodrigo,

2009). In other words, Filipinos could join the American military without being an American citizen. This was yet another step towards the positive association that Filipinos had with military careers due to ease of access and the potential for American citizenship in the future. The resulting perception of the military as a respectable and worthwhile job opportunity saw the enlistment of 35,000 Filipinos in the U.S. Navy through the PEP over the course of forty years (Maligat, 2000).

For more than four centuries, Filipino citizens and their government needed to adapt to the constant presence and pressure of two imperial states. By claiming commitment to “education for self-rule” (Pomeroy, 1974), the American government was able to integrate itself into Filipino politics, trade, and society while championing conditional independence for the Philippines in the future. Subsequently, foreign influence was normalized and to a certain extent incorporated into Filipino culture. American military bases presented a viable career path for Filipinos in need of overseas work, American citizenship, or even educational opportunities in the future.

### Filipinos in the American Military

In the nearly forty years that the Philippine Enlistment Program existed, the number of qualified Filipinos that applied to join the U.S. Navy was notably high. From 1983 to 1990, the military branch only recruited 400 Filipinos annually but as many as 100,000 Filipinos applied each year (Aquino, 1990). As a result, only the most exemplary candidates were selected. In a study in 2000, U.S. Navy Lieutenant Luisito Maligat found that PEP recruits had “higher educational attainment prior to enlistment, higher [Armed Forces Qualification Test] scores, higher short-term and long-term continuation rates; more rapid promotion rates; and relatively fewer



separations for adverse reasons” (Maligat, 2000) compared to their non-Filipino peers. Numerous other statistics legitimize the distinct reputation that Filipinos had in the U.S. Navy: 81 percent of Filipino nationals who have enlisted since 1979 ended up staying for at least ten years, and the vast majority (as much as 95 percent) of Filipino nationals completed their first term of service while only 30 percent of all Navy recruits did (Maligat, 2000). Today, Filipinos are the largest foreign-born ethnic group and the second-largest group of Asian-Americans in the American military (Greitens, 2014).

My study is focused on Filipino U.S. Air Force enlistees, but I expected some of my participants to know or be related to other Filipinos who joined the U.S. Navy because of the significantly larger presence of Filipinos there. In my research, I also paid special attention to whether the positive reputation of Filipinos as studious and high-performing carried over from the U.S. Navy to the Air Force. If the Air Force welcomed Filipinos with open arms because they saw them as potentially outstanding workers, it further reinforced an environment that Filipinos may prefer over any others.

### Changes in Filipino Immigration to the United States

The origins of Filipino immigration to the United States are intricately tied to the Philippines’ colonial history. In vying for loyalty from its new colonial subjects, the United States sought to reward Filipinos who supported American influence, primarily business elites that saw an opportunity to advance politically and socially in re-colonized society. In the early 1900s, an American scholarship in the Philippines sponsored *pensionados*, children of affluent families that were carefully selected to attend American higher education due to their familial influence (Espiritu, 2003). This program would create waves as returning *pensionados* espoused the

American education system, planting the seed for a new and consistent migration pattern among young Filipinos.

Due to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and other policies limiting immigration, the Philippines stood out as a readily accessible source of labor for agricultural and domestic work. As an American colony, its denizens already qualified as U.S. nationals (Rodriguez, 2010), which bypassed several immigration hurdles and supposedly dispelled some of the fears and vitriol that Americans harbored for foreign workers. The convenience with which Filipinos could be funneled into the United States as an effective workforce led to the induction of over 100,000 Filipinos in America by the 1930s. Outreach from and involvement in the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association, nursing agencies, the U.S. Exchange Visitor Program, and the U.S. military multiplied the opportunities abroad that Filipinos could pursue as exceptions to serious immigration policies (Rodriguez, 2010).

In the 1950s, a desire to thrive in a weakened postwar economy by acquiring advanced training abroad and practicing those skills at home grew among Filipinos. Health services stood out as a valuable occupation and receiving countries in the Middle East and North America took advantage of this interest. Active recruitment of potential nurses in the 1960s incentivized migration to the both regions and resulted in eventual residency in the United States, increasing the number of Filipino workers in the American healthcare system (Lorenzo et. al, 2007). In the following decades, a worldwide shortage of nurses continued to increase demand for healthcare professionals among Filipinos and other immigrants. By 2016, trends in occupation had shifted away from agricultural work of the early twentieth century: over 330,000 (more than half) of newly contracted Filipinos started working as household service workers, manufacturing laborers, or nursing professionals (Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, 2016).

Thus, the United States has benefited considerably from Filipino labor, even in the post-colonial period. When the Philippines became independent, its ties with its former colonizer did not weaken much. The position of Filipinos in the American workforce has often been in America's favor, either by convenience as U.S. nationals or by reliability in skill and work ethic.

Domestically, the push and pull of the Philippine government in migrant labor produces a dynamic view of globalization. As long as Filipinos continue to work abroad, send back remittances, and eventually return home to the Philippines, the state can encourage the physical exit of many of its citizens in the name of nationalism and economic growth. In 2017, personal remittances reached \$31.29 billion dollars, or about 10% of the Philippines' GDP (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, n.d.). Rates of out-migration have also significantly increased in the past several years. From 2015 to 2016, the number of government-contracted Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) increased by more than 12 percent from 1.8 million to over two million (Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, 2016). This number does not include the millions of Filipinos that were privately recruited or have "unauthorized" migration status and currently live abroad (Tyner, 2004).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Recent studies on Filipinos in the military address several moving parts, ranging from U.S.-Philippine relations during and after the Philippines' colonization to shifting gender roles for Filipinos within the military and their families. With this heavily contextualized situation in mind, studies on Filipino military membership in the U.S. Armed Forces have shown that a military career path profoundly impacts Filipino immigration to the United States as well as the identity formation and career choices of children in Filipino military families. Interestingly, two

topics are absent in these studies: the possibility for reciprocity in the relationship between Filipinos and the U.S. military (in other words, the desire of some Filipinos to give back to a military community that has taken care of them and their families) and the potential for Filipino parents and their children to have conflicting views about the U.S. military. My thesis will draw from the following studies in order to relate their findings to Filipino military families in Colorado Springs in 2019.

There are three topics surrounding family dynamics that have created a strong foundation for my own research, namely, Filipinos in the U.S. Navy, parental military membership, and second-generation Asian immigrants. Due to the U.S. Navy Philippine Enlistment Program, the exodus of tens of thousands of Filipinos from the Philippines through the U.S. military has usually been studied through the lens of the U.S. Navy, not the U.S. Air Force or any other military branch (Espiritu, 2002; Suarez, 2015a). The effects of parental military membership on Filipino families is an uncommon research topic in academia, but existing studies have explored how deeply families can be affected by a military lifestyle (Suarez, 2015a). There are also studies that focus on second-generation Asian immigrants (Wolf, 1997; Yeoh et. al, 2005) that offer some perspective on how the experiences of parents and the displacement of children from their parents' country of origin can affect children's identities. It is important to note here that studies on the first two topics primarily take place in California and rarely in inland states like Colorado. Applying their findings to Colorado Springs may initiate more conversation about other military branches and their long-lasting effects on second-generation Filipinos.

Several ethnographic studies on Filipino military members in the U.S. Navy combined the topics of military service with the family relations that result from military commitment (Espiritu, 2002; Espiritu, 2003; Suarez, 2015a). In 2002, Yen Le Espiritu's ethnographic study in

San Diego delved into the denigrating impact of the military on Filipino men who joined around World War II as Navy stewards, a “feminized” line of work. In the second half of the chapter, Espiritu compared this to the more empowering narrative of women migrating to the United States as healthcare professionals. In the former situation, Filipino military servicemen’s families were faced with burdensome responsibilities *and* newfound independence and authority because they needed to make up for the father’s absence. In the latter, Espiritu explained that unmarried Filipino women could exercise their opportunity to immigrate independently out of personal desire or as primary immigrants, with their partners and kids listed as dependents. This study is especially important to my study because it exemplifies early gendered experiences of Filipinos in the military and consequent family relations. To a certain extent, it provided some insight into how female members of the U.S. Air Force select their careers and how Filipino military family dynamics have evolved since the study was conducted.

Another study on Filipino military families in San Diego by Theresa Suarez in 2015 took a different approach in contextualizing family relationships. Supported by the historical background of U.S.-Philippine relations and colonization, Suarez acknowledged the undeniable influence of the U.S. military as a leftover colonial institution in defining parenthood and family life in America. She argued that the military regulates and legitimizes different forms of family constructs that Filipinos have followed in order to be accepted in normative American society, and in general, to fit a “white bourgeois” ideal (Suarez, 2015a). At the same time, Suarez pointed out the ways in which Filipino military families are working to achieve “demilitarized domesticity,” including relying less on military values for the well-being of family and redirecting children’s career choices, either by discouraging military enlistment in general or by advising children to join the military as officers (Suarez, 2015a). One of the other important

points of Suarez's work is that the very existence of Filipino military communities defies heteronormative values of the military itself because they thrive on connectivity. Since I focused on Filipino military communities in Colorado Springs, a renowned Air Force hub, this information was valuable in understanding the context and significance of such a group's existence. Her inclusion of the Philippines' past as an American colony was important to consider at first since I thought that there could be implicit power dynamics surrounding Filipinos joining the U.S. military.

In previous studies on second-generation Filipino children, academics have argued that growing up outside of the Philippines impacts children's roles within the family (Espiritu, 2002), sways career choices upon reaching adulthood (Suarez, 2015b), and leads to gendered experiences growing up (Suarez, 2015b; Wolf, 1997). More broadly, it has been argued that the identities of children in Asian immigrant families depend on both lived experiences and imagined communities (Yeoh et. al, 2005; Wolf, 1997). For reference, Benedict Anderson's work establishing imagined communities depicted them through the filter of nationalism: these communities are "imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." (Anderson, 1991). By this definition, scholars including Diane Wolf reasoned that Asian American children identify with their parents' communities through sentiment and imagination. In her study of children of Filipino immigrant families, Wolf interviewed college students at two California sites about their positive and negative experiences with their parents while growing up and pursuing a college education. The study provided further evidence that there are weighty differences between the upbringing of daughters and sons: while daughters were pushed to excel and then pulled back into choosing a college close to the family,

sons faced the same academic pressures but were ultimately less restricted in where they could go to school. Additionally, Wolf coined the term “emotional transnationalism,” drawing attention to how second-generation Filipinos shape their identities by referencing not only the experiences of themselves, their parents, or grandparents, but also real and imagined communities. Wolf’s study was a helpful starting point in analyzing how the unique experience of second-generation children changes when the U.S. military motivates immigration in the first place.

There are two uniquely Filipino concepts that I will incorporate into my thesis based on Kale Fajardo’s research on seafarers and seamen (Fajardo, 2011) and on E.J.R. David, Dinghy Sharma, and Jessica Petalio’s article on colonial mentality, *kapwa*, and the Filipino American family (David et. al, 2017). In the former source, Fajardo used the lens of Filipino seafarers to explore the concept of *utang na loob*, a Filipino psychology term that roughly translates to “debt of gratitude” or “debt of one’s inner self”. As an exchange built on reciprocity, *utang na loob* emphasizes indebtedness between equal parties because of a shared sense of identity or community. Fajardo noted that in the Philippines the government often utilized *utang na loob* to encourage overseas Filipino work, inspiring a feeling of indebtedness to the nation. The government would use “rhetoric of respect and deference” (namely, the linguistic addition of *ho* and *po* in Tagalog) to equalize the position of OFWs with the state (Fajardo, 2011). In other words, Fajardo argued that manipulation of *utang na loob* by the Filipino government disguised the unequal sacrifice that the state asked of its citizens. In my thesis, I will argue that the Filipino parents I interviewed have truly come to share an identity with the Air Force community and wish to support it throughout their careers and retirement. This dynamic, however, was qualified by several other factors: Filipino Air Force members did not take the Air Force and its benefits completely for granted, the Air Force still prioritized fulfilling its mission over anything else, and

children of these military members experienced heightened pressure to contribute to the family's functionality at home.

The second concept concerns *kapwa*, which is the foundation for *utang na loob* but can exist independently. In essence, *kapwa* is a sense of interconnectedness, or sharing an identity with others (Enriquez, 1992). It is the building block from which *utang na loob* and other Filipino psychology terms spring, including *hiya* (shame) and *pakikisama* (group solidarity). In "Losing Kapwa," David et. al discussed how Filipino children growing up in the United States and Filipino American families in general associate with *kapwa* differently. They reasoned that because Filipino American children often feel pressured to assimilate in order to fit into American society, they may start to favor independence and individualism over family dependence and interconnectedness (David et. al, 2017). With this article in mind, I sought to explore how *kapwa* was experienced in the context of Filipino *military* families in my study. More pointedly, I wanted to see whether there was a significant change in interconnectedness among my participants who grew up as Filipino-American military brats (a colloquial term for children in military families).

The aforementioned sources were invaluable in starting to understand the experiences surrounding the military and being a second-generation Filipino. Some of them acknowledged the impact and remnants of American colonization and they complicated the narrative of Overseas Filipino Workers, which often focuses on domestic work, construction jobs, or nursing. However, many of the studies were set in California, a state in which there are well-established Filipino communities and higher rates of diversity. The common focus on the Navy community meant that there were also significant differences in how families must move and adapt when the parent serving is given a new assignment (sea duty, or serving on vessels versus shore duty,



being land-based). Through my study, I will be able to strengthen discussion about other military branches (the Air Force) and other places in the United States that have a less diverse population (Colorado Springs) in relation to Filipinos. Just as Filipino communities in California are unique for their substantial history and influence in the state, Filipino communities in Colorado Springs exemplify how immigrant groups can form around institutions when there are few surrounding minority groups.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### Foundation and Theory

Past studies on Filipinos as U.S. military members and as immigrants will provide the foundation for my research. Most of my sources fall within a narrow range of topics, including post-1960s U.S. Navy enlistees in San Diego and their families (Espiritu, 2002), daughters that chose military career paths and challenged masculinized authority within the U.S. military (Suarez, 2015b), and Filipino seamen who personify *bagong bayani* (Overseas Filipinos Workers as “new heroes”) (Fajardo, 2011). In general, these studies were important for when I gathered data from my interviews and needed to compare my analysis with studies that were the most like mine. If my findings differed significantly, this would either indicate lapses in my analysis or—hopefully—the significance of Filipinos joining the U.S. Air Force rather than the U.S. Navy, or becoming an OFW.

The main concrete theory that I drew upon for my research at first was the concept of “emotional transnationalism,” which was discussed in Wolf’s 2005 article on Filipinos pursuing an American college education. I hypothesized that Filipino children in military families complicated the idea that immigrant children base their identities on both real and imagined

communities because often, the group's environment is also inextricably connected to the military. Although it is not tied to one nationality or ethnicity—which imagined communities are usually associated with (Anderson, 1991)—I predicted that the Air Force community made up a decentralized network upon which Filipino military brats could find solidarity and to a certain extent, an identity. Living on a military base, attending an international or base school, befriending fellow military children, and other experiences impacted them in a way that other types of immigration do not, mainly because a military occupation often dictates family lifestyle. The consistent effect of the military on their upbringing added a unique element to their identities in addition to real and imagined communities based on being Filipino.

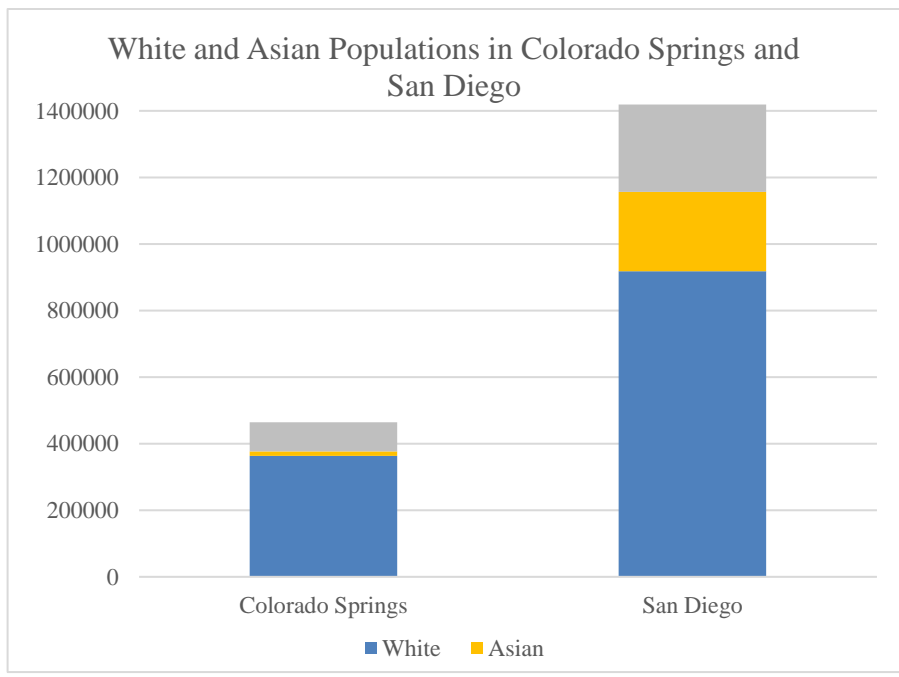
After finishing my research, I found that the idea of emotional transnationalism was closely connected to my study. Throughout my interviews, the children of Filipino U.S. Air Force parents seemed to perceive the Air Force through the filter of their parents' experiences as well as their own experiences in a military household. In other words, the second-generation Filipinos in my study perceived the military positively because their parents perceived it positively; however, they did not feel this to the same intensity because of some of the negative consequences they encountered as children of military parents. Their “points of reference” for forming their identities and communities depended on both their parents and their own experiences growing up and this led to some dissonance when they became adults.

### Location

California has been the most common place to study Filipinos in the American military, most likely because of the extensive history of Filipino migrants in Californian cities like San Diego and Los Angeles. My study focused on Colorado Springs instead for multiple reasons. First,

Colorado Springs is to the Air Force as San Diego is to the Navy: Colorado Springs is a renowned Air Force hub, with a rich military history housed in the United States Air Force Academy, Peterson Air Force Base, Schriever Air Force Base, and Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station located nearby. Pragmatically, the physical landscape and natural resources in Colorado Springs are also fitting for the Air Force. High elevation, protective mountains, land and air availability, and relative isolation manifested in a near perfect location for the Air Force (Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, 2015). As a result, bases in Colorado Springs—not including Cheyenne Mountain AFS and including Fort Carson, an Army base—have employed over 40,000 military personnel and 21,000 civilian personnel as of 2011 (El Paso County Health, 2012). Military presence does not decrease with retirement, either. In 2010, over 87,000 of Colorado’s veterans chose to stay in El Paso County in Colorado Springs following active duty (DMVA, 2015).

Colorado Springs is also notably less diverse than cities like San Diego. Its population is 78.2% White (363,218 people) and 2.9% Asian (13,469 people) compared to 64.7% (918,427 people) and 16.8% (238,478 people) respectively in San Diego (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).



In an American Community Survey (ACS; an ongoing survey by the U.S. Census Bureau) from 2010 to 2014, survey takers also reported that there were a little over 2,600 first-generation Filipino residents (Filipino immigrants) in Colorado Springs. The ACS reported that San Diego had over 83,000 first-generation Filipino residents in the same timeframe (Colorado Filipino Population Percentage City Rank, 2014).

Consequently, Colorado Springs offers an exceptional opportunity to study how Filipino communities form in Colorado, an inland state with a much lower population of Filipinos and Asians in general. Considering the heavy influence of the military in Colorado Springs and the past trajectory of the U.S. Navy in San Diego, I expected to have interviews supporting the idea that Filipinos tended to form their communities around the Air Force or (less frequently) other military branches.

### Interviews

Overall, my thesis is a basic qualitative study on Filipino U.S. Air Force service members and their families in Colorado Springs. Through this type of study, I could determine themes, meanings, and patterns from people's narratives; I could interpret more expressive information (behavior, word choice, etc.) from interviews that otherwise could not be relayed by quantitative data. Through qualitative study, I could take into account Filipinos' personal experiences in the Air Force more subjectively, which is appropriate and applicable considering Filipino parents' significant investment into the Air Force and their individual reasons for doing so.

I chose to do interviews for several reasons. Primarily, my subject of study had not been written about before and I wanted to base my research off real and recent experiences of Filipino U.S. Air Force members and their families. I already knew that their stories would be complex,

but I did not know yet which parts I would explore the most and interviews seemed like the most efficient and thorough way to get different kinds of information at once. I would not have been able to accurately describe the state of Filipino U.S. Air Force families with statistics or related studies about Filipinos in the Navy alone, and this method gave me the opportunity to talk with military families myself. I was able to look at the phenomena of Filipinos joining the Air Force in consideration of different roles in the family (parent and child) and I could analyze the varying effects of Air Force membership (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Most importantly, only qualitative research could allow me to engage with my participants more personally through face-to-face conversation, an appropriate method for the stories that they entrusted me with to share and explore in an academic setting. During the writing process, I could recall the emotions and context behind the transcribed words and factor them into what I was trying to say. I could also compare and contrast the stories of different participants (particularly between those of Filipino parents and their respective children) to better understand varying perspectives within military families. Both abilities helped to validate my findings because participants' stories were in constant discussion with one another throughout my thesis, and sometimes they unintentionally built upon one another to provide more context.

I created and followed two separate interview protocols (question sets) for each group of participants; however, follow-up questions were very common throughout the interviews. Sessions varied widely in duration, from 20 minutes to over an hour. My data consists of five interviews with active duty and retired Filipino U.S. Air Force members and four interviews with second-generation Filipinos. In this study, the term "second-generation Filipino" is defined as the direct descendant (child) of a Filipino U.S. military member. Four out of five of the Filipino U.S. Air Force parents were retired and had completed at least 20 years of service upon retirement.

All the interviewed second-generation Filipinos were related to at least one U.S. Air Force parent, and there was a significant age range among them (13 to 26). One of the four second-generation Filipinos was already an active duty officer in the U.S. Air Force.

Requirements for both participant groups are listed below.

**Age:** All participants must affirm they are 18 years old or older, **OR** have the written consent of at least one parent or legal guardian if they are minors.

For **active duty and retired military members**, participants must have a military career with a duration of at least 1 year.

For **second-generation Filipinos**, participants must have lived the majority (at least 75%) of their lives outside of the Philippines.

**Second-generation Filipinos** must have at least 1 parent who is active duty or retired military.

In regard to recruitment of my interview participants, it made sense logistically to start with people that I already knew from my community in Colorado Springs. I could easily find time to interview them and potentially recruit other participants from their recommendations, i.e., through snowball sampling if necessary (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). I originally chose to interview ten to fifteen individuals because I predicted that participants would have profoundly different experiences and backgrounds from each other as members of the Filipino military community in Colorado Springs. I wanted to broaden the perspective of my thesis as much as was possible for such a specific community, but due to time constraints and scheduling conflicts, I concluded my study with nine participants and interviewed each of them only once. There are a few limitations of having a small interview group that knew each other and myself: Familiarity meant that participants sometimes only implied answers to interview questions (without clarifying completely) because they had already told me about those experiences before. Additionally, the community was very self-contained and close-knit. Due to my use of snowball sampling, I did not venture into interviews with Filipinos that served in the Air Force in Colorado but were not considered a part of this small group. Although the number of participants

was quite limited, I tried to accommodate for these limitations by discussing a range of different experiences to achieve as big of a scope as possible without extrapolating beyond the Filipino U.S. Air Force community in Colorado Springs.

After I had completed the interviews and begun writing the analysis, I used a program to transcribe the sessions. I coded for several categories (which will be listed in the Appendices of this thesis) to get an idea of the topics that were discussed the most or the least, the latter in regard to unique situations or perspectives on being a part of a Filipino U.S. Air Force family. After coding, I originally created memos (Merriam & Tisdell, 2017; Charmaz, 2014) to conceptualize some of the trends that I saw in the interviews. These memos eventually grew, later forming the different sections of my thesis. I incorporated quotes from the interviews throughout the analysis section to give context and direct evidence of various themes.

#### Positionality in my research

I grew up in a family almost exactly like the ones in my study. Both of my parents were involved with the Air Force in some capacity: my father served for over 25 years, and my mom worked as a civilian on Air Force bases for a lot of my life. For the past decade, I have also been a part of the Filipino community in Colorado Springs that I researched. As an insider to this community, already having a relationship with participants made it much easier to discuss subjects that could have been uncomfortable or overlooked by people that were unfamiliar with our bigger “family”. This situation also made it simpler for me to initiate and maintain contact with the people in my study. Of course, my perspective was affected by my experiences. However, I maintained a professional relationship with my participants during interviews and I regularly checked the

progress of my research with peers and advisors to moderate my analysis and point out topics that deserved more or less attention.

## **ANALYSIS**

In my study, my interviews with Filipino U.S. Air Force parents and their children revealed two sides—sometimes complementary, sometimes not—of the same story. It was generally accepted by my participants that the military played an important role in their lives, particularly through the support of family programs, tangible benefits, and access to a network of other military members that could double as a family. However, the reality of the situation was far more complicated. Filipino U.S. Air Force families relied on the military for almost every need, and as a result, there was more weight in the parents' decision to invest time and energy because it was for their children as much as it was for themselves. In their own way, Filipino military children also needed to sacrifice things for the good of the entire family. Their increased responsibilities in the household, whether it was taking care of younger siblings or housework, made their personal association to the military less intensely positive compared to their parents' though they remained attached to the institution.

Air Force membership assured the security of Filipino families as a whole, but parents and children responded differently. The former wanted to continue a legacy and encourage their kids to join, sometimes in an effort to pay back the military for everything it had given them. The latter harbored personal knowledge of the negative effects of the Air Force on the family and could look to other sources of stability.



Filipino U.S. Air Force Parents and *utang na loob*

*The reputation of the Air Force*

The Air Force is not unique in providing family support. The Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Army also accommodate the entire family when there are family emergencies or specific educational or medical needs to be met (Powers, 2019). In my study, the central difference between the Air Force and other branches was in the reputation of the Air Force among Filipinos for being particularly sensitive to keeping the family together. This was a common precursor for the enlistment of the Filipino parents in my study: one of the strongest cases that I heard about the importance of family in the Air Force was from Luz.

Luz was the only active duty Filipino parent I interviewed. By the time I interviewed her, I had already met with her husband Rizal (who was also a member of the Air Force) and their daughter Rosa the day before. Her voice commanded the room during the interview and made it simple to focus on her words and nothing else. This is not to say that her voice had the snap of discipline, though it easily did when her children got too rowdy; rather, she sounded confident and proud of many of her stories and recollections of her experiences.

When Luz first considered a military career, she aimed for the Marine Corps. To guarantee a certain rank upon joining, she needed to have a form signed by her instructors from Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC). At that moment in time the idea that the Air Force cared about families made an immediate impact on her choice of military branch.

[My instructors] signed it, and they were like, "Are you joining the Marines?" And they asked me the same thing, "Why?" I said because "Gung ho, it's really good, so cool, I'm fit, I'm Hoo-ah." I was really gung ho. But then they kind of sat me down, and they were like, "Okay. I understand you're young right now. And I understand that, you know, the prestige of being a Marine is really good." But [then] they said, "Do you plan to have a family someday?" I said, "Yes."

So, I didn't think about that. That moment, I changed my mind, because I don't know how I am going to feel. You know, I feel that right now when I was 21. But then, how will I feel 10 years from now if I'm going to make this a career? Wasn't quite sure.

For Luz, having a family was indeed a serious consideration when deciding what branch to join. Her “gung ho” attitude for the Marines was ultimately balanced out by the appeal of family security in the Air Force. Although having a family would be further into the future for her, she knew that her family would later become her top priority and that she would want a job that accommodated that.

The reputation of the Air Force affected other participants in a similar way, namely in that they had comparable preconceptions about what it would be like to raise a family in the Air Force:

Marc: Being in the Air Force, you're always with your family.

Severino: Air Force is better. The Navy is just too hard for the family because you're always out at sea.

Cris: I thought that the U.S. Air Force would be that kind of environment that I wanted my kids to grow up in.

Even when Filipino enlistees did not yet have a partner or children, the expectation of eventually having a family and needing to provide for them made physical proximity to family important. There is an interesting contrast to draw from the arrangement the Air Force can provide its Filipino military members: while many lines of overseas work for Filipinos require movement and immigration of just one individual, the American military seems to wholeheartedly support entire families.

Additionally, if Filipino military members had only their immediate family to support once they moved to the United States, remittances became a vestige of the past. It is important for me to note that four of the five Filipino adults I interviewed had enlisted *after* moving to or

growing up in the United States. Consequently, they did not need to worry in the same way about supporting their extended families. They were often detached or less relied on by their relatives in the Philippines. They did not need to commit to jobs associated with Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in order to survive, and they did not have to experience many of the obstacles that OFWs face in the international workforce. But regardless of their relative comfort, all five adults in my study still sought out careers that would actively consider the needs of their children and partners. The desire for a job that “cared” for its workers *and* their families may be a reminder of the Philippines’ “labor brokerage” system in which such a desire was hard-fought or near impossible (Rodriguez, 2010). In other words, what may have been impractical in the past became doable in the current day through the U.S. military.

Cris, unlike most Filipinos who joined the Air Force while the Military Bases Agreement was active, was an exception in that he enlisted as an American citizen in the Philippines at Clark Air Base. His father had served in the Navy for several years, during which Cris was born in Rhode Island and briefly enjoyed international living in Italy before returning to the Philippines. When he explained his childhood and motivations for joining the Air Force, Cris said the following:

I chose the Air Force because seeing how my father was in the Navy [and] had a lot of separation time from our family when he was away during duty on ships and other locations, [it] was taking a toll on the family. So, I decided that being in a more steady environment but also being in the military was a good move.

First-hand experience, then, along with the guidance of older members of the military made it clear to aspiring Filipino military members that branches besides the Air Force often demanded more away-time from family. For Cris, his American citizenship gave him the ability to choose the Air Force instead of going through the Navy Philippine Enlistment Program like most who wanted to enlist in the Philippines.

*Family programs*

The **Exceptional Family Member Program**, or EFMP, is one of several programs that the Air Force provides for its military members and their families. By Air Force definition, an EFMP is a family member who has a “diagnosed physical, intellectual, or emotional-psychological condition that requires ongoing specialized medical or educational services.” (Air Force’s Personnel Center, n.d.-b) Logistically, if a family member has special educational or medical needs and qualifies as an EFMP, the Air Force Medical Service and the Airman and Family Readiness Center accommodate the family member both medically and in the community. In reality, this means EFMP can affect where Air Force service members are stationed based on whether the new assignment can fulfill the family’s needs. If the location is unable to do so, the Air Force’s Personnel Center facilitates reassignment for the military member.

The **Join Spouse Program** (or more colloquially, “mil to mil”) supports married military couples in the process of reassignment. After presenting a marriage certificate to the couple’s nearest Military Personnel Section Customer Service Element, the Air Force is then alerted to try and accommodate military couples who desire to be stationed together whenever one person is reassigned (Air Force’s Personnel Center, n.d.-c). Accommodation can take the form of assigning one military member in roughly the same location as their partner or, in the case of assignment locations that do not provide accompanied housing, finding another assignment for one of the military members that has the same duration.

**Humanitarian Reassignments and Deferments** aim to reconcile Air Force needs and family needs when a “severe, short-term problem” arises for an immediate family member (Air Force’s Personnel Center, n.d.-a) Spouses, children, parents(-in-law), and step-parents all qualify as immediate family members.

The humanitarian program offers deferment from reassignment or deployment. In the former case, the Air Force tries to send the military member to the location closest to the aforementioned family member. Humanitarian assignments only occur if the military member’s presence is “deemed as essential to alleviate [the] problem” and the problem is resolved within “12 [to] 18 months (24 months if terminally ill).” (Air Force’s Personnel Center, n.d.-a)



## Types of Humanitarian Reassignments

Justification	Normally Approved	Normally Disapprove
less)	X	
Chronic illness of family member		X
Recent death of spouse or child (within last 12 months)	X	
custody		X
Sexual assault of a dependent family member	X	
Complete adoption (once child is placed in home)	X	
Sole purpose of seeking / providing extended family support		X
Serious financial problem through no fault of the Airman, due to loss of possessions due to natural disaster, theft or fire	X	
Financial problems (including bankruptcy) resulting from over-extension of military income		X
Establishing a Family Advocacy Program (FAP) (In cases where there is evidence of spousal or child abuse or neglect in	X	
Problems associated with child-care arrangements due to lack of documented Family Care Plan		X
Home ownership problems		X

During my study, the role of the Air Force as a caretaker arose when participants discussed family programs. Three of the Filipino parents recounted experiences with family programs in the Air Force that truly made the difference between the American military and other jobs.

In the Air Force, “humanitarian assignments” allow for reassignment if a serious issue arises with an immediate family member. This program considers how productivity of Air Force members can be negatively affected by family emergencies; thus, the Air Force fashioned a way to address both the needs of the Air Force and the family simultaneously.

Before moving to Colorado Springs, Luz’s mother was diagnosed with cancer. Upon hearing the news, Luz and her family were able to move to Los Angeles to take care of her mother. She recalled this situation with slight exasperation—she wanted me to truly understand the significance of what the Air Force was able to do for her and for her family.

We were able to do "humanitarian". That's also a perk, the military is very family friendly, that they recognize the importance of family. Because if I'm here at work, and my mom is dying somewhere, how am I supposed to do my work? How am I supposed to balance work and life? They were able to move us to the closest base, which was L.A. That was how we got to L.A.

Luz’s mother was not the only mention of humanitarian assignments. Severino and Edita, his wife, faced a very similar situation with Edita’s mother. Also diagnosed with cancer, Edita’s mother was able to stay with them in Delaware. Once her illness became more critical, the situation initiated Severino’s reassignment to Schriever Air Force Base in Colorado Springs so that they could unite her with extended family (specifically Vilma, Edita’s sister.) As of 2019, Edita and Vilma’s families still lived four houses away from each other.

To Luz and Rizal, as well as to Severino and Edita, it was not just a logistical move on the Air Force’s part to offer humanitarian assignments. Ensuring that military members remained effective workers was important, but by offering this option, Air Force members could regain a

degree of agency in being able to take care of their family. The program recognized the needs of military members as family members and enabled them to occasionally prioritize their personal situations, even in a work environment.

When I interviewed Luz, I often heard her two young sons running around the house. From time to time, they would barge into the room to show us little things they had found and to loudly explain what the items were, only to rush out of the room again before finishing their explanations. As enthusiastic as they were, Luz and Rizal experienced firsthand what it meant for one of them to be in the Exceptional Family Member Program before moving to Colorado Springs. “We got orders to Kadena, Japan,” Rizal told me. “Tristan didn't clear, because he has speech issues. He didn't talk [...] He wasn't speaking. He was already four. So, they canceled Kadena, and they were gonna move me somewhere I didn't wanna go. So, I saw Colorado Springs open, and I was like, ‘Oh, let me apply to this.’”

Due to his speech impairments, Tristan qualified for EFMP. Essentially, the program allowed for Luz and Rizal to bypass an assignment that normally would have been nonnegotiable. They were able to stay “stateside” (be stationed in the United States) instead of being sent to another base (Kadena) that potentially would not have been able to fulfill the entire family’s needs. Once Rizal applied to Colorado Springs, he and Luz faced yet another challenge that is unique to married military partners.

The Join Spouse Program (“mil to mil”) is the last of the three family programs offered by the Air Force that I mention in this study. It is also, as Luz puts it, “a gamble”. In general, the program works to assign military spouses in bases near one another if one partner is reassigned. Because the program does not address any intense family issues or medical needs, it is arguably the least reliable program to depend on for family unity. Spouse proximity leans more towards

“perk” than it does “necessity” for fulfilling the mission of the Air Force. However, when these programs were first developed, the Pentagon clearly recognized what was at stake if spousal needs were not addressed: “Today, if military men married to military women are not kept happy, the Pentagon risks losing not one, but two trained soldiers: the wife and the husband.” (Enloe, 2000). As tedious as it may be to plan assignments around two active duty members, the program works to satisfy two different assets of the Air Force.

Consequently, the Air Force continues to cater to family togetherness through “mil to mil”. Luz explained the program in her interview succinctly:

We get coded to say that if my husband gets orders, I get orders, they're gonna try to fit us within 50 miles from each other. It's not gonna guarantee that we're going to be together at the same base, but they're gonna try to do it within 50 miles.

My husband ended up trying to go over here because he knew, when we did the research, Peterson's not so far. Schriever's not so far. Cheyenne Mountain's not too far. Even Buckley, that's the furthest one, but still not too far. [...] When he got it—maybe about two days later—I got orders... I got to Peterson. And we were happy, because at the end of the day, it meets Air Force goals and it meets our goal as a family to stay together.

Luz’s recount expressed an important point. The Filipino parents who discussed family programs (Luz, Rizal, and Severino) did not take the programs for granted, although they knew that they were widely accessible in the Air Force. All three addressed them as momentary opportunities for family support, including Luz: “How we got here [to Colorado Springs], it was also by luck as well. [...] We kinda had to plan it that way. But it's all a gamble, it's not guaranteed.” The Air Force could develop programs for families to stay together, but it could not completely promise their utilization if they did not have a direct impact on fulfilling the Air Force mission. The Air Force could only meet families halfway: providing family programs in the first place incentivized Filipino parents to stay; presenting the programs as easily accessible (though not guaranteed) made it seem like the Air Force had their members’ interests at heart but cannot



always follow through. Thus, there are real limitations to the Air Force as an institution in how consistently it can provide tools for family welfare, but Filipino parents still experienced the Air Force's caretaking abilities positively. For those in my study, the Air Force was able to intervene and shift situations for the better, but this says nothing about those military members who faced different circumstances.

### *Tangible benefits*

The variety of benefits that the Air Force offers its members and their families is remarkable compared to other jobs in the United States. Granted, the benefits were not always the immediate draw for the Filipino adults in my study; however, they often became a serious reason for investing time and energy into the Air Force. It was enabling for Filipino military members to have the promise of security just by serving.

At 21 years old, Luz first turned to the military because she felt that she needed direction. She had been working to pay for college on her own and could only take two classes at a time. "I just felt like, 'I'm getting left behind,' [that] kind of deal," Luz told me. "Like everyone else is doing their thing, everyone's going to college, almost graduating, and I needed [...] to do something." Familiarity with the military was key in Luz's decision of what to do next. Her father was retired Navy, so she grew up a military brat; in high school, she participated in Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFJROTC). After she switched tracks from joining the Marines to joining the Air Force, she finally had a path.

While growing up in a military family, Luz enjoyed many perks through a simple presentation of military ID: tax-free shopping at the commissary and Base Exchange (BX), free healthcare at base clinics, and military discounts outside of bases, to name a few. I, myself have

felt the reassurance that comes with knowing that nearly everything I need can be found at an Air Force base. Unfortunately, receiving these benefits stops once children become young adults.

Thus, after Luz joined the Air Force and renewed her connection to the military as an active duty member and not a military brat, her children were able to enjoy the same tangible benefits listed above. Through her military membership she was able to ensure reliable healthcare for everyone, and her children—particularly Rosa—were aware of this privilege: “Getting medication is easy; all I gotta tell my mom is, ‘Hey, I need a refill,’ and then the next day she’ll just come with it and it’s great.”

The Air Force makes it easy for members to take care of themselves, but my participants believed the narrative that the Air Force took care of you. Indeed, joining the Air Force expedites a lot of processes that would normally take time in the civilian world, and it usually provides benefits in centralized locations (Air Force bases). Through this accessibility, it is easy to see why members find the military very diligent in providing for them.

Education was another significant benefit of Air Force membership. At the time of Luz’s interview, she was also only one class away from earning a bachelor’s degree after 19 years of serving. She was able to invest in her education at the same time as her occupation, and this was not the only occurrence of educational achievement. Before his retirement, Rizal was able to finish his bachelor’s degree and later earn a Master’s. Both occurrences were made possible through the GI Bill, an educational assistance program that pays for college, graduate studies, or training programs (Air Force’s Personnel Center, n.d.-d) The GI Bill can also be transferred to a member’s spouse or children.

I can speak about my own experiences regarding this program. My father transferred the GI Bill to my older sister and me, effectively splitting up the normal 36-month duration into two

to cover our first two years of college respectively. Everything was essentially paid for: my tuition, housing, and even my textbooks were covered by the program, and it made a huge difference for my parents to be able to breathe easy for the beginning of our college careers. In a similar way to the family programs discussed earlier, the Air Force was able to carry some of the weight of Filipino parents in providing for their children. This in turn allowed parents to consider the future welfare of their children, especially when they were on the verge of becoming adults.

When I asked parents what they wanted for their kids in the future or what they had advised when their kids were growing up, the pursuit and completion of a college education took priority over any other pieces of advice, including joining the U.S. Air Force. The importance of education was unsurprising. To put it in another Air Force retiree's words, Marc noted that the general feeling surrounding learning was that "once you have it, they can't take it away from you. Unlike material things, you know. It all gets away. [...] Education is something that you have for life." Education was something to cultivate over time, regardless of the career path that his children chose to follow.

By emphasizing education, parents like Severino could also ensure that their kids would be able to lead self-sufficient, independent lives: "So it was, for me and Edita, it's really more you have to finish college. You have to focus on college. You gotta finish your career, because we're not gonna be here forever. You know, you have to learn how to be independent." For Severino and Edita—and in fact, for all the parents I interviewed—they did not expect or plan for their family makeup to be like families in the Philippines. This meant that relying on extended "blood" family—siblings, aunts, uncles—was not always an option for children if their parents were unavailable. As described in a study on Filipino American families, "Filipinos typically have a very large familial system—in America and the Philippines—that they rely on

for emotional and material support” (David et. al, 2017). For Filipino U.S. Air Force members, however, there is little possibility of living with or near siblings (extended family) since moves occur every several years and personal preference for assignment is not the first consideration for the military. (Although Severino and Edita lived four houses away from Edita’s sister Vilma, it was only after Severino’s humanitarian reassignment that their families could grow together.) Education became a reassurance for Filipino military parents that their children could survive without the military and eventually without them.

Surviving *with* the military was the hope, however. The reliability of the Air Force community to provide for its members was alluring to Filipino U.S. Air Force parents, especially since they could promise their children with near certainty that many of their basic needs would be addressed if they joined. The parental desire I found throughout my interviews to advise children to join the Air Force was enforced when parents themselves grew up in military families. The cycle of growing up a military brat, joining the Air Force in adulthood, and having children who in turn grow up as military brats and consider the Air Force for their futures was a significant progression for some of the families that I interviewed. To this point, Luz and her eldest daughter, Rosa, made remarks about joining the Air Force that almost mirrored each other. They both felt like they belonged to the military “culture” that they grew up with, from the benefits to the people.

Luz: I’m a military brat myself. You know, I didn’t know what to do without the military. So, I felt like it was the thing to do, kind of deal. But then, you know, being in the military is also [...] It was very familiar. So it’s weird, with change. I’m so good with change, but then, I didn’t want to change that. I didn’t want to change that because I loved it.

Rosa: I grew up with military. I feel like I would be more comfortable if I joined the military because I would know most of the stuff, because I experienced it. [...] I feel like going into the military would be good for me.

This finding is interesting to consider alongside previous studies of military family dynamics. In the article “(De)Militarized Domesticity”, Theresa Suarez noted that many interview participants (Filipinos in the U.S. Navy) actually avoided encouraging the military as a career for their children because of the demands of military life. In fact, the way in which Suarez’s participants conducted their everyday lives was to “lessen a reliance on the values, resources, and structures of the military for the material and social well-being of the family.” (Suarez, 2015a). Parents in Suarez’s study *did* believe that joining as an officer could grant their kids more independence from leading “militarized” lives, however. In my own study, a few of my participants commented on this difference, both as parents and as second-generation Filipinos. Luz saw it as a possibility for her children to achieve more than she had in her time in the Air Force:” I want them to be higher ranking than me, I would like them to be officers.” Along those same lines, Luke—Severino’s son and active duty Air Force at the time of his interview—expressed officer status as somewhat of a continuation of his father’s achievements.

I thought it was awesome. [...] I thought to myself, I am the new generation here. It is my turn to make my own path, and it is my turn to lead in the way that I want to. And in the end, I know most parents just want their kids to be successful and, if you would, most parents would want their children to surpass [them] in some shape or form. To me, I thought [...] this was a good opportunity to do that with my dad.

Indeed, a hope for some Filipino parents in pushing a career in the Air Force was for their children to carry on the torch and take it further than they had. Having sometimes invested more than 20 years in their military careers, parents like Luz and Severino knew not only the benefits that accompany the job, but the prestige and respect accorded to it. The ability to progress in the Air Force on an individual level through promotions *and* intergenerationally by encouraging kids to become officers enforces the idea of Air Force membership as a legacy for entire Filipino families, not just the parent. Similarly, if children chose not to pursue a military career, it could

be disappointing—a shutting of a door that a parent had opened, almost a negation of the hard work that the parent had put in for decades.

*The Air Force as a community*

The final aspect I will discuss for Filipino U.S. Air Force parents is the importance of access to a community. As the foundation for the Air Force as an institution, people mattered just as much as the family programs and benefits that the military could provide. Without a military-based network of people the Filipinos in my study would not have been able to find a community in the Air Force, let alone a community with one another in Colorado Springs. The environment that came with joining the Air Force—primarily frequent moves to a variety of bases—fostered connection out of necessity but lasted out of familiarity. Two trends arose in my interviews about the importance of the Air Force Filipino community versus the importance of the Air Force community in general.

The Air Force community at large made an impact on the Filipino parents in my study, but some went even further and sought out other Filipinos wherever they were stationed. Sharing a Filipino identity did not automatically engender friendship, but the presence of other Filipinos often led to positive experiences and enduring relationships during deployments and reassignments. According to Cris, there were times when he was deployed and he could still find Filipinos to connect with:

When I was in Japan, I was going to be sent to Saudi Arabia for a three-month deployment. Even before I left, my other friends that were Filipinos that had gone there before already told me that I shouldn't worry about going there because there are a lot of Filipinos there and if I go to a certain place on the base, then I can expect to meet up with other Filipinos and it would basically be a good time. [...] A lot of the folks that I did end up meeting over there in 2002, 2003, during my deployment, still are very good friends of mine to this day. 16, 16 years later. And we still keep in touch.

Receiving and sharing knowledge of where other Filipinos were stationed was common among my participants. In fact, the foundation of the Filipino community in this study was built upon an existing network of Filipinos, and arguably began before anyone met in person in Colorado Springs. Before moving there, Marc already knew Edita and Severino from a previous assignment. Edita connected Marc with her sister Vilma, and in the following years, they would grow the little community with Severino and Edita, Cris and his wife Marisol, and Luz and Rizal, along with a few other families. One moment in Cris's interview described the formation of their community perfectly:

One thing that can always be guaranteed whenever you move or you have a permanent change of station is that you would always link up with other Filipino families as a means of support so that you can easily adapt to the new community. [...] There's a certain kinship that exists among all Filipinos regardless of where you're from in the Philippines, and if you happen to meet up with them somewhere—anywhere around the world—then there's sort of like an unspoken... It's hard to describe, but it's kind of like a familial relationship.

In Luz's case, being Filipino was not always the primary connection she had in friendships. Finding out that a neighbor was another member of the Air Force was enough reason to reach out and offer support. Luz's personal ability to uncover and connect with a military community in any place that she was stationed was a significant plus for her and resulted in advice that she passed on to others. "Every time I go [on a temporary duty assignment] somewhere, I'll call someone and I get to meet them again," she said. "You never feel really lonely, because I always tell people—especially the new Airmen that [are sent to] our unit—everyone here is scared, the first time. It's almost like we're not here with our core families, but we build families with each other because no one's naturally from this area." Even when I interviewed her, she was able to demonstrate the connection between Air Force members

impromptu. She could point in a direction, reference a house nearby, and list the current Air Force base to which that neighbor belonged.

It was not only Luz who championed the people in the Air Force as a supportive, widespread community, but Luz made an effort to emphasize how military members took care of each other, even outside of the workplace. “Your normal day-to-day here, it's still that Air Force family trying to take care of you,” she explained after describing her neighborhood. “You still feel taken care [of], you can always count on that part. I guess it's embedded in us to take care of people, no matter if we don't work together. She's Air Force, I'm Air Force.”

The connection between military members, despite being enforced and initiated by working for the same military institution, was pointedly a human connection. In both Cris and Luz's answers, they mentioned something that not every Filipino in my study perceived as their doing, but everyone performed: the creation of a community. The “family” of the Air Force was not created by the military. Instead, the structure of the Air Force forced its members to associate with one another, and those members in turn created communities amongst themselves. This idea closed the gap between occupational obligation—supporting others because it helps the Air Force mission—and sharing an identity—supporting others because you relate to them and have a sort of kinship. Through unspoken, mutual understanding, they could form a symbiotic relationship that did not need to include the military beyond first introductions.

Near the end of Luz's interview, she said something that is the crux of understanding *utang na loob* for Air Force Filipinos.

I want [my kids] to join the military. I want them to either finish college, go ROTC, and join the military. [...] I want my kids to have comfort. I want them to be higher ranking than me, I would like them to be officers, you know? But just knowing the fact that [...] if they ever get stationed somewhere else, there is a family that's going to take care of them.



That's the military family. They're gonna take care of them professionally, they're gonna take care of them personally, [...] financially, it's a good move. [...] So, yes. I want all three of my kids to. If they're willing to take, if they're gonna go that route, I'm not gonna *push them* push them. Maybe a little bit. But, hopefully I can influence them, but my hopes are all of them are gonna join, to give back. And it's also because [the military has] given so much to me. This family would not be here without the military. I would not have this house without the military, you know? I would never have [...] the comforts and successes I've had without the military. [...] My dad would not be here. I would not be in the United States if it wasn't for the military. So, to give back.

For Luz, the Air Force was inheritable. She had experienced firsthand how the military could “take care of you,” and she wanted her kids to be able to benefit equally, if not more. There was a distinct feeling of security that came with knowing that an institution like the Air Force had family programs built into it, inseparable from the job and easily accessible. In brief, Filipino parents could practically guarantee their children’s well-being through a military career based on their own experiences and the presentation of the Air Force as an altruistic institution.

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In Filipino psychology, the concept of *utang na loob* roughly translates to “a debt of one’s inner self” or “a debt of gratitude.” (Fajardo, 2011). In conjunction with its foundational counterpart *kapwa*, it emphasizes an “inner awareness of relationships of unity between oneself and other people” as the origin of willful indebtedness to a family, or more broadly, a community (Enriquez, 1992; Fajardo, 2011). *Kapwa* is also not a product of outside forces: a hierarchy, such as the one found between the Air Force and Filipino U.S. Air Force members, is not the source of *utang na loob*. The Air Force community, however, was.

Both terms were never explicitly stated as such by any of my interview participants. The feeling of *wanting* to give back to those with a shared identity, however, was recognizable and strong. All the Filipino U.S. Air Force members that I interviewed felt inextricably tied to the military community wherever they were stationed, and not just because their job mandated

reassignment. The familiarity and reliability of the Air Force community inspired them to not only serve for over 100 years collectively, but to try and pass the torch to their children in the name of “giving back” to the military. For Luke, Severino’s son and recent Air Force officer, his parents succeeded in passing down an economic and cultural legacy.

This is *not* to say that the feeling of *utang na loob* applies to all Filipinos in the Air Force, but rather that it makes sense for some Filipino military members to feel this way. Luz’s life in particular revolved around the Air Force at a young age as a military brat, in adolescence as a young adult without direction, and as a mother who wanted to provide for her family. Her generally positive experiences with the Air Force and its ability to keep up with her family’s specific needs were conducive to creating a narrative in which the military community supports you, always. Keeping her family safe, healthy, and relatively happy were enough for her to want to pay into the system for the future, rely on fellow Air Force members, and encourage her children to do the same.

At the same time, it is important to remember that the Air Force presents itself to be as family-oriented as possible while still fulfilling the Air Force mission. Though the Air Force community is able to put other people first on a personal basis, the Air Force can never consider *only* the needs of its members because it still needs to accomplish work. The Air Force’s family programs and benefits can be tempting to parents, but they can also be misleading about the hierarchy between the military and its members, which still exists. In the next section on second-generation Filipinos, the experiences of children growing up with Air Force parents reveal that the military’s narrative that it can take care of families actually disregards the cost of military membership at home.

Second-generation Filipinos and *kapwa*

The experiences of Filipino U.S. Air Force parents and their children, of course, varied greatly due to their different roles in the military family. Filipino parents worked for the Air Force directly, but children dealt with both the positive and negative consequences of the occupation—free healthcare, education, taking care of siblings, frequent moves, and deployment, to name a few. With this difference in mind, I argue that the perceptions of second-generation Filipinos about the Air Force were greatly influenced by how their parents portrayed and participated in the military; *however*, their views were not to the same intensity. Jiselle, Cris’s oldest daughter, summarized this idea nicely: “When you're a military brat or a dependent, I would say the pressures of being in that kind of situation are very different as opposed to when [...] you yourself are active duty.”

This dichotomy is clearest between Luz and Luke, the only second-generation Filipino I interviewed who had gone on to become an active duty officer in the Air Force after college. For context, at the time of her interview, Luz was already planning to continue working in government service after retirement.

I think I wanna get into the [Government Service] world. [...] I connect well with that community. Things will get done, you know? And there's no run around. I know the objective and what the mission is. I know why it's important, you know. And, giving back to the military, to help support them in a different [way]... Once I retire, I still want to serve in some kind of fashion.

When I interviewed Luke, I asked him about the goals he had for his career in the Air Force. His response took me by surprise, especially since it was after I had already interviewed all of the Filipino military parents who were deeply connected with the Air Force.

Uh, I have Plan A through D. [laugh] So Plan A is, uh, stick with the military, and then just, make it—try to make it twenty years, unless something else better comes along. Plan B. So, currently my job is Space Operations. If I don't like it, then, uh, try to switch [Air

Force Specialty Codes], or jobs in the Air Force to be a Public Health Officer, since I'm going for my Masters in that. Plan C is go Reserves. And, or Guard. And Plan D is just to get out altogether. [...]

The striking difference between these answers lies in the respective relationships that Luz and Luke had with the military. The Air Force gave each of them direction as young adults, and they both had grown up as military brats before joining. However, Luz steadily relied on the Air Force (and the government in general) throughout her career and she planned to contribute in a similar way to the government later in life. She did not immediately contemplate other lines of work that could provide the same quality of life or better, but more importantly, she did not show any doubt in the Air Force's ability to take care of her or her family at any point in her interview.

Conversely, Luke had four different plans of action depending on if the Air Force worked out for him. Prepared for the worst, Luke's perspective automatically included consideration of other occupations. He made sure that there was always an alternative to the military, despite the very real benefits of the Air Force and the positive experiences of his parents. Unlike the Filipino parents I interviewed, he also emphasized that the Air Force was not the only source of direction in his life; in fact, he was aware that the Air Force could not completely guarantee his success. To him and other second-generation Filipinos, success did not necessarily entail finding a job with the same benefits given by the Air Force. As complex as this shift in Filipinos' relationship to the Air Force is, I argue that there are two main reasons for second-generation Filipinos like Luke to explore other career options and not remained personally tied to the Air Force: the significant pressures and responsibilities they dealt with as Filipino military brats, and their more individualized lives as Filipino-Americans in terms of finding community and purpose.

*Sharing the burden*

The older second-generation Filipinos that I interviewed often praised the Air Force as a conduit for healthcare and education, but they also had a lot to say about their sacrifices to the military as a family and as an individual. Regularly urged to take on more responsibility than the average Filipino-American kid, some of my participants felt strengthened or challenged by their experiences during childhood, and their personal views of the military were shaped this way.

In reality, responsibility for the entire family's well-being fell on every family member and was not completely ameliorated by the presence of the military. Taking care of the family was not perceived as a strictly paternal role for the Air Force community in Colorado Springs, as was theorized for Navy families in San Diego (Shigematsu et. al, 2010). The families in my study all had two full-time working parents, most with partners working as Air Force members or as civilians on Air Force bases. Consequently, children in these families often found themselves taking care of younger siblings as soon as they were old enough and regularly completing housework because parents were frequently absent. Usually highly disciplined, these households demanded a different kind of sacrifice, doubling the children's responsibilities as both Filipino kids and military brats.

When I asked Luke about what it was like to grow up in a military family, he responded immediately. "Strict," he said. "First thing that comes, 'strict'." With an answer as quick as this, I had to ask how; Luke readily explained.

A good example of this is, my older brother and I came home, and, immediately just being the studious kid that I was—or kind of [was]—I got my homework done right away. [...] Once I finished that, went downstairs, watched TV.

Then my dad came home, and the first thing that he [...] came home to was, "Why the fuck is it so dark in here? We're not fucking vampires." And then it was, like—it went on to be like, "Ah, the window blinds are open, you're letting all the heat out, you're watching TV in the dark, you're gonna ruin your eyes. The trash isn't thrown away, this

should be automatic"—Which, by the way, there's like a piece of tissue in there— "The dishes aren't done, why isn't—why aren't they done? There's no rice cooked, this should be automatic." And then he's just going off and off and off, and like, just... And then, of course, [he] went into my older brother's room and started yelling at him about why things have to be done a certain way.

The flipside to exchanges like this was intriguing to hear from Luke's father, Severino. To the Air Force retiree, doling out the responsibility of housework to his kids not only made sense at the time, but was crucial for the entire family to function. The Air Force could give both parents an opportunity to provide for their families through military membership, but that meant that domestic responsibilities often fell to the children. Without distributing the burden of managing a household, both Severino and Edita did not imagine that their family could survive.

It made us work smarter. What I mean with smarter is because with Edita and I working at the same time, we've always taught our kids to do their portion at home. You know, like work-wise and all that. So they grew up more disciplined. [...] For example, they would wake up like 5:30 in the morning, get themselves dressed up. [They] became more automatic. And then, part of what we taught our kids is because we really need to help each other out, 'cause we're all doing our own thing. And so, we share responsibilities at home. Which made it easier for me and Edita.

By sharing a household, the demands of the Air Force on Severino as a military member and Edita as a civilian nurse had made an undeniable impact on their kids. Their perspectives clashed: for Luke and his older brother Quentin, the expectations for them to help around the house was sometimes a lot to ask, especially when they were younger; for Severino and Edita, the request made it just easy enough for everyone to handle a military family life.

Interestingly, Severino's assumption that everything would be done "automatically" indicated a highly militarized home life. There were methods and expectations for managing the household, and if they were not executed correctly, there were consequences. This was not a singular idea among other second-generation Filipino kids either, though the phrasing changed from person to person. Rosa framed this a little differently: "I guess when you're in a military

family, you're more independent. Whatever your parents do in the military, they bring into the household," she explained. "We have order. When we're around my parents, we kind of behave because we don't want to get in trouble." For both Luke and Rosa's families, children accepted the presence of the military in their daily lives. It was not strange to have a sort of hierarchical organization at home.

The pressures on Filipino partners to make a military family "work" have been explored in depth before (Enloe, 2000; Espiritu, 2002), but the hardship of having kids take care of each other within a Filipino military family is a less common subject. In having two full-time working parents but usually no extended family for support, the second-generation kids in my study took on the role of "parent" when adults were absent or busy. "Quentin was already 10 years old and they gave him the responsibility, like, 'You gotta watch [Luke],'" Luke recalled at one point, explaining his older brother's situation.

When I first met Rosa, I was struck by how closely she watched her younger brothers in public. It was more than an occasional glance in their direction. Usually seated near them in a restaurant, house, or movie theater, she scolded and praised them like a parent would, keeping a watchful eye on them almost constantly. Her attention to her brothers showed how deeply she cared about them, but also indicated the responsibility of her role as an older sibling: for the past several years of her life, she had never had just herself to worry about. In her interview, Rosa explained the situation casually, though the weight of what she was saying was anything but.

I only have time at night for my own personal stuff. Throughout the day, it's always my brothers, I always have to babysit. [My parents] don't get it, because they're out all the time. But me, I would always babysit. I'm always at home and it sucks.

I would consider myself like the "mini-mom" because I'm home all the time, and I have to feed my brothers. I have to help them with homework, I have to take them to bathe sometimes, I have to help them. If something goes wrong, then it's on me, because they can't blame my brothers. They're babies. It's hard.

Beyond taking care of siblings, children in Filipino military families also had to acclimate to parental absence when it came to their own needs and development. What would normally be taken for granted (parents at sports meets, concerts, ceremonies, and the like) became conditional, depending on the needs of the Air Force.

Rosa: Let me start with the bad. They're gone. Like, my parents, they work all the time, sometimes my mom will come home from work and then all of a sudden, she'll get a call from her coworkers and then she has to leave again. It's kinda hard to not see my parents most of the time.

Luke: I'd say long hours that my parents had to work [were a challenge]. [...] It was just something that I accepted, and my older brother took care of me a lot. But, [I] didn't realize like, wow, my parents are coming home at like 5, 6 o'clock at night, and they're still finding the energy to cook dinner and help us with homework. [...] Maybe it was more hard on them than it was on us, but there are days I just kinda accepted it. "Oh, my dad's not coming home for a while. Okay." So, you know. Same thing with my mom.

Jiselle: Mom and Dad were always busy, which wasn't a bad thing, but you know. Sometimes that's hard to talk about with your kids especially when you're just like, that's just the norm.

Being away and busy were the most common traits that second-generation Filipinos associated with their parents, but it is important to note that they never criticized, blamed, or even specifically pointed out the Air Force's role in encouraging absenteeism. This may have been partly because the kids in my study never lived without the military. In other words, they had not yet experienced their parents having non-military jobs that demanded less, and the needs of the Air Force became normalized. There were extensive amounts of time in their childhoods where they could rely only on themselves, but this was not unexpected. The cost of military membership did not fall on just the military parent: if everyone benefited, everyone paid, in one way or another.



Absence meant lost time as a family, but this is not to say that Filipino military families lacked affection or understanding. In his interview, Luke explained the importance of family and maintaining closeness whenever possible. Although the Air Force claimed a lot of time from both of his parents, everyone in his family treasured the limited time they had together as a result. At one point, he held it in direct contrast with others his age who were not Filipino.

I always ask some of my American—well. I'm an American. But, all my Caucasian friends— "What do you guys do for, like... What do you guys do for dinner?" And then they say, "I don't know."

I was like, "What do you mean you don't know? [...] You don't sit as a family and, you know, talk about how your day was or anything?" They're like, "No, we just kinda grab our food and go."

And then, just kinda seeing it, growing up and seeing how that would shape a lot of kids and there's not a lot of family value into that. And maybe it's just the American way, but I thought it was important after a while. I was like, wow, my mom and dad are actually asking me how my day is going. They're helping me with homework, whereas most other kids, their parents aren't following up with them. [...] I think that's why it was important.

According to Luke, away-time from family made times together more meaningful. Although he had negative experiences with growing up in an “automatic” family, he seemed to recognize the weight that was already on his parents’ shoulders and he accepted family life for what it was. In general, none of the second-generation Filipinos actually mentioned that they felt distant or disconnected from their parents despite the demands of the Air Force. Their perceptions of the Air Force were still generally positive, but it is important to point out that they were tempered by the burden of being a military family member.

### *Growing up American*

For the second-generation Filipinos in my study—all of whom grew up in the United States— independence was entrenched in living as a Filipino-American. In a study on *kapwa* in a

Filipino-American context, David, Sharma, and Petalio argued that Filipino family values of cooperation and interdependence are traded for individualism and independence. They reasoned that if Filipino children “Westernize in this sense,” they would contradict “traditional Filipino values of familial dependency” and would weaken their sense of *kapwa* (David et. al, 2017). Though there are undoubtedly differences between growing up in the Philippines and growing up in the United States, the interviews I had with the children of Filipino U.S. Air Force parents significantly complicated this theory. At times, their stories proved the opposite. Both second-generation Filipinos and their military parents appreciated having an environment that was conducive to opinion, conversation, and compromise.

When Luke was growing up, speaking his mind came as second-nature, especially in an American environment that approved of open communication and put some value in children’s input. This difference between Luke’s childhood and that of his parents was largely encapsulated in his identity as a Filipino-American. Luke pointed this out several times in his interview: “That’s just how I identify because the reality is, as a Filipino-American, I don’t cook Filipino food on an everyday basis. I don’t speak the language. [...] I was born and raised in America, so. I’m an American.”

As a Filipino family living in the United States, Luke’s parents eventually embraced taking time to develop a relationship with their sons that was based on an exchange of ideas, not just seniority. By the end of Severino’s interview, he had made it clear that the way in which his sons grew up in the United States was completely different from his own childhood. This was not a bad thing at all. Rather, it was an opportunity for the entire family to grow together in the United States.

I guess what I’m saying is in the Philippines, as a parent, you could dictate your kids what they, you know, the courses or the career that you want them to take. Here in the

States, kids become more opinionated. Right? And so, it's kind of a culture shock for us, for me, but then as you know, it's actually a good thing. It really is a good thing. [...] You realize that here in the United States, kids—even though, you know, no matter what age they are—when they have an opinion, and they voice their opinion, it really matters. In the Philippines, it's like, “Nope, nope, nope, nope. This is what I'm telling you, this is what you're gonna do.” So, of course, that didn't evolve; for me, that didn't evolve right away. Took some time, you know? It's really more, let's grow up together. But that, [...] to me, it's very important.

It's the culture. [...] Because in the Philippines, it's always about respect, right? I'm the parent. I'm older. I'm the, the older brother. I'm the older sister. Whatever I tell you, it's pretty much law.

For context, Filipino families often emphasize respect during exchanges with anyone older, from grandparents to older siblings (David et. Al, 2017). Shifting from respecting elders to respecting your own children was major for Severino, and yet, he appreciated that this kind of relationship was possible. Rather than seeing this change as a loss of family dependency or *kapwa*, it meant that Severino and Luke could reach an understanding that may not have been entertained in a conventional family in the Philippines.

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The conflicting feelings about the military within second-generation Filipinos can be explained through the concept of emotional transnationalism. Children were situated between two vastly different perspectives of how the Air Force works for Filipino military families, and ambivalence about the military was to be expected. On one hand, the children in these families could not deny all the positives of their parents' membership in the Air Force. They were often grateful for what the military was able to provide them, and they understood why their parents wanted them to experience the same security through pursuit of a military career. At the same time, they had already formed their own opinions about the Air Force due to their more negative experiences of what needs to be sacrificed in order for this arrangement to work. The “points of reference” for the emotional transnationalism of second-generation Filipinos in my study were the experiences

of their parents and of themselves, and their dissonance was enough to complicate the positive association that parents had towards the military.

Underlying this internal conflict was *kapwa*. The threats to *kapwa* predicted by David, Sharma, and Petalio, namely heightened individualism and independence from being in the United States, seemed to be balanced out by the militarization of Filipino U.S. Air Force families in my study. Although this may not apply to Filipino families of other military branches, the kids I interviewed did not perceive the Air Force to be an overdemanding institution or even a specific source of unhappiness. They did not seek out a perpetrator or scapegoat, and they acknowledged that sacrifice was a part of military life. Through this perspective, they came to greatly appreciate any time that they were able to get with their families and saw busy work schedules as their parents taking care of them. As Luke had recounted in his interview, he thought his parents still tried to encourage closeness and trust in his family despite their regular absence.

In his own way, Luke also embodied emotional transnationalism. He pushed back on the strong reliance that his parents had on the military in securing their family's well-being. He was more ambivalent about his career prospects and less willing to rely on the military for his future. Though he remained open to joining the military and ultimately became an active duty service member, it was because it fit his definition of success for now and he thought he could manipulate his trajectory within the military in the future.

It's funny. Some people have an exact path of what they want. I'm kinda just going with the flow. But also, with going with the flow, [...] I still wanna set myself up for success. Instead of just going wherever the military tells me to go, I wanna at least try to cater myself to go somewhere else.

Joining the military indicated Luke's willingness to consider his parents' hopes for him and perhaps buy into the Air Force as a caretaking institution. Being willing to leave, however, showed that he still considered his own aspirations as a person separable from a military life.

## **CONCLUSION**

When I first began my study in Colorado Springs, I had several predictions based on other research of Filipino U.S. Navy members in San Diego. I thought that there would be a stronger negative association between the U.S. military and the Philippines' past as a colony, or that there would at least be a clear separation between personal life and military life so that work would not "militarize" the home and increase reliance on the military. I also assumed that Air Force membership in general would be more appealing to Filipinos because they could still maintain a family unit wherever they were stationed. Throughout my research, these assumptions were complicated by the experiences of Filipino U.S. Air Force members and their families.

For the parents I interviewed, the Air Force became an inheritable occupation. Although it was not something that could be passed down directly from parent to child, the former could promise their children that they would continue to be taken care of if they also joined the Air Force as adults. It helped that the Air Force presented itself as considerate and caring towards its military members and to a certain degree, followed through. Their narrative was reinforced through supportive family programs, tangible benefits like healthcare and education, and most importantly, access to a community that could be used as a network wherever the Air Force stationed members. People (along with other Filipinos) who were also Air Force members formed the foundation of the military institution as well as a makeshift family. They took care of one another ultimately out of friendship, not just work. The community in Colorado Springs

perfectly exemplified this: it was built on knowledge passed from Filipino to Filipino, outgrew the need for a common military denominator, and welcomed other Filipinos as family once a connection was made.

Though it was left unsaid during interviews, the idea of *utang na loob* factored into Filipino parents trying to pass on Air Force membership to their children. By encouraging the next generation to take the helm and continue a military legacy, some parents felt that they could repay the Air Force community for everything it had given to them and their families. Parents would eventually retire, but if they knew that their kids would carry the torch, they could compensate the “willful indebtedness” that they themselves carried throughout their careers.

There is something to be said about the feeling of *utang na loob* that Filipino parents felt towards the Air Force community. If parents saw the military as an exception among all jobs in providing the most for themselves and their families, it was unsurprising that they would want the same security and stability for their children. It made sense to want to “pay it forward” and invest in the futures of their kids. At the same time, though, this course of action opened the door for a cycle that allows for over-reliance on a single institution, the Air Force. It also assumed that children would feel the same way about the military their whole lives. In reality, they did not.

As militarized as the household could be, much of the children’s lives differed greatly from their parents. They felt largely the same positivity towards the military, but their own experiences as military brats tempered their views and made their feelings less intense than those of their parents. At home, they faced heightened responsibilities to take care of themselves, their younger siblings, and housework because both parents often worked full-time. Parental absence became a reluctant norm. Due to their American upbringing, the children had more independence to express their opinions and choose their paths in life. This did not prevent their parents from

asking them to take on more responsibility in order for the entire family to function and thrive with the military in their lives. Simply put, children only saw the effects of the military and they sacrificed their efforts and time in a different way than their parents. Their personal experiences challenged the idea that the Air Force can ensure family togetherness in practice because even when families were able to live in the same household, parents found themselves called away.

When they became adults, second-generation Filipinos faced an interesting but conflicting view of the military compared to their parents. They valued the opinions and guidance of their parents highly, but they also had the freedom to speak their minds. When asked about the future, it was easy for them to briefly consider or sidestep the idea of a military career. Partly, this was because they found community in the Air Force mostly through association with their parents, not by themselves. They all had other groups of people outside the military lifestyle with whom to form relationships and shape their own identities. Their perspective yielded a kind of emotional transnationalism: they were less reliant on the military as they transitioned to adult life as Filipino-Americans, but they were always very much aware of the benefits that came with the Air Force because of their parents' experiences. In Wolf's study, second-generation Filipinos encountered serious differences between the desires of their parents and their own feelings when it came to higher education and independence (Wolf, 1997). In mine, I found that children could, to a certain degree, reach reconciliation between the wishes of their parents and themselves by exercising their freedom to accept or deny a military career as adults.

The conflicting points of reference in second-generation Filipinos also related to their demilitarized adult lives. In 2015, Suarez's study on Filipino U.S. Navy families in San Diego found that military parents actively worked to demilitarize their households and limit reliance on the military for the whole family (Suarez, 2015a). In my thesis, I found that Filipino U.S. Air

Force parents did not seek to separate the military from their lives at home; additionally, the desire to demilitarize applied more to their children. The family roles purported by Suarez—namely, that the father was the breadwinner and the wife took care of the children and household—had shifted for the participants in my study. Had I known the direction I was headed with my thesis, I would have focused on this aspect more. In our constantly changing world, a lot of the weight that was on the shoulder of spouses has shifted to their children as families with two full-time working parents become more common. Now, kids handled more domestic responsibilities; they took care of their siblings and themselves, often without an adult figure present. Later in life, the same second-generation Filipino children found ways (both intentionally and *unintentionally*) to demilitarize their lives in adulthood. They could choose careers that were unrelated to the military, keep their reliance in check if they became a military member, and qualify their perspectives when asked about their childhoods as military brats: “It was amazing, *but*”; “I am proud of my parents, *but*.”

The benefits of the Air Force had made it essential to Filipino parents, but the cost had made it optional to kids. It is in these subtle ways that second-generation Filipinos could cut their reliance on the Air Force and consider lives where they could survive without it. Regardless of any of their personal investment or trust in the institution, they knew that one thing would never change: In a military family, everyone must sacrifice *something*—even when they think it is an appropriate price to pay and they accept the cost wholeheartedly.



## APPENDICES

### Appendix A - Interview protocols

#### **Interview Protocol for Active Duty or Retired (U.S. Air Force) Military Members**

##### Military Experiences

1. Why did you join the U.S. Air Force? Where did you enlist?
2. Why did you join the U.S. Air Force and not another military branch?
3. How would you describe the state of U.S.-Philippine relations when you joined the military?
4. How would you describe your day-to-day experience in the U.S. Air Force?
5. Please describe some benefits and challenges of joining the U.S. Air Force.
6. When does your Filipino identity matter in military service? Can you list any examples?

##### Colorado Springs

7. Please describe the differences between Colorado Springs and the other places that you have been stationed.
8. How did you (and your partner/family) end up in Colorado Springs?
9. Was there a specific reason that you chose Colorado Springs?
10. How did you find community or friendships in Colorado Springs?
11. How would you describe the Filipino community in Colorado Springs?

##### Personal

12. Please describe how working in the military has affected your family relationships and personal life.
13. Please describe how living and working abroad through the U.S. military has affected how you identify yourself.
14. What advice would you give (or, what advice have you already given) to your children about their careers or education?
15. If you have children, would you be willing to recommend them to this study? They will be asked questions from a different interview protocol.
16. Do you know of anyone else from the U.S. Air Force that might be interested in participating in this study?

#### **Interview Protocol for Second-Generation Filipinos**

##### Personal

1. What was it like growing up in a military family? Can you give any examples?
2. Describe any benefits from being in a military family.
3. Describe any challenges from being in a military family.

4. If someone asked you about how you grew up, what do you think are the most important things to mention?
5. What communities (friend groups, student clubs, etc.) do you belong to? How would you describe them?
6. Please describe how being in a military family has affected how you identify yourself (for example, Filipino vs. Filipino-American, “military brat”, etc.).

#### Career

7. If you are currently employed, what are your goals for your career? If not, what do you want to do for a job when you’re older?
8. Did being in a military family affect your choice in career?
9. Did your parents influence what you want to do when you’re older?
10. Have you ever thought about joining the military? Why or why not?
11. For minors: If you would like, you have 15 minutes to write down any last thoughts or answers to any of the interview questions.

#### Appendix B - Original categories for coding

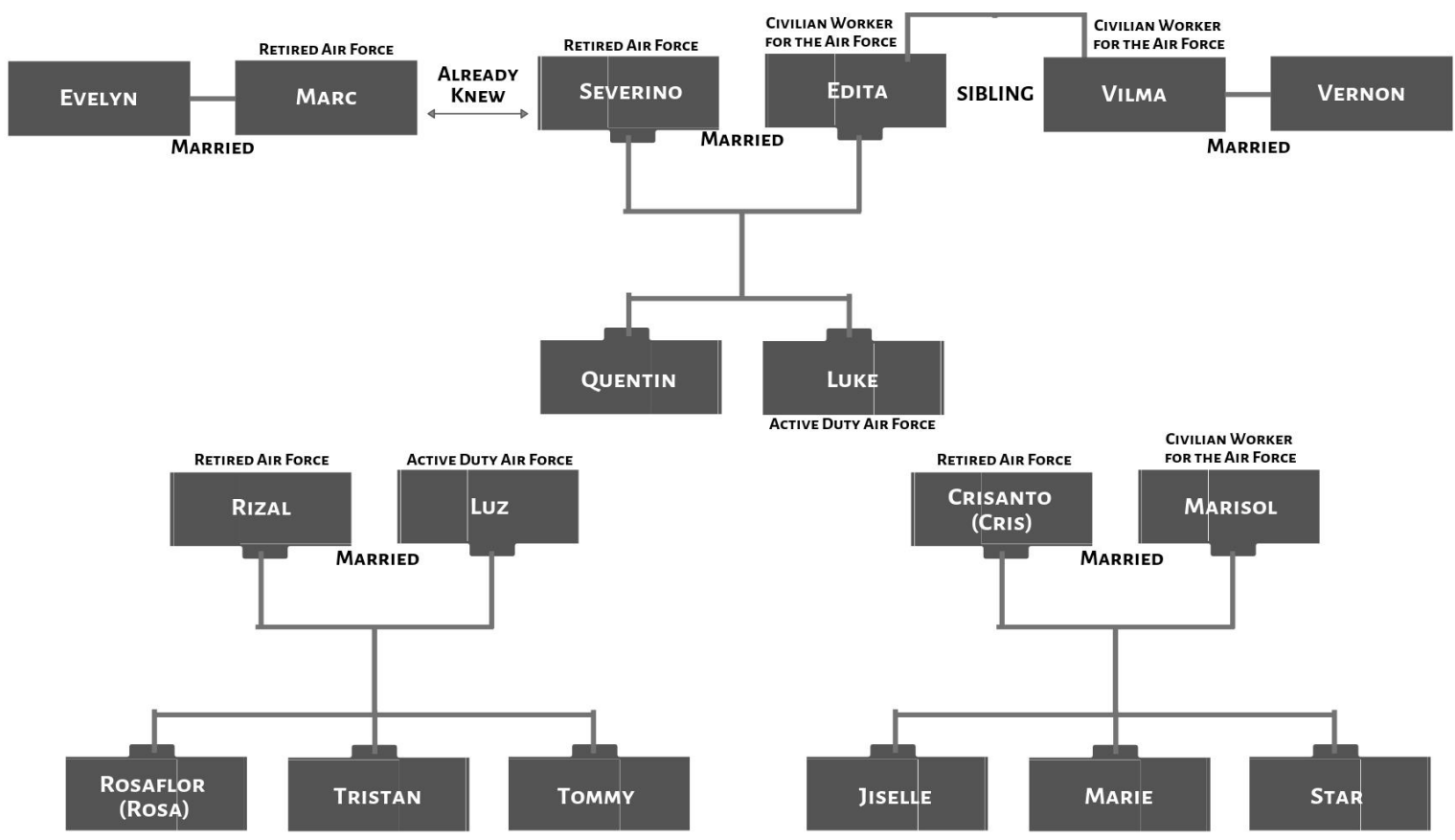
##### **Active Duty/Retired Air Force Coding**

- military gives direction
- military already considered seriously (outside pressures to join)
- parent/sibling involvement in military
- family matters
- grew up in Philippines
- grew up in United States
- mixed reactions to Philippine-US relationship
- positive reactions to Philippine-US relationship
- negative reactions to Philippine-US relationship
- stability and security
- Filipino community as family
- Air Force community as family
- choosing your family
- military takes care of you/your family (the military accommodates you)
- you take care of/accommodate the military (you give something back to the military)
- Air Force a part of identity
- dual identity
- open opportunity for kids
- difference between Philippines Filipinos and US Filipinos (and between Colorado Springs Filipinos and non-Colorado Springs Filipinos)
- culture of the Air Force
- normality of the Air Force
- difference between Air Force Filipinos and non-Air Force Filipinos
- interdependency (in families)
- inner Filipino network

### Second-Generation Filipino Coding

- busy (time taken away from family)
- discipline
- exposure (to different people, places, etc.)
- mutual understanding in the Air Force community
- mutual understanding in the POC (person of color) community
- personal gain from being in a military family (not just parental gain)
- adaptability
- military family identity is secondary
- identity not clear-cut; identity combination
- rest of the family takes care of the family (not the deployed/absent military parent)
- tangible benefits of being a part of a military family
- importance of family (+ closeness within a family)
- military familiarity
- cost of military membership on the kids

### Appendix C - Family trees



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