

**An Intercultural Perspective on Filipina/o American Persistence:
Implications for College Success**

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to those in the past, present, and future who challenge the boundaries of cultural injustice and create opportunities for those who follow.

In loving memory of my father, Robert DeVera Bachini, and my mother, Frances Mary Bachini, who provided the inspiration and courage in my journey of self discovery.

To my daughter Robyn Kahanu‘ala‘ona‘pua

A father’s dream and gift

This is for you and your children.

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ABSTRACT

Despite the growth of immigrant populations, only a few studies have examined college-aged children of immigrants or specific ethnic groups (Maramba, 2008a). In Hawai‘i, Filipinas/os represent 23 percent of the total population of 1,211,537 in the state (U.S. Census, 2000), yet remain an under-represented ethnic group at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (Bail, Zhang, & Tachiyama, 2008).

An underlying assumption in the study is students are not functioning in isolation, but in the overlapping and sometimes competing worlds of home and college. Using an intercultural approach (Museus & Quaye, 2009), a descriptive case study was developed to capture the first-hand experiences of undergraduate Filipina/o American students and examine how these experiences influence persistence. One advantage of using a cultural perspective to examine student departure is that it accounts for student behavior resulting from interactions on process variables such as involvement, effort, and sense of belonging (Kuh & Love, 2000).

The students’ perceptions about the college experience revealed five primary themes or process variables: finances; family; ethnic identity; sense of belonging; and social networking. The obtained results suggest these social interactions were significant factors in Filipina/o American persistence.

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CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of a qualitative study on Filipina/o American student persistence at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. It includes a background of the study, problem statement, justification of the study, a conceptual framework, significance of the study, and research questions. The purpose of this research is to examine the Filipina/o American college experience, while the goal is to provide a voice for students and understand how the culture of origin contributes to student success.

Background of Study

There is a tremendous gap in educational attainment between America's highest and lowest income students, despite similar talents and potential (Council for Opportunity in Education, 2011). In response to this gap, access and equity have long been central goals of American higher education (Hurtado, Kirotsuchi Inkeles, Briggs, & Rhee, 1997). If access was a defining educational opportunity theme for higher education beginning in the mid 1960s, retention has become a defining theme for the 1990s and beyond (Thayer, 2000). Retention refers to the ability of an institution to retain a student from admission to the university through graduation, while persistence is the desire and action of a student to stay within the system of higher education from beginning year through degree completion (Berger & Lyon, 2005).

The early persistence research (Antley, 1999) was descriptive and a number of theorists posited models of persistence behaviors (Astin, 1984, 1993; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Berger & Milem, 1999; Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992; Pascarella, Whitt, Nora, Edison, Serra Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996; Sondgeroth & Stough, 1992; Tinto, 1990), while later research shifted the focus to the institution level and examines

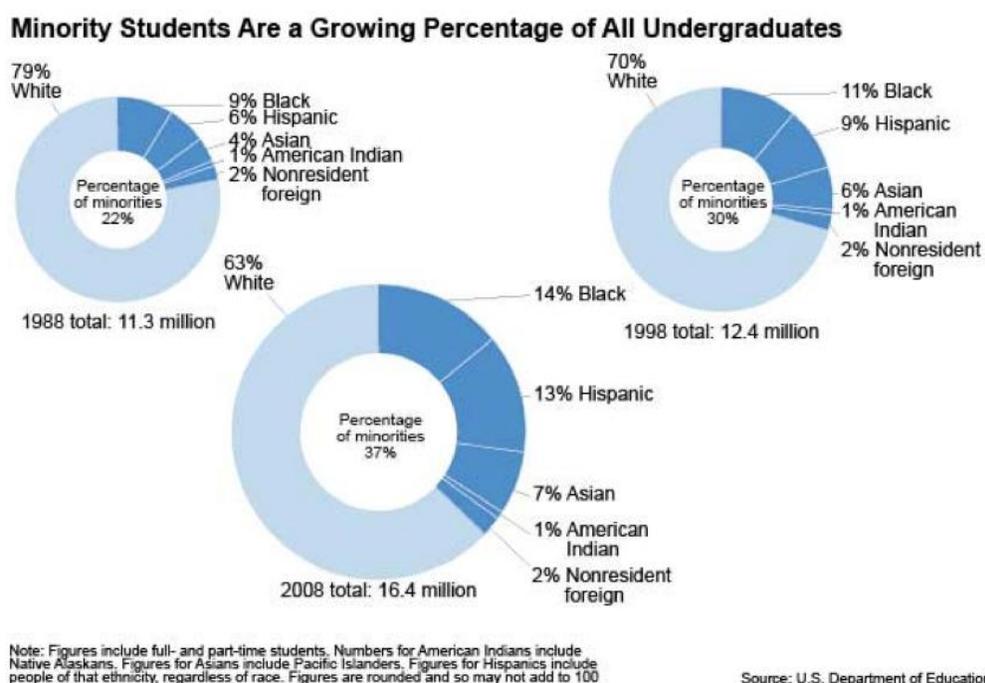
sense of belonging (Cheng, 2004; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; McDonald, 2002; Surla Banaria, 2004) and external environments (Cho, Hudley, Lee, Barry, & Kelly, 2008; Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano, & Cuellar, 2008; Kim & Omizo, 2005; Lundberg, Schreiner, Hovaguimian, & Miller, 2007; Maramba, 2008b; Museus & Quaye, 2009; Torres & Hernandez, 2007). In summary, this study explores the body of literature on the theoretical models of retention and student persistence.

Access and equity are only part of the equation. The postsecondary system resembles a dual system of equality, which mirrors the polarization of White students and those from affluent families at the top and a concentration of African Americans, Hispanics, and students from disadvantaged families at the bottom (Carnevale, 2010). Gasman (2009) reports increased enrollment of students of color is not enough to close the higher education gap in the United States, but more importantly these students must go on to complete their degrees. In agreement, Shirvani (2009) encourages colleges and universities to focus more on degree completion and not just on how many students enroll. In other words, more attention should be focused on student success by improving ways faculty/staff can support and guide students inside and outside the classroom.

Demographic changes have dramatically increased the proportions of people of color in the United States. In 1990, ethnic minority groups made up 25 percent of the American population and increased by 2.6 percent each year during the decade of the nineties (Janes, 1997). Immigrant children and U.S. born children of immigrants are the fastest growing segment of the country's population of children under 18 (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Colleges today are increasingly diverse, with students that are different from their counterparts of three or four decades ago and have different needs (Pike &

Kuh, 2005). From yesterday's enrollment of only elite, White males to today's enrollment of people from various socio-economic, ethnic and gender groups, American higher education has grown from a very limited enrollment to an enrollment that is extremely diverse in cultural backgrounds (Land & Land, 2002). Figure 1.1 provides the growth percentage of all part-time and full-time minority students from 1988 to 2008 (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2010).

Figure 1.1 Undergraduate Minority Students



This new, culturally diverse group of students has challenged American institutions of higher education to address communication barriers with bilingual students, ethnic misunderstandings, cultural ignorance and social stereotyping. If retention is an institutional goal, higher education professionals must understand the cultural background minority students bring to campus. People of color are often viewed as if they have all the options and privileges of White, middle-class Americans, but this is

not the case (Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000). Institutions have opportunities to design environments and activities that are supportive of particular subpopulations, such as first-generation college (neither parent earned a bachelor's degree) and low income students (Thayer, 2000). As a result, many institutions have re-evaluated and re-shaped the services, instructional methods, and developmental activities offered to students (Land & Land, 1992).

Research indicates that students whose parents did not attend college (first-generation college) are more likely than their non first-generation college counterparts to be less academically prepared for college, have less knowledge of how to apply for college and for financial assistance, and have more difficulty in acclimating themselves to college once they enroll (Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004). Student race/ethnicity is also related to first-generation status, as students of color make up 36% of first-generation students, but only 10% of continuing-generation students (Lundberg et al., 2007). Students from low-income and first-generation backgrounds, many of whom are ethnically diverse, face obstacles that may include a lack of knowledge of the campus environment, its academic expectations and bureaucratic operations, and lack of family support. Further, first-generation college students may encounter a cultural conflict between home and the college community (Thayer, 2000). Therefore, it is critical that higher education policymakers and practitioners understand the factors that facilitate or hinder racial minority college students' persistence and degree completion (Museus, Nichols, & Lambert, 2008).

One particular group of students among this culturally diverse, first generation, and low income population is Filipinas/os. Although Filipinas/os are the second largest

Asian American group and the largest Southeast Asian American group (Asian American Justice Center, 2006), they are absent from contemporary literature on immigration and Asian Americans (Wolf, 1997). California has the highest Filipina/o population at 1,085,868, followed by Hawai‘i at 185,638 (Barretto Ogilvie, 2008). Filipinas/os are generally overlooked as a unique ethnic group because they have higher rates of interracial marriage than other Asian ethnic groups and often do not have a sense of their unique cultural identity (Tuason, Reyes Taylor, Rollings, Harris, & Martin, 2007).

The concept of Asian American, often referred to as the “model minority,” has been treated as a homogenous construct, implying that all Asian Americans identify with the Asian American community in the same way (Alvarez, 2002). There is a common assumption Asian Pacific Americans (APA) are a successful minority group and mistakenly categorized and treated as a single, homogeneous racial group (Teranishi, Ceja, Antonio, Allen, & McDonough, 2004). College however, provides an opportunity for Asian Americans to establish a cultural experience on their own terms (Lee & Chol Yoo, 2004). In turn, the enrollment, persistence, and retention research on Asian American college students is often misunderstood (Lim, 2008). As a subgroup of this “model minority,” Filipinas/os are assumed to be high achieving and adapt more easily to majority dominated environments than other students of color (Maramba, 2008b), or are erroneously described as passive, compliant, and without problems or needs (President’s Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, 2001). A critical unmasking is needed because it negatively affects the lives of Asian American students and contributes to the justification of race and class inequality in schools and society (Lim, 2008).

While a limited amount of research on the educational experiences of Asian Americans exists as a whole, even less is known about the educational experiences of ethnic groups within the APA population (Teranishi et al., 2004). Although Asian Americans are often excluded from conversations about minority students due to their relatively high rates of educational attainment, disaggregated data on various Asian American ethnic subpopulations reveal vast disparities in postsecondary degree attainment, with some Asian American ethnic groups completing postsecondary degrees at rates far lower than their non-Asian American peers and the national population (Museus & Quaye, 2009). Filipinas/os are often excluded in the research on APA students in higher education, suggesting more research is needed (Maramba, 2008b).

Asian subgroups are often marginalized, face discrimination due to their accents, and select careers that are less desirable to avoid rejection on the basis of language (Schommer-Aikins & Easter, 2008). Marginality can be defined as a sense of not fitting in and for members of minority groups, marginality is often a permanent condition (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Historically underrepresented racial minority students exhibit very low degree completion rates compared to the overall college student population (Museus, et al., 2008). In higher education, the knowledge of White middle class is valued over all other knowledge, and therefore the education system is socially and culturally biased (Pearce, Down, & Moore, 2008). Since universities tend to be middle class institutions, orientation towards middle class values becomes natural and normalized. In contrast, many underrepresented students are from immigrant backgrounds and from cultures that place a central value on the family and family obligations. As a consequence, effectively managing these two values toward degree

completion may be a challenge and a source of stress for many of these students as the roles of gender, race, and household income are often overlooked.

Because there is little existent research on Filipina/o students specifically within Hawai'i, in framing the present research study, the historical context of Filipinas/os will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two. In order to understand persistence among Filipina/o students, it is important, however, to examine the status of other ethnically underrepresented students in higher education, specifically Latinas/os, African American and Asians. A current challenge for college campuses is to establish and sustain communities (Kinzie & Schuh, 2008; Tinto, 1990), especially among a diverse student population. Understanding the experiences of underrepresented groups enrolled in college is an important step in making higher education more inclusive and representative of the diversity in the United States (Surla Banaria, 2004).

Latinas/os (Latin American origin), at approximately 45.5 million, are the largest population of color in the U.S. Of this group, approximately 64 percent are of Mexican origin (Malott, 2009). Despite the number of Latina/o students in higher education growing (Torres, 1999), Mexican Americans remain the largest undereducated group in the U.S. with only 3.7 percent of women and 6.1 percent of men graduating from college (Niemann, Romero, & Arbona, 2000). External factors that contribute to this low educational achievement include feelings of isolation in college, negative faculty expectations, and acculturative stress. Within this group, the values of *respect* and *family* are recurring themes among Mexican American women. Malott (2009) found none of the Latina/o students ever discussed ignoring family expectations, but rather in understanding *how to manage* these expectations.

In families from many ethnic traditions, non parental adults and older children often serve as caregivers in the household. This practice is based on cultural influences such as family values as well as economic reasons (Cooper, Jackson, Azmitia & Lopez, 1998) and is often prevalent in the Mexican American culture. For many Mexican American college students, cultural orientation creates a conflict between family relationships and educational goals (Niemann et al., 2000). For example, traditional gender roles in the family are associated with prioritizing marriage and family life. These women see these roles as biased and unchangeable and receive minimal support to pursue a college degree. In their belief, a college degree conflicts with these roles and feelings of alienation from the family follow. For a man, however, in the role of economic provider to the family, the culture offers stronger support to pursue higher education.

Over the last quarter of a century, there has been little to no progress in increasing participation rates among African American men (Strayhorn, 2008). Today, Black men represent the exact same proportion of all students enrolled in American colleges as they did in 1976. Of the 15 million undergraduate students in the U.S., less than 5 percent are African American, and only 30 percent of all African American men who enter college persist and earn a degree within six years (Strayhorn, 2008). Results of this research suggest that supportive relationships are associated with higher levels of satisfaction but not academic achievement as measured by grades. Some of the challenges Black male youth face is they do not have access to, or are discouraged from, participating in college preparatory curricula and activities. Black men are often viewed as an at-risk population in education and any disparaging words can perpetuate negative stereotypes among educators. Palmer and Young (2009) examined factors that improve academic success for

unprepared African Americans at a Black college. These scholars stressed the importance of maintaining relationships with members outside the college community and its impact on academic success.

For Asians (Nisbett, 2003), feeling good about themselves is likely to be tied to the sense that they are in harmony with the wishes of the groups to which they belong and are meeting the group's expectations. A role shift for Asians is initiating and developing relationships with faculty and staff, which is in opposition to the cultural belief of passive deference to authority figures. Harmony in the household is maintained by compliance with, and not defiance to, the family's needs (Nisbett, 2003). This shift in social skills and pursuit of harmony is also a shared belief in Filipina/o households.

As APAs continue to enroll in colleges and universities in increasing numbers, the imperative to study everyday experiences will increase (Lim, 2008). The Asian American and Pacific Islander population is expected to reach 37.6 million individuals, or comprise 9 percent of the U.S. population, by the year 2050 (President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, 2001). In Hawai'i, Asians make up the highest proportion of the total population at 55 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Similar to Latina/o and African American students, Asian Americans face racism and stereotypes that may influence the way they see themselves (Kodama, McEwen, Liang, & Lee, 2002).

Problem Statement

In 1997, the United States immigrant population numbered 55 million people, or approximately one-fifth of the U.S. population (Maramba, 2008a). Despite the growth of immigrant populations, only a few studies have investigated college-aged children of

immigrants or specific ethnic groups (Maramba, 2008a). Filipina/o Americans are the least understood and studied ethnic minority group (Tuason et al., 2007). What is known (Dahilig, 2009) is that the traditional Filipina/o family structure (family identity) conflicts with today's modern values of Western society (individual identity). Therefore, a Filipina/o residing in the U.S. is confronted with a potential conflict between his or her own culture and the host Western culture. While the college campus culture emphasizes the importance of individual academic achievement, the Filipina/o culture believes maintaining the value of family is just as important, if not more important (Dahilig, 2009). As a consequence, Filipina/o American students encounter numerous challenges in higher education that include managing the influence of their cultural background, responding to the pressure from parents to maintain their primary responsibilities to the family, struggling with ethnic stereotypes, and finding a sense of belonging and comfort on campus (Dahilig, 2009).

At the national level, Filipina/o Americans represent the fastest growing population among U.S. immigrants and remain a remarkably understudied and overlooked group in U.S. culture and academic research (Maramba, 2008a). In 2007, the Filipina/o American community was estimated to be at 4 million, or 1.5 percent of the U.S. population (Zaide & Zaide, n.d.). At the local level, Filipinas/os represent 23 percent of the total population of 1,211,537 in the state of Hawai'i (U.S. Census, 2000). Of the 1.2 million residents in Hawai'i, over 170,000 identify themselves as being Filipina/o, ranking them as the third largest ethnic group in the state (Nayani, 2006).

In general, the body of literature on Filipina/o immigrants and Filipina/o Americans is limited (Velasco, 2008). Specifically, there is a lack of research that

examines the academic experiences of Filipina/o Americans in higher education (Maramba, 2008a). The culturally diverse student population enrolled at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM) provides a unique demographic setting to conduct this study not otherwise available on campuses throughout the continental United States. Institutional transfer data (Harms, 2001) suggests more Filipinas/os live with their parents; are less likely to hold a job while they attend the university; report that their studies deter their involvement in campus activities; express a need for educational counseling; have educational loans; are Catholics and consider religion an important part of their lives.

UHM hosts the Filipino and Philippine Literature Program and offers a bachelor’s degree in Filipino Language & Literature, a minor in Filipino Language and Culture, and sponsors the *Katipunan Club* and *Timpuyog Organization*. The *Katipunan Club* serves as the premiere collegiate-based resource center for the creation, preservation, and promotion of Filipino language, literature, and culture in Hawai‘i (Katipunan Club, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2010), while the *Timpuyog Organization* is a student run organization that aims to instill pride in the Filipino heritage, develop leadership skills, and help students develop proficiency in Ilokano and awareness of Filipino traditions and values (Timpuyog Organization, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2011). Teaching these leadership skills and cultural pride is a small handful of Filipina/o scholars. Of the 2,278 UHM faculty employed in the 2007-2008 academic year, 54 or 2.4 % were of Filipina/o ancestry, far below the Filipina/o undergraduate student enrollment (Office of Student Equity Excellence, and Diversity, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2010). In addition, UHM boasts the Center for Philippine Studies, the only such center in North America and

an internationally recognized source of broad and specialized expertise on a country and people that have had long historical links with the U.S. and the Asia-Pacific region (Center for Philippine Studies, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2011).

Within Filipinas/os, there is little work addressing regional variation between Hawai‘i and the mainland (A. Antonio, personal communication, December 13, 2008). When compared to the continental U.S., Hawai‘i has the largest percentage of Filipinas/os at 22% and the lowest percentage of BA/BS degrees at 14.1% over 25 years old (Chua, 2009). As an isolated campus located in the Pacific Ocean and unlike any other U.S. institution, Asian/Pacific Islanders comprise almost 60 percent of the total student population (University of Hawai‘i Institutional Research Office, 2009). Filipinas/os make up only 13 out of every 100 students in the UH system, while the proportion of Filipina/o students at the campuses ranges from 24% at Leeward Community College to a low of 4% at Windward Community College, and among 4-year campuses 16% at the University of Hawai‘i West Oahu and 6% at the University of Hilo (University of Hawai‘i Institutional Research Office, 2007-2008). Although Filipinas/os are the largest ethnic group (25%), second to Native Hawaiian/part-Hawaiian among Hawai‘i high school students, only 10% were first time freshmen in fall 2008 at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (Chua, 2009). This enrollment trend however may be due to the high representation of Filipinos that live within the campus community, where college choice is more of convenience than competition.

Despite their representation within the state of Hawai‘i, Filipina/o American students accounted for only 12% of the total undergraduate enrollment of 13,191 and only 8% of the total enrollment of 20,169 students enrolled at UHM in 2009 (University

of Hawai'i Institutional Research Office, 2009). Accordingly, Filipinas/os and Native Hawaiians remain the two most underrepresented ethnic groups at the university (Bail, et al., 2008).

Previous research has often assumed the college experience is the same for all students (Surla Banaria, 2004). As researchers (Hurtado et al., 2008; Kaufman & Feldman, 2004) argue, an important factor in studying how the college experience affects students is the background of students, particularly their social class, race/ethnicity, and gender. At a sociological level, these variables exist within the social environment and consequently affect social interaction. Racial/ethnic groups provide people with a sense of belonging, which helps them cope better with the rest of society (Berry, 2009).

There is accumulating empirical evidence that various racial/ethnic groups do in fact experience college differently (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Bean & Vesper, 1994; Cabrera et al., 1992; Conway, 2009; Dela Cruz, Salzman, Brislin, & Losch, 2006). European Americans are often labeled *individualistic*, while Asian Americans and Latin Americans are considered *collectivist* or *communal* (Cooper et al., 1998). In response, other research (Steward, O'Leary, Boatwright, & Sauer, 1996) concluded that due to different cultural norms (e.g., collectivism vs. individualism) and increased probability of social isolation due to racism, minorities need a different kind and degree of support than majority group members.

More importantly, however, very few studies have disaggregated the data to determine how individual students of color experience the college environment (Maramba, 2008b). Most studies do not place gender, class, and ethnicity as the center of theories about how students experience higher education (Surla Banaria, 2004).

Sociologically-based theories (Clark, 2005) identify the range of factors that influence students' transitions, but fail to address how students experience, perceive, and manage the various influences. As a result, coping strategies or cognitive maps (Clark, 2005) become a salient point of investigation. Furthermore, there have been no empirical attempts to detail the processes students use to manage the transitions between various social settings (Phelan, Locke Davidson, & Thanh Cao, 1991).

Research is therefore needed to assess the positive and negative influences of the external environment and how students negotiate external influences, not only during the first year of college, but also throughout their collegiate experience (Rendon et al., 2000). As Filipina/o Americans comprise the largest Asian immigrant population in the United States, the experience of immigrants or the experience of children of immigrants who enroll in colleges and universities becomes a concern for higher education professionals (Maramba, 2008a).

Justification of the Study

The purpose of this study is to address the gap of research on Filipina/o college students by describing students' perspectives and experiences and exploring how Filipina/o American students manage the influences of home and college. The goal is to address issues of concern to Filipina/o higher education students by disaggregating their experiences as a subgroup from the larger APA student population. Findings are expected to contribute to the research on immigrant college students as well as the overall success of Filipina/o American students.

Conceptual Framework

Student departure research has been the central focus of higher education research in the past forty years (Tierney, 2008). In general, much of the research has tried to delineate different causal variables that might lead to the retention of students. College student outcome research often examines the experiences of undergraduate students and measures indicators of the college experience (Surla Banaria, 2004). These indicators represent the broad area of the college experience and may include the following: success in academic studies, degree of involvement, development of friendships and networks, and perceptions of the campus climate.

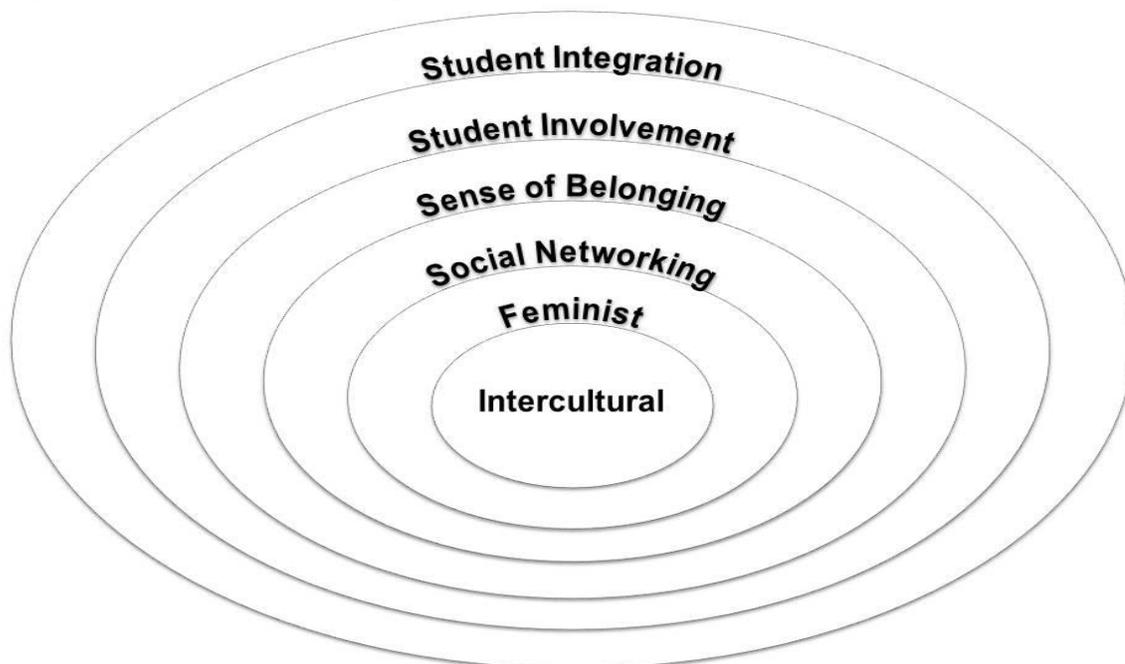
One review of college persistence models concluded that previous studies often focus on measuring completion rates, while few examine the socio-demographic characteristics of completers (Educational Policy Institute, 2008). The conceptual underpinnings developed for this study are grounded in Tinto's (1990) Student Integration Model, a seminal theory of student persistence in higher education. Tinto's (1990) model is the most studied, tested, revised, and critiqued in the literature (Braxton & Hirschy, 2005).

Over time, however, several critiques of this model have been offered by scholars who propose alternative conceptual frameworks. Critiques of Tinto's model are especially important to incorporate in the conceptual framework when examining the persistence of minority racial/ethnic student groups (D. Cole, personal communication, April 24, 2010). As Tierney (2008) argues, different theoretical models are needed from those that insist upon an integrative framework that assumes an individualist stance. Similarly, Rendon et al. (2000) identify at least three conceptual problems with the

social/academic interactionist theory as used in Tinto's student departure model. These problems include individual responsibility, as opposed to institutional responsibility; problems associated with the concept of student involvement; and the focus on the negative impact of the external community.

The alternative frameworks discussed in formulating the conceptual framework for this study include the student involvement model (Astin, 1984), sense of belonging theory (Hurtado & Carter, 1997), social networking (Surla Banaria, 2004), feminist theory (Maramba, 2008a), and Museus and Quaye's (2009) intercultural perspective. Figure 1.2 below provides an outline to this discussion regarding alternative frameworks. The concentric circles suggest that with increasing diversity of students entering colleges and universities, there is less emphasis on "integration and involvement" as more general concepts, often without respect to students' differing backgrounds, and an increasing emphasis on students' sense of belonging, development of social and cultural capital, and the relevance of their cultural contexts to their college success.

Figure 1.2 Alternative Conceptual Frameworks



Student Integration Model

Experiences, academic and social, serve to integrate the individual into the life of the college, increase attachment, and strengthen individual commitments to the goal of education and to the institution (Tinto, 1990). College experience is sometimes used to encompass Tinto's (1990) theoretical domains of academic and social integration (Surla Banaria, 2004). He hypothesizes that persistence is a function of the match between an individual's motivation and academic ability, and the institution's academic and social characteristics (Museus & Quaye, 2009). The theory explains what is required of students if they expect to persist and graduate (DeWitz, Woolsey, & Walsh, 2009). Tinto suggests that students enter college with personal, family, and academic skills and specific intentions regarding personal goals and college attendance (Guillory & Wolverson, 2008). He posits that persistence and withdrawal behavior is a longitudinal process that is primarily influenced by how well the student fits into the structure, social and academic life, and goals of the institution. Accordingly, student experiences during the first year in college have more influence on retention than the characteristics they bring to the university (DeWitz et al., 2009).

Tinto's (1990) theory is partly based on anthropologist Van Gennep's (1960) stages of cultural transition (Museus & Quaye, 2009). Specifically, Tinto's work builds on Van Gennep's theory that individuals go through three stages when transitioning from one status to another within a culture: *separation*, *transition*, and *integration*; that is, the student must separate from the family household, make the transition to a new environment, and integrate into the college community. Tinto argues that retention is a function of the degree to which a student becomes academically and socially integrated

or “tied” to campus life. Supportive relationships then may facilitate students’ social adjustment to college and enhance their sense of belonging which, in turn, increases the likelihood of retention (Strayhorn, 2008).

Tinto (1990) postulates six major causes of student departure: 1) *adjustment*; 2) *goals*; 3) *commitments*; 4) *uncertainty*; 5) *congruence*; and 6) *isolation*. *Adjustment* is defined as the student’s ability to adapt to the academic and social life of the college, primarily during the first six weeks of the first semester. With many students, any adjustment difficulty is transitory and subsides over time. For others, however, insufficient preparation, backgrounds which differ from those of most students, faculty, and staff on campus, or limited coping skills may confound this adjustment period.

Not all students who enter college have clearly identified *goals* or intentions. As developmentally expected, some students will alter their goals during the course of their college career. Any change in individual goals may lead students to leave when the college experience to date conflicts with any newly identified goals. In the pursuit of a college degree, a considerable amount of effort and commitment is required. Similar to goals, individual *commitments* may also change during the course of the student’s career. The quality of the academic and social experiences in college with other members of the institution (faculty, staff, and students) largely contributes to the level of student commitment (Tinto, 1990). *Uncertainty* comes with those students who enter college without a clear purpose or a generalized rite of passage. This lack of clarity undermines the desire and willingness of students to persist during times of stress.

Incongruence is the outcome of the quality of interaction between the individual and other members of the institution. It reflects the student’s evaluation of the manner

and degree to which the social and intellectual life of the institution serves his or her interests and needs (Tinto, 1990). This mismatch may prompt the student to transfer to another institution viewed as a better match that may fulfill this void. Finally, *isolation* is largely the outcome of the lack of interaction between the student and other members of the institution. Departure arises not because of a mismatch, but from the absence of significant social and/or intellectual contact (Tinto, 1990). These students feel isolated from the established membership in the life of the institution and depart.

As previously discussed, it is Tinto's (1990) underlying assumption that racial minority students must separate from their traditional cultural traditions, values, and customs and adopt those of the predominantly White culture of their respective campus (Museus et al., 2008). A criticism of this model is the exclusion of external factors in shaping student perceptions, commitments, and preferences (Cabrera et al., 1992). Another criticism is the misinterpretation or misuse of the "rite of passage" construct that all individuals, regardless of race, class or gender, must undergo to achieve full development in society (Tierney, 2008). This model also ignores individual variables and presents a global perspective of retention (DeWitz et al., 2009). Many of the reasons that students leave college are outside Tinto's (1990) model and may include finances, lack of family or social/emotional encouragement, and difficult personal adjustment and integration into the college social and academic community (DeWitz et al., 2009).

Student Involvement Model

In contrast to Tinto's use of motivation, Astin (1984) prefers the term *involvement* because it implies more of a behavioral manifestation rather than a psychological one. Astin's theory of student involvement is more concerned with the behavioral mechanisms

or processes that facilitate student development, or the *how* of student development. Involvement is defined as the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience (Evans et al., 1998). Research (Rendon et al., 2000) indicates that the more time and energy students devote to learning and the more intensely they engage in their own education, the greater the achievement, satisfaction with educational experiences, and persistence in college. As a characterization of the model, Astin (1986) developed the I-E-O model: *Inputs*, student characteristics; *Environment*, various programs, faculty, peers; and *Outcomes*, student characteristics after exposure. Therefore, the greater the student's involvement in college, the greater amount of student learning and personal development will occur.

This model suggests that the students who are most likely to persist are those who have values, norms, and established patterns of behavior that are already in existence on campus (Berger & Milem, 1999). Conversely, students who are least like the dominant peer group on campus, especially with regard to race and political attitudes, will be least likely to persist. Astin (1984) argues that for student learning and growth to take place, students need to engage actively in their environment. Panos and Astin (1987) posit college completion in four years is more likely achieved if students attend colleges where peer relationships are characterized by friendliness, cooperativeness and independence; where the students frequently participate in college activities; and where there is a high level of personal involvement with, and concern for, the individual student.

The five basic tenants of this model include: 1) Involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects; 2) Involvement exists on a continuum; 3) Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features; 4)

The amount of student learning and personal development is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program; and 5) The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement (Astin, 1984). Tenants four and five are specifically applicable to cultural insensitivity that may be found on college campuses. The fourth tenant highlights the need for minority students to view the predominantly White university atmosphere as free of racism, welcoming and culturally knowledgeable. The fifth tenant underscores the need for minority students to have role models within university faculty and staff members (Land & Land, 1992).

Astin's (1984) student involvement model suggests student affairs professionals and other educators need to create opportunities for involvement to occur, both in and out of the classroom (Evans et al., 1998) and encourages educators to focus less on what they do and more on what the student does (Astin, 1984). Rendon (1994) however, challenges this construct; in particular, she places greater responsibility on faculty and staff to engage students in the college experience (Lundberg et al., 2007). Rendon (1994) emphasizes the importance of "cultural translators, mediators and role models," or more commonly referred to as advisors, counselors, administrators, faculty, and students, to help students of color with issues that might arise as a result of conflicts between their culture of origin and the campus culture (Maramba, 2008b). Members of stigmatized groups often cope by identifying more closely with their own group as a way to seek social support and a sense of belonging that supports their self esteem (Cho et al., 2008).

Sense of Belonging

In an attempt to clarify the conceptual underpinnings of Tinto's (1990) departure model, Hurtado and Carter's (1997) research on the antecedents of *sense of belonging* examines the extent Latino students' background characteristics and college experiences in the first and second years contribute to a *sense of belonging* in the third year. Although concepts of social and academic integration in college have been studied, constructs vary in conceptualization and measurement. Tinto (1990) posited that the ways in which students negotiate the transition to college are essential to the integration and success and felt all students experience some difficulty. However, aspects of the transition-to-college experience are missing from the departure model and give attention to institutional interventions.

Specifically, Hurtado and Carter (1997) developed a transition-to-college model that can be used with a large number of students to evaluate their ease in transition as a precursor or determinant of their sense of belonging in college. These researchers contend that understanding students' *sense of belonging* is critical to understanding how particular forms of social and academic experiences affect students. The guiding hypothesis is that Latino students' transitional experiences play a key role in determining the students' *sense of belonging*; that is, the ease of transition in the first year of college has both direct and indirect effects on students' *sense of belonging*, mediated by perceptions of a hostile racial climate in the second year. Consistent with this proposition, Maramba (2008b) found Filipina American college students defined *sense of belonging* by a *sense of community* on campus.

In contrast to Tinto's (1990) more general model, these findings suggest that the college environment, or context, has more to do with the transition to college than the students' background characteristics (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Additionally, the results identify the selectivity of the college as a mediating effect on students' likelihood to transition to college successfully. More specifically, institutional selectivity has a direct negative effect on transition, which indicates the higher the selectivity of the institution, the more likely students are to experience difficulty in the transition to college. Results also indicate a strong relationship between students' *sense of belonging* in college and frequent discussions of course content with other students outside class. Membership in social-community organizations was the most significantly associated with a *sense of belonging* in the third year of college. Members of religious clubs, student government, and sports teams also tended to have a significantly higher *sense of belonging* than did nonmembers in the third year. Similarly, Cheng (2004) found students' feelings of being cared about, treated in a caring way, valued as an individual, and accepted as part of a community directly contribute to a *sense of belonging*.

Hurtado and Carter (1997) suggest a need to assess specific forms of students' interactions in college, and a need to capture the individual's view of whether he or she feels included in the college community. They posit a *sense of belonging* is fundamental to a student's identification with a group and affects both cognitive and affective behavior. Therefore, studying a *sense of belonging* allows researchers to assess which forms of social interaction (academic and social) further enhance the students' affiliation and identity with the college. Consistent with other models, Hurtado and Carter (1997) question the assumption of separation as a critical element in Tinto's (1990) departure

theory. They specifically challenge the claim that in order for students to become fully integrated in college life, students must physically and socially dissociate themselves from communities of the past. Hurtado and Carter (1997) further argue that separation from prior communities is difficult for the 40 percent of part-time students in higher education, among non-traditional students with multiple responsibilities, and for those students who live in the parental household or hold part-time employment for financial reasons.

For many Latino students who attend college full time, maintaining family relationships and support is among the most important aspects of transition that facilitates adjustment to college. Other research found when college students maintain a supportive relationship with parents, they are better adjusted and may persist to graduation (Cabrera et al., 1992). Collectively, the cited literature highlights the importance of maintaining prior communities in facilitating students' transition and adjustment to college.

Social Networking

Relevant to the focus on underrepresented students in higher education is to identify social networks and to examine the effects of such networks on academic and social integration among racial/ethnic groups. Academic integration refers to the interactions with networks that assist the student with academic-related functions in the academic system (Surla Banaria, 2004). Social integration refers to the interactions with networks that impact the student's social system, extracurricular activities, and provide emotional support. Examining students' college experiences by focusing on differences in the quality of academic and social experiences may help explain differences in the outcomes among various ethnic groups.

Social networks may be influential in defining the quality of the college experience among various ethnic groups of students, that is, students' social networking patterns can contribute to the accumulation of social capital. Social capital refers to social relationships and group membership that provide resources and support to an individual as one advances in social status (Surla Banaria, 2004). The volume of social capital by an individual depends on the size of the network of connections (Bourdieu, 1986). In application to the college environment, students with higher grades and higher status expectations will generally have greater social capital than those with lower grades and low status expectations. Cultural capital is defined as the socialization and inherited cultural competencies which are cues about how to behave in order to adapt socially, from the social location of one's families (Surla Banaria, 2004).

In one examination of the relevance of different forms of social networking to student success during college, Surla Banaria found that non-Caucasian groups relied on their social networks more in comparison to Caucasian students (Surla Banaria, 2004). Networking functions before (e.g., receiving help with college-related tasks, sharing fun and relaxation activities, etc.) and during college were significant in explaining students' satisfaction with attending college. The results suggest that students' social networking patterns can contribute to the accumulation of social capital. Such behavior positively affects students' performance in college, as well as their overall integration and satisfaction with the college experience. In this research, the need of social support networks for minority students was examined, since racial/ethnic minorities value interdependence and networks that influence their cultural development (Surla Banaria, 2004).

Similar to the sense of belonging model (Hurtado & Carter, 1997), family support was found to be significant for minority students. With immigrants, social networks have also been shown to be an invaluable aid before, during, and after the migration process. Social networks are the social structures which establish relationships between the migrant and the receiving community before he or she moves. Networks that are based primarily on kinship, and include friendship, neighborhood, community or other ties, play a major role in the adaptation of immigrants to a new place (Surla Banaria, 2004).

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory has also been applied as a means of understanding the college experiences of various groups of students. Feminist theory has a normative quality, concerned with what should and should not exist in social and political life (Beasley, 1999). Feminists concerned with race and ethnicity critique universal assumptions which perceive the condition of all women as being essentially the same and refuse to suppress differences between women. Using a feminist perspective, Maramba (2008a) focused on the ways in which Filipina American college students make sense of the college experience. The results uncovered three main themes: family and parental influence, home obligations/gender differences, and the importance of maintaining and balancing the Filipina American identity within the context of home/family and college experiences.

In particular, *biculturalism* was an important theme emerging from this study. Biculturalism is defined as a process by which individuals learn to live in two different environments, the dominant culture and their ethnic minority culture (Maramba, 2008a) and provide one of the primary conceptual frameworks employed in this study. Women

in this research expressed the importance of not forgetting about the culture while balancing college student life. All participants associated family with their Filipina American identity. Though at times family relationships were the cause of much stress, they also viewed family as the greatest support in college (Maramba, 2008a). These students stressed the importance of having role models and support networks at the university level, specifically having Filipina/o American staff or faculty as a source of support in college. These findings suggest different ways of working with Filipina/o American students in order to improve the college experience. In contrast to Tinto's (1990) theory, "cutting the cord" and separating a student from one's family is not recommended in improving the college experience for Filipina/o American students.

Intercultural Perspective

Finally, emerging research is also focusing on the relevance of a cultural lens in understanding students' college experiences. The cultural focus proposes that the level of incongruence between students' precollege cultures and dominant campus culture is inversely related to persistence, and students for whom there exists a high level of distance between those cultures must either acclimate to the dominant campus culture or become immersed in one or more enclaves (e.g., subcultures) to successfully find membership in and persist through college (Museus & Quaye, 2009). Museus and Quaye offer a cultural perspective of college student departure, as it focuses on the important role of students' precollege and campus cultures in shaping the college experiences and outcomes.

Kuh and Love (2000) suggest eight culturally based propositions that appear to be especially helpful in understanding minority student persistence. These propositions

provide the primary conceptual framework employed in this study. The propositions include: 1) Students' college experiences and decisions are mediated by a student's cultural meaning-making system; 2) Students' precollege cultures determine the importance they associate with attending or graduating from college; 3) Knowledge of both students' precollege cultures and campus cultures is necessary to understand their abilities to navigate the campus cultural milieu; 4) The likelihood of persistence is inversely related to the incongruence between students' precollege and campus cultures; 5) Students who travel a long cultural distance must either acclimate to the dominant campus culture or join one or more culture enclaves (e.g., subcultures) to succeed; 6) The amount of time students spend in their cultures of origin during their college career is positively associated with cultural stress and eventual student departure; 7) The extent and intensity of students' connections with their academic program and affinity groups are positively related to persistence; and 8) Students are more likely to persist if they belong to one or more cultural groups, especially if those groups value achievement and persistence.

In one test of these propositions, Museus and Quaye (2009) found that establishing connections with faculty and peers, or cultural agents on campus (Rendon et al., 2000; Surla Banaria, 2004) supports the use of an intercultural perspective of minority student persistence. The term intercultural is often used to refer to interactions across multiple cultures (Museus & Quaye, 2009). The researchers find this term more appropriate due to: a) multiple cultures-cultures of origin and immersion, as well as dominant campus cultures and subcultures are central to this emergent perspective; b) the emergent intercultural perspective focuses on the interactions between those cultures of

origin and immersion, and c) the term intercultural distinguishes itself from Kuh and Love's (2000) original set of cultural propositions. Overall results reveal support for Kuh and Love's first, third, and fourth cultural propositions, with modifications on the remaining five propositions.

Specifically, Museus and Quaye (2009) found students' cultures of origin mediate the importance of college attendance and degree completion; underscore the potential impact of individual cultural agents (faculty and peers) as well as collective cultural agents (student organizations); and subcultures. In addition, students' connections to their traditional cultural heritage can be positively associated with their likelihood of success and focuses on the quality and quantity of students' connections with both collective and individual cultural agents. These researchers posit that racial/ethnic minority undergraduate students are more likely to succeed if the campus cultural agents to whom they are connected emphasize achievement, value attainment, and validate their cultural heritages.

As the previous discussion highlights, alternative conceptualizations of student persistence expand Tinto's (1990) student integration model and challenges its key underlying assumptions when applied to students of color. In the past, the study of racial/ethnic minority students has been primarily through the lens of student development theories (Bensimon, 2005). If we are promoting greater multicultural diversity across college campuses in the United States, we also need different conceptual models from those of the social integrationists to explain student experiences (Tierney, 2008). Emerging perspectives of minority student success and existing evidence suggest the relationship between precollege cultures and campus cultures influence the

persistence of racial/ethnic minority students (Museus & Quaye, 2009). We know the campus culture is multilayered, ranging from the pictures and signs that hang on the walls to the deep level of embedded values, beliefs and assumptions that guide the behavior of students, faculty, staff and administrative leaders (Williams, 2006). What isn't well delineated, however, is the complex level of the student culture of origin upon student persistence.

Unlike Maramba's (2008a) feminist approach conducted in a predominantly White university in southern California, this study examines both female and male Filipino students' experience in a predominantly Asian institution in Hawai'i. Since the purpose of this study is to explore how Filipina/o American students manage the influences of home and college (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa), it is imperative the developed conceptual framework of this study examine the context of the Filipina/o culture. I argue the culture of origin (precollege) influences college student persistence and provided support to this claim. A student's culture of origin mediates the importance of college attendance and degree completion (Museus & Quaye, 2009). Therefore, the lens of this study extends Kuh and Love's (2000) culturally based approach that advocates "knowledge of a student's culture of origin and the cultures of immersion is needed to understand a student's ability to successfully negotiate the institution's cultural milieu" (p. 203), and further delineates Maramba's (2008a) biculturalism theme.

The culturally based/biculturalism approach is the lens of choice for the following reasons. First, this proposed study seeks to understand how the Filipina/o minority status contributes to the college experience. Second, the academic and social challenges of Filipina/o college students are explored. Finally, the origin of these challenges and the

methods students use in response to these challenges will be answered. Both models acknowledge the importance of “culture” in understanding student persistence, underscore the need for higher education professionals to fully comprehend its influence on student persistence, and advocate the need for more within group role models on campus. Through a biculturalism lens, I hope to understand the strategies Filipina/o students employ in living in, and effectively managing, two culturally different environments. Family and friends (pre college and during college) remain a strong influence during a student’s years on college (Surla Banaria, 2004).

While Kuh and Love’s (2000) constructs may assist institutions in understanding minority student persistence, Maramba’s (2008a) work adds credibility to this study through its emphasis on household family relationships and the inherent pressure of maintaining these relationships. Similar to other minority groups, Filipinas/os remain loyal to family members. By combining the concepts of a culturally-based approach with biculturalism, it places the role of culture as the cornerstone of this study. More importantly, it forces the data to be examined in a cultural context and discover new indicators of the college experience.

Significance of the Study

The cited literature identifies the lack of research and the need for further studies on the Filipina/o college student experience. It is the student’s experiences, both in and out of school, that influence the attitudes about his or her education and ultimately the decision to continue in school (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Further research is necessary to understand racial and ethnic minority students’ views of their participation in college as an important part of the process of engagement in the diverse learning communities of a

college (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). There are several reasons this study will be significant to the literature on Filipina/o American research in higher education.

First, this study focuses on the first-hand experiences of Filipina/o American students. It gives them a voice and recognition separate from other Asian American populations and challenges the homogenous construct which implies all Asian Americans identify with the Asian American community in the same way (Alvarez, 2002). Second, the study recognizes and gives value to the cultural challenges inherent with this particular student population. Third, it will contribute to the lack of published research on college Filipina/o students and identify effective coping strategies on how students manage the influences of home and school, and/or offer pragmatic campus based interventions that may contribute to student success. Fourth, the culturally diverse student population enrolled at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa provides a unique demographic setting to conduct this research not otherwise available on campuses throughout the continental United States. The campus is unique due to its geographical location in the Pacific Ocean and an Asian/Pacific Islander enrollment of more than half of the total student population.

Finally, this study has personal significance. As a second generation Filipino American, first-generation college student, and UHM faculty member, my position in this study may be viewed as both insider and outsider. In my role as an academic advisor, I am challenged to establish relationships with students from diverse backgrounds and understand the cultures of origin. The results from this study may have implications for institutions to re-examine their current minority student practices and policies, discover alternative strategies from Filipina/o American students in managing the influences of

home and school, and give permission for student services personnel to “think out of the box” in the types of services and support provided.

Research Question

The purpose of this study is to obtain Filipina/o students’ perspectives and experiences of college life, and explore how Filipina/o American students manage the influences of home and college. An underlying assumption in this study is students are not functioning in isolation, but in the overlapping and sometimes competing worlds of home and college. Influences from home may come from family or friends who expect household chores to be completed, babysitting younger siblings, remaining close to home, and earning the highest grades (Maramba, 2008b). The college influences may come from the student’s ability to adapt to the norms of the dominant social group, possession of strong expressive and written English language skills, and mentoring by same culture role models (Phinney & Haas, 2003).

More specifically, this study seeks to answer the following question:

How do Filipina/o American students at UHM describe their undergraduate college experience?

Summary

This chapter outlined the framework that guides this study and justified the merits of scholarly engagement. Specifically, data on culturally diverse students in higher education was examined, with special emphasis on Filipina/o American students as the focus of research. The literature on retention models was reviewed and a culturally based approach was introduced as a way to understand persistence. The Filipina/o culture and culturally based models of student persistence will be discussed further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the perspectives and experiences of Filipina/o American college students, and examine the complex level of a student's culture of origin on persistence. This chapter is organized into three sections of relevant literature: the history of Filipina/o immigration to the United States; the Filipina/o culture of origin; a review of acculturation theory (Berry, 1977, 2009); and intercultural theories (Maramba, 2008a; Museus & Quaye, 2009). These theories are related to the problem under study as it provides an important dimension on ethnic minority college student persistence. Collectively, the cited literature provides a foundation for understanding the culture of Filipina/o American students in the context of a successful college experience.

History of Filipina/o Immigration to the United States

Filipina/o immigrants have become the second largest immigrant group in the United States (Chua, 2009). When Filipinas/os arrived in the U.S., they were often referred to as "birds of passage" as their skin color and language set them apart from everyone else and were subject to racial discrimination and stereotype (Melendy, 1977). Of the many historical events in the history of the Philippines, the important landmarks that shaped cultural identity and achievement relevant to this study are: the Philippine-American War; the 1903 Pensionado Act; the 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Act; the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act, and the 1972 Political Refugee movement.

In 1898 the United States began military and administrative occupation of the Philippines (Chua, 2009). The Philippine-American War, also known as the Philippine War of Independence, was an armed conflict between a group of Filipino revolutionaries

and the United States which arose from the struggle to gain independence following annexation by the United States. Although the Philippines established a brief period of self governance, its people were forced to become dependent on a U.S. military government. For Filipinas/os, the war meant trading, after an eight month interval of embattled political independence, one antagonist for another (Kramer, 2006). U.S. troops viewed Filipinas/os as barbarians, uncivilized and often used racial epithets to describe its people. As a result, Kramer (2006) described this conflict as a race war.

The colonization of the Philippines by the U.S. military opened the way for the transport of large scale cheap Filipino labor to the sugar plantations of Hawai‘i and California. Between 1909 and 1946, almost 127,000 farm laborers were recruited to work the sugar cane fields of Hawai‘i and to the mainland (Strobel, 1997). As “nationals,” Filipinas/os were not subject to immigration restrictions (Lim, 2008). Therefore, the laws which discriminated against other Asian groups like the Chinese and Japanese (e.g., the right to citizenship, right to own property) could not be applied to Filipinas/os. This differential treatment set Filipinas/os apart from the Asian communities that preceded them and they became easy targets of Asian inclusion. Filipinas/os came mostly from peasant backgrounds and were seen as racially inferior and incapable of self-government (Jung, 2006).

This immigration created a predominantly single, male, under-educated labor force, many of whom experienced discrimination as they began to date and marry White women. During this period in Hawai‘i, a racial hierarchy developed among immigrants with Portuguese and Japanese earning a status of power. Since Portuguese were similar in physical appearance to Europeans, they were often promoted as “lunas,” or plantation

bosses, while Filipinos were limited to unskilled labor positions during the growth of the sugar cane industry. When compared to these immigrants, Filipinos experienced other inequities that included the lowest paid jobs, the worst living conditions, and disproportionately men without wives or children in Hawai‘i (Jung, 2006).

In the early 1900s, we see evidence of the first college educated Filipinas/os as limited numbers started arriving in the U.S., many of whom were U.S. government scholars called *pensionados*. The Pensionado Act of 1903 allowed a limited number of Filipina/o college students to enter the U.S. (Chua, 2009). These scholars were part of a program of the U.S. colonial administration to train Filipino leaders for future political roles in the colonial government. Many of these scholars returned to the Philippines but several, due to culture shock and discrimination in American universities, failed to complete their education and stayed in the U.S. rather than face the shame of returning home as failures and accepted jobs as houseboys, cooks, gardeners, and other menial jobs (Strobel, 1997). This period of time set the stage for cultural trauma and alienation as racism was foundational in rationalizing the colonization of Filipinas/os.

The Tydings McDuffie Act of 1934, also called the Philippine Independence Act (independence was to be granted in ten years), changed the status of Filipinas/os in the U.S. from “nationals” to “aliens” and the immigrant quota was reduced to fifty a year (Strobel, 1977). The granting of independence to the Philippines was a result of a growing threat of “undesirable” Filipinas/os in the United States. The Filipinas/os in the U.S. were offered free passage to return to the Philippines in the face of anti-Filipina/o sentiments during this time period (Strobel, 1977). Collectively, these experiences

created a colonial mentality and an ethnic and cultural identity crisis for Filipina/o Americans. A colonial mentality (Espiritu, 2009) may be defined as:

the concept that the colonizer's values and beliefs are accepted by the colonized as a belief and truth of one's own, and that the mores of the colonizer are superior to those of the colonized. (p. 15)

Colonized people lose confidence in themselves and their abilities, lose their voice, and feel powerless to make change, and may have learned their native tongue is bad while the language of the American colonizer is good (Halagao Espiritu & Nadal, 2007). This denigration of one's self and culture is one of the most pressing issues for Filipina/o Americans. Thus, the psychology of colonialism exists internally among Filipinas/os and Filipinas/os Americans today.

In 1965, the U.S. government revamped its immigration law to standardize the country's recruitment of labor from other countries including the Philippines by instituting a formal mechanism that ranked occupations based on corporate demands (Chua, 2009). The Immigration and Naturalization Act (INS) law raised the quota for Asian countries to 20,000 annually to eliminate the racism that was implicit in the immigration policies (Strobel, 1997). The INS increased the quota for Filipinas/os through family unification and professional worker provisions. As a result, a dual chain migration of Filipinas/os into the U.S. began. From 1966 through 1976, approximately 276,000 Filipinas/os immigrated to the United States (Strobel, 1997). Of this group, two thirds were doctors, nurses, engineers, and teachers, which resulted in a more educated, privileged class. As the working class and agriculture workers before them migrated to Hawai'i and the West coast, this professional class of immigrants moved to the East coast and Mid West region (Root, 1997). Some Filipina/o Americans were embarrassed to be

associated with the former group of people who may be viewed as second class citizens. This phenomenon was commonly referred to as the “brain drain” from the Philippines as an unprecedented migration of Filipina/o professionals and technical workers left the homeland in order to meet the labor demands and the growing economy (Melendy, 1977). In the 1970s and 1980s, Filipina/o nurses, health care workers, and other professionals entered the U.S. through this occupational preference mechanism that provided a way to unify migrant families with their loved ones (Chua, 2009).

Filipina/o Americans, despite being the second largest Asian American minority group in the U.S., have been called the “invisible minority” (Strobel, 1997). When compared with Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and recently, Korean Americans, the majority of Filipina/o Americans lag behind these groups in economic mobility, representation in higher education, community development, and political clout. In comparison to Chinese and Japanese Americans, a larger proportion of Filipinas/os hold working class jobs. While the majority of post-1965 Filipina/o Americans are in the secondary labor market characterized by low pay and slow advancement, many are under-employed and have low returns on their educational investment (Strobel, 1997). Among Filipina/o American college students, retention in public colleges and universities is low. Filipina/o youth have one of the highest high school dropout rates and one of the highest rates of teen suicide ideation and attempts (President’s Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, 2001).

In 1972, President Ferdinand Marcos signed the Martial Law Edict and placed the entire country under martial law. He cited growing lawlessness and open rebellion by local communist rebels as justification for this measure (Strobel, 1997). In doing so,

democracy was suppressed and civil liberties restricted. His dictatorship resulted in wide arrest and detention powers, while corruption and cronyism contributed to a serious decline in economic growth and development. Many Filipinas/os landowners were forced to turn over property rights to the Marcos government, dissident forces were crushed, and billions of dollars were stolen from the country. Once traumatized in the U.S. and now in their homeland, many Filipinas/os sought political refugee status in the United States (Chua, 2009). In 1986, the Marcos regime finally collapsed and Marcos himself sought, and was granted, political asylum in Hawai'i. Between 1971 and 1984, Filipina/o immigration under occupational preference declined, however there was an increase in immigration of immigration under the family reunification category (Strobel, 1997). According to the 2007 U.S. Census, there are more Filipino women than Filipino men, a gendered pattern that reflects the greater demand for the labor of young women from the Philippines (Chua, 2009).

Filipina/o Culture of Origin

Research (DeWitz et al., 2009; Lee, Sax, Kim & Hagedorn, 2004) suggests family support, interest, and encouragement can help students persist in college. The family is the core social unit with the Filipina/o culture (Velasco, 2008). It is seen as the conduit of values, morals, beliefs, and attitudes that determine an individual's behavior and roles (Nayani, 2006). When compared to Western families, Filipina/o families are typically bigger in terms of family size relative to the U.S. norm (Chua, 2009), and may include extended and/or intergenerational members living in the same household. As a matriarchal unit, the culture relies on women to take care of the family needs and economic survival (Velasco, 2008). Some of the cultural values include: deference to

parents and older relatives; maintaining close familial relationships with extended kin; continuing Catholic rituals brought from the Philippines; maintaining fluency in their native tongue (Yates Long, 2008), and obtaining and providing education for their children (Okamura, 2008). Revilla (1997) posits when Filipina/o Americans are able to maintain their traditional cultural values, it increases self esteem and strengthens a sense of belonging.

Chickering and Riesser (1993) found a positive identity is enhanced by an awareness of one's cultural background, an immersion in the social world of one's ethnic group, a valuing of the rituals, traditions, and artifacts of one's extended family or adopted network, and a sense of one's lineage. Knowing "Who I am," or what Torres & Hernandez (2007) called intrapersonal development, rests in part on knowing "Where I came from," and pride in the character or accomplishments of one's ancestors. This awareness may eventually lead to a conscious choice to depart from some cultural traditions (Chickering & Riesser, 1993). Living in Hawai'i provides a positive context for youth (Nayani, 2006). Okamura (2008) found attending college at UHM appears to result in many Filipina/o American students losing their sense of shame and instead develop positive feelings of pride about their identity, especially noteworthy since a lower proportion of Filipina/o students enroll at UHM compared to their high schools.

Among Filipina/o American children, identification is an issue, especially among those with multiethnic heritage (Nayani, 2006). People in Hawai'i would rather connect to their ethnicity rather than a generalized category (Carter Merrill, Evans, Sellers, Wilder, & Bachini, 2009), and it is considered "normal" to be multiracial as it is to identify as "local" (Nayani, 2006). In Hawai'i for example, many Filipina/o Americans

have Hawaiian ancestry and are more likely to assert being Native Hawaiian than Filipino as their primary identity (Okamura, 2008). The distinction between what are referred to as “local” and “immigrant” Filipinas/os is much more than demographic and is reflected in social divisions and cultural and socioeconomic differences between two components of the Filipino American community. *Kapwa*, a core value, is defined as the identity of self and others, or an awareness of a shared identity (Halagao & Nadal, 2007). Therefore, the individual Filipina/o identity is often defined in the context of a family identity. At the same time, however, family relationships can be a major source of stress (Maramba, 2008a). This identity crisis is due in part to the perceived parents “failure” to properly educate and instill in themselves and their children cultural pride in being Filipina/o (Strobel, 1997). This issue is also related to problems within the community in terms of invisibility, lack of unity, and youth and family problems.

In response to this ethnic identity crisis, different approaches were used. Those Filipinas/os who were secure in their identity refused to prove they were Filipina/o, some tried to be more Filipina/o and establish themselves as cultural experts, and others rejected the Filipina/o identity as a defense against scrutiny and rejection (Root, 1997). The Filipina/o American identity movement began in the 1960s and gained momentum in 1970. This changed the orientation, and created and reinforced feelings of pride in being Filipina/o (Revilla, 1997). Filipina/o organizations grew and encouraged youth to learn about their culture. Printed publications on the 100th anniversary of the Philippine revolution and the 90th anniversary of Filipina/o immigration to Hawai‘i were made available in critical mass and celebrated. Ethnic identity, defined as a construct or set of self-ideas about one’s own ethnic group membership (Torres, 1999), is important because

it affects the maintenance and expression of traditional culture, helps individuals enhance their self-concept and self-esteem, and enables individuals to have a sense of belonging to an ethnic group (Revilla, 1997).

One of the primary challenges from the home environment for Filipina/o American students in higher education is the influence of their cultural background, or pressure from parents to give priority to the family and maintain family responsibilities (Dahilig, 2009). For these students, especially those living at home, feel obligations to the family are expected in the form of housework and childcare (Phinney & Haas, 2003). At the same time, Filipina/o families expect their children to attend college close to home, graduate in four years due to financial hardship, and only earn “A” grades (Maramba, 2008b). Falling short of this expectation, these children feel they let their parents down and participation in non-instructional activities or part-time employment is viewed as a waste of time. Given these challenges and expectations, Filipinas/os tend to earn lower grades, have a higher attrition rate, require a longer period of study to graduate, and have a lower graduation rate (Agbayani, 1996). As previously mentioned, challenges that originate from the college environment may come from the student’s ability to adapt to the norms of the dominant social group, possession of strong expressive and written English language skills, and mentoring by similar culture role models (Phinney & Haas, 2003).

The future of higher education in the U.S. may depend on our ability to address the needs of the immigrant student or the student who is a child of immigrants (Conway, 2009). Immigrant students see education as an instrumental means to credentials for success in ways that are not possible in their home country (Cho et al., 2008). Minority

immigrant students face greater financial pressure and more family responsibilities than typical middle class students. College success may come from the student's ability to adapt to the norms of the dominant social group, possession of strong expressive and written English language skills, and mentoring by culture role models (Phinney & Haas, 2003). Immigrant households are more likely to have rules about grades and homework (Kao & Tienda, 1995). Few studies have investigated college-aged children of immigrants or specific ethnic groups, more specifically, Filipinas/os are absent from contemporary literature on immigration (Wolf, 1997).

Research on generation status (Tuason et al., 2007) suggests Philippine born and U.S. born groups hold similar values, including family orientation, hospitality, politeness and respect. Regardless however of the place of birth, all participants consistently shared the experience of discrimination. This discrimination was often based on physical appearances (e.g., brown complexion) or on the basis of assumptions of them (e.g., presumed to be poor). For U.S. born, elements of Filipina/o identity include feelings of warmth and belongingness to family, and valuing commitment and deep connections in their relationships. With Philippine born groups, the essential parts of their identity were family and the meaningful relationships they had in the United States (Tuason et al., 2007). Often referred to as the "bridge generation" (Revilla, 1997), second generation Filipinas/os attempt to bridge the Filipino culture they learned with the American culture, and assume "hybrid identities" (Halagao Espiritu & Nadal, 2007). This group became subject to conflicting pressure from parents and peers, to pervasive outside discrimination, and torn by conflicting social and cultural demands toward "Americanization" (Portes & Zhou, 1994).

Acculturation Theory

In application to this study, Berger and Milem (1999) suggest that the students who are more likely to persist are those that have values, norms, and established patterns of behavior that are already in existence on campus. In contrast, students who were least like the dominant peer group on campus, particularly with regard to race and political attitudes were least likely to persist. Baruch-Runyon, Van Zandt, and Elliott (2009) examined a student's transitional experience at the university level and the strategies they developed to adjust to university life and four themes emerged: 1) the challenges of forming connections to other students with similar interests during the first few weeks on campus; 2) the need to balance competing demands; 3) varied experiences of connection with family and staff; and 4) the need for translation of university life for minority students. Acculturation theory provides one way to examine the strategies culturally diverse students may use in forming connections to other students, balancing competing demands, and a successful transition to university life.

Acculturation, defined as a dynamic and complex process of adapting oneself to the broader social surroundings (Torres, 1999) includes two basic propositions: 1) human beings are part of the natural world and as members of a single species, we share basic psychosocial processes and capacities; and 2) human beings are part of the cultural world, meaning we make various cultures and are shaped by these cultures. According to Berry (2009), a key task of acculturation psychology is to understand the links between the cultural and psychological sets of information, as well as within these sets. He continues to define culture as the entire social heritage of a group, including the material culture and external structures, learned actions, and mental representations of many kinds, that is,

culture is made of socially shared concrete features. Migrants bring cultural and psychological qualities with them to the new society, and the new society has a variety of such qualities. No cultural group remains unchanged following cultural contact, and results in actions and reactions to the contact situation (Berry, 2009).

Ethnic groups often provide people with a sense of belonging which can make them better able to cope with the rest of society than they would as isolated individuals, however ethnic loyalties do not need to detract from the wider loyalties to the community or country. Acculturation theory (Berry, 2009) may offer a model for minority students to successfully make the transition to university life and persist through degree completion. At the core of this theory are two central questions:

1. *Is it considered to be of value to maintain one's identity and characteristics?*
2. *Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationship with the larger society?*

This theory suggests four ways of acculturating based on the distinction between orientations toward one's own group, and those towards other groups, meaning a relative preference for maintaining one's heritage culture and identity and a relative preference for having contact with and participating in the larger society along with ethnocultural groups (e.g., culturally diverse).

Acculturation strategies involve an interaction between the ethnocultural group and the dominant group or larger society. Accordingly, Filipinas/os are faced with maintaining the ethnocultural group (Filipino) while participating in the dominant group or larger society (e.g., college campus). *Assimilation*, the first way of acculturating, occurs when individuals from the ethnocultural group do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures. In contrast, when

individuals place a value on holding on to their original culture, and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with others, the second acculturating strategy is referred to as *separation*. However, when separation is forced by the dominant group it results in *segregation*. *Assimilation*, when sought by the dominant group is called the *melting pot*, based on the assumption that different ethnic groups in the U.S. would melt together and form a common culture based on Anglo conformity which would result in the declining significance of race and ethnicity (Strobel, 1997). In this decision pattern, ethnocultural groups decide to merge their identity with the larger society in the pursuit of pervasive and general goals (Berry, 1977). Hawai'i has been characterized as a racial *melting pot* because of its high intermarriage rate (Okamura, 2008).

In opposition to this strategy, Strobel (1997) argues the classic assimilation model for immigrants is no longer sufficient. The assimilation model, or “push-pull” framework, assumes the achievement of immigrants depends on their human capital, motivations, values, talents and skills. Portes and Zhou (1994) question if immigrants should assimilate given the conflicting pressure from parents and peers and to pervasive outside discrimination. Instead, these scholars suggest *segmented assimilation* is possible but is dependent on what sector of American society a particular immigrant group assimilates.

When there is an interest in maintaining one's original culture, while in daily interactions with other groups, *integration* is the third acculturation strategy. In this strategy, both ethnic retention and positive intergroup relations are valued by the ethnocultural group (Berry, 1977). In other words, there is some degree of cultural integrity maintained, while at the same time seeking, as a member of an ethnocultural group, a desire to participate as an integral part of the larger social network (Berry, 2009).

Integration, when diversity is a widely accepted feature of the society as a whole, including by all various ethnocultural groups, the outcome is *multiculturalism*. Integration can only be chosen and successfully pursued by non-dominant groups when the dominant society is open and inclusive in its orientation towards cultural diversity. Thus, mutual accommodation is required for *integration* to be attained, involving the acceptance by both groups of the right of all groups to live as culturally different peoples. This strategy requires non-dominant groups to adapt to the basic values of the larger society, while at the same time the dominant group must be prepared to adapt to national institutions (e.g., college campus) to better meet the needs of all groups now living together in the plural society.

In application to Hawai‘i, Okamura (2008) challenges this *multiculturalism* concept and argues *multiculturalism* is primarily concerned with the way in which cultural differences within a multicultural society are produced, received, or reproduced. Hawai‘i symbolized the message of equality of opportunity for all, regardless of background, color, or religion. A general problem with multicultural approaches is the emphasis on culture and cultural differences, rather than race and racial differences, to distinguish groups in a common society. Instead, Okamura (2009) suggests a Hawai‘i *multicultural* model. Its principals include a tradition of tolerance and peaceful coexistence; harmonious ethnic relations evident in cordial relationships and a high rate of intermarriage; equality of opportunity and status; and a shared local culture and identity. This cultural norm, referred to as the “aloha spirit,” is more significant in interpersonal relationships than in ethnic group relations.

Intercultural Theories

As an extension of the *integration-multiculturalism* acculturation strategy within a university setting, Maramba (2008a) offers the construct of *biculturalism* as a strategy of student success. Previously defined, it is a process by which individuals learn to live in two different environments, the dominant culture and their ethnic minority culture.

Biculturalism combines acculturation and ethnic identity to create a different world view. This view suggests that a person can function competently in two cultures, or as Torres (1999) suggests, a synthesis of two cultures and languages out of which a third arises that was not previously present. The spheres of biculturalism (Maramba, 2008a) emphasize an axis relationship in which structures of power (domination and resistance) interact with the dominant and subordinate culture simultaneously.

Results in a study of 82 undergraduate Filipina women in a southern California university (Maramba, 2008a), students felt their “old” friends did not understand what they were experiencing in college. Although the family provided a support system, talking with parents and non-college friends about their college experience proved to be challenging. These students described a shift between worlds and were still exploring “who they were.” While some discussed the importance of having role models and support networks at the university level, others looked for women of color on campus who felt they understood their struggles. Several participants mentioned the importance of having Filipina American staff or faculty as a source of support in college. A cultural democracy (Maramba, 2008b) is important for Filipino students to remain at the college or university. This cultural democracy may consist of a campus environment that includes more Filipino students and more Filipino courses, a sense of belonging on campus where

students find a safe space and involvement, and a recognition of external influences that include family and friends. More importantly, however, is a campus environment that is void of micro aggressions, or racist comments in class or on campus, and a way for Filipinas/os to have a voice and recognition on campus.

In a related study, LaFromboise, Coleman & Green (1993) propose a *bicultural orientation model*, which posits that an individual is able to gain competence within two cultures without losing his or her cultural identity or having to choose one culture over the other. Similar to the previously discussed theories, the model shares similar concepts and consists of three constructs: acculturation, ethnic identity, and *biculturalism*.

The *biculturalism* theory disproved the notion of a linear acculturation model and suggests time in the majority culture is one indication of acculturation (Torres, 1999). Most theoretical models used in student development do not assess the individual differences among ethnic minorities or examine the choices students make about their culture of origin and the culture of the majority population. Not all students fit neatly in all student development models, but all students should feel comfortable in the collegiate environment (Torres, 1999). Future research on ethnicity should show the interaction between acculturation and ethnic development, and determine the other constructs that illustrate differences between the cultural orientations that may include persistence, academic achievement, expected level of education, and socioeconomic status. Incorporating a qualitative component to the research approaches used in this study would allow for further interpretations of the developmental processes involved in choosing a cultural orientation (Torres, 1999).

In similar criticism and in a later study, Berry (2009) challenged his earlier

acculturation theory (Berry, 1977). In a move away from this linear acculturation model and further development of the *biculturalism* construct, Museus and Quaye (2009) provide an *intercultural* framework for college success. It includes the concepts of *cultural integrity*, *a cultural perspective* of student departure, and the concept of *cultural agents*. An intercultural definition used to refer to interactions across multiple cultures, however Museus and Quaye (2009) prefer the term “intercultural perspective” of minority student persistence. In a qualitative study of college student departure that focused on the important role of students’ precollege and campus cultures, Kuh and Love (2000) propose that the level of incongruence between students’ precollege cultures and dominant campus culture is inversely related to persistence, that is, students must acclimate or become immersed in a subculture to find membership in and persist through college. As a result, three (3) alternative cultural frameworks for understanding the experiences and persistence of students of color are presented: 1) the concept of *cultural integrity*; 2) a *cultural perspective* of student departure; and 3) the concept of *cultural agents* and how they foster *bicultural socialization* (important to establish connections with cultural agents (e.g., faculty and peers) on their campuses. Included in these cultural frameworks are eight culturally based propositions:

- *Proposition 1: Minority students’ college experiences are shaped by their cultural meaning-making systems.* Students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds can experience the same environment in different ways, or within-group differences.
- *Proposition 2: Minority students’ cultures of origin moderate the meanings that they attach to college attendance, engagement, and completion.* Students’ cultures

of origin mediate the importance of college attendance and degree completion. If previously interacted with diverse groups of people in his/her precollege experience, these interactions shaped his/her expectations regarding the role of diversity.

- *Proposition 3: Knowledge of minority students' cultures of origin and immersion are required to understand those students' abilities to negotiate their respective campus cultural milieus.* Knowledge of both racial/ethnic minority college students' cultures of origin and cultures of immersion is required to understand their abilities to negotiate their respective campus cultures in predominantly white institutions (PWI). This proposition shifts more emphasis on the institution's responsibility in student persistence.
- *Proposition 4: Cultural dissonance is inversely related to minority students' persistence.* Cultural dissonance has been used to describe the tension students feel as a result of incongruence between their cultural meaning-making systems and new cultural information that they encounter. Cultural dissonance increases adjustment difficulty and leads to thoughts about departure.
- *Proposition 5: Minority students who experience a substantial amount of cultural dissonance must acclimate to the dominant campus culture or establish sufficient connections with cultural agents at their institution to persist.* This proposition suggests an "either-or" response on the part of the student. Many students in this study expressed the importance of remaining connected to their home communities. This proposition adds another layer of criticism to Tinto's (1990) integration model.

- *Proposition 6: The degree to which campus cultural agents validate minority students' cultures of origin is positively associated with reduced cultural dissonance and greater likelihood of persistence.* Here, the value of peers and cultural groups is emphasized. The more incongruent between these cultural agents and the cultures of origin, the more negative impact it will have on minority students.
- *Proposition 7: The quality and quantity of minority students' connections with various cultural agents on their respective campuses is positively associated with their likelihood of persistence.* Or, the greater connections the student has with cultural agents on campus, the greater engagement, which results in the greater socialization into the cultures of their campus. This proposition lends support to the importance of social networking (Surla Banaria, 2004).
- *Proposition 8: Minority students are more likely to persist if the cultural agents to whom they are connected emphasize educational achievement, value educational achievement, and validate their traditional cultural heritages.* Students are more likely to succeed if members of the ethnic enclaves in which those students are integrated value achievement and persistence. Data suggests that the ability of students of color to find and connect with collective and individual cultural agents that validate their cultural heritages is associated with success in college.

Kuh & Love (2000) suggest that the level of incongruence between students' precollege cultures and dominant campus culture is inversely related to persistence, that is, students must acclimate or become immersed in a subculture to find membership in and persist through college. Here, they emphasize *cultural agents* and *bicultural*

socialization and the importance of establishing connections on campus. Collective agents provide students with smaller and more manageable environments within the larger campus, offer a conduit for socialization into the larger campus community, and provide a venue in which students can maintain and express a sense of racial/ethnic identity on campus, or bicultural socialization. Collective cultural agents refer to groups (e.g., academic programs, informal peer groups, cultural centers, and student organizations) in the campus cultures with whom students can connect.

Summary

In summary, emerging perspectives of minority student success and existing evidence suggest that the relationship between precollege cultures and campus cultures influences the persistence of racial/ethnic minority students (Kuh & Love, 2000; Maramba, 2008a; Rendon, et al., 2000; Tierney, 2000). This chapter explored the Filipina/o American historical migration, the complexities of a Filipina/o American culture of origin, and the inherent challenges for Filipina/o American college students.

CHAPTER THREE. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the research methods used in describing Filipina/o college students' perspectives and experiences, and, more specifically, how they manage the influences of home and college are detailed. Because this study seeks to examine how students "make sense of," or come to understand these experiences and identify the personal ways in which the participants manage these home and college influences, a case study approach was chosen.

Design of the Study

Scholars emphasize that further research on student retention should include more qualitative studies to contribute to the further development of theory (Attinasi, 1992; Janes, 1997; Tinto, 1990). Attinasi emphasized the importance of using qualitative methods in higher education research that provides students with an opportunity to elucidate full, rich descriptions of their experiences and perceptions (Maramba, 2008a). Qualitative research emphasizes *thick description* as a means of understanding the particular perceptions of the actors (Stake, 1995).

The study represents a qualitative case study inquiring about Filipina/o American students in higher education. Stake (1995) suggests the three distinctive features of qualitative inquiry are: 1) the focus on understanding as the purpose of inquiry; 2) the emphasis on knowledge construction; and 3) the personal role of the researcher in all aspects of the research process. In qualitative studies then, the research questions are oriented to cases or phenomena, seeking patterns of unanticipated as well as expected relationships (p. 41).

Qualitative inquiry is the method of choice in this study for three reasons. First, the purpose of the study is to capture the strategies Filipina/o American students use in managing the social worlds of home and college and not in measuring outcome variables which is more suited to quantitative discovery. Second, the theoretical lens of the study is acculturation theory (Berry, 2009). In this context, data is best examined in the type and quality of social interactions across multiple cultures. As Heck (2004) writes, one essential feature of qualitative inquiry is the focus on the social construction of reality by participants. The social construction of reality is sometimes referred to as “sense making,” that is, how people make sense of, or construct their social world. Finally, the qualitative method is best suited to answer the process questions of the study. Qualitative research is heavily process oriented, meaning it attempts to examine events and meanings as they unfold, and to understand the contingencies that influence the manner in which such events evolve (Heck, 2004).

Case Study Features

There are several case study definitions in the literature Yin (1993) defines the case study in terms of the research process.

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. (p. 13)

Later, he adds case studies are studies of events within their real life context (Yin, 2003). Stake (1995) focuses on the unit of study, or the case and defined case study in terms of its end product. Merriam (1998) identifies the case study as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit and the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study.

Within this definition of a single social unit representing the object of study, Creswell (1998) emphasizes the exploration of a bounded system or case (or multiple cases) occurs over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context. The bounded system is bounded by time (e.g., one academic semester) and place (e.g., a single campus), and it is the *case* being studied such as a program, an event, an activity or individuals. The case or bounded system could be a person such as a student (e.g., Filipina/o American student), teacher, a principal, a program, a group such as a class, a school, a community, a specific policy, etc. In application to the study, the unit of study is the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, while the embedded unit of analysis are Filipina/o American students.

The case study, therefore, is a distinctive research approach (Creswell, 1998) in its flexible ability to attend to accommodate single cases or situations with a small number of cases; capture process and outcomes in a causal logic model; adapt to the availability of different types of evidence; assess outcomes and test causal theories and rival theories; and develop lessons generalizable to the major substantive themes in the field. Since the number of cases in the study will be relatively small (N=12), and the focus under investigation concerns itself with the process of student persistence, the case study approach is an appropriate method as an evaluation tool of student persistence.

Case studies are appropriate when investigators want to define topics broadly and not narrowly, cover contextual conditions and not just the phenomenon of study, and rely on multiple and not singular sources of evidence (Yin, 1993). The two principle uses of case study are to obtain the descriptions and interpretations of others (Stake, 1995). Since the goal of the study is to capture students' descriptions and interpretations of the college

experience, the case study approach is best suited for the study. It is the method of choice when the phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from the context.

Additionally, case studies are an appropriate research method when you are trying to attribute causal relationships and not just wanting to explore or describe a situation (Yin, 1993). In a qualitative case study, we seek a greater understanding of the case. Case studies are undertaken to make the case *understandable*. “Naturalistic generalizations” are conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life’s affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to them (p. 85).

Case study knowledge is more concrete and resonates with my own experience as a second generation Filipino, first-generation college student. Further, it is ideally suited to the needs and resources of the small-scale researcher (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006) as the focus is on the place of work, the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Merriam (1998) suggests it is more vivid and sensory rather than abstract and is more contextual, since our experiences are rooted in context, as is knowledge in case studies. Further, case studies are more developed by reader interpretation since readers bring to case study their own experience and understanding, which can lead to generalization when new data for the case are added to old data. In other words, this approach is based more on reference populations that are determined by the reader in generalizing, as readers have some population in mind. Thus, unlike traditional research, the reader participates in extending generalization to reference populations (Merriam, 1998). Finally, it is the preferred strategy to answer when “how” and “why” questions are posed (Yin, 2003). The central research question in the study attempts to obtain the descriptions and interpretations of Filipina/o American students:

How do Filipina/o American students at UHM describe their undergraduate college experience?

Descriptive Case Study

A *descriptive* case study is one that presents a detailed account of the phenomenon under study. It is not an expression of a cause-effect relationship, but rather covers the scope and depth of the object (case) being described (Yin, 1993). A *descriptive case* study means the end product of a case study is a rich, “thick” description of the phenomenon under study. A thick rich description is a term from anthropology and means the complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated. In the study, the phenomenon under investigation is the methods, or strategies, Filipina/o American students use in managing two different cultures, the culture of origin and the culture of the academic institution. Thus, the thick descriptions of persistence among Filipina/o American students serve as the foundation of inquiry.

Site Description

The mission of the University of Hawai‘i system reads in part:

to provide quality college and university education and training; create knowledge through research and scholarship; provide service through extension, technical assistance, and training; contribute to the cultural heritage of the community; and respond to state needs....The system’s special distinction is found in its Hawaiian, Asian, and Pacific orientation and international leadership role....Some of the core values include: access, diversity, fairness, and equity; and Hawaiian Asian-Pacific advantage. (University of Hawai‘i Mānoa 2009-2010 Catalog, p. 5)

The primary data source was collected from undergraduate students at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM). UHM is one of only 13 institutions to hold the distinction of being a land, sea, and space grant research institution. Classified as a very high research activity, the 320 acre campus is located in urban Honolulu on the island of O‘ahu, Hawai‘i. The campus is one of ten institutions in the University of Hawai‘i postsecondary

education system in the state, the only Carnegie Doctoral Research Extensive University, and has the most selective admission criteria. Generally, admitted students earn a B in all college preparatory high school course work and rank in the upper 40 percent of their graduating class (University of Hawai‘i Mānoa 2009-2010 Catalog).

Consequently, the students in the study reflect a higher standard of academic achievement and/or persistence when compared to the other nine UH campuses. UHM students have special opportunities for Asian, Pacific, and Hawaiian educational experiences and involvement in research activities, service learning, and co-curricular activities (University of Hawai‘i Mānoa 2009-2010 Catalog). Approximately 20,000 students are enrolled in UHM courses of which 69 percent are undergraduates, 55 percent are women, and 71 percent attend school full time, and the mean age of students is 25 (University of Hawai‘i Mānoa 2009-2010 Catalog). Institutional selectivity and size appear to have a significant influence on the noncognitive aspects of student development and students’ involvement in campus life (Astin, 1986).

In the 1970s, UHM established *Operation Manong* (big brother) as a response to address the cultural conflicts between Hawai‘i born and Philippine born Filipinas/os in Hawai‘i public high schools (Agbayani, 1996). UHM students provided tutoring and mentoring services to high school students in a predominantly Filipino community. In 1975, the Hawai‘i State Legislature passed a resolution authorizing the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa to establish a program which was the forerunner of the current Center for Philippine Studies (Aquino, 2001). This resolution was an attempt to recognize the contributions of Filipinos to the history of Hawai‘i, and to highlight the academic expertise on the Philippines at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. In 1988, the program

was put under the School of Hawaiian, Asian and Pacific Studies (now School of Pacific and Asian Studies (SPAS). On August 5, 2009, the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and the Vice Chancellor for Students established a Committee on Enrollment Planning (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Committee on Enrollment Planning, 2009). Hawai‘i remains well below educational attainment across Hawai‘i’s population. A number of groups in the state (Hawaiians, Filipinos, & Pacific Islanders) are attending and graduating from college at rates below the state’s average (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa and its Peer and Benchmark Institutions, 2007). One of the goals of this committee was to address the differential rates of educational attainment among these ethnic groups.

While the average graduation rate within four years at UHM is 11.5%, the average rate for Filipina/o students is 9.0% (University of Hawai‘i Institutional Research Office, 2007-2008). More specifically, the enrollment committee recognizes the under-representation of the Filipina/o population in higher education, on some measures is even more severe than that of Native Hawaiians and deserves attention and critical analysis at a level that is has not yet received. In agreement with the cited literature (Gasman, 2009; Shirvani, 2009), the committee adds it is not just a matter of access, but a matter of success once enrolled. In order to address this deficit, the stated goal is to increase the number who enter and graduate with both undergraduate and graduate degrees. In response, the university acknowledges these students need to receive the type of support they need in order to successfully transition into the culture of the university, is committed to strengthen areas of the curriculum and make it relevant, and increase the representation of these groups among faculty, staff, and administration.

In many ways, UHM is the last remaining bastion of White colonial rule in the islands (Okamura, 2008). As the largest institution of higher education in the state, the setting of this flagship campus offers an important perspective, that of a safe place in which multiethnic individuals feel that they can belong. Rather than having to choose one identity over the other, or discriminated against as a minority student, the multiethnic student body seems to develop a strong sense of self as “local” or “hapa,” as being identified as such is accepted, comfortable, and even prized in certain situations (Nayani, 2006). In fall 2008, Asian students represented 48.6% of the total enrollment, of which Filipinas/os only comprised 10.0% (University of Hawai‘i Institutional Research Office, 2007-2008). Accordingly, given the high percentage of Asian students and the low representation of Filipina/o students, the site provides a unique research opportunity not otherwise available to examine Filipina/o persistence.

Participants

Purposeful sampling is used in order to discover, understand, and gain insight (Merriam, 1998). It is a non-random method of sampling that allows the researcher to select information rich cases for study in depth (Patton, 2001). The sample included a total of twelve (N=12) undergraduate, full-time (12+ credits) students who self-identified as Filipina/o. According to McCracken (1988), a principle of qualitative analysis is that “less is more,” (p. 17) and for many research projects, eight participants are sufficient.

Selection for participation in the study began with email notification (see Appendix A) during the spring 2011 academic semester to all Philippine language instructors/advisors in the Tagalog Language Club (Katipunan Club) and Ilokano Language Club (Timpuyog Organization). A significant portion of Filipino and Southeast

Asian women enroll in business and health-related college majors (Song & Glick, 2004). In addition, advisors in the School of Nursing, School of Social Work, College of Business, Student Support Services Program¹ and College of Education departments were also sent notifications. All class standings and genders (e.g., freshmen through baccalaureate graduates; male and female) were invited to participate in the study. Upon invitation by an instructor, in-class presentations were conducted in the Philippine language classes to further explain the scope of the study. Given the collectivist (Hinkle & Brown, 1990) nature of the Filipina/o culture, students may feel more comfortable discussing and collectively sharing as part of a group. Snowball sampling was employed in order to obtain maximum variation. Snowball sampling involves asking each participant to refer the researcher to other participants, while maximum variation identifies and seeks out those who represent the widest possible range of characteristics of interest for the study (Merriam, 1998). Interested students received follow up email invitations and/or telephone calls to confirm dates and time for participation.

Data Collection

Yin (2003) recommends three principles of data collection in case study research: 1) multiple sources of information (e.g., participant demographic data, interviews, records); 2) a case study database (e.g., case study notes, documents); and 3) maintain the chain of evidence (e.g., collection, storage, and the ability to follow the evidence). The multiple sources of information advanced in the study included direct observations, demographic information, both initial and follow-up interviews, academic records, suggested literary publications, and case study notes. While interviews offer a very targeted and insightful source, they may be biased due to poor questions and/or response

bias. Documents on the other hand are generally stable and exact, however reporting may be bias or limited due to access. All sources of data (e.g., audio files, interview transcriptions, demographic data, etc.) were stored in a locked cabinet in my office on campus. Similarly, Creswell (1998) suggests six types of information: documentation; archival records; interviews; direct observations; participant observations; and physical artifacts.

Primary data were collected via individual face-to-face interviews, using a semi-structured approach, for approximately 1.0 hour in duration. Both face-to-face and group interviews can be defined as a conversation, but a conversation with a purpose (Merriam, 1998). The main purpose of any interview is to obtain a special kind of information. Tuason et al. (2007) used face-to-face interviews in order to address the distinguishing characteristics, stories, and experiences of Filipina/o American students. For the most part, interviewing in qualitative investigations is more open-ended and less structured (Merriam, 1988). The use of semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to acquire data necessary for understanding the overlap between home cultures, campus cultures, and student experiences, while providing flexibility to explore data on unexpected emerging themes (Museus & Quaye, 2009). The interview began with predetermined open-ended questions then continued in an unstructured manner of probing and following participants' leads. A sample of the *Interview Protocol* may be found in Appendix B. The questions were designed to solicit participants' descriptions of their home and campus cultures and their explanation of how those cultures shaped their experiences.

For this type of study, the purpose of the interview is not to discover how many, and what kinds of people share a certain characteristic, but rather to gain access to the

cultural categories and assumptions according to which one culture construes the world (McCracken, 1988). The initial, semi-structured interviews were digitally recorded and professionally transcribed into a word document. Both initial and follow-up interviews were conducted at local coffee shops and fast food restaurants, including various locations on the university campus on a date/time selected by, and convenient for, the student. Throughout the data collection process, ongoing verbal checks were conducted in order to clarify and confirm my understanding of their comments and meanings. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation took place (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and averaged approximately 45 minutes in length.

Advantages

A case study brings together a wealth of information from a variety of sources that can be used to examine a situation. It involves the widest array of data collection (Creswell, 1998) and allowed me to build an in-depth picture of the Filipina/o American college experience. An essential feature is its flexibility of purpose (Heck, 2004). It offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables or potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. Case study research is anchored in real life situations and offers results in a rich and holistic account of the phenomenon. It is drawn from people's experiences and practices and so it is seen to be strong in reality (Blaxter et al., 2006). Case studies allow the researcher to show the complexity of social life, while good case studies build on this to explore alternative meanings and interpretations. It offers insights and illuminates meanings that can expand its readers' experiences. These insights can be construed as tentative hypotheses that help structure future research or advancing a field's knowledge base (Merriam, 1998). Blaxter et al. (2006) agree case

studies can provide a data source from which further analysis can be made. Further, because case studies build on actual practices and experiences, they can be linked to action and their insights may contribute to changing practice. As a result, practices in higher education may be reviewed and changed, or more specifically, the retention practices of Filipina/o American students at UHM may be reviewed and changed.

Specific advantages of *descriptive* case studies include an advantage of hindsight yet it can be relevant in the present; illustrate the complexities of a situation, the fact that not one but many factors contributed to it; shows the influence of personalities on the issue; obtains information from a wide variety of sources; presents information in a wide variety of ways and from viewpoints of different groups; spells out differences of opinions on the issue and suggest how these differences have influenced the result; and includes vivid material obtained from quotes, interviews, etc. (Merriam, 1998). The data generated from the study can benefit the institution in understanding persistence strategies among all ethnically under-represented student groups.

Merriam (1998) suggests interviewing is the best technique to use when conducting intensive case studies of a few selected individuals. Interviewing is the preferred tactic of data collection when it will get better data, more data, or data at less cost than other tactics. In agreement, Glesne (1999) suggests interviewing allows researchers an opportunity to get more data. Interviewing is an occasion for close researcher-participant interaction and is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them (Merriam, 1998).

A by-product of the interview process is the research experience itself. The research experience can affect participants' thoughts and behavior, raise consciousness,

and allow participants to learn about themselves, the researcher, and the research. The intent of interviewing is to capture the unseen, explore how participants think or feel about something, and understand how they explain or account for something (Glesne, 1999). Interviewing research provides many opportunities to engage in feelings because it is a distance reducing experience. The feelings in question are those that are involved in the researchers' relationship with others, the matter of rapport, and those that are involved in the researchers' reactions to what they are learning in the world of others, and the matter of subjectivity (Glesne, 1999).

Limitations

The case starts with the problem, its definition, and the rationale behind the selection of the design. As a result, the problem, definition, or rationale may bring limitations to the study as well as the scope and boundaries of the study (Heck, 2004). As a novice researcher, a challenge is to maintain scientific rigor in conducting research and contributions to the academic community. Thus, the defined problem and design of the study may be inherently flawed from the start and impact any obtained data. In an attempt to prevent these problems, I created an initial dissertation proposal, sought peer consultation and critical analysis, and made appropriate revisions as necessary throughout the study. Trustworthiness is a critical factor in qualitative research in order to assure that the research process and products are fair, ethical, and represent the experiences of the participants as closely as possible (Clark, 2005). Accordingly, I followed all procedures and practices outlined by the UHM's Institutional Review Board to ensure procedural safeguards were in place.

Other limitations include the potential time and cost of conducting the study, ensuring rigor in scientific investigation, difficulties in replicating the results of case studies as case studies focus on the particular. Time is an important consideration in bounding the case, and the *type* of case study (Heck, 2004). As a full-time UHM employee and part-time doctoral student, the available time in any data collection method was limited. I conducted all data collection during after work hours in the evening, during lunch breaks, or weekends as appropriate to a participant's availability. In view of the cost of participant compensation, along with professional transcription fees, I assumed the total costs of the study as external funding was not available. In an attempt to reduce out-of-pocket expenses, I procured an out of state transcription service as the fees were significantly more competitive when compared to local vendors.

Case studies may be too lengthy, too detailed, or too involved for busy policy makers and educators to read and use (Merriam, 1998). It can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the reader to erroneous conclusions about the actual state of affairs. In case study research, everything appears relevant (Blaxter et al., 2006). That is, every word or phrase recorded in the interview and documents could be over simplified or easily exaggerated in the analysis. Given these challenges, after the initial transcription readings, I purposefully took a break from the material and came back for a second reading several days later.

In addition, case studies are too limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator since the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. My positionality in the study includes both an insider and outsider perspective, as well as participant and observer. This means that I attempted to gain access into the lives of the

students under study, yet also serve as an objective outsider in the data collection process.

I recognize my position as a beginner researcher, second generation Filipino American, first-generation college student, non-native Filipino language speaker, and the youngest of seven children are factors that may contaminate the trustworthiness of the study.

Accordingly, participants in the study may view me as an insider, one of “them,” or as an outsider, unlike them, which in turn may impact any obtained data. I acknowledge my position as a UHM faculty, chronological age, advance degree, or any previous relationship with participants as an advisor or employment supervisor may impact the process and outcome of the study. As such, I am left to rely on my own instincts and abilities throughout most of this research effort and as such, could produce and create “unusual problems of ethics” (Merriam, 1998). In every step of the research process however, I consulted with senior researchers to obtain objective feedback. An unethical case writer could select from among available data that anything he/she wished could be illustrated. Full disclosure at the beginning of the study and sharing the goals/purpose of the study with all participants, hopefully preserved my integrity as investigator.

Another limitation includes the issues of reliability, validity, and generalizability. Case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes (Yin, 2003). The study is context bound and any findings transferred to another institution must be used with caution. Accordingly, I followed Yin’s (1993) construct validity through the use of multiple measures, internal validity by specifying the units of analysis, and reliability by developing formal case study protocols. The small number of participants limits generalization to a larger population, the open ended nature of responses often makes summarization and interpretation of results

difficult, and the interviewer may bias results knowingly or unknowingly providing cues about what types of responses or answers are desirable (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Throughout the interview process, I made a conscious effort to guard against “leading questions” and use of “active listening” skills that may prompt a desired response. Lack of rigor in the collection, construction, and analysis of the empirical materials may follow. This lack of rigor is linked to the problem of bias. In response, I followed all procedures regarding securing and protecting the chain of evidence. Additional procedural safeguards will be discussed in the *Analysis* section.

A final limitation is selection bias. All interviewed participants self identified as Filipina/o and are or were full time UHM students who successfully persisted. These participants’ behaviors, experiences, and perceptions may differ from those students who are not similarly identified or as successful. Participant selection was limited to UHM students enrolled in a Philippine language or culture courses, active in student clubs or community organizations, or were known by faculty or staff during spring 2011 academic semester. In attempt to reduce this bias, I employed maximum variation and obtained a diverse sample of diverse student class standings and academic majors. Snowball sampling allowed me to reach a cross interest of participants not otherwise considered (Creswell, 1998). Thus, any obtained data is based on the perceptions of continuing or persisting Filipina/o American college students during one academic semester. I believe, however, that these student perceptions about the environmental and experiential factors about the college experience can serve as a valuable source of information in better meeting the needs of racial/ethnic student persistence.

Assumptions

In a qualitative research study, there are certain assumptions consistent with the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings from this type of research. The first assumption of the study is that Filipina/o American students, both first and second generation, are somehow different in their role adjustment at home and in college from other underrepresented minority groups. Some students may have college experiences or coping skills similar to those found with Latina/o or African American students. Within this context, a related assumption is the institutional environment. Results obtained from this 4-year, public, Research I institution are assumed to be much different from those obtained at a similar institution or student sample from a campus on the continental United States.

The second assumption is self-reported identity. The study assumes all students accurately identified themselves as Filipina/o. Inherent in this assumption is all participants have some level of cultural pride and are not ashamed to disclose their Filipina/o ethnicity to others. Conversely, those students who are Filipina/o may have chosen instead to self-identify as “mixed” instead of Filipino, thus omitted from potential selection in this study.

A third assumption is the investigator/respondent relationship (McCracken, 1988), or the thoughts and attitudes the participants may have toward me. This assumption assumes respondents easily developed rapport with me and truthfully shared in a one-to-one environment. Research on student disclosure (Noel & Smith, 1996) suggests minority students are more willing than White students to self-disclose to those who are similar to themselves (in-group) or a faculty of their own ethnicity, than to those who are dissimilar

(out-group). As an in-group faculty member, I assumed the Filipina/o respondents will easily disclose to me. However, I remained vigilant regarding any power issue as an older adult or UHM faculty member and attempted to create what McCracken (1988) refers to as “face safety,” by consciously *talking story* with each participant prior to the formal interview, and in a safe environment chosen by the student.

Data Analysis

Blaxter et al. (2006) readily admit working with a long transcript and various pages of field notes is not an easy task. Qualitative interview analysis involves a five stage process that moves from the particular to the general (McCracken, 1988). Accordingly, I analyzed the data in the following stages consistent with McCracken’s (1998) recommendations. In the first stage, I examined each *utterance* in the interview transcript and ignored its relationship to other aspects. At this initial stage, I played back the audio recording while checking the written transcript for accuracy and/or errors. These utterances created the second stage, *observation*. In this stage, I reviewed any memoing or handwritten notes I made during the real time interview. These observations were further developed both in context of the interview and related literature. I then made mental notes of the cited literature and theoretical constructs of the study, and when necessary, later reviewed the literature. During the third stage, I examined the interconnection of observations and *expanded observations* emerged, where the focus of attention shifted away from the transcript and toward the observation itself (McCracken, 1988). Here, I matched any level of behavioral observation or emotion displayed by any participant (e.g., laughter, teary eyed, nervousness, etc.) against the transcribed response. At the fourth stage, I took these observations and subjected them to further scrutiny in

order to study *themes*. The object of analysis at this stage was the determination of patterns of theme consistency and contradiction. Finally, the fifth stage involved taking these patterns and themes as they appeared in the interviews and developed *interview theses* (McCracken 1988).

Analyzing case studies is difficult because the strategies and techniques are not well defined (Yin, 2003), as data are collected in words as opposed to numbers (Heck, 2004). With this approach, data analysis consisted of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining both quantitative and qualitative evidence to address the initial propositions of the study. Data are typically analyzed inductively, as researchers do not tend to develop hypotheses first and then test them. Instead, it is more common for researchers to begin organizing and analyzing data while it is being collected (Heck, 2004). In my case, I found this type of analysis to be true. Yin (2003) recommends three strategies: 1) *Relying on theoretical propositions* which helps organize the study and define alternative explanations, and answers “how” and “why” questions; 2) *Thinking about rival explanations*, which allow the researcher to define and test any threats to the null hypothesis or threats to validity (history, maturation, selection, etc.) or investigator bias (experimenter effect); and 3) *Developing a case description*, that is, develop a descriptive framework for organizing the case study, although this is less preferable. After each initial interview, I listened to the audio recording and tried to find ways to improve my interviewing skills or seek additional data before the follow-up interview.

Most case study reports present both coded data and direct interpretation but one or the other usually bears the conceptual load (Stake, 1995). Coded data are obtained

primarily from categories dividing a variable (e.g., high, medium, low). In analysis and interpretation, there are two ways that researchers reach new meanings about cases, through direct interpretation of the individual instance and through aggregation of instances until something can be said about them as a class. In application to the study, the aggregation of instances was employed as an interpretation of Filipina/o American students as an ethnic group. Triangulation involves the use of multiple data collection procedures, multiple sources, multiple investigators, and/or multiple theoretical perspectives (Bowen, 2005). In *data source triangulation*, the researcher looks to see if the phenomenon or case remains the same at other times, in other spaces, or as persons interact differently. With *investigator triangulation*, the researcher will have other researchers take a look at the same scene or phenomenon, or the use of peer consultation. In *theory triangulation*, the researcher may choose co-observers, panelists, or reviewers from alternative theoretical viewpoints; and finally with *methodological triangulation*, the researcher will follow direct observation with a review of old records (Stake, 2005). In order to safeguard participants and protect confidentiality, co-observers were not used in the interview process, however, *data source* and *methodological* triangulation methods were applied in the analysis.

Member checking, as a type of analysis, occurs when the actor/participant is requested to examine rough drafts of writing where the actions or words of the actor/participant are featured (e.g., transcription). Member checking involved sharing interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, and/or drafts of the final report with research participants to make sure I represented them and their ideas correctly (Bowen, 2005). This took place after the initial interview and prior to the follow-up interview. Each

participant was asked to review for accuracy and palatability (Stake, 1995). As previously discussed, data were collected and stored via digital audio recording, professionally transcribed, and recorded into a verbatim Microsoft word document. The transcripts were then numerically coded and each participant received an electronic copy of the transcription via electronic mail. These responses were then categorized to correspond with each question (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Role of the Researcher

The case researcher is something of a biographer (Stake, 1995). In social science, biographies are often called “life histories” (p. 96) as interpreters who recognize and establish new meanings; or as relativists who emphasize experiential and personal determinant knowledge and believe the value of interpretations vary, relative to their credibility and utility. I viewed my role as a biographer who shared the life histories of twelve students and tried to make sense of their experiences. In essence, my role was to be an objective recorder and provide them a “voice” in the hope others may learn and benefit from their stories. Researchers who are members of marginalized groups have an insider advantage of obtaining more detailed, candid responses and picking up subtleties or nuances of the culture (Maramba, 2008a).

As a non-instructional faculty member in a professional school, I tried to mitigate any perception of power or control. That is, no control was exercised over a participant’s grade in an academic subject or academic sanction. Throughout the interview, I stressed there were no right or wrong answers and only sought honest opinions and experiences. I purposely framed any follow-up question in a neutral manner and did not elaborate unless queried by the participant. For some participants however, my chronological age, gender,

educational background, administrative responsibilities, and/or doctoral studies may contribute to the perception of my role as an authority figure despite these attempts.

Consideration of Human Subjects.

The study adhered to all procedures and safeguards designed to protect the welfare of all participants. It complied with the specific aims of the UHM's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and included: the safety and well being of human participants; adherence to the ethical values and principles underlying research; only ethical and scientifically valid research is implemented; and allay concerns by the general public about the responsible conduct of research (University of Hawai'i Committee on Human Studies, 2005). See Appendix C for a copy of institution approval.

No personal identifying information was included in the results and there was little to no risk associated with this research project. All participation was voluntary and any student could withdraw from participation in the study at any time. Each participant was informed of the type of compensation prior to any participation in the study, and afforded the opportunity to request a summary of findings upon completion of the research. A sample of the participant *Consent Form* may be found in Appendix D.

Summary

This chapter described the site, participant selection, data collection method, advantages and limitations, assumptions, data analysis, role of the researcher, and consideration of human subjects. I reviewed the seminal literature on case study research and cited support for this chosen method. A qualitative case study research design was developed with the purpose of examining the strategies Filipina/o American students use in successfully navigating the home and college environments.

¹ A federally funded TRiO program designed to increase the graduation and retention of first-generation college students and those with financial need.

CHAPTER FOUR. RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the case study regarding Filipina/o American students' perspectives and experiences relative to undergraduate persistence. The two principal uses of case study are to obtain the descriptions and interpretations of others (Stake, 1995). The analysis includes observations, individual interviews, case study notes, academic records, participant suggested readings, and adhered to the chain of evidence protocol (Yin, 2003). The chapter is organized in four sections: A brief review of the study's research questions and the interview instrument used to obtain the data; the demographic data on the participants; the observations on participants collected relevant to constructing the interviews; and the emergent themes.

Research Question and Instrumentation

The research question guiding the study is:

How do Filipina/o American students at UHM describe their undergraduate college experience?

The research question was designed to explore how the culture of origin (Filipino) mediates the importance of college attendance and degree completion (Museus & Quayle, 2009). The conceptual underpinnings of the study suggest a cultural perspective is important to understand minority student persistence. More specifically, as a unique APA subgroup, Filipina/o American students are challenged with successfully navigating two distinct worlds, a precollege culture (home) that emphasizes family (collective) and a mainstream college culture that reflects the dominant society (individual). A student's ability to move between worlds affects their chances of using educational institutions as

stepping stones to further their education, work experiences, and meaningful adult life, but that success in managing these transitions varies widely (Cooper et al., 1998).

Hinkle and Brown (1990) propose cultural groups differ along two dimensions of orientation: individualistic or collective, or separate versus relational. Hinkle and Brown suggest that a bias toward one's in-group would only be found in groups that were collectivist and relational. As their data suggested, these constructs are essential in describing Filipina/o American persistence in higher education as Filipinas/os seek relationships with in-group members. In contrast to the collectivist and relational nature of the Filipina/o and Asian American culture (Cooper et al., 1988), universities value such things as independence, argumentation, academic prose, and self-reflexive middle-class voice (Pearce, et al., 2008).

The instrument used to collect information from participants queried regarding 13 demographic dimensions and included 7 process questions. A complete copy of the instrument may be found in Appendix B. Demographic data included: class standing, gender, place of birth, primary language, high school, primary major, number of years at UHM, career goal, other colleges attended, highest level of formal education by either parent, parents' type of employment, number of family members who completed a 4-year college degree, and participation in activities. Process questions to help focus on their college experiences and the role of cultural identity in their college experiences included the following:

- *Who are the key people in your life at home? In college? Why?*
- *What does Filipina/o mean to you? Describe your relationship with your parents/family members.*

- *Please describe some of the people or situations that lead to the decision to attend college.*
- *What has your college experience been like so far? Why?*
- *What are some of the challenges, if any, in being successful? At home? In college? Where do these challenges originate and why?*
- *What skills do you use in order to successfully meet these challenges (how do you overcome these challenges)?*

Demographic Information

The participants included twelve students of which nine were female and three were male. Four students were graduates (baccalaureate), three were seniors, three were juniors, and two were sophomores. Freshmen were not considered for the study since a history of persistence had not been established. Half of the participants were born in Hawai‘i, while the remaining half were born in the Philippines and immigrated to Hawai‘i ranging in ages from six months to 14 years. Regarding language background, seven participants indicated English was their primary language. The others indicated various Filipino languages; more specifically, two participants listed Filipino (Ilokano) language, one indicated Filipino (Tagalog) language, another identified a combination of both English/Filipino (Tagalog) languages; and the final student indicated Filipino (Tagalog and Pangasinan) languages. Six participants lived and commuted daily from their parents’ home, three lived in student housing on campus, one lived with a boyfriend, one participant lived with in-laws, and one had her or his own apartment.

All participants graduated from Hawai‘i public schools, including two from the neighbor islands of Maui and Hawai‘i, and represented a total of ten high schools. Two

participants graduated from Pearl City High School, two from Farrington High School, and one each from Kapolei, Campbell, Radford, Leilehua, Kea‘au, Wai‘anae, Lahainaluna, and Moanalua High Schools. Of interest, the communities that surround Farrington and Campbell High Schools have higher concentrations of Filipino residents. At the time of this analysis, the participants were pursuing nine different majors including biology; business; communication; dental hygiene; education; nursing; political science; psychology; and sociology. Six participants applied and were directly admitted to UHM from high school, while the remaining six were transfer students. Of the latter, four transferred from UH community colleges, one from UH West O‘ahu, and one from Washington State University.

Depending on class standing, the participants’ length of enrollment at UHM ranged from one to six years of study. Of the three seniors, two are scheduled to graduate in spring 2011. All participants were in good academic standing with cumulative grade point averages ranging from a low of 2.39 to a high of 3.69. Although six participants reported at least one parent attended college in the Philippines, the federal “first-generation college” definition (Council for Opportunity in Education, 2011) was applied in the study which classified all participants as first-generation college students.

Table 4.1 provides a summary of demographic information for the participants.

Table 4.1 Demographic Background of Participants

Participant	Gender	Class	Major	Birthplace	Transfer	Family	Religion
Interviewee 1	F	GRAD	BUS	Hawaii		Extended	Catholic
Interviewee 2	M	SOPH	PSY	Hawaii	✓	Nuclear	Catholic
Interviewee 3	F	JUN	Pre-DENT	Hawaii		Extended	Catholic
Interviewee 4	F	SEN	SOC	PI-left @ 7	✓	Extended	Jehovah
Interviewee 5	F	SEN	NURS	Hawaii		Extended	Christian
Interviewee 6	F	GRAD	POLSC	PI-left @ age 3	✓	Nuclear	Catholic
Interviewee 7	F	SOPH	Pre-NURS	PI-left @ 6		Nuclear	Catholic
Interviewee 8	M	GRAD	COMM	Hawaii-Big Island	✓	Extended	Varied
Interviewee 9	M	JUN	ED	PI-left @ 6 mo	✓	Extended	Catholic
Interviewee 10	F	GRAD	BUS	PI-left @ 14		Extended	Catholic
Interviewee 11	F	SEN	BIO	PI-left @ 6	✓	Self	Catholic
Interviewee 12	F	JUN	Pre-BUS	Hawaii		Nuclear	Catholic

Researcher Observations Regarding Data Collection

Throughout the study, all participants were fully cooperative, easily engaged, and articulate in describing the college experience. The flow of conversation appeared natural with the exception of two students who required additional prompting to elaborate further on their responses. By and large, all participants appeared to enjoy the close researcher-participant interaction (Merriam, 1998) and the opportunity to share opinions with an in-group member (Noel & Smith, 1996) who was interested in learning about their college experiences. Several participants felt the experience gave them a chance to reminisce and think about their college life and “Filipino-ness,” or what Glesne (1999) referred to as a research by-product. For example, three participants declined the \$20 cash compensation and indicated an appreciation for the opportunity to share their college experience was in of itself, compensation enough.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted during the spring 2011 academic semester. Initial interviews averaged thirty eight minutes in length, while follow up sessions averaged thirty five minutes. In order to protect confidentiality, no student names were used and each interview was numbered. Participants' comments are sometimes referred to in the following section by their interview number. All participants received a written transcription of the interview and were asked to review it for accuracy and corrections. In an attempt to maintain quality assurance and trustworthiness, member-checks and triangulation were completed with all 12 participants.

As a type of analysis (Stake, 1995), member checking requires the participants to examine rough drafts of writing or words of the featured participant (e.g., transcription). In addition, I reviewed all audio recorded files against written transcriptions to check for accuracy. Common transcription errors discovered included misspelled Hawaiian and Filipino words. During this member checking phase, more than half of the participants came to the follow up meeting with their own written notes to discuss with me. Only one participant noted errors that included the insertion of incorrect responses and/or gaps of information where correct responses were omitted. For two participants who were unable to meet face-to-face, follow up interviews were conducted by telephone call or electronic mail. Overall, all participants felt the transcriptions accurately reflected their perspectives and experiences.

Next, triangulation (Bowen, 2005) involved an analysis of multiple data collection sources and multiple data sources. I reviewed each audio file and compared it to multiple data sources that included: the transcribed documents; case study notes; participant academic records; a participant's literary publication², a UH West O'ahu history course

text³, and a Filipino performing arts workshop⁴. This documentary analysis (Blaxter, et al., 2006) involved an examination of the interview transcript question by question, and the comparison of the answers to specific questions given by all interviewees. In each case, I found all secondary data sources commensurate with primary data sources (interviews).

In the analysis of the qualitative interview (McCracken, 1988), the observations were developed further within the context of the interview and cited literature. These expanded observations emerged into themes, or coded data (Stake, 1995), and were analyzed by patterns of consistency and/or contradiction. Coding is analysis that tags or assigns units of meaning to the descriptive information compiled during the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As a type of coding analysis, open coding was used throughout each transcript and clustered into themes based on the frequency of topics recorded among all participants. This process helps to organize all the data, explore alternative explanations including investigator bias, and begin to answer the *how* and *why* questions (Yin, 2003). The primary focus of the study was to answer *how* Filipina/o American students persist.

Emergent Themes

After identifying initial patterns, or emergent themes, the second part of the data analysis continued using Museus and Quayle's (2009) approach for examining intercultural propositions. As the emergent themes were refined, I created structural-textural descriptions that accurately captured the participants' thoughts, behaviors, feelings, and experiences. Subsequently, I compared these descriptions to each of Kuh and Love's (2000) eight cultural propositions and Museus and Quayle's (2009) revised intercultural propositions. This second level of analysis was intended to confirm

congruency between the propositions and the individual data, to clarify the propositions further, and to identify factors that contribute to minority student persistence. When the discovered theme supported an intercultural proposition, a comparative analysis will be further developed in Chapter Five.

One advantage of using a cultural perspective to examine student departure is that it accounts for student behavior resulting from interactions on process variables such as involvement, effort, and sense of belonging (Kuh & Love, 2000). Based on the reported student responses and other data sources, I found these social interactions were significant factors in Filipina/o American persistence. The summation of these varied sources of information reflecting students' perceptions about the college experience revealed five primary themes or process variables: finances; family; ethnic identity; sense of belonging; and social networking.

Finances

The Filipino immigrant narrative is replete with stories about and around money (Espiritu, 2009). Okamura (2008) suggests not all ethnic groups in Hawai'i have the financial means to meet the high cost of tuition, and cites the increase in UHM tuition as a contributing factor in the decline of Filipina/o student enrollment. With the exception of one participant, all reported finances were the primary challenge in college choice and degree completion. However, securing the financial resources to pay for a college education was often the family's primary obstacle. Although a common concern among many parents of college bound children, Filipinas/os are not the highest paid, when compared to other racial minority groups (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). In Hawai'i, the socioeconomic returns Filipinas/os receive in income and occupational status are not

commensurate with their educational qualifications (Okamura & Agbayani, 1997). Combined with the high cost of living in Hawai‘i and the low wage earnings of Filipinas/os (Agbayani & Ah Sam, 2008), the cost of a university tuition adds to the parents’ struggle to afford undergraduate education. In extended family households, this struggle was especially pronounced.

All participants were keenly aware of and sensitive to their parents’ struggle in managing all the household finances. As a result, many participants took advantage of high school opportunities to enroll in advanced placement courses, assume student leadership positions, manage part-time employment, pursue financial aid and scholarship resources, or participate in athletic or musical competition as a way to help subsidize college expenses and not rely on parents’ income. These participants took the initiative to overcome any perceived financial barrier to college access. Interviewee #9, a male junior who works 20 hours a week to cover personal expenses explained:

Like my mom, she wants me to work more, earn more money. But at the same time I tell her, “Oh, but I have school as well”, so I don’t know how to balance that out.

Interviewee #3, a female in a health-related major remarked:

Since they (parents) weren’t educated in the United States, they really didn’t know too much about the FAFSA or SATs, but they just encouraged us going to school and furthering our education.

Other self-reliant participants who began planning for college in high school shared:

I knew my parents didn’t have money to pay for me, so I made it a point to think about that on my own...I attribute a lot to my coming to college, and what I did in college to what I did in high school. I did student government. I did class council for four years. I did district student council, and I did state student council. And I was part of this youth organization because of my brother.

If I can get into a university, it’s a big accomplishment.

On my first year at UH, including housing, I actually got enough scholarships to cover everything. And if I went to the mainland, even if those were covered, I guess everything that I needed to, I guess I gathered things up to move there, my plane ticket, everything, it would just cost more. So I didn't want to burden my parents for that too.

Immigrants share a belief that education is important and a willingness to sacrifice for their children to achieve educational goals (Conway, 2009). Cho et al. (2008) suggest immigrant students see education as an instrumental means to credentials for success in ways that are not possible in their home country. Although all participants in the study are of Filipina/o American descent, Philippine born participants and U.S. born participants who visited the Philippines developed a meaning-making system based on poverty and sacrifice. All but one participant lived or visited the Philippines and came to understand the economic struggles their parents had overcome to migrate to the United States. Filipinas/os aspire to be like those who set the standards, make up the rules, and have access to power (Bergano & Bergano-Kinney, 1997). After a family visit to the Philippines, one participant exclaimed, *“It was a wake-up call.”* When immigrant participants and Hawai‘i participants experienced or viewed the Philippines as a third world country, the pursuit of a college education was a shared value and viewed as a necessary step toward improving personal finances.

Students from similar racial/ethnic backgrounds who come from different precollege cultures may experience similar campus environments in disparate ways (Museus & Quaye, 2009). All participants frequently shared a desire to have “more than” their parents or siblings by earning a college degree. As Interviewee #10, a female graduate business major explained:

We (friends) always wanted to strive for something that our siblings or our parents didn't have... You see where they are and you know that's not where you want to be.

Interviewees #5, #4, and #8, all upper class students, respectively shared the following:

The first time I went (to the Philippines), I think, just to see my parents' sacrifice. And know that I'm older I can realize you know, what my parents have done. My Dad worked from six to twelve every day since I was growing up. I never saw him until high school and he like, he'd have a talk with me. I just realized their sacrifices and it's like you know I shouldn't get mad if they tell me do to something.

Well, the typical Filipino family, they work very hard... We didn't come from a family where we had everything. My Mom had to manage with four children working two jobs.

I'm from the Big Island, the majority of them (friends, family) become parents of their own, they remain there. I mean, not a problem, but for me I wanted more than that.

With respect to college choice, the parental expectation for their child to attend college was never often verbalized in some cases, but more of an assumption. Although all participants expressed a desire to attend college on the continental U.S., remaining in Hawai'i became the only viable choice due to the comparatively low tuition and/or close proximity to home. Of the six participants who live in the central or West O'ahu communities, one began her or his academic career at UH West O'ahu and two enrolled at Leeward Community College. Half of all students in the U.S. today spend their freshman year in a community college (Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004). College and career choices are more or less or not only a sign of Filipina/o assimilation and social acceptance, but more of a complex and strategic response to their and their parents' "differential inclusion" into U.S. society (Espiritu, 2009).

For some participants, birth order or gender influenced college choice. If an older sibling previously attended college or was currently enrolled, subsidizing non-resident

tuition or dual college tuition added to the financial strain on the family's income. As

Interviewee #2, a male sophomore transfer student lamented:

My parents are always tight on money, so that's what actually formed my decision to go here (UHM), first UH West O'ahu then here. My brother ruined it for me since he went to the University of the Pacific. I just didn't want to put that burden on my family. They already work hard enough.

Female participants frequently described their parents as "overly protective," or "strict," of their behavior outside the family home especially in the area of dating. Some of the reported reasons for strict parenting included fear of teenage pregnancy, distraction and loss of focus from studies, etc. Interviewee #12, a female business major agreed:

Well, I really wanted to go to a college on the mainland. But because I am the youngest and the baby girl, my parents never even had the thought of going to a different school so they assumed that either I would go to community college here or UH Mānoa.

Interviewee #11, a female graduating science major offered:

It's always just been, "It's closer to home, it's safer." My parents are really over-protective so they would rather me be home so that they can visit or make surprise visits whereas if I was in Washington, they can't check up on me.

Transfer participants had a very different cultural experience from their initial campus when compared to those who were admitted directly to the university. The ability to negotiate the new campus cultural milieu was relative to their perception of any "culture shock." Prior experiences serve an important role in determining whether a student goes to college and whether he/she will persist to graduation (Kuh & Love, 2000). Transfer participants from the neighbor islands shared the following:

And a lot of people had told me to be, to watch out at Mānoa. The first two years, it's going to be a huge class versus an intimate class in community college.

It was kind of a little bit of a culture shock, you know? Being from Maui, I'm kind of used to being around a lot of different people: Caucasians, Samoans, and Tongans. But when you're there (mainland college), you're the minority and

you're kind of just like, 'Oh no, what do I do?' And I personally don't always click with everyone I meet.

For many low income ethnic minority groups, the culmination of a college degree serves as a strong motivation to level the economic playing field. Over a lifetime, the average college graduate earns roughly \$570,000 more than the average person with only a high school diploma (Greenstone & Looney, 2011). Additionally, college graduates live longer on average than high school graduates and tend to have higher job satisfaction (Greenstone & Looney, 2011). This data suggests the more education you obtain, the better off your job prospects and future earnings. Given the colonized history of Filipina/o Americans, a college diploma often elevates the status within the family and provides an opportunity to break the glass ceiling of entry level employment. A colonial mentality encourages the assimilation process and distorts the roles, images, and the expectations of Filipina/o Americans (Bergano & Bergano-Kinney, 1997).

Family

Minority immigrant students face greater financial pressure and more family responsibility than typical middle class students (Cho et al., 2008). Among Filipinas/os (Maramba, 2008b), the family is the most important influence in their lives and a strong reflection of themselves. Dahilig (2009) describes the pressure from parents for their children to give priority to the family and maintain the family responsibilities. For the participants who commute long distances using public transportation or live in extended family households, this pressure was even greater. These factors seemed to increase the level of "home responsibility," and depended on how many children in the home required care or supervision, the various working schedules of adults within the household, daily

parental needs, etc. As a result, the pressure was much greater than those participants who came from nuclear families.

In a study of southern California Filipinas/os (Espiritu, 2009), almost all respondents reported experiencing pressure from parents to get good grades, to attend and finish college, and to pursue practical careers such as law, medicine, or engineering. Many second generation Filipinas/os learn early on that getting good grades, attending college, and selecting a career are not personal choices, but are deeply embedded in fulfilling their parents' dream of and hope for intergenerational mobility, their reason for migrating in the first place (Espiritu, 2009). This cultural pressure to succeed is closely grounded in the expressed pride in the Filipina/o identity. Similar to other ethnic minority groups, Filipinas/os place a strong value on higher education.

Studies of immigrant families (Espiritu, 2009) identified gender as a significant source of parent-child conflict. When compared to males, female participants appeared to be the most relied upon regarding home-school responsibilities. Although the expectations for male participants rarely included cooking, cleaning, or laundry, contributing to the household finances through part-time employment appeared to be an expectation. In two households, female participants had the additional responsibility of assisting a parent with a medical condition, and in the other, assuming primary responsibility for the family's home health care business.

Two thirds of the nine female participants in the study echoed the findings in Maramba's (2008) research on managing the cultural expectations from home and the academic demands from school. As Interviewee #1, a female graduate business major explained:

One challenge, I think, that comes to mind is having the balance of being in school and being at home, that being a student and a daughter. So it was interesting, because I had that Filipino culture expectation of doing these things, or this is how you have to be. And then I had this, but at the same time I had the expectation to go to school. And so I found it hard because it was, "Okay, wait, what am I really supposed to do? Or what is going to be more valuable?" Because as much as they (parents) want me to do this, I'm trying to do that, and I'm trying to do really well at it, but then they want me to do this at the same time. So, I significantly remember conversations with myself like, 'I must be such a bad daughter because I'm doing this' (pauses, becomes teary-eyed). It was weird, that's how I felt. Because it's like I'm trying to do these things, but at the same time I feel like I'm letting my parents down.

Interviewee #10, the youngest child in an extended family household clarified the cultural expectations at home:

But like I said, it's like part of the culture too. If you're the youngest you have to, kind of thing...I have to help out every time without being asked. And you have to help out everybody. If I'm the oldest, I can actually tell my younger sister or younger brother, "You wash the dishes."

Interviewee #5, a graduating nursing major and youngest daughter identified the cultural expectation for females this way:

I guess in the Filipino culture it's usually the woman that is the one that has to do a lot in the home, like the housework and stuff.

Interviewee #12, a compliant daughter summarized the family's expectations:

I mean in their generation, they're like a lot older, both of my parents are in their fifties and stuff and so, and they're from the Philippines. So I guess their way of thinking is very strict and very different from the American culture. And so growing up, it was always like, I always had the pressure to do good in school, to study, and have to come home and do household chores and get good grades and all that. And there's not so much an emotional connection, rather just I'll provide you with food, shelter, and money for doing what you need to do and that's it.

Another female participant described a feeling, a tension, in the household filled with non-verbal looks and explained, *"In the Filipino culture, coming out with an opinion is considered as talking back."* Students who lived with their parents believed that rules should not negotiated, and females believed more strongly in the importance of rule

negotiation in the family versus rule negotiation in the classroom (LeBlanc III & French, 1997). In other words, female participants and those who lived at home were least likely to challenge parents or household rules. Filipino parents however, had higher aspirations for their daughters than their sons (Espiritu & Wolf, 2001). These aspirations often result in Filipino women having higher educational attainment, higher occupational status, and higher earnings than Filipino men (Espiritu & Wolf, 2001).

These comments lend support to the notion that the Filipino culture keeps problems within the family, frowns upon discussing family problems outside the home, and contributes to what Espiritu (2009) defines as the “intergenerational strain.” Any discussion of problems with someone outside the family is not considered an option due to the possibility of gossip, which would bring shame on the family (Espiritu & Wolf, 2001). These cultural taboos may offer an explanation for a strict parenting style. As Interviewee #3, one of two girls in the family household remembered:

At first they gave us (my sister) the impression that if we disobeyed them, that they would just throw us out of the house.

As a way to minimize the parental strain, all participants stressed the importance of active communication with parents. I discovered Filipino parents expect, or rather demand, some form of communication from their children. For some participants, this meant multiple parent-student communication throughout the day, video conferences, daily communication, or at the very least, weekly communication. Conversely however, reciprocal parental communication appeared unevenly developed in some families, and in others, nonexistent. Interviewee #6, a female transfer student reported:

Our parents never really addressed problems to us, money issues, you know, who our sister is dating, and whatnot. They just let it kind of build up and then when the problem is too much to handle, then they kind of verbally lash out at others

and point out all the negatives and don't cut things at the root, don't acknowledge problems when they're growing and acknowledging ways we can possibly stop them.

Interviewee #12, a female business major provided an example of the intergenerational strain:

There's not much of an emotional connection with my parents. There's not much talking, more like they tell me what to do...I'm expected to wash dishes, cook, not so much of that, clean and take the trash out and stuff like that.

As Okamura and Agbayani (1997) suggest, the child's accomplishments are the direct result of the family's support and encouragement over the years. In essence, the child's academic achievement in a Filipina/o household is a positive reflection of the entire family and celebrated by all. It is not unusual to see photos of Filipina/o scholars with the parents in the background or read Filipino print publications that include the names or backgrounds of the scholarship recipients' parents. One participant explained the pressure is, "To be a certain way, somewhat perfect." Interviewee #5 felt achievement was often measured by the success of an older sibling:

I want to please my parents, it's an expectation. I am expected to drop any plans I may have and help my parents first, be obedient. I don't know if it's culture, but you're constantly compared. You're constantly compared to other family, to immediate family, to so and so's kid. All that kind of stuff and me and my brother would always be compared to my sister. She's very smart. Yeah, she went through everything.

Interviewee #7, a female sophomore pre-nursing major, described the pressure to succeed in this way:

Yeah. And we work hard for our money. Because I guess, well to me studying didn't come easily. I mean school didn't come that easily, I had to work for it, like I have to study. So I guess for Filipinos it's mostly like working hard.

Interviewee #3, a female pre-dental hygiene major who tries to meet the challenges at home and in college explained:

I don't want to disappoint them (parents)...I really don't like to involve my parents so much because I know that they have so much other things going on to worry about...I talk to my peers of my sister...My Mom really needs me and it's like I divide my energy.

All participants acknowledged a collective and relational sense of self that identified the family's responsibilities as a group responsibility. Based on the participants' voices above, I concluded the responsibility to the family is governed by a cultural code of ethic, or cultural meaning-making system. The data suggests compliance to the family's needs is not a matter of personal choice but, rather, a dutiful obligation to the group. Espiritu (2009) found Filipinas/os are more family oriented and more willing to sacrifice for one another. This tension between the family responsibilities and the college campus culture was often fueled by the parents' lack of understanding of the academic demands they place upon their children.

Although the family serves as an important influence and source of motivation, family relationships can also be a major source of stress (Maramba, 2008a). The parental pressure to succeed may often strain the parent-child relationship and create additional barriers in managing the home-school responsibilities. Like many college students, all the participants explained time management skills were extremely important in successfully managing these responsibilities. The participants learned how to prioritize tasks through participation in high school activities, Filipino sponsored organizations⁵, college readiness programs⁶, or other formal coursework.

Ethnic Identity

Students come to college with a set of beliefs and attitudes about diversity that have been shaped by a variety of pre-college socialization contexts including family, friends, schools, and neighborhoods (Umbach & Milem, 2004). As students of color enter

college and begin to think concretely about their career goals, they often reexamine the role ethnic identity plays in their new environment (Pizzolato, Chaudhari, Murrell, Podobnik, & Schaeffer, 2008). Ethnic identity development is critical in coping with the challenges presented in the college environment and in examining persistence through an intercultural lens. Okamura (2008) suggests ethnicity restricts the pursuit of higher education for ethnic minorities by serving as a structural and cultural barrier that limits their opportunities to continue along the educational pathway to college completion.

Filipina/o American ethnic identity is assumed to be the product of the historical and cultural backgrounds and the process of negotiating and constructing a life in the United States (Revilla, 1997). However, ethnic identity manifests itself differently between Philippine-born and U.S. born Filipina/o Americans. U.S. born participants define their identity as spanning both sides of the Filipina/o and American cultures. In contrast, Philippine-born Filipina/o Americans experience an adjustment to American life in the form of language difficulties and concerns about the place, the weather, and the lifestyle (Tuason et al., 2007). Both groups, however, identify values such as family orientation, hospitality, politeness, and respect as the Filipina/o elements of their identity; and efficiency, punctuality, and expressiveness as the American elements (Tuason et al., 2007).

In the transition from Filipina/o to Filipina/o American, the emphasis has shifted with ethnicity being regarded as the dominant aspect in the forging of an American identity (Andaya, 1996). Nayani (2006) suggests the transmission of ethnicity is seen to be more dominant in the family sphere (home) than in the form of public institutions (college). Although initially in denial about their ethnic heritage due to shame or

embarrassment, I found that all participants shed this negative image and grew to appreciate it, and in most cases, embrace it as a result of their community or college experience. One of the more significant negative consequences of the racist stereotyping of Filipina/o Americans in Hawai'i is the tendency among some young people to feel "ashamed" of their ethnic identity and consequently often to disavow it (Okamura, 2008). Researchers note when racial/ethnic minority students experience prejudice and discrimination, the resulting psychosocial stressors can cause distress and lead to adjustment difficulty (Museus, et al., 2008). As Interviewee #6, a female graduate student explained:

A bad as this sounds, I tried to suppress it (Filipino identity). I didn't agree with the idea that "you have to do this, you have to do that" mentality.

In agreement, Interviewee #8, a male graduate student reported:

I was embarrassed. I was ashamed of my own culture, my language, my family, where I'm from, how I grew up. Because, you know, we were financially challenged. We were not up there financially. But in the end, I think that also pushed me to prove it not just to myself but to others as well....It was the clubs, it was the Filipinos, but primarily the fact there were a lot of teachers who had this, like they were just proud...But now, after graduating and also being more proud about my culture, I mean appreciate it, I love the fact that I'm from there (Ka'u) because it made me who I am today.

Interviewee #2, a male sophomore psychology student noted:

We had a Filipino identity but we had no knowledge to base it on...I learned some of the culture through my family. And just being Filipino means hardworking. I noticed our culture has struggled to adjust to American life, even in the Philippines they struggle. And to continually struggle and persevere somewhat, it makes me proud. And we're still struggling.

As Interviewee #3, a female junior addressed the issue of cultural identity:

I can say I'm not ashamed about it (Filipino ethnicity). Before growing up, maybe like when I was in elementary, not really elementary, maybe like middle school, early high school, I was a little bit like, not really so ashamed, but I just didn't really always bring up my ethnicity because there were so many stereotypes about

it. And it wasn't until going into, taking Tagalog courses that I really learned to embrace my culture...Tagalog classes helped me understand my more about my culture (language, customs, greetings, behavior). And I'm actually proud of it. Even though, despite corruption or things people might say about it. I know that we have more, we have stuff to offer, not just like white people or black people, but we're not really on the map. Not so much people know about us, but more and more we're starting to be more recognized.

Interviewee #9, a male junior education major added:

Oh, I'm proud, yeah. Proud to be Filipino because through the, not hard times, but the...through history, I guess. I would say throughout history, um, I've learned that Filipinos went through a lot from, you know, from the invasion of Spain, from a common enemy like Japan, America, and all that, and how um, they envisioned a better life in somewhere new, America. And then from there, many generations came about from there. Plantations and things like that. But to be proud, I would say, of our unique culture.

Consistent with Nayani's (2006) findings, I found that all participants felt *family* played a vital role in the development of their Filipina/o American identity. Although the family provided an important support system, the concept of *family* was extended beyond the household and included role models and support networks at the university level (Maramba, 2008a). Female participants looked for Filipina peers on campus who they felt understood their struggles at home, while others discussed turning to Filipina/o American staff or faculty as a source of support and identity in college. It appears this growth in ethnic identity development was forged by the family's cultural practices as well as the college experience with other Filipinas/os. Together, these experiences created a renewed sense of pride in ethnic identity. Common descriptors of the Filipina/o identity were *family* and *food*. Interviewee #7 defined her ethnic identity this way: "*Being Filipino means family oriented, food.*" In agreement, Interviewee #1, a female graduate student who is very active in the community and in college shared:

I learned being Filipino isn't bad...It's food & parties...Any party is like a family. There is no such thing as a small party in my family.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) posit that a positive identity is enhanced by an awareness of one's cultural background, an immersion in the social world of one's ethnic group, a valuing of rituals, traditions, and artifacts of one's extended family or adopted network. For the participants, the desire to please and achieve was related to an understanding of *who I am, where I came from*, and to compensate for the family's "hard life." The motivation to succeed, or the generalized "hard" work ethic, seems to be grounded in a strong sense of Filipina/o identity.

Sense of Belonging

Hurtado and Carter (1997) suggest a sense of belonging is fundamental to a student's identification with a group and affects both cognitive and affective behavior. In support, Museus and Maramba (2011) posit a student's connection to her or his cultural heritage is positively associated with a greater sense of belonging in college. A secure and welcoming feeling on campus seems to be important to both females and first generation males (Cho et al., 2008). As a result, first generation or underrepresented ethnic minority groups may seek out social opportunities that provide a sense of belonging. First generation or underrepresented ethnic minority students are most likely to be stigmatized as incompetent in the academic domain and may look for social opportunities that provide a sense of belonging and connectedness (Cho et al., 2008). Museus and Maramba (2011) found first generation students had the lowest sense of belonging to their campus culture, while second generation students had the most difficulty making new friends, maintaining relationships with family, and dealing with feeling of isolation on campus.

Members of stigmatized groups often cope by identifying more closely with their own group as a way to seek social support and a sense of belonging that supports their self esteem (Cho et al., 2008). American minority students and immigrants may have experiences with discrimination, isolation, or rejection that affect their college experience. While Western people are often brought up to regard Orientals or colored people as inferior, Filipinas/os are taught to regard Americans as equals (Melendy, 1977). Minority status stresses, including discrimination and doubts about one's academic abilities, have also been shown to add to students' psychological distress and achievement (Hurtado et al., 2008). These groups may feel forced to choose between divergent ways of living and thinking, those of the traditional culture and those of the institution (Andrade, 2006). On campus, students are faced with ethnic stereotypes and strive to find a sense of belonging and a comfort zone on campus (Cheng, 2004). Among Filipinas/os, a safe place has more to do with cultural, social, and political meanings and less to do with physical safety (Maramba, 2008b).

In Hawai'i, the performance of Filipinas/os is impacted by the limited amount of time parents who work more than one job spend with their children; the unfamiliarity of many immigrant Filipinas/os with the English language and school system; and the prejudice and discrimination by peers, teachers, media, and business (Agbayani & Ah Sam, 2008). Maramba (2008b) further explains Filipinas/os want to have the ability to express themselves without feelings of being "tokenized and essentialized." As one participant revealed, "*You'd have to fit into their mold. If you looked like them, then they'd listen to you.*"

For all participants, culturally relevant institutional programs and practices were discovered in Filipino language, history, or culture courses; Filipino student clubs; Filipino community organizations; or through Filipino role models, mentors or peers. *Cultural integrity* challenges the assumption that students must dissociate from their precollege cultures to succeed in higher education (Museus & Maramba, 2011). This concept refers to the existence of culturally relevant institutional programs and practices that engage students' cultural backgrounds. Museus and Maramba posit that *cultural integrity* can help affirm racial/ethnic minority students' cultural identities and increase the chances that they will succeed. Federal programs such as Gear Up, community-based organizations such as Sariling Gawa, UHM's Center for Philippine Studies⁷, college Ilokano or Tagalog language courses and clubs, and a Filipino conference (Nakem)⁸ served as vital links in creating a sense of belonging. A transfer participant shared:

It was a history class at UH West O'ahu. And my parents would always tell me that we're privileged to be in America, but I guess I just didn't really see, they didn't really explain it to me. And I guess I read a book called America's in the Heart by Carlos Bulosan. Just seeing his experiences during that time, it's pretty inspiring.

Interviewee #4, a non-traditional student, transferred three times before reaching UHM and is determined to complete a bachelor's degree in fall 2011. She enrolled in an Ilokano language course in order to fulfill the language graduation requirement. The mastery of language proficiency in the native tongue appears to have strengthened a sense of belonging on campus for many participants. She explained how her involvement contributed to her college experience this way:

I'm more appreciative of knowing, improving my Ilokano, because I know that I'll use it...I think it changed the way I am too...I feel like I'm able to say whatever I like...In my Ilokano classes we talk about things that have happened in your life. Like, who would you consider a hero? I wrote myself because of all the things I've

gone through with my children, school, work all of it. Just those things in life that I've struggled through and overcome. Then I got involved in the Timpuyog Organization and they do a lot of activities like Drama Fest and the annual spring banquet.

Other Philippine language participants agreed:

So by taking Tagalog language courses I learned different cultural customs, more so about language customs and how people act and why they act that way, through greetings and what people like to talk about.

The Ilokano program empowers you, you learn the language, and the teachers give you a sense of belonging.

Interviewee #9, a Leeward coast transfer student added:

Velasco, he's one of the key players to my college experience...I feel there are stronger ties here at UHM compared to LCC. The Filipino connection that I feel is through the classes...It's the activities inside and outside of school like the socials and things like that, the festivities, the drama fest, that's where we see the culture shine.

Interviewee #8, a male graduate communication major explained:

It was the clubs, it was the Filipinos, but it was primarily the fact that there were a lot of teachers who had this, like they were just proud. And they shared it with me of why you should be proud and why you should appreciate it more because we've gone through a lot of struggles and we continue to...we've always been viewed differently, in a negative connotation.

Maramba (2008b) stressed the importance of fostering a sense of belonging on campus through faculty support and involvement with co-curricular activities. In agreement, supportive relationships with professors, teaching assistants, and advisors played an important role in the level of instructional support participants felt (see also Yazedjian, Purswell, Sevin, & Toews, 2007). The participants' comments highlight the important role of individual and collective cultural agents in minority student persistence. These cultural agents validate the students' traditional cultural heritage and serve as a bridge in the acculturation process to the dominant campus culture.

Social Networking

Research in the student development field has repeatedly indicated that increased student engagement is linked to improved retention (Baruch-Runyon, et al., 2009). Students become more involved once they establish social connections and feel a greater sense of attachment with the institution, while peer support was particularly salient for first-generation college students (Yazedjian et al., 2007). The greatest gains in retention rates among first-generation college students will result from focusing not only on the selection process, but also the student-environment interaction after college entry (Thayer, 2000). In a study of Native American students, social support on campus was found to be critical in persistence (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Hurtado and Carter (1997) posit students must learn and develop socially during college at the same time that they manage relationships with individuals from different racial/ethnic backgrounds. As one female participant explained:

I'm able to meet a lot of other people who are Filipino-American. I'm able to connect with them and I guess the cultural struggles that we deal with about our parents riding us, about doing good in school and all of that. And being able to connect with other people about that and them being able to understand what I'm going through helps a lot without not letting it hinder me so much, or make me think, "Oh man, I'm so unfortunate."

Social networks have been an invaluable aid to immigrants before, during, and after the migration process and are defined as the social structures which establish relationships between the migrant and the receiving community (Surla Banaria, 2004). Among Filipina/o youth, their social networks closely resembled those of their parents (Espiritu & Wolf, 2001). Phinney and Haas (2003) suggest social support may be particularly important for students who have few, if any, family members who attended

college. In the study, five participants came from families where at least one sibling earned a bachelor's degree and another participant's sibling earned an associate degree.

The evidence suggested that networks played a vital part in students' success as undergraduates. These networks include friendship, neighborhood, and community serve as a major role in the adaptation of immigrants to a new place. All participants developed networks with collective and/or individual cultural agents that validated their cultural identity. Organizations such as Sariling Gawa Youth Council, Gear Up, Timpuyog Organization⁹, Katipunan Club¹⁰, and Filipina/o faculty and staff contributed to the circle of networking for all participants.

These social links are vital in allowing the student to become interdependent (Smith, Carmack, & Titsworth, 2006). A transfer participant described his transition to UHM this way:

Well, when I first came here I roommated, I lived at the dorms with my friends that I grew up with. So it was a good transition because I knew people. Another thing was that I participated because I didn't have a job here. I mean, I was the person that always had a job while I was going to school. But when I transitioned here, I wanted to participate. I had free time so I was like, 'Let me try this and that', peer mentoring, acting, everything.

For some participants, the social networks that developed in high school continued through college. These earlier friendships seemed to ease the transition to UHM.

Interviewee #1, a very high achieving high school student explained:

My friends, I kept a lot of the same friends from high school to college, but I well, I'll put it this way, the friends I had in college were pretty much were the friends that I knew in high school. But maybe we had a smaller group in college because then I knew who I could really depend on, by the end of high school I knew, okay, I could probably be friends with this person.

Interviewee #10, an immigrant student who grew up in a predominant local Filipino community remembered:

Well, we're all Filipino, so all my friends from high school were Filipinos, except for a couple of Vietnamese...So we figured that's something you can do (attend college) and that there are so many scholarships for Filipino students, women, first-generation college students so we took advantage of that...because my friends were doing the same thing.

As a challenge in developing social networks, all participants reported some level of confrontation with Filipina/o racial stereotypes at some point along the educational pathway, usually involving skin color or accent. In their day-to-day living, Filipinos found their dark skins and their imperfect English did indeed set them apart from the American majority (Melendy, 1977). Some parents shared the belief that if their skin color was lighter, they would be more socially accepted. Interviewee #6, experienced racial stereotypes at a young age and shared this experience in elementary school:

I think that was more of skin color. But one incident in particular was around Thanksgiving time, second grade, our teacher had us divide into Pilgrims and Indians [ha] and I really wanted to be the Pilgrim [laughs] and she told me I had to be the Indian because I was brown! So we only had three Indians, it was really sad. So that was something that stuck with me.

As a coping mechanism, humor was the best anecdote, and for others, an ethnic denial became the defensive response. Among local born Filipinas/os, the stereotype frequently involved the distinction between Philippine born, more commonly referred to as “fresh-off-the-boat,” or FOB versus local born, with local born achieving a higher status among peers. Within the community, job occupation stereotypes were common as the general public frequently presumes Filipinas/os in the service industry roles of nurses, janitors, gardeners, or hotel housekeepers. As one participant reported, “*You know, I feel really bad for people who say, ‘Oh, Filipinos are janitors.’*” Another participant retorted defensively:

I was defensive when it was appropriate, I guess. Because I remember some experiences where it was like, I happened to have relatives who worked at the

school, who worked at my school, who cleaned. And I knew all the other Filipino people because they knew my relatives. And people made a comment and I was like, "Dude, that's my uncle."

Filipino women constantly struggle against a common perception as nurses.

Espiritu (2008) explains Filipina/o nurse ambitions were conditioned by the high status assigned to health care professionals, the culture's high regard for the profession, and the inflated recruitment strategies of U.S. hospitals in search of cheap nursing labor. Of the twelve participants, two declared nursing as the primary major and one changed from nursing to dental hygiene. Interviewee #3 described an experience with an occupational stereotype while studying in a popular coffee shop:

Yeah, actually, funny story. Me and my sister were sitting in Starbucks one day, and then this couple came in and they saw us studying at the table. They came up to us and were like, "Can we ask you a question?" And we were both like, "Okay." And then they were asking us, "By the way are both of you nursing students?", and we were like, "No." Because at the time my sister was pursuing her pharmacy degree and I was doing my pre-reqs but I wasn't nursing and so they automatically assumed that we were... We were just shocked that they would have the audacity to bring that up. But in a way it is kind of insulting, you know, judging me just because you know I'm Filipino.

Interviewee #11 felt the support of her parents in not pursuing a culturally prescribed nursing career path added:

I told my parents, "I don't want to be a nurse, that's what's expected of a Filipino person."

As a collectivist and relational culture, social networking can be seen as an important piece in Filipina/o college persistence. Social networks, or collective and individual agents (Museus & Quaye, 2009), were developed among Filipina/o peers, Philippine language courses, Philippine cultural groups and Filipino organizations. These networks seemed to provide an important support system in Filipina/o American student success.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of a case study on the college experience of Filipina/o American students. The primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews, while secondary data sources included case study notes, academic records, literary publications and a cultural workshop presentation. Results identified five key themes: finances; family; ethnic identity; sense of belonging; and social networking. Although a lack of finances, the additional burden of family responsibilities, and negative ethnic stereotypes served as challenges in persistence and degree completion, all participants discovered successful strategies in overcoming these obstacles. These strategies were discovered through the college or community experience and included a renewed sense of pride in ethnic identity, finding a sense of safety and belonging on campus, and developing social networks that supported the Filipina/o culture. At the same time however, the Filipina/o identity and the Filipina/o family served as key support systems in college achievement. With the exception of one participant who changed majors three times, the remaining participants did not require a longer period of time toward degree completion. The obtained data suggests the college experience provided important cultural and social interactions that contributed in persistence.

In a more general context, the results of this case study lend further support for adopting an intercultural perspective on minority student persistence (Museus & Quaye, 2009). Asian cultural values include collectivism, conformity to norms, deference to authority figures, emotional restraint, filial piety, hierarchical family structure, humility, and maintenance of interpersonal harmony (Kim & Omizo, 2005). Given the participants' collective experiences, Filipina/o cultural values appear to be key variables that

contribute to student success and persistence. The emergent themes and their meaning for understanding Filipina/o students' college experiences are further developed in Chapter Five.

² Ramos, J. (2007). Coming to terms with my roots. In A.S. Agcaoili & R. L. Liongson (Eds.) *Final Proceedings of the 2006 Nakem Centennial Conference and Essays on Ilokano and Amianan Life, Language, and Literature in Honor of Professor Prescila Llague Espiritu* (pp. 226-230). Honolulu, HI: Ilokano and Philippine Drama and Film Program, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

³ Bulosan, C. (1946). *America Is In The Heart: A Personal History*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company.

⁴ Geo, aka Prometheus Brown. (May 5, 2011). *Philippine Cinema and Resistance*. University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

⁵ Sariling Gawa Youth Council, Inc. Sariling Gawa started as a grass roots community effort in 1980, commemorating the 75th anniversary of Filipino roots in Hawai'i by college-age Filipino students who were concerned with the overall well being of the whole community. Part of the mission is to maintain effective communication and social network among Filipino youth groups throughout the state of Hawai'i.

⁶ Gear Up Hawai'i, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs.

⁷ UHM Center for Philippine Studies. Part of the mission is to maintain the Center's status as the foremost academic institution in the US for the comprehensive study of Philippine culture and society and Filipinos in America.

⁸ Nakem Conference. A non-profit, non sectarian organization of Ilokanos whose members are composed of individuals that come from various universities, colleges, and organizations in the Philippines and other parts of the world.

⁹ Timpuyog Organization. Timpuyog is a student run organization which strives to preserve the Ilokano identity through language, literature, and culture. The Timpuyog Organization is comprised of students enrolled within Ilokano and Indo-Pacific classes at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

¹⁰ Katipunan Club. The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Katipunan Club is comprised of all students currently enrolled in the Filipino Language & Philippine Literature Program courses offered at the University of Hawai'i.

CHAPTER FIVE. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of the study was to disaggregate Filipina/o students from the APA designation and address the gap of research among Filipina/o American students in higher education. Specifically, it sought to examine the strategies successful students implement in managing the cultures of home and a college campus. One advantage of using a cultural perspective to examine student departure is that it accounts for student behavior resulting from interactions on process variables such as involvement, effort, and perceived belonging (Kuh & Love, 2000). A case study approach was employed to capture the first-hand experiences through observations, semi-structured interviews, a review of records, and student sponsored literary readings. More specifically, the goal was to address issues of concern among Filipina/o American higher education students by disaggregating their experiences as a subgroup from the larger APA student population. This final chapter is organized in five sections: summary of the study and its goals, discussion of the findings, conclusions, implications, and future research.

Summary of the Study

Despite the growth of immigrant populations, only a few studies have examined college-aged children of immigrants or specific ethnic groups (Maramba, 2008a). At the national level, Filipina/o Americans represent the fastest growing population among U.S. immigrants and remain an understudied and overlooked group in U.S. culture and academic research. In Hawai‘i, Filipinas/os represent 23 percent of the total population of 1,211,537 in the state (U.S. Census, 2000), yet remain an under-represented ethnic group at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (Bail et al., 2008). In 2009, despite their representation within the state of Hawai‘i, Filipina/o American students accounted for

only 12% of the total undergraduate enrollment of 13,191 and only 8% of the total enrollment of 20,169 students enrolled at UHM (University of Hawai‘i Mānoa Institutional Research Office, 2009).

Within Filipinas/os, there is little work addressing regional variation between Hawai‘i and the mainland (A. Antonio, personal communication, December 13, 2008). When compared to the continental U.S., Hawai‘i has the largest percentage of Filipinas/os at 22% and the lowest percentage of BA/BS degrees at 14.1% over 25 years old (Chua, 2009). Filipinas/os make up only 13 out of every 100 students in the UH system, while the proportion of Filipina/o students at the campuses ranges from 24% at Leeward Community College to a low of 4% at Windward Community College, and among 4-year campuses 16% at the University of Hawai‘i West Oahu and 6% at the University of Hilo (University of Hawai‘i Institutional Research Office, 2007-2008). The study’s contribution to research helps practitioners understand racial and ethnic minority students’ views, specifically among Filipina/o American students, about their undergraduate education in a 4-year university in Hawai‘i. This institutional understanding serves as an important part of the process of engagement in the diverse learning communities of a college (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Using an intercultural approach (Museus & Quaye, 2009), a descriptive case study was developed to capture the first-hand experiences of undergraduate Filipina/o American students. Purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1998) from approximately 13,000 UHM undergraduate students was used to discover, understand, and gain insight on the Filipina/o American undergraduate experience. Purposeful sampling is a non-random method of sampling that allows the researcher to select information rich cases for study in

depth (Patton, 2001). The sample included twelve self-identified Filipina/o American, undergraduate full-time (12+ credits) students enrolled during the spring 2011 academic semester, including recent graduates. The “snowball” approach was employed in order to obtain maximum variation, that is, the researcher asks an initial set of participants to refer other possible participants, such that individuals who represent the widest possible range of characteristics of interest for the study can be invited to participate (Merriam, 1998).

Individual semi-structured and follow-up interviews were conducted at the preference and convenience of all participants. All interviews were digitally recorded and professionally transcribed. An underlying assumption in the study is students are not functioning in isolation, but in the overlapping and sometimes competing worlds of home and college. Influences from home may come from family or friends who expect household chores to be completed, babysitting younger siblings, remaining close to home, and earning the highest grades (Maramba, 2008b). College influences may come from the student’s ability to adapt to the norms of the dominant social group, possession of strong expressive and written English language skills, and mentoring by same-culture role models (Phinney & Haas, 2003). The study’s research question organizing data collection was:

How do Filipina/o American students at UHM describe their undergraduate college experience?

A review of the literature suggests Filipinas/os are a unique culture apart from the Asian community. They do not fit the “model minority” mold, a stereotype of hard work and success (Gillborn, 2005), but instead have been referred to as the “invisible minority” (Strobel, 1997). When compared with Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and recently, Korean Americans, the majority of Filipina/o Americans lag behind these

groups in economic mobility, representation in higher education, community development, and political clout (Strobel, 1997). A long history of colonization subjected Filipinas/os to differential treatment and discrimination among immigrants over the years. Colonization opened the way for the transport of large scale, cheap Filipino labor to the sugar plantations of Hawai'i and California.

Colonized people lose confidence in themselves and their abilities, lose their voice, and feel powerless to make change, and may have learned their native tongue is bad while the language of the American colonizer is good (Halagao Espiritu & Nadal, 2007). This denigration of one's self and culture is one of the most pressing issues for Filipina/o Americans. Thus, the psychology of colonialism exists internally among Filipinas/os and Filipinas/os Americans today. Within the academic arena, a special relationship developed over time between the colonizer and colonized, sometimes referred to as a love-hate relationship (Aquino, 2000).

Previous research has often assumed the college experience is the same for all students (Surla Banaria, 2004). As Kaufman and Feldman (2004) argue, an important factor in studying how the college experience affects students is the background of students, particularly their social class, race/ethnicity, and gender (Hurtado et al., 2008). At a sociological level, these variables exist within the social environment and consequently affect social interaction. Racial/ethnic groups provide people with a sense of belonging, which helps them cope better with the rest of society (Berry, 2009).

Very few studies have disaggregated the data to determine how individual students of color experience the college environment (Maramba, 2008b). Most studies do not place gender, class, and ethnicity as the center of theories about how students

experience higher education (Surla Banaria, 2004). Sociologically-based theories (Clark, 2005) identify the range of factors that influence students' transitions, but fail to address how students experience, perceive, and manage the various influences. As a result, coping strategies or cognitive maps (Clark, 2005) become a salient point of investigation. Furthermore, there have been few empirical attempts to detail the processes students use to manage the transitions between various social settings (Phelan, et al., 1991).

The current study assessed the positive and negative influences of the external environment and how students negotiate external influences, not only during the first year of college, but also throughout their collegiate experience (Rendon et al., 2000). Emerging research is focusing on the relevance of a cultural lens in understanding students' college experiences. Students who come from cultures that are most different from the dominant cultures that are found on their respective college campuses encounter the greatest challenges as they adjust to college (Museus & Maramba, 2011). The cultural focus proposes that the level of incongruence between students' precollege cultures and dominant campus culture is inversely related to persistence, and students for whom there exists a high level of distance between those cultures must either acclimate to the dominant campus culture or become immersed in one or more enclaves (e.g., subcultures) to successfully find membership in and persist through college (Museus & Quaye, 2009). Museus and Quaye suggest employing a cultural perspective of college student departure, as it focuses on the important role of students' precollege and campus cultures in shaping the college experiences and outcomes.

Accordingly, the lens of this study examined Kuh and Love's (2000) culturally-based approach that advocates "knowledge of a student's culture of origin and the

cultures of immersion is needed to understand a student's ability to successfully negotiate the institution's cultural milieu" (p. 203). The study also further delineated the biculturalism construct (Maramba, 2008a; Torres, 1999).

Discussion of the Findings

Previous conceptual approaches have focused on student undergraduate experiences in terms of engagement (Astin, 1984, 1993; Tinto, 1990). More recently, scholars have suggested looking more closely at the undergraduate experience for diverse groups of students (Cabrera, et al., 1992; Kuh & Love, 2000; Museus & Quaye, 2009; Rendon et al., 2000). These analyses go against the common frameworks and methods, and suggest giving a voice to those who have often been marginalized. This study focused on bringing ethnicity, social class and gender more to the forefront, and not assuming engagement is a simple "one size" approach to understanding undergraduate life (Heck, 2004). A cultural lens and case study suited this alternative approach well because it gave voice to those whose experiences may not be heard in larger types of survey studies.

In the context of higher education, culture has been described as social or normative glue that is defined by the shared values and beliefs that exist within a college or university (Rendon, et al., 2000). Student persistence research has challenged the predominant cultural difference models and suggests a cultural paradigm to understand success among students of color (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Kuh & Love, 2000; Museus & Quaye, 2009; Rendon et al., 2000). The discussion of the findings is presented around the five primary themes which emerged during the analysis of the data. These five factors appear to play a primary role in the retention and persistence of Filipina/o students during

their undergraduate years. These factors include a concern with college finances, family, ethnic identity, sense of belonging, and social networking. Within the Filipino culture, the family serves as the source of all household finances and core of the Filipina/o identity (Velasco, 2008). Family support (e.g., financial assistance, encouragement, ethnic awareness) transcends onto the college campus vis-à-vis cultural agents (Museus & Quaye, 2009) and membership in language or culture courses and clubs (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). In turn, these experiences provide a sense of belonging and cultural validation (Rendon, et al., 2000) and strengthen social networks (Surla Banaria, 2004). In essence, a re-creation of the family unit and dynamics takes place as students found “a home at college,” where instructors are commonly referred to as *manong* (older brother) and made to feel “part of” a family.

The results of the study suggest that for many low-income families, financing a child’s college education is a pervasive challenge that impacts not only student access, but persistence. Within Filipina/o families, money issues are emotionally charged, and they often result in a clash between parents and children (Espiritu, 2009). Many students from Farrington High School do not attend college because of money issues (R. Aurellano, personal communication, May 27, 2011).

Filipina/o parents frequently enforce discipline and rigid academic standards. A second theme that emerged was that for Filipina/o students to persist, especially females, it is critical they respond to this pressure and develop strategies in fulfilling the family’s expectations while maintaining high academic standards. At the core of Filipina/o American families is the development of a Filipina/o identity.

A third theme apparent in this study was that the development of an achieved ethnic identity is important in coping with the challenges present in the college environment (see also Phinney, 1992; Pizzolato, et al., 2008). As a result, this developed identity promotes a sense of belonging and, in turn, minimizes isolation due to racism or cultural stereotypes.

The fourth and fifth themes that emerged from the data was that ethnic minority students look for social opportunities that provide a sense of belonging and connectedness in selecting and persisting in college (Cho, et al., 2008). In Hawai'i, ethnic groups have a preference for their own group (Johnson, 1992). Students in the study sought opportunities to join a number of campus or community based groups that provided opportunities to network with other Filipina/o students.

Each of these emergent themes was then discussed in terms of Museus and Quaye's (2009) intercultural propositions on minority students' college experiences. These propositions form a basis for linking the data to an explanatory framework. This involves linking information from the case to an existing theoretical proposition. Through this process, one can build a theoretical explanation of the results of a case study. This process of linking empirical findings to previous theory helps one to make sense of the data being collected. This aspect of data analysis has been least well developed in case study research (Yin, 1994).

More specifically, Museus and Quaye's (2009) first two propositions highlight the important role of a cultural meaning-making system, the pre-college experience, and the culture of origin in persistence.

- *Intercultural Proposition 1: Minority students' college experiences are shaped by their cultural meaning-making systems.* Students from similar racial/ethnic backgrounds who come from different precollege cultures may experience similar campus environments in disparate ways (Museus & Quaye, 2009).
- *Intercultural Proposition 2: Minority students' cultures of origin moderate the meanings they attach to college attendance, engagement, and completion.* Students' cultures of origin mediate the importance of college attendance and degree completion. When the values of one's cultures of origin support the goals of college education, they encourage persistence (Kuh & Love, 2000).

Results of the study suggest the meaning-making system among the Filipina/o culture grew from a colonized perception of low socioeconomic status and constant financial strain. The *finance* theme, as applied toward household expenses and the cost of a college education, was pervasive among all participants. The majority of the participants' parents in the study held service industry positions, managed multiple jobs, were under employed despite formal training in the Philippines, or unemployed.

Coming from a lower income household not only means that a student has less access to economic resources, but also that s/he likely has less access to important sources of social and cultural capital that might ease their path to a postsecondary institution (Educational Policy Institute, 2008). Surla Banaria (2004) defines social capital as the social relationships and group membership that provide resources and support in social status advancement, and cultural capital as the socialization and inherited cultural competencies regarding behavior in order to socially adapt outside the family. Two of the twelve participants were scholarship recipients, while the remaining

participants relied on financial aid or, when possible, parental financial support. Ten of the participants successfully managed single or multiple part-time employment, both on campus and off campus, while enrolled as full time students. At least four participants disclosed giving a portion of their pay checks to their parents in order to help pay for utilities, rent, and other household expenses. The Filipina/o culture of origin has a strong desire to improve their economic position, strive toward upward mobility, and emphasizes the importance of a college education in achieving that end.

The focus of persistence research has shifted to the institutional level (Antley, 1999). Proposition 3 implies responsibility on the part of the institution to have some cultural knowledge or understanding of the racial/ethnic minority students they serve on their campus.

- *Intercultural Proposition 3: Knowledge of minority students' culture of origin and immersion are required to understand those students' abilities to negotiate their respective campus culture milieus.* Knowledge of both racial/ethnic minority college students' cultures of origin and cultures of immersion is required to understand their abilities to negotiate their respective campus cultures. Prior experiences serve an important role in determining whether a student goes to college and whether he/she will persist to graduation (Kuh & Love, 2000).

Given the available Filipina/o cultural enclaves found at UHM, the campus appears to have more than adequate cultural knowledge of the Filipina/o culture of origin and provides valuable cultural immersion programs. Although all participants in the study are of Filipina/o American descent, student prior experiences were often shaped by place of birth and/or transfer status relative to their UHM experience. For immigrant participants,

a U.S. college diploma afforded cultural and familial status. Among local born and transfer participants, a university diploma signaled the achievement of community and peer recognition. In all prior experiences however, the participants' negotiation of the campus culture was greatly enhanced by the institution's cultural knowledge.

Proposition 4 suggests incongruence increases as differences between two cultures emerge.

- *Intercultural Proposition #4: Culture dissonance is inversely related to minority students' persistence. Cultural dissonance is the tension students feel as a result of incongruence between their cultural meaning-making system and new cultural information they encounter (Museus & Quaye, 2009).*

For several participants in the study, the tension frequently described was greater from within the *family* and less from the new campus culture. These participants wanted to please their parents and meet the family's demands and household responsibilities, while at the same time, be academically successful and develop friendships on campus. Family obligations and traditional behaviors that are deeply embedded in the culture may lead to feelings of conflict between the family of origin's expectations and the school's requirements for culturally diverse students (Niemann et al., 2000). Although a source of motivation for college success, the parental pressure often strains the parent-child relationship and creates additional barriers in managing the home-school responsibilities. Older siblings often replace parents as information sources when parents are not able to understand the U.S. college process (Ceja, 2006), act as a buffer between student and parent, or in other cases, set the household standards toward achievement to which their

siblings are frequently compared. All participants in this study found comfort on the college campus and often used it as a way to get out of the home environment.

The cultural or familial pressure to succeed is closely grounded in the expressed pride in Filipina/o identity. Success is often sought as a group goal rather than as a personal badge of merit (Nisbett, 2003). When asked what it means to be Filipina/o, all participants unanimously identified the *family* as the center of what it means to be Filipina/o (Wolf, 1997). Many second generation Filipinas/os learn early on that getting good grades, attending college, and selecting a career are not personal choices, but are deeply embedded in fulfilling their parents' dream of and hope for intergenerational mobility, their reason for migrating in the first place (Espiritu, 2009).

Choice of major, especially in the field of nursing, may play a role in Filipina/o students' higher education experiences. More female Filipinos are employed as professionals when compared to their male counterparts primarily due to the high number of women working as nurses or other health care professionals (Okamura & Agbayani, 1997). Based on the obtained results, it appears many of the students in this study have rejected this profession due to the cultural stigma and exercised more personal choice. For others, academic barriers (Educational Policy Institute, 2008) may limit choice of major. Students may select courses that are less desirable to avoid rejection on the basis of language (Schommer-Aikins & Easter, 2008), as language proficiency are possible factors in immigrant success since immigrants are less likely to enroll in required remediation coursework (Conway, 2009). The results suggest that home expectations and cultural support have a key influence on student persistence.

Similar to Native Hawaiians (Sing, Hunter, & Meyer, 1999), Filipinas/os strongly believe that the family is important. All participants indicated a collective sense of self that revealed the family's responsibilities is a priority over individual responsibilities, and together, is a group responsibility. In part, due to the dominant "local" and Asian culture found at the institution studied, I found little if any cultural dissonance and support for this proposition. However, in a Western culture that may value individual achievement over family obligations, such as a predominantly White institution (PWI), the dissonance may be greater.

Previous research on the persistence of college immigrant students found various student background and cultural characteristics, outside demand or resources, and intent to attain a degree were contributors to student persistence (Conway, 2009). For underrepresented minority students, *ethnic* and *racial identity* is essential to psychological health (Miller, 1992) by increasing self esteem and *sense of belonging* (Revilla, 1997). The extent to which students of color feel connected to the cultures of their campus contributes to student success (Museus, 2011). Strayhorn (2008) asserts supportive relationships increase social adjustment, which increases a greater sense of belonging and improved retention rates.

- *Intercultural Proposition #5: Minority students who experience a substantial amount of cultural dissonance must acclimate to the dominant campus culture or establish sufficient connections with cultural agents at their institution to persist.*

Kuh & Love (2000) posit students who experience high levels of cultural incongruence must acclimate to the dominant campus culture or join one of more cultural enclaves to succeed. This revised proposition highlights the role of

collective cultural agents as well as the impact of individual cultural agents (Museus & Quaye, 2009).

- *Intercultural Proposition #6: The degree to which campus cultural agents validate minority students' cultures of origin is positively associated with reduced cultural dissonance and greater likelihood of persistence.* Collective and individual cultural agents (e.g., ethnic student organizations, ethnic role models, etc.) play an important role in the experiences of students of color by validating those students' traditional cultural heritages and decreasing the amount of cultural dissonance they experience (Museus & Quaye, 2009).
- *Intercultural Proposition #7: The quality and quantity of minority students' connections with various cultural agents on their respective campuses is positively associated with their likelihood of persistence.* This intercultural revision focuses on the quality and quantity of students' connections with both collective and individual cultural agents (Museus & Quaye, 2009).
- *Intercultural Proposition #8: Minority students are not more likely to persist if the cultural agents to whom they are connected emphasize educational achievement, value educational attainment, and validate traditional cultural heritages.* Museus & Quaye's (2009) revision includes both collective and individual cultural agents and emphasizes the significance to which cultural agents validate students' cultural identities.

For propositions 5, 6, 7, and 8, I found strong support with the discovered themes of *ethnic identity, sense of belonging, and social networking*. While self-identity is greatly influenced by the college transition, students with a more secure identity are likely to

handle relationships and interactions better than students with a less secure identity (Smith, et al., 2006). In a review of *ethnic identity* models, identity achievement means acceptance and internalization of one's ethnicity, or an achieved identity (Phinney, 1988).

Often ridiculed by peers because of skin color, accent, or job occupations, all participants grew from a position of denial, embarrassment and shame, to a position of cultural pride during their college experience. Participants were not forced to become members of the dominant campus culture, but instead joined the available Filipino cultural enclaves that supported traditional Filipino cultural heritages (Museus & Quaye, 2009). College peers and faculty (Filipinas/os); Filipino language, history, or culture course; Filipino community organizations; Filipino student clubs; or Filipino sponsored social activities appears to help cultivate a positive Filipina/o identity and increase cultural awareness. Espiritu and Wolf (2001) suggest ethnic identity and language preference are two key indices of cultural assimilation. These ethnic student organizations, cultural centers, and academic ethnic studies departments allowed students to connect with, and become engaged in the college environment (Museus, 2010).

Cultural awareness is the individual's cultural knowledge, such as language, history, traditions, and cultural heroes, and is considered a component of cultural change (Niemann, et al., 2000). From a cultural perspective, when an individual joins a group, interactions between people influence the larger institutional environment and its sub-environments (Kuh & Love, 2000). The participants' mastery and understanding of the Philippine language and history seems to have increased cultural awareness, contributed to a level of confidence and ethnic pride in their ability to communicate with other

Filipinas/os in their native tongue, especially among family members, and positively influenced retention and persistence.

As a way to respond to peer ridicule, embarrassment or shame, students strive to find a *sense of belonging* and comfort zone on campus (Cheng, 2004). All participants reported some level of confrontation with Filipino racial stereotypes at some point along the educational pathway, usually involving skin color or accent. Acceptance into a group and not being alienated from a group serve as motivators for acting appropriately since the group specifies the actions or behaviors that are expected of its members (LeBlanc & French, 1997). A student's greater ease in adjusting to the cultures of campus is associated with a greater sense of belonging on campus (Museus & Maramba, 2011). As previously discussed however, a sense of belonging with home and family is especially critical to those students whose culture emphasizes strong family values (Niemann et al., 2000). Student participation in Filipino organizations and mentoring appears to have minimized family conflicts and within some families, even endorsed and supported.

For all participants, a cultural *sense of belonging* was found on campus. The development of a strong ethnic identity however, served as a prerequisite for a sense of belonging and social networking opportunities to develop. The quality of connections among cultural agents found in Filipino language or culture courses, quantity of participation in Filipino student clubs or community-based organizations, and mentoring from Filipino role models or peers greatly influenced persistence. Ethnic student organizations facilitated the adjustment and membership of those students of color in college by functioning as spaces that provide cultural familiarity and sources of cultural validation (Museus & Quaye, 2009). Federal college readiness programs such as Gear

Up, culturally-based organizations such as Sariling Gawa, the university's Center for Philippine Studies, the Ilokano or Tagalog language courses and membership in Filipino clubs, and the opportunity to attend a bi-annual, campus-based Filipino conference (Nakem Conference, 2009) served as vital links in creating this sense of belonging. These college experiences provided a safe place in which Filipina/o students could culturally thrive and excel, and seem to ease this family conflict.

Kuh and Love (2000) found social integration was positively related to a student's subsequent commitment to graduating from the institution. Social capital refers to instrumental or supportive relationships that an individual (or group of individuals) may have resources or *social networks* that provide access to opportunity (Ceja, 2006). Museus (2010) defines *social networks* as structures of relationships linking social actors. The two types of *social networks* (Ceja, 2006) that have an impact on minority students' access to social capital are institutional agents (e.g., teachers or counselors) and protective agents (e.g., family members or community networks). In this study, the institutional agents in the form of Filipina/o peers, language courses, Filipino cultural groups and organizations provided a vital link in the Filipina/o student's college success. If the student brings who she or he is and what she or he represents into the school setting, then school would be more meaningful in a personal sense (Sing, et al., 1999).

Many minority students are not likely to give up their affiliations and lose contact with their cultural groups, or cultural maintenance (Berry, 2009), in order to find membership in a new college world (Rendon, et al., 2000). All participants discussed how the community, the institution, the courses, the faculty/staff/peers provided them an opportunity to connect and learn more about their own culture. These connections with

others provided an important support system for their success and persistence in college. During difficult times, the participants could turn to someone on campus and find the necessary help to resolve the familial, personal, or academic challenges.

The discussion of the findings in the previous section provides evidence to answer the research question posed in the study. All participants in the study described a positive college experience at UHM. The findings suggest the presence of Filipina/o faculty and staff, culturally relevant pre-admission programs such as Sariling Gawa and Gear Up, and the availability of UHM Filipino language, history and cultural courses have greatly contributed to this positive experience. In the Philippines, we (parents) push the students, in school and in the home, to do well in school (Quintas Kern, 2008). Despite this cultural pressure to succeed in both environments, all participants developed strategies in overcoming financial and cultural barriers that inhibit persistence. Effective strategies included securing external sources of funding to pay for college expenses, consistent communication with parents, developing cultural networks on campus, and effective time management. Although all participants described the family as a tremendous source of cultural pride (Espiritu & Wolf, 2001), this cultural pride was further strengthened as a result of the UHM college experience. In summary, the active cultural socialization (Espiritu & Wolf, 2001) available on campus was a significant factor in the Filipina/o American college experience at this institution.

Conclusions

One conclusion that can be drawn from the study's findings is that Filipina/o American student persistence was extremely high among all participants. Studying students at a single institution as opposed to multiple institutions controls several threats

to internal validity (Conway, 2009). Of the three seniors currently enrolled, two successfully matriculated at the end of the spring semester, while the remaining senior is on track for fall 2011 graduation. It should be noted however, that although all participants persisted, many students struggled to find success in the pursuit of a college degree. Several participants did not earn the minimum passing grades throughout all coursework. One participant initially resisted the urging by parents to attend college and saw no point in earning a college diploma. Another participant became a teenage parent, dropped out of high school and returned to earn a GED. Recent baccalaureate graduates were included in the sample in the hope of obtaining data from a different student perspective that was free from the perception of judgment or academic control. When snowball sampling was introduced, participants referred me to students with similar values of academic achievement and success, and not those viewed as less motivated. As a result, knowledge of, or access to, data on students who were not currently enrolled or non-persisting students were not made available.

At least at the undergraduate institution studied, Filipina/o persistence appears to be grounded in a strong ethnic identity formation and in-group membership. In contrast with Caucasians, Asians Americans often express having greater feelings of isolation, loneliness, and anxiety (Sue & Sue, 1987). In this study, students discovered new perspectives about themselves through social interactions and/or exposure to culture specific curriculum. The institution seems to have the necessary social links (Hurtado & Carter, 1997) and cultural agents (Museus & Quaye, 2009) necessary in bridging a family oriented culture with an academic culture. Especially important is a sense of belonging on

campus that was nurtured through faculty or peer support and participation co-curricular activities (Maramba, 2008a).

A second conclusion that can be drawn is that the cultural and social setting of Hawai‘i which surrounds the higher education experience does provide a supportive perspective, that is, being a safe place in which multicultural individuals feel that they can belong (Nayani, 2006). The racial stigma of being Filipina/o does not appear to be prevalent at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa when compared to PWIs. As Ramos (2007) explained, “Transferring to UHM last semester has helped me become prouder of being Filipino. The intellectual climate, the heritage culture programs they have here, the Ilokano language courses, all these added up to my excitement of going back to my roots and learn from those roots the wisdom of my elders and ancestors” (p. 229). A Nakem conference participant (Aurellano, 2007) wrote:

Timpuyog: Ilokano Student Organization has taught me to embrace my ‘Filipino-ness’. The organization, truly, has served its purpose of putting all the Ilokano students together, whether they are Ilokanos or not so that together they would be able to explore the various approaches in understanding a culture that is foreign to the United States but is historically a culture and language of the majority of immigrants of this country. Timpuyog had definitely reached their goal of instilling pride in one’s heritage and in bringing people together. Timpuyog has also given us many opportunities to strive and become great leaders.

All participants appeared to have successfully managed the cultural pluralism (Berry, 1997). More specifically, these students found high value in maintaining their Filipina/o identity and characteristics while maintaining relationships with the larger (university) society, or what other scholars refer to as *dual socialization* (Rendon et al., 2000), *biculturalism* (LaFromboise, et al., 1993; Maramba, 2008a; Torres, 1999), or *members of multiple communities* (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). These findings lend support to the important relationship between students’ precollege and campus cultures, as well

as their ability to acclimate to college life by becoming immersed in a subculture and persist through college (Kuh & Love, 2000). The ability of these Filipina/o American students to find and connect with individual and collective cultural agents, in this case, Filipina/o peers, language courses, and activities are factors that contributed to their persistence and success in college.

A third conclusion drawn from the study is that, consistent with the previous literature, social support appears to play a positive role in helping individuals cope with stressful situations that can interfere with persistence toward their undergraduate degrees (Phinney & Haas, 2003). Research suggests that supportive relationships increase social adjustment, improves a *sense of belonging*, and improves retention rates (Strayhorn, 2008). Collective agents provide students with smaller and more manageable environments within the larger campus, offer a conduit for socialization into the larger campus community, and provide a venue in which students can maintain and express a sense of racial/ethnic identity on campus, or bicultural socialization. Collective cultural agents are groups (e.g., academic programs, informal peer groups, cultural centers, and student organizations) in the campus cultures with whom students can connect (Kuh & Love, 2000). These individual and collective cultural agents in the form of peer friendships and students organizations helped establish a sense of cultural identity (Cooper et al., 1998).

Inherent in this intercultural framework is the student's intrinsic motivation and strong desire to avoid and overcome parental financial struggles and adjustment in the United States. Educated immigrants are in a much better competitive position and are more likely to succeed occupationally and economically in their new environment (Portes

& Rumbaut, 2001). Among the study participants, their parents' under-education or under-employment seems to serve as a motivation to earn a degree, but also a life stressor at the same time. Social and economic class, relative to their peers and communities, was clearly evident among all students in the study except one. As a group, Filipinas/os are constantly reminded of their low social, economic, and political standing in everyday life and readily grasp on to role models who have broken the glass ceiling. Lending support to a study with Native American students (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008), the need to live up to family expectations and a fear of letting their families down by not graduating from college was a major factor in persistence among all participants.

Student debt has been found to impact students' persistence and completion (Educational Policy Institute, 2008). More specifically, Porter (1989) found first year financial aid was correlated with persistence. This data suggests that those Filipina/o American students who were unable to obtain financial assistance during the freshman year may not have persisted to the sophomore year, or may not have even applied for admission to UHM due to price constraint (Educational Policy Institute, 2008). Persistence may also be impacted by the quality of student-faculty relationships. The quality of social interactions make a difference in the prediction of academic performance, feelings of discrimination, and student perceptions of diversity on the campus environment (Wells-Lawson, 1994). All participants in the study successfully developed student-faculty relationships either prior to admission or during the college experience itself. In one study (Yazedjian, et al., 2007), students became more involved once they established social connections and felt a greater sense of attachment with the institution.

Finally, students who share similar values in achievement and higher education appear to be more successful in degree completion, especially along gender lines. Filipina/o parents, along with Filipina and other immigrant females (Conway, 2009), have higher educational achievements and aspirations of their daughters than of sons (Espiritu & Wolf, 2001). Although overly protected as children, Filipino daughters are treated differently and are expected to be the provider in this matriarchal culture. As one female participant remarked, “Some Filipino friends of mine are not really hard working because they’re kind of spoiled or they’re lazy.” Student persistence might also be influenced by the need for immediate gratification. Recent data (Clemente, 2010) reports some Filipina/o students focus their energies more on working as a way to buy expensive clothes and cars. This group’s value system was based on dancing and singing rather than studying and earning academic awards. In agreement, another successful participant shared, “*The Filipinos I knew were into break dancing and cars and all that, and I was just not into that.*”

Implications

Minority students come to college from communities with cultural identities that are often markedly different from mainstream academic communities (Smith, et al., 2004). In support, Berger and Milem (1999) suggest if we are serious about improving retention on campus, particularly for traditionally underrepresented groups, we must find educationally sound ways to ensure that campus environments reflect the norms and values of a wider variety of students rather than the norms and values of a select few. The biggest challenge in better serving minority college students is not creating new knowledge about how to help them, but in creating incentives for institutional leaders to

act on the knowledge that already exists (Schmidt, 2008). Some policy recommendations include an “enacted” versus an “enmeshed” mission statement or enrollment strategy that translates into action (e.g., increasing Filipina/o enrollment, hiring more Filipina/o faculty, and improving access to, and knowledge of, need-based financial assistance).

The social identities of race/ethnicity and gender can be particularly salient for first-year students (Clark, 2005). It is the institution’s role and responsibility to help students solve their adjustment concerns (Strange & Banning, 2001). In affirming the importance of student identity, Tierney (2000) contends successful programs cannot be developed unless we acknowledge the particular backgrounds of those whom we seek to educate. Accordingly, it seems prudent that institutions maintain ongoing contact with ethnically diverse students by providing programming and monitoring of adjustment in order to improve retention rates during the second year of college (Hurtado, Michigan Univ., A. & Others, A., 2004). Securing and assigning within-group role models and peer mentors at the point of entry into the institution, especially for transfer students, would support first-year students’ adjustment. The depth and breadth of student Filipino language and culture clubs, along with Filipino faculty and staff appear to have made significant strides in Filipina/o American student persistence.

Efforts to engage racial minority students must go beyond simply providing space for ethnic student organizations more toward encouraging their participation in a wider array of activities (Museus et al., 2008). Creating “safe spaces” for underrepresented ethnic/racial groups, a one-stop shop or center, and/or a clearly identified “champion” might be initiatives that contribute to the institution’s retention efforts. Within a large campus setting, this may not present itself as a viable option. However, I believe the

campus can assess its current resources and go beyond making these resources available to incoming students, by connecting these resources to the students who can benefit the most. Colleges and universities need to re-focus energy away from ranking and toward the responsibility to educate (Slaughter, 2009).

Institutions may adopt cross cultural training programs that strengthen attitudes about people of color and develop cultural sensitivity (Ptak, Cooper, & Brislin, 1995). There is a need for student affairs practitioners to help faculty understand how the classroom experiences influence ethnic identity (Torres & Hernandez, 2007). Since all participants discussed the linkages with Filipina/o friends, faculty, staff, classmates, and clubs or organizations, the amount of resources can be endless and/or cost effective. Establishing linkages with K-12 schools, especially those in low income communities, (e.g., Big Brothers/Big Sisters college mentors) could model the best practices found in successful programs such as Gear Up or Sariling Gawa and create a culture of change. Diversity, one of the strategic goals of the institution, is not the same as inclusiveness. Inclusiveness implies participation and representation at all levels of the institution (Slaughter, 2009).

In an effort to assist students overcome the financial barriers to education, the necessary appropriation of institutional funding should be earmarked and budgeted on an annual basis for programs that target under-represented ethnic groups. The Center for Philippine Studies, the Filipino language courses, and the Filipino student clubs and organizations should not be viewed as expendable programs marked first to be cut or eliminated during a budget crisis (Aquino, 2000). At the same time, federal and state programs such as Gear Up or Sariling Gawa should continue to receive the necessary

funding as supplemental resources to the college community. Data from the study clearly identifies a positive impact these programs had on the achievement and persistence of Filipina/o American students at UHM. More financial aid should be provided to the neediest students instead of being used to induce more affluent students to enroll (Slaughter, 2009), or entice students into stereotyped Filipina/o careers (e.g., nursing majors). Based on institutional research of leading indicators on student success, financial aid was identified as the most important (Stanley, 2011).

Finally, and more importantly, the human resources required for optimal programming and services should continue in the form of increased Filipina/o faculty, staff, and students. Academic units or divisions could provide incentives for Filipina/o faculty/staff/students to continue their own education or participate in campus sponsored cultural events. The cited literature lends supports to the importance of Filipina/o role models and mentors in improving student persistence (Agbayani & Ah Sam, 2008; Dahilig, 2009; Espiritu, 2009; Maramba, 2008a; Maramba 2008b; Nayani, 2006). Stanley (2011) reports faculty/staff-student conversation and follow- up are key outcome variables related to student persistence. Aurellano (2007) gratefully acknowledges,

I had a lot of mentors around me. Being involved in those things in high school really prepared me to want to go to college. When I came here (UHM), everyone is connected in the Filipino community in some way. Like a big circle, it's a connection.

Future Research

The participants' various starting points highlighted their multiple journeys toward academic success and achievement. At the center of these experiences was a strong identification with the Filipina/o culture, the importance of being connected to the family, and the development of social and cultural capital in overcoming obstacles

toward degree completion. If minority students' cultural meaning-making systems moderate their college experiences, and if it is essential for postsecondary educators to understand their students' precollege cultures to accurately appraise their ability to navigate the college campus environments, then it is critical for researchers to pursue lines of inquiry that help develop a better understanding of how the experiences of students of color vary according to their cultures of origin (Museus & Quayle, 2009). Above all, a unique motivation or ethnic work ethic was pervasive in all their stories. This point underscores the importance of analyzing multiple minority groups and racial differences in future studies of college student experiences and outcomes (Museus et al., 2008). Researchers may want to consider the importance of disaggregating minority samples by race by gender, class, immigration and generation status (Dahilig, 2009).

Phinney and Haas (2003) described coping among minority students as proactive, seeking support, distance/avoidance, acceptance, and positive reframing. Future research may explore a change in the bounded system, or a shift in time and place. A longitudinal study that examines students over a period of time instead of a unit of time might reveal a broader scope in coping strategies toward persistence. A change in sample size that includes unsuccessful versus unsuccessful Filipina/o American students might provide more insight in the types of support the student received or did not receive.

Finally, future research might include multiple institutions in different geographic regions in assessing how different campus climates impact retention. Within Hawai'i, however, contrasting UHCC Filipina/o American students with UHM Filipina/o American students might shed some light on the low transfer rate from local community colleges, especially those from predominant Filipina/o communities.

Final Reflection

The findings of the study emphasize that a strong sense of cultural pride and identity contributed to student success and achievement. Moreover, the campus community provided key role models, within-group peers, and cultural courses and activities that contributed to a sense of belonging for these students. The participants in the study successfully managed to overcome financial barriers to cover college expenses through external resources, use time management (Hurtado, et al., 1994) and communication skills to meet parental expectations in the home, and overcome cultural barriers by developing a strong Filipina/o identity through relationships on campus. More importantly, the college experience provided a “decolonization process” which allowed students to reconnect with the past in order to understand the present and to be able to envision the future (Strobel, 1997). All participants described a positive college experience at the university and seemed to display an enormous pride in being Filipina/o.

Filipina/o faculty and staff, Filipina/o students, and Filipino student clubs and community organizations serve as important pieces in the persistence puzzle. Students were able to find a sense of belonging and felt connected to college without giving up who they were at home or in the community. This “cultural integrity” (Museus & Maramba, 2011) was developed through the existence of culturally relevant institutional programs and practices that engaged the students’ cultural backgrounds. Cultural integrity can help affirm racial identity/ethnic minority students’ cultural identities and increase the chances that students will succeed in higher education. The unique Filipina/o cultural identity and family background seem to serve as key factors to overcome obstacles and complete a college degree.

APPENDIX A

**An Intercultural Perspective on Filipina/o American
Persistence:
Implications for College Success**

The Purpose:

Examine the Filipino/a culture and college culture. Culture has been described as consisting of concepts, values and assumptions about life that guide behavior and that are widely shared by people (Dela Cruz, Salzman, Brislin, & Losch, 2006). All too often, the college culture represents a marked contrast to the minority student's familial or cultural background, thus creating a conflict of socialization between both worlds.

The Goal:

To explore students' perspectives and experiences.

The Research Question:

"How would you describe your college experience?"

The Need:

Approximately 10-12 Filipina/o American UHM college students, freshmen through graduates, various majors, male and female to participate in a 1:1 semi-structured interview (approximately 30-45 minutes), and a brief follow up interview or focus group (approximately 15-20 minutes). Each student will receive \$20 cash or a \$20 gift certificate for full participation (two sessions).

Interested? Do you want to provide a voice for Filipina/o students? Serve as a part of Filipina/o academic research?

Contact:

ROBERT BACHINI, PhD candidate
956-2487
Bachini@hawaii.edu

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol

1. Class standing (circle one) Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Graduate
2. Gender (circle one): M F
3. Place of birth _____
4. Primary language _____
5. High school _____
6. Primary major _____
7. Number of years @ UHM _____
8. Career goal (reason for 4-year college degree) _____
9. List other colleges attended _____
10. Highest level of formal education by either parent _____
11. Parents' type of employment _____
12. Number of family members who completed a 4-year college degree _____
13. List participation in activities (e.g., college, community, church, employment)

- Who are the key people in your life at home? In college? Why?
- What does being Filipina/o mean to you? Describe your relationship with your parents/family members.
- Please describe some of the people or situations that lead to the decision to attend college.
- What has your college experience been like so far? Why?
- How does being Filipina/o influence the college experience, if at all?
- What are some of the challenges, if any, in being successful? At home? In college? Where do these challenges originate and why?
- What skills do you use in order to successfully meet these challenges (how do you overcome these challenges)?

APPENDIX C

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Committee on Human Studies

August 25, 2010

Revised February 9, 2011

TO: Robert Bachini
Principal Investigator
College of Education

FROM: Nancy R. King
Director



Re: CHS #18368- "An Intercultural Perspective on Filipino American Persistence:
Implications for College Success"

This letter is your record of CHS approval of this study as exempt.

On August 25, 2010, the University of Hawai'i (UH) Committee on Human Studies (CHS) approved this study as exempt from federal regulations pertaining to the protection of human research participants. The authority for the exemption applicable to your study is documented in the Code of Federal Regulations at 45 CFR 46 (2).

Exempt studies are subject to the ethical principles articulated in The Belmont Report, found at <http://www.hawaii.edu/irb/html/manual/appendices/A/belmont.html>

Exempt studies do not require regular continuing review by the Committee on Human Studies. However, if you propose to modify your study, you must receive approval from CHS prior to implementing any changes. You can submit your proposed changes via email at uhirb@hawaii.edu. (The subject line should read: Exempt Study Modification.) CHS may review the exempt status at that time and request an application for approval as non-exempt research.

In order to protect the confidentiality of research participants, we encourage you to destroy private information which can be linked to the identities of individuals as soon as it is reasonable to do so. Signed consent forms, as applicable to your study, should be maintained for at least the duration of your project.

This approval does not expire. However, please notify CHS when your study is complete. Upon notification, we will close our files pertaining to your study.

If you have any questions relating to the protection of human research participants, please contact CHS at 956-5007 or uhirb@hawaii.edu. We wish you success in carrying out your research project.

APPENDIX D**Consent Form**Agreement to Participate in
Filipina/o American College Student StudyRobert Bachini
Primary Investigator
956-2487

I am conducting this research project as a component of a dissertation for a doctoral degree in higher education. The purpose of the project is to describe the experiences of Filipina/o American college students. You are being asked to participate in this student because you self-identified your ethnicity as Filipina/o.

Your participation in the project will consist of completing a form on background information about yourself and an interview with me. Interview questions will focus on your college experience at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Data from the interview will be summarized into broad categories and no personal identifying information will be included in the results. Completion of the form should take no more than 5 minutes and the interview will last no longer than 45 minutes. Approximately 12 people will participate in the study. I will audio record each interview for the purpose of transcription.

I believe there is little to no risk in participating in this research project. However, there may be a small risk that you will experience psychological stress or discomfort when asked to describe your college experience.

Your participation in this research may be of no direct benefit to you however, I believe the results of this research will lead to a better understanding of Filipina/o American college students. As compensation for your time participating in this research project, you will receive a gift certificate or cash.

All research data will be confidential to the extent allowed by law. Agencies with research oversight, such as the UH Committee on Human Studies, have the authority to review research data. I will store all research records in a locked file in my office for the duration of the research project. I will destroy all audio tapes immediately after transcription and a copy of the transcription will be made available to you upon request. Finally, I will destroy all other research records upon completion of the study.

Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from participation at any time during the duration of the project with no penalty, or loss of benefit to which you would otherwise be entitled.

If you have any questions regarding this research project, please contact me, Robert Bachini, at 956-2487.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the UH Committee on Human Studies at 956-5007 or visit 1960 East-West Road (Biomedical Bldg) Rm. B-104.

Participant:

I have read and received a copy of this agreement. I understand the above information and agree to participate in this research project.

Name (printed)

Signature

Date

Please send me a report on the results of this research project (circle one)

Yes No

If circled YES, please provide a self addressed stamped envelope.

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