Cultural Baggage: Filipino-American Ethnic Identity and Postcolonial Experiences in Hawaiʻi

Thesis

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INTRODUCTION

Historically, the people of the Philippines can trace colonialism back to the 1500s, when Ferdinand Magellan and his explorers landed on the island chain (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia 2019). Colonized Filipinos are believed to have experienced exploitation, brutality, cheating, cruelty, injustice, and tyranny under Spanish rule. Additionally, Spanish culture and Catholicism were intended to replace Filipino indigenous culture as part of the "civilization process" (David and Okazaki 2006). The nation was colonized by Spain for about 400 years, until the Treaty of Paris (1898) transferred the Philippines from Spain to the United States, thus making the Philippines a U.S. territory (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia 2019). The Filipino peoples already experienced colonization, oppression, and cultural erasure under Spanish rule. Once the Philippines were declared a U.S. territory, further efforts were made to "civilize" Filipinos under the colonization of another nation.

During the United States' colonial period in the Philippines, American educators were sent to the islands to instill Filipinos with concepts of American civilization, worldviews, and superiority. In 1946, U.S.'s rule in the Philippines officially ended, and the Philippines were finally granted their independence (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia 2019). Even after U.S. colonization ended, however, the legacies of colonialism are still present in the Philippines and the Filipino people - legacies that are

manifested through notions of Western superiority and Filipino inferiority (David and Nadal 2013).

Due to this romanticized perception of the United States shaped by the long colonial history of the Philippines and a westernized postcolonial climate, the annual migration of Filipinos to the United States is not surprising (David et al. 2017) and implies that Americanization already begins before Filipinos immigrate to the United States. In 2010, the Filipino American immigrant population in the United States consisted of 1.8 million Filipinos (Hoeffel et al. 2012). Thus, it is worthwhile to investigate how contemporary Filipino Americans in the U.S. experience postcolonial trauma. Because trauma theory defines trauma as resulting from a single, extraordinary, catastrophic event (Craps 2013), much of the literature that has emerged neglects racially based forms of trauma rooted in the global systems of slavery and colonialism, thus neglecting the particularities of non-Western traumas (Andermahr 2015). Postcolonial trauma, therefore, is trauma that persists into the present – it is not the completed past of a singular colonial event (Rothberg 2008). Postcolonial theorist, Frantz Fanon (1952), analyzed the psychological effects of colonialism and argued that the colonized develops a sense of self as defined by the colonizer, while the colonizer develops a sense of superiority. Fanon (1952) suggested that the colonized individual rejects their own culture and instead adopts the values, religion, language, and practices of the colonizer in attempt to deal with the postcolonial trauma of psychological inadequacy.

Some studies have demonstrated ways in which Filipino Americans may experience a form of postcolonial trauma exhibited as colonial mentality (CM), a specific form of internalized oppression characterized by a rejection of anything Filipino and a

preference for anything American (David and Okazaki 2006; David 2008; Nadal 2013). However, I argue that research on CM must be expanded for the following reasons. First, the term CM underscores the nature of mental health and well-being as indicated by one's internalized oppression without considering a more structural view of colonialism and racism. Second, a deeper examination of Filipino Americans' sense of ethnic identity, and its relationship with postcolonial experiences and mentalities, would be a significant contribution to current research and mental health understandings. Because ethnic identity is influenced by larger, sociopolitical factors (Berry, 2003) such as colonialism, investigating the relationship between ethnic identity and its possible effects on colonized and previously colonized groups' experiences may provide researchers and mental health professionals a more complete conceptualization of mental health for Filipino Americans. Lastly, the Filipino American population is not solely significant because they are the only Asian population that has been directly colonized by the United States (David and Okazaki 2006) – Filipino Americans also have a long history in Hawai'i, resulting in some of the largest population numbers on the island (Tamura 2000). According to data from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), Asian Americans hold the largest population percentage in Hawai'i (56.6%), with Filipino Americans making up the largest percentage of Hawai'i's Asian American population (15.7%) (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). As a result, the histories and contemporary experiences of Filipino Americans in Hawai'i must account for two colonizations: U.S. colonialism in both the Philippines and in Hawai'i (Labrador 2015).

It would be meaningful to explore the experiences of Filipino Americans in Hawai'i specifically because the island chain has a very distinct and diverse demographic

profile compared to the continental United States (Tamura 2000). It is important to investigate how its histories, sociopolitical structures, and "local" culture contribute to Filipino-American ethnic identity and postcolonial experiences. Furthermore, it would also be important to investigate how particular demographic characteristics such as generational status and education level may influence the nature of Filipino Americans' postcolonial experiences in Hawai'i.

Generational status is an important factor to consider as Hawai'i-born Filipino Americans may be more likely to identify as "local" and neglect the Filipino history, culture, tradition, and language (Labrador 2015). This denial of Filipino heritage may be attributed to the lack of positive images and definitions of "Filipino" in Hawai'i, as well as fewer opportunities to learn a Filipino language (Eisen 2019; Labrador 2015), thus resulting in a distancing from the Filipino ethnic identity. Similarly, education is a notable aspect to investigate, in part because it is an important marker of socioeconomic status. Furthermore, for Filipino Americans who grew up feeling ashamed to be Filipino, experiences in higher education may allow them to find ethnic studies or Asian American studies programs and reclaim a Filipino identity (Eisen 2019).

Due to the aforementioned reasons, this study aims to explore the effects of postcolonial trauma on the lived experiences and psychological well-being of contemporary Filipino Americans living in Hawai'i, as well as the role of ethnic and local identity and the ways in which it may affect Filipino Americans' postcolonial experiences. In addition, this study also intends to explore the role of generational status and education, and the ways in which these factors affect Filipino Americans' postcolonial experiences in Hawai'i. In order to examine these research objectives among

Filipino Americans, this study utilizes identity theory and the settler colonial framework. In the following section, relevant theories and literature will be reviewed in detail.

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

There is a fair amount of research on ethnic identity and the Filipino-American experience (Baldoz 2011; David and Nadal 2013; Labrador 2015; Mossakowski 2003; Nadal et al. 2012; Ocampo 2016), but studies on postcolonial trauma are somewhat scarce. The existing work on Filipino-American postcolonial trauma does not typically focus on the Filipino-American population in Hawai‘i, despite its large population (Tamura 2000) and the significant history of Filipinos in Hawai‘i, which I will discuss in depth later. Overall, more attention should be given to Filipino-American colonial and postcolonial experiences, as it would be meaningful to understand how colonial histories are important social factors to understand the mental health of Filipino-Americans in the United States.

In the following sections, I will first introduce identity theory and the settler colonial framework that guide this study. I will then provide an overview of the literature on the Filipino-American experience in the United States, postcolonial trauma, ethnic identity, and the Filipino-American population in Hawai‘i.

Identity Theory and the Settler Colonial Framework

Two theories are particularly important in understanding postcolonial trauma in contemporary Filipino Americans living in Hawai‘i: identity theory and the settler colonial framework. According to identity theory, an individual may have many identities that are organized as a salience hierarchy within the self (Stryker 1987). These identities

vary based on a person's commitment to the group (e.g., racial/ethnic group), which is one of the most essential features of ethnic identity (Stryker 1987; Phinney 1991). In essence, a strong commitment to one's ethnic group will result in a greater likelihood for ethnic identity to be salient; ethnic group commitment will hold a higher position in one's salience hierarchy compared to one's commitment to other groups. In terms of Filipino Americans, a strong ethnic identity would entail a prioritized commitment to the Filipino ethnic group over the dominant "American" group.

On the other hand, the setter colonial framework is often used to analyze racial inequality on a transnational scope. In contrast to colonialism whose objective is to take advantage of Indigenous resources, settler colonialism's purpose is to acquire land so colonists may settle permanently. A defining feature of settler colonialism is the attachment of settler identities to the land itself, bridging differences in class, ethnicity, and nationality that might have otherwise divided them (Glenn 2015). In the case of Hawai'i, the presence of a local identity can be understood as a product of settler colonialism, an identity that may serve to hide the existence racial and ethnic hierarchies on the island.

Furthermore, the settler colonial framework understands settler colonialism not as an event, but as an ongoing structure whose logic, tenets, and identities continue to shape race, gender, class, and sexual formations into the present (Wolfe 1999). It is also important to note that although the Philippines did not experience settler colonialism like Hawai'i, the settler colonial framework is one that pays attention across time and place, making it open to intersectional understanding (Glenn 2015), thus making it a suitable framework to examine the shared histories of colonialism in the Philippines, Hawai'i, and

the United States. Ultimately, the settler colonial framework can be utilized to investigate the lives of contemporary Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i by taking into account the multiple, ongoing structures of colonialism that have shaped, and continue to shape, the Filipino-American experience.

For the purpose of this study, it would be beneficial to merge identity theory and the settler colonial framework to understand how salience of ethnic identity in combination with structures of colonialism in the Philippines and Hawai‘i might influence the nature of postcolonial trauma manifested in contemporary Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i. Ethnic identity is often found to be a protective factor against postcolonial experiences, such as discrimination (David and Nadal 2013; Mossakowski 2003; Nadal, Vigilia Escobar, Prado, David and Haynes 2012). Thus, I plan to integrate the identity theory and settler colonial framework to orient my examination of ethnic identity as a possible buffer against postcolonial trauma.

The Filipino-American Experience

Colonial legacies. E.J.R. David (2011) listed a few ways in which colonial legacies exist in the Philippines: (1) English continues to be the primary language of instruction in Filipino schools, as well as in government, business, and other important communications, (2) the myriad of skin-whitening products throughout the Philippines, and (3) the low regard for and discrimination against non-Christian Filipinos. This serves as evidence that the more American Filipinos look, think, and behave, the more likely they will be accepted by society. Given the romanticized perception of the United States shaped by colonialism and a westernized postcolonial climate, it can be implied that Americanization already begins before Filipinos immigrate to the United States.

Stratification and discrimination. One study conducted by Nadal and colleagues (2012) found two themes regarding the nature of the microaggressions that Filipino Americans experience in their daily lives: The assumption of criminality or deviance, and the assumption of inferior status or intellect by White Americans or other Asian Americans. As a result, Nadal et al. (2012) suggested that Filipino Americans' racial and sociocultural realities seem more similar with other groups of color, which may be attributed to Filipinos' history of colonialism under Spain (similar to Latinxs) and the United States (similar to Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and Black Americans). This is just one example of stratification and discrimination that Filipino Americans face. Due to the colonial legacies in the Philippines, as well as the nature of the discriminatory experiences that Filipino Americans experience in the U.S., it would be meaningful to investigate more closely the influence of colonialism on the lives of Filipino Americans across generations.

Postcolonial Trauma

Scholars have recognized that the effects of trauma can be experienced by people intergenerationally, meaning that people may suffer the negative impacts of an event that occurred before they were born (Duran and Duran 1995; Maxwell 2014; Nagata 1990). According to Caruth (1996), trauma is an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events (e.g., colonization) in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled, repetitive appearance of intrusive phenomena. Scholars have recognized that the intrusive phenomenon of internalized oppression is common to many colonized, and formerly colonized, people (David and Okazaki 2006; Fanon 1952, 1961; Freire 1970; Maxwell 2014). David and Okazaki (2006), for instance, examined a

specific effect of colonialism manifested in contemporary Filipino Americans, termed "colonial mentality" (CM). As a form of postcolonial trauma, CM among Filipino Americans was defined as a specific form of internalized oppression that is "characterized by a perception of ethnic or cultural inferiority" that "involves an automatic and uncritical rejection of anything Filipino and an automatic and uncritical preference for anything American" (David and Okazaki 2006, p. 241). In addition, David and Okazaki (2006) highlighted the example of Filipino-American community publications, citing CM as a contributing factor to the lack of ethnic pride, historical knowledge, and cultural appreciation for many Filipino-American individuals. In this way, CM can be understood as a manifestation of postcolonial trauma in contemporary Filipino Americans.

Research on CM in the Filipino-American community has gradually started to emerge. A study done by E.J.R. David (2008) showed that CM was significantly correlated with lower levels of enculturation, negative conceptions of and attitudes toward one's personal and ethnic group characteristics, negative sense of belonging in one's ethnic group, and more depression symptoms. CM's association with depression suggests that CM is an important factor to consider in conceptualizing Filipino-American mental health (David 2008).

Another study by David and Nadal (2013) found that Filipino-American immigrants' psychological experiences were influenced by colonialism and its legacies in the Philippines, as well as in the United States. Results supported the argument that ethnic and cultural denigration (a form of acculturative stress) are experienced by Filipino-American immigrants, which can lead to the development of CM. Findings also

exhibited that CM among Filipino-American immigrants might be initiated or reinforced by experiences of racism in the United States.

These studies suggested that postcolonial trauma is manifested in Filipinos and Filipino-Americans through CM. Additionally, because findings showed that CM is associated with depression, it is reasonable to believe that postcolonial trauma should be considered when evaluating the mental health of Filipino Americans and other groups that have been historically or currently colonized.

Expanding CM

Research has demonstrated the ways in which Filipino Americans may experience a form of postcolonial trauma exhibited as CM (David and Okazaki 2006; David 2008; Nadal 2013). Because research on Filipino-American postcolonial trauma is quite limited, CM findings have been central to informing our understandings of the contemporary Filipino-American experience. However, the term CM may have a "psychologizing" tendency, serving as a counterpoint to a more structural view of colonialism and racism. In this way, CM underscores the nature of mental health and well-being as indicated by one's internalized oppression, via perceptions of the self and one's ethnic group, without taking into full account broader sociohistorical and political factors.

I suggest expanding upon understandings of CM by conceptualizing it as a form of symbolic violence. First introduced by Pierre Bourdieu, the concept of symbolic violence describes a type of non-physical violence that represents and legitimizes modes of dominance and social inequality, while maintaining existing hierarchies (Bourdieu 1979). Symbolic violence can also work to make these power dynamics to appear natural, and thus strengthened by perceived acceptance by the dominated (Scott 2012). By

identifying CM as a form of symbolic violence, CM can be understood as a form of internalized oppression in contemporary Filipino Americans, but it can also be attributed to the racial hierarchies introduced by colonialism in the Philippines. Thus, recognizing CM as a form of symbolic violence can highlight the ongoing differentiated power of the powerful (colonizer) and the power-deprived (colonized). Though negative beliefs about Filipino culture and individuals can be informed by CM, using symbolic violence to expand understandings of CM can serve to account for broader sociohistorical and political factors, such as colonial histories, that may influence contemporary Filipino Americans' postcolonial experiences.

It is also important to note that internalized oppression, like CM, is not always fixed or permanent. There are sources of variation in one's lived experiences that may affect the nature of postcolonial trauma, such as ethnic identity.

Ethnic Identity

The examination of Filipino Americans' sense of ethnic identity, and its relationship with postcolonial experiences and mentalities, would be a significant contribution to current research and mental health understandings. Ethnic identity is influenced by larger, sociopolitical factors (Berry, 2003), and one factor is colonialism. While CM is related to depression and worse mental health, ethnic identity is often found to be a protective factor against postcolonial experiences, such as discrimination (David and Nadal 2013; Mossakowski 2003; Nadal, Vigilia Escobar, Prado, David and Haynes 2012). Examining the relationship between ethnic identity and its possible effects on colonized and previously colonized groups' experiences may provide researchers and

mental health professionals a more complete conceptualization of mental health for Filipino Americans.

Ethnic identity is the degree to which individuals perceive themselves to be included and aligned with an ethnic group (Smith and Silva 2010). According to Phinney (1992), ethnic identity has different dimensions: Affirmation and belonging, ethnic identity achievement, ethnic behaviors, and other-group orientation. The dimension of affirmation and belonging involves positive feelings towards one's ethnic group and cultural background. Ethnic identity achievement entails learning about one's ethnic group, committing to helping others in the group, and exploring and resolving challenges of ethnic identity. The ethnic behaviors dimension consists of participating in cultural practices and being active in social groups that mainly include one's ethnic group. Other-group orientation concerns socializing and connecting with people from other ethnic groups (Phinney 1992).

Some studies have demonstrated a positive association between ethnic identity and personal well-being across ethnic groups, indicating that ethnic identity may buffer against distress experienced by ethnic minority groups (Smith and Silva 2010). In the context of the Filipino ethnic group, Mossakowski (2003) found that, in the case of Filipino Americans, ethnic identity served as a significant coping resource because it buffers the stress of racial and ethnic discrimination by preventing negative stereotypes from influencing one's self-concept. In another study, Mossakowski (2007) examined experiences of depression in Filipino immigrants and U.S.-born Filipino Americans. The results illustrated that ethnic identity has a noteworthy connection to decreased levels of

depressive symptoms. It appears that a strong sense of ethnic identity may serve as a protective factor for mental health.

In terms of the relationship between ethnic identity and CM, Tuazon and colleagues (2019) conducted a study on CM and mental health help-seeking behavior of Filipino Americans, and included ethnic identity in their investigation. They found that higher levels of ethnic identity were associated with lower levels of CM, which is consistent with previous findings by David (2008). Furthermore, Tuazon and colleagues' (2019) findings demonstrated that Filipino Americans who have high levels of exploration and high levels of commitment (e.g., achievement identity status) regarding their ethnic identity generally have lower levels of CM, while Filipino Americans who have low levels of exploration and commitment (e.g., diffusion, moratorium, foreclosure identity statuses) regarding their ethnic identity generally have higher levels of CM. Based on their methods and results, however, Tuazon et al. (2019) recommended that future research should replicate this study with various community samples, as the analysis did not include small subdemographic groups (e.g., gender).

It is important to note that identity development is rarely fixed and stagnant, as individuals' presentations of self and identity are contingent on social settings (Goffman 1959). Scholars have found that experiences in higher education settings (e.g., ethnic studies and Asian American studies programs) are crucial to the process of decolonizing the mind (David 2011; David and Okazaki 2006a; Freire 1970; hooks 2010; Nadal 2004; Strobel 1996; Tuason et al., 2006) because they provide opportunities to question ideologies of cultural inferiority. Additionally, the social context Hawai‘i may also influence the identity development of Filipino Americans on the island chain due to

reasons such as the large population of Filipinos (Tamura 2000), distinct sociopolitical structures and socio-demographics compared to the continental United States, and local culture. Taken together, I argue that Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i would be a meaningful community to expand research on CM and ethnic identity.

Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i

Due to the history and large numbers of Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i (Tamura 2000), this population would be a significant group to expand the examination of CM and ethnic identity on mental health and well-being. Hawai‘i is typically perceived as a place that embraces multiculturalism. However, sociological research demonstrates that the perception of Hawai‘i as a multicultural paradise may serve to render its racialized social system as invisible (Jung 2015; Okamura 1990, 2008; Rohrer 2010; Rosa 2010). Compared to the continental United States, people in Hawai‘i are differently racialized due to the colonial histories of the Hawaiian Islands. Therefore, the history of Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i must account for two colonizations: U.S. colonialism in both the Philippines and in Hawai‘i (Labrador 2015). More specifically, the Filipino-American experience in Hawai‘i must be understood within the context of the development of United States capitalism and the incorporation of their territories into the world capitalist system (Cheng and Bonachich 1984; Sharma 1984).

In 1778, Captain James Cook landed in Hawai‘i, resulting in the following: (1) the opening Hawai‘i’s ports, (2) the entry of British and American political and economic interests, (3) the absorption of Hawai‘i into the world economy, and (4) the emergence of settler colonial relations. In addition to these changes, interactions with foreigners and Western settlements brought diseases, reducing the Native Hawaiian population from

over 300,000 to one million at the time of Cook's arrival, to about 70,000 by 1850. This major population decline was central to the development of Hawai'i's sugar industry, as well as the subsequent transformation of its racial and ethnic makeup. Though Native Hawaiians comprised the majority of Hawai'i's plantation workers from 1835 and 1876, the declining Hawaiian population, as well as the contrasting nature between traditional Hawaiian economic practices (e.g., the land tenure system) and the plantation wage work system compelled planters to search for workers outside of the islands to supplement the Native Hawaiian workforce (Labrador 2015).

In 1850, the Hawaiian government passed the Masters and Servants Act, which permitted the importation of foreign laborers to work on the sugar plantations in Hawai'i. This legislation spurred the influx of Asian immigrants to Hawai'i, as transportation costs were lower due to geographical proximity, as well as Asian laborers' experience with sugar cultivation (Liu 1984). However, the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893, followed by the annexation of Hawai'i in 1898, changed the dynamics of labor importation and immigration. The newly annexed state became subject to U.S. laws, thus making the Chinese Exclusion Act applicable to Hawai'i, preventing further immigration from Japan, China, and Korea (Anderson et al 1984). As a result, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association (HSPA) turned to two U.S. territories, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, to obtain laborers (Labrador 2015).

As colonial subjects of the United States, Puerto Ricans and Filipinos were able to move freely to and from the U.S. and its territories (Labrador 2015). Due to the Philippines' proximity to Hawai'i, the expense of transporting workers from the Philippines was lesser. Thus by 1909, the Philippines became the primary source of

plantation laborers (Alcantara 1981). It should be noted that by the 1920s, recruiters turned to Ilocos, a northwestern, coastal region of the Philippines, to recruit Filipino laborers, as the region had a high population density, diminishing natural resources, and Ilokanos had already been participating in an intranational migrant circuit (leaving the Philippines to make money, and returning to achieve higher social status) (Anderson et al. 1984; Labrador 2015). Between 1906 and 1946, over 125,000 Filipino workers were recruited to work on Hawai‘i’s plantations (San Buenaventura 1995), making them the last and one of the largest immigrant groups to arrive in Hawai‘i (Tamura 2000).

However, the United States passed the Tydings-McDuffle Act in 1934, creating the Commonwealth of the Philippines and intending to grant the Philippines independence in 10 years. Soon after the passage of the Tydings-McDuffle Act, the Philippine Repatriation Act was passed in 1935, limiting Filipino immigration to the U.S. to 50 persons per year. Although there was a special exemption for the Territory of Hawai‘i and the Philippine Repatriation Act was not invoked in the islands until 1946, once invoked, the act resulted in the repatriation of over 7,000 of Hawai‘i’s Filipino plantation workers to the Philippines (Labrador 2015). The end of Filipino labor recruitment and large-scale immigration to Hawai‘i marked a defining moment for Filipinos in Hawai‘i – Filipino plantation workers transitioned from “temporary residents” to “permanent settlers,” indicating the transition from “Filipino” to “Local Filipino” (Alegado 1996; Labrador 2015; Revilla 1996).

Local Identity

Local culture and identity are believed to foster a sense of community among Hawai‘i residents (Okamura 2008), however, the presence of local culture and identity

serves to hide how ethnicity structures social hierarchies in Hawai‘i (Okamura 1990, 2008). According to the settler colonial framework, “local” can be understood as a product of settler colonialism, as its ongoing structure continues to shape race and class formations into the present through the attachment of settler identities to Hawaiian land, thus serving to hide the existence of racial and ethnic hierarchies on the island (Glenn 2015; Wolfe 1999). Furthermore, “despite touting cultural pride, [local identity] does not equally embrace and include cultural practices from all communities. Filipino culture is often neglected in the construction of local culture and identity” (Eisen 2019:242). Ultimately, “local” draws upon the essential ideas of colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2014) by embracing the myth of multiculturalism throughout the island chain and inaccurately suggesting that individuals who make efforts to assimilate to local culture will have equal access to resources and opportunities in Hawai‘i (Eisen 2019).

As one of the last immigrant groups recruited to work on the plantations, Filipinos worked the worst jobs, lived in the worst housing, and were unable to establish themselves like the ethnic groups that preceded them (Jung 2015). When Hawai‘i’s plantation-based economy transitioned into a tourism-based economy, Filipinos were funneled into service-sector positions that offered minimal opportunities for promotion or upward mobility (Eisen 2019). In comparison to other groups, Filipinos are generally underrepresented in managerial occupations, overrepresented in the service sector, less likely to obtain a college degree, and earn significantly less income than other groups (Okamura 2008). The nature of this marginalization through the social structure may promote feelings of shame, therefore encouraging Filipino American individuals to

minimize association with the Filipino ethnic group (Labrador 2015; Okamura 1990, 2008; Rosa 2010).

Additionally, many Philippine and Filipino American scholars, artists, writers, students, and community leaders have expressed concern that Filipino youth, especially those born and raised in Hawai‘i, tend to disregard their roots because they do not have a positive image or definition of “Filipino.” As a result, there is an elevation of local identity in Hawai‘i-born Filipino youth (Labrador 2015). Ironically, some Filipino American families in Hawai‘i have also discouraged a Filipino identity to reinforce dominant beliefs about assimilation, which has commonly been accomplished by refusing to teach the younger generations a Filipino language. As a result, Hawai‘i-born Filipinos often differentiate themselves from immigrants by highlighting that they do not share cultural practices, such as language and speech patterns, in order to earn status through assimilationist practices. These assimilationist processes thus serve to reinforce dominant narratives and internalized racism as individuals gain prestige for being “less Filipino.” As follows, Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i tend to navigate their identity in an environment that seems to promote cultural pride in and acceptance of a local identity, yet fails to acknowledge the structural inequalities that challenges Filipinos from developing this sense of cultural pride in and acceptance of their own ethnic identity (Eisen 2019).

It is important to note that there is no unified Filipino identity in Hawai‘i – there is a multiplicity of Filipino identities in Hawai‘i: “Because Filipinos have come from different parts of the Philippines and arrived in Hawai‘i under different sociohistorical circumstances, there are multiple, competing, and discrepant histories among Filipinos in

Hawai‘i” (Labrador 2015:14). Furthermore, not all individuals embrace assimilation and reject being Filipino. Many have worked to foster meaningful connections across the Filipino diaspora and construct positive Filipino identities (Bonus 2000; Espiritu 1995; Ignacio 2005; Labrador 2015). Because identity is fluid rather than fixed, “Filipino-ness is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated, validated and invalidated” (Labrador 2015:13).

History and social environment have the ability to shape an individual’s self-concept and identity. Based on the distinct history of Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i, as well as the sociocultural environment of the Hawaiian Islands, the current study seeks to understand how local culture in Hawai‘i might shape the postcolonial experiences of Filipinos on the islands. This study also attempts to explore the influence of generational status and educational levels. Investigating the nature of CM and ethnic identity in the Filipino-American population in Hawai‘i would be particularly meaningful as Hawai‘i’s diverse demographic profile is important to account for because the existence of local culture may influence the nature of Filipino-American psychology and postcolonial experiences.

METHODS

The present study aims to examine the nature of postcolonial trauma, often manifested as elements of colonial mentality (CM), in contemporary Filipino Americans living in Hawai‘i, and the ways in which engagement with Filipino and/or “local” identity may shape their postcolonial experiences. The study’s methods attempt to answer the study’s research questions:

(1) How might understandings of and engagement with "local" identity and/or Filipino ethnic identity affect the nature of postcolonial trauma experienced by Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i?

(2) Do experiences of postcolonial trauma differ across generations and contexts (e.g., age, gender, education level, income)?

Based on the nature of the social structure of Hawai‘i and the marginalization of Filipinos (Eisen 2019; Labrador 2015; Okamura 1990, 2008; Rosa 2010), I hypothesize that strong engagement with "local" identity, and/or minimized association with Filipino ethnic identity, might intensify negative beliefs about Filipino culture and individuals, often informed by CM. In contrast, I expect that Filipino Americans who work to foster meaningful connections across the Filipino diaspora and construct positive Filipino identities (Bonus 2000; Espiritu 1995; Ignacio 2005; Labrador 2015) may not experience negative beliefs about Filipino culture and individuals as intensely. I also hypothesize that Filipino American youth, especially those who were born and raised in Hawai‘i, might experience postcolonial trauma more deeply than older generations due to the lack of positive images and definitions of "Filipino," as well as fewer opportunities to learn a Filipino language (Eisen 2019; Labrador 2015), thus resulting in a distancing from the Filipino ethnic identity. Lastly, because higher education provides opportunities to reclaim a Filipino identity through ethnic studies and Asian American studies programs, I hypothesize that Filipino Americans with higher education levels may experience stronger associations with Filipino ethnic identity (Eisen 2019), thus serving as a buffer against experiences of postcolonial trauma.

I conducted a total of 10 semi-structured, in-depth interviews to collect and analyze data on the nature of ethnic identity, local identity, and CM of Filipino Americans living in Hawai‘i. The use of semi-structured in-depth interviews aimed to more thoroughly assess elements and dimensions of ethnic identity and CM that quantitative methodologies may not be able to illustrate. Because research on CM has primarily utilized quantitative methodologies (e.g., David 2008; David and Okazaki 2006; Tuazon et al. 2019), interviews may further reveal dimensions of CM, such as the denigration of the Filipino self and culture, the discrimination against less-Americanized Filipinos, and the tolerance of the historical and contemporary oppression of Filipinos and Filipino Americans (David and Okazaki 2006).

Furthermore, previous research on CM has not focused on Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i. Because the recruitment of Hawai‘i plantation laborers primarily drew from the Ilocos region of the Philippines, Ilokanos represent a large number of the Filipino-American population on the island (Aquino and Magdalena 2010; Labrador 2015). Interviewing Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i may broaden the examination of CM among other Filipino subgroups, such as Ilokanos. Each participant in this study has roots in the Ilocos region of the Philippines. In the following sections, I will describe in more detail my positionality as a researcher, sampling methods, and the semi-structured in-depth interviews.

Positionality

I have a family history of Filipino plantation work in O‘ahu. In the late 1920s, my grandfather and his siblings were recruited from Ilocos to work on Hawai‘i’s sugar plantations. Although my grandfather ultimately did not stay on island, his siblings and

their families continue to reside in O‘ahu. My positionality as a researcher may be useful in accessing members of Hawai‘i’s Filipino community and building rapport with participants. However, my positionality may also serve as a limitation as I was not born and raised in Hawai‘i or the Philippines. This may limit the rapport built with participants throughout the interview process.

Sampling

I utilized non-probability convenience sampling, snowball sampling, and quota sampling to investigate the research questions of the present study. First, I used convenience sampling, as participant recruiting for the qualitative semi-structured interviews drew from my personal and professional connections in Hawai‘i’s Filipino community. Next, I employed snowball sampling in order to recruit other Filipinos in Hawai‘i outside of my personal and professional connections. Lastly, I utilized non-probability quota sampling to guide the gender, age, generation, education level, and class make-up for my sample in order to represent different demographics through respondent interviews. For the purpose of this study, I recruited 10 non-mixed Filipino Americans over the age of 18 in order to examine the Filipino-American experience in Hawai‘i without additional influences from other racial and ethnic identities. It should be noted that English-speaking Filipino Americans were recruited, as I am not fluent in a Filipino language and did not have a translator.

Because this study aims to investigate possible differences across generations and socio-demographics, participants were recruited from four different multigenerational Filipino families. A focus on multigenerational Filipino families may provide narratives generated from different contexts (e.g., age, generation, gender, education level, class)

and family histories, which may serve to highlight differences and/or similarities between perceptions of Filipino ethnic identity, local identity, and postcolonial trauma manifested as CM among respondents.

Semi-Structured Interviews

In order to deeply evaluate the nature of respondents' ethnic identity salience and CM levels, I conducted interviews with each participant. All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of each interviewee, lasting approximately one hour. These interviews sought to establish the context of participants' experiences (e.g., allow participants to share as much about him or herself on the topic of being Filipino in Hawai‘i) and encourage participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them (e.g., give participants the opportunity to reflect on the significance of being Filipino and/or local in Hawai‘i).

In order to achieve cultural competency through the semi-structured interviews, the present study concentrated on principles of contextuality (e.g., understanding how to speak with and approach Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i with respect), appropriateness (e.g., ensuring the researcher has knowledge of common Filipino values and practices), mutual respect (e.g., being aware of power differentials and respecting the views of participants), and flexibility (e.g., allowing participants to select the time that the interviews are conducted) (Im et al., 2004). Due to the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted at a time of the respondent's choice via Zoom.

RESULTS

Participant Overview

The results of this study are based on data from in-depth and semi-structured interviews (N=10). Aliases were assigned to each participant in an effort to anonymize identities. As shown in Table 1, interviews were conducted with members from four Filipino-American families in O‘ahu. The interview sample consisted of six women and four men between the ages of 34-66 years old. All participants had a college degree, and two participants had a master’s degree. The majority of respondents were married (N=6), and half of the respondents had an average annual income of at least $100,000 (N=5). Lastly, of the 10 participants, three were first-generation, two were 1.5-generation, three were second-generation, and two were third-generation.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Family	**Alias**	**Gender**	**Age**	**Education Level**	**Marital Status**	**Average Annual Income**	**Generation**
1	Michelle	F	34	College degree	Married	86,000	3
1	Rachel	F	38	College degree	Single	105,000	3
1	Adrienne	F	66	College degree	Married	90,000	1.5
1	Julian	M	62	Master's degree	Single	100,000	2
2	Nicole	F	49	Master's degree	Widowed	100,000	1.5
2	Victoria	F	38	College degree	Married	Dependent on spouse	1
3	Chris	M	34	College degree	Single	120,000	1
3	Daniel	M	65	College degree	Married	30,000	1
4	Mary	F	34	College degree	Married	130,000	2
4	Russell	M	36	College degree	Married	45,000	2

According to Table 2, a large majority of interviewees self-identified as Filipino (N=9), while one distinguished himself as “Fil-Am” (Filipino American). Additionally, most of the study’s respondents shared that they felt a sense of belonging in the Filipino community (N=7). However, the 1.5-generation participants shared that it depended on the group, while another one shared that they felt like an outsider to the Filipino community.

Table 2. Identification and Belonging

Family	**Alias**	**Self-Identification**	**Belonging in Filipino Community**
1	Michelle	"Filipino. Definitely 100%"	"Yes [I feel belonging within the Filipino community]. Yeah, definitely."
1	Rachel	"Race and ethnicity, yes. Filipino"	"Yeah, I do [feel a sense of belonging within the Filipino community]. Definitely."
1	Adrienne	"How would I identify myself? Filipino"	"I guess [I feel a sense of belonging in the Filipino community]...certain groups, you know, certain Filipino groups. There's some I don't really, I don't know. I don't feel like I identify with them. Or I don't, I don't…how do I say this? Like, I feel like I’m more American. You know? Until I open my mouth and say something in Tagalog or Ilokano then they’ll kind of [be like] 'Oh, you’re Filipino!'"
1	Julian	"Coconut. Very brown and very white. And I just don't fit in as Filipino. But, you know, Fil-Am"	"Because we were not Catholic. When you say Filipino, you immediately assume you know that you have a Catholic background...the bad thing about that: we were kind of outsiders, because we were different…Well, it became evident when I joined the Filipino cooking group on Facebook. Okay, that made it even more clear that I was an outsider. Well, when I would share my recipes, they're like, 'What is this?' And I thought, well, I don't even know what the word is in Filipino. And Filipino to them means Tagalog."
2	Nicole	"I’ve never pictured myself as any other but Filipino"	"Yes and no [I feel a sense of belonging within the Filipino community]. Because I grew up here [in Hawaii] and it's harder to relate with the Filipino

			community. And they would place you in a different class."
2	Victoria	"Pure Filipino"	"Oh, always [interacting with Filipinos]. Yeah, cuz when I pick up my son get plenty Filipinos. So I get friends from there. Neighborhood, yeah, lots of Filipinos...Mhm [I feel a sense of belonging within the Filipino community]."
3	Chris	"Yes [I identify as Filipino]. Yes"	"Oh, yeah [I feel a sense of belonging in the Filipino community], definitely. Definitely. I feel like because there's so many Filipinos here. I feel like you feel a little bit like, comfortable. Feel like as you say, you have a sense of belonging. It feels like home."
3	Daniel	"Yeah, I'm Filipino by blood"	"I enjoy [interacting with other Filipinos around the island]. I like them. Yeah [I feel a sense of belonging in the Filipino community]."
4	Mary	"Filipino. Full Filipino"	"I think the majority of my friends are Filipino. Or part. Yeah [I feel a sense of belonging in the Filipino community]."
4	Russell	"Filipino"	"Oh yeah [I feel a sense of belonging within the Filipino community]. For sure."

Interview data were analyzed by identifying common themes across participant interviews related to the study's research questions on local identity, ethnic identity, and postcolonial trauma. The quotes reported below are representative of themes expressed across the 10 interviews.

Catholicism in Filipino Traditions

Throughout the interviews, Catholic practices were frequently associated with Filipino traditions. Christmas traditions were mentioned regularly when asking participants about the Filipino traditions they practice:

> Michelle: *We're Catholic…around the holidays, [we hang] the stars. My grandma made that every year. Oh, one time actually one time she came to my school when I was in elementary school and she showed us how to make it.*

Rachel: *Christmas always have those Filipino stars out*

Julian: *We do things that honors the Filipino tradition like the parol at Christmas...But I have no idea why we do it.*

Nicole: *Christmas time we have a tradition that we follow back on the Philippines. That's why we envy people in the Philippines because the tradition, you really can feel Christmas there. Every Christmas we make stars. They call it parol. And then and then caroling is so big in the Philippines. You would get like money or you get tupig.*

Chris: *Christmas is such a big deal in the Philippines. As soon as June starts, as soon as six months of everything, it's like, you can start playing Christmas songs. You know what I mean? So it's, you know, it's kind of like that. And then as soon as any month, any month that ends in "-ber", September, October, you can start decorating your house in Christmas stuff.*

In addition to Christmas, the funeral custom of Novena, a nine-day period of prayer mourning the deceased, was a common tradition practiced by several participants:

Michelle: *Funerals. They will put out a plate of food for the deceased. Every day. And most of the time, when they go visit the graves, they will put out the favorites of their family member. And then we also, we did practice the nine days of prayer after my grandparents passed away.*

Nicole: *You know, the nine day prayer tradition, right, nine day of prayer. Everybody come to the house, we pray.*

Victoria: *Yeah, you know, those like when somebody pass away? They have this nine days prayer. They offered food like you know those, they call it atang.*

Daniel: *Oh when somebody died, especially if a member of the family, or our relatives, we do novenas.*

Of the 10 interviewees, only one was not Catholic. Interestingly, this respondent explicitly highlighted the common association between Catholicism and Filipino identity, implying that not aligning with the Catholic faith can ostracize one from their Filipino identity and community.

Julian: *[Being Filipino] just means keeping up the traditions that I understand. You know, upholding family values. Not necessarily Filipino Catholic family values because I'm not Catholic, which is what most people presume because you're Filipino. When you say Filipino, you immediately assume you know that you have a Catholic background...the bad thing about that: we were kind of outsiders, because we were different. So and when you say "Oh, I'm not Catholic", you get this look like…and I say, "I'm also really not Filipino".*

The prevalent themes of Catholicism throughout the study's interviews highlights the ongoing legacies of Spanish colonization on Filipino traditions and identity, as the Catholic Church was instrumental in the "civilization" process under Spanish rule (David and Okazaki 2006). Respondents perceived Catholic practices surrounding Christmas and

Novenas as Filipino traditions. Furthermore, it appears that a Catholic background plays a significant role in cultivating connections in the Filipino community.

Role of Language

Another theme that arose throughout the interviews was the role of language in the Filipino-American experience. First, the value of English proficiency among Filipinos was frequently brought up among participants:

> Michelle: *You know what I think too? It's sometimes with Filipinos they don't want you to like be like, I don't know, like be the "FOB." Like they want you to be more Americanized, maybe. Because I don't remember my grandparents ever like pushing to like speak Ilokano or Tagalog to like my sisters and I. Yeah, so I don't know if it was that too was just kind of like, Americanizing us a little bit more.*
>
> Adrienne: *I thought I really knew how to speak English. And you know, in the Philippines, we were taught in English. Yeah, all the schools, all in English. And I thought I spoke really well. I got an award for speaking well.*
>
> Julian: *Well, I remember as kids, my parents did try to teach us but we would look at them and laugh and run away. So it became the language of secrecy. We also didn't want to speak with an accent. So we didn't want to learn it.*
>
> Nicole: *I think [being Filipino is an advantage] because like I said, like, coming here, we already knew how to speak English. It's not like we had to learn another language. It was our second language.*
>
> Chris: *I knew how to speak English [when I immigrated to Hawaii]. I had a lot of those moments where like, "Oh, you just came from the Philippines. But how can*

you talk so well?" or "how do you know how to speak that?" I'm like, I mean, technically we do have subjects in school where it's English.

Daniel: *The way I observe, most Filipinos can speak English. This is our advantage from other nationality. That's why I am proud to be a Filipino because most of us, or all of us, in the workplace can speak and express themselves in English very well.*

Although English proficiency appeared to be a common aspiration or value across interviewees, participants also expressed that knowing a Filipino language was meaningful to Filipino ethnic identity and cultivating community among Filipinos.

Michelle: *We didn't really learn the language which I wish we did. But I definitely wish like my sisters and I, definitely wish that we at least could understand. Like even if we couldn't speak like at least we could understand. I wish because then it's kind of like dying out with us, with our generation.*

Rachel: *Yeah, so definitely the language, if I can understand that then I definitely know I can identify myself as being Filipino. Because I don't speak the language. That has always been a disadvantage for me and I always felt left behind. I always felt left behind because I couldn't understand what people are saying anymore. You know, like, I understood when I was a kid, but like, nowadays, I don't. Like you feel like you're not Filipino enough.*

Adrienne: *Certain groups, you know, certain Filipino groups. There's some I don't really, I don't know. I don't feel like I identify with them. Like, I feel like I'm*

more American. You know? Until I open my mouth and say something in Tagalog or Ilokano then they'll kind of [be like] "Oh, you're Filipino!"

Julian: *And they can see that I don't speak [a Filipino language] you know. And I have to put it on hold, go get someone who can speak to them, or break through that accent. Yeah, see the non-traditional Filipino here, so I'm on the outside again.*

Nicole: *I retained [the language], I still speak it. To this day. I still speak it I still vote you know, Tagalog and Ilokano. So you cannot forget your own tongue. I'm going to tell you that much.*

Chris: *I can speak Tagalog and Ilokano. So basically, that was one thing that, that was one thing that my dad instilled even before we started going to school was that, don't act like you forget where you came from. So at home, he would always speak in Ilokano*

Daniel: *If I know somebody who is talking to me Filipino, I would ask them probably are they from the Tagalog regions, the Ilokano regions. Then if they say I am from the north, of course I know they are Ilokano. I know so I start conversation with them in our native language.*

Throughout the interviews, there seems to be a duality about the role of language. The emphasis on English proficiency is consistent with the literature on CM and the Filipino-American experience in Hawai‘i, as English continues to be the primary language in Filipino schools, and Hawai‘i-born Filipinos are less likely to know a Filipino language due to their families reinforcing beliefs about assimilation, or the desire

to distance themselves from Filipino immigrants (David 2011; Labrador 2015). Based on the interview responses, English competency may serve as a tool for Americanization and adaptation to the larger American society. Thus, there is evidence that the more American Filipinos behave (e.g., speaking English), the more likely they will be accepted by society.

On the other hand, the interviews also illustrated the value of speaking a Filipino language in relation to one's sense ethnic identity and belonging in the Filipino community. Respondents who speak a Filipino language emphasized the importance of knowing a Filipino language in forming community with other Filipinos, as well as in remaining connected to Filipino culture. Respondents who do not speak a Filipino language expressed feeling like an "outsider" and "not Filipino enough."

What Is Filipino?

In some of the interviews, respondents acknowledged the various cultural influences in Philippine history (e.g., Spanish colonialism, Japanese occupation, U.S. imperialism) and questioned aspects of Filipino identity, traditions, and cuisine:

> Michelle: *[I'm] Filipino. Definitely 100%. I don't know if I'm anything else. Maybe I could be like a little bit of Spanish but I think for the most part Filipino.*
>
> Julian: *So I don't know what [traditions are] what because the Philippines is also conglomeration of American, Spanish, Japanese, Chinese. And then any kind of Muslim influence from the south, so I don't know what's what.*
>
> Nicole: *Our culture is so mixed, we don't even know what cuisine we have. We have from the Chinese. We have from the Spanish. We got from the Japanese.*

Pick one, you know, and then you get the American's dishes. So that disadvantage is, do we have our own? Do we have our own? You know, we don't. We don't. I think that's the only that's what I think one of the disadvantage of being Filipino. Look at our last name!

Additionally, interviewees shared the difficulty in distinguishing Filipino culture and local culture in the context of the Filipino-American experience in Hawai'i:

Michelle: *Yeah, I think I love being Filipino. You know, I love, well see, it's also like the Hawaiian culture too. Like, I mean, you see with my daughter, how we are with her. I think we do more of that [Hawaiian culture] than we do more of a Filipino.*

Rachel: *As a kid, you know, typically raised by Filipinos, we used to go to my grandma's house on the weekends. So I always thought it was like the local country like Waialua, not really realizing it until I actually moved to the mainland, where I realized that I'm being raised Filipino, but at the same time being raised like Hawai'i, you know, style I guess you could say. It was a mixture of Filipino and local culture.*

Mary: *I feel like that it's hard because you know, like, it feels like it's a local culture now, not just, you know, not just Filipino.*

Though it is not a stated effect of CM, some respondents expressed confusion over what is truly Filipino as a result of colonization and other cultural influences in the

Philippines. In the context of Hawai‘i specifically, participants also shared the difficulty in differentiating Filipino culture from local culture. Based on participant responses, there also seems to be a noteworthy conflation between local-Hawai‘i culture and Native Hawaiian culture. This conflation is a likely feature of settler colonialism insofar that local culture may work to adopt Indigenous attributes and practices in forming a local identity (Glenn 2015). Ultimately, it seems that Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i must navigate various, competing cultural influences – not only in the Philippines, but in Hawai‘i as well.

Differences Across Socio-demographics

Based on interview data, differences across socio-demographics (e.g., age, gender, education level, income) were manifested in two notable ways: (1) age differences in feeling ashamed or embarrassed to openly practice Filipino customs or speak a Filipino language, and (2) generational differences in the strength of one's local identity.

First, age appeared to play an important role in feeling ashamed or embarrassed to openly practice Filipino customs or speak a Filipino language. Six respondents shared that they had never felt ashamed or embarrassed to openly practice Filipino customs or speak a Filipino language. The other four expressed that they felt ashamed to be Filipino around school age, but not now:

> Adrienne: *Yeah, I think [I was ashamed to openly practice Filipino traditions or speak a Filipino language] when I was in high school, or when we just moved here [to Hawai‘i], I was a little bit maybe. But now, nah. It doesn't matter.*

Julian: *Yes [I felt ashamed and embarrassed to openly practice Filipino customs or identify as Filipino]. Because it wasn't cool. It was cool to be a Japanese kid. But it wasn't really cool to be Filipino. So at one point, I even hated being Filipino.*

Mary: *I think when I was younger, yeah [I felt ashamed or embarrassed to openly practice Filipino traditions of customs]. Like, "ew what that's so Filipino!" But now that I'm older, you know, I guess you know, that's your culture. Like you got to be acceptable. I don't know. Now that I'm older I feel like that was so stupid. But it was like now that I'm older. I'm like, I want to do it because I want my kids yeah, to learn.*

Russell: *Yeah [I felt ashamed or embarrassed to openly practice Filipino traditions when I was younger] like, "What? What you talking about?*

Secondly, the interviews illustrated stronger local identity among the 1.5-generation, second-generation, and third generation interviewees, as they all explicitly identified as local and/or spoke with respect for local culture. By contrast, all first-generation participants did not identify as local and distinguished themselves from the local community.

Victoria: *I can tell the difference of a Filipino that born and raised in the Philippines, other than the Filipino here, or local born. Like I don't know if they are influenced by that because of the how the American live like.*

Chris: *A lot of local people or local Filipino that I know it's like sometimes they don't even accept that they're Filipino. You know, it's like, "I'm local, and that's it." You know? So I'm like, okay, like, what do you identify as? And it's like, I mean, they grew up here so they didn't have to experience growing up in the Philippines.*

Daniel: *[Locals are] the people who were born here in Hawai'i like that…[I don't consider myself a local] not yet.*

No differences arose across the contexts of education level and income because the sample's interviewees held similar education and income levels. However, it should be noted that although the study's sample exhibited high levels of educational attainment and income, the results still revealed some signs of postcolonial trauma. This finding suggests that higher socioeconomic status may not completely buffer postcolonial trauma experienced among Filipino Americans in Hawai'i.

DISCUSSION

The intention of the present study was to answer (1) how understandings of and engagement with "local" identity and/or Filipino ethnic identity affect the nature of postcolonial trauma experienced by Filipino Americans in Hawai'i, and (2) whether experiences of postcolonial trauma differ across generational status and socio-demographics (e.g., age, gender, education level, income). Regarding the first research question, results showed that the majority of participants identified as Filipino and felt a sense of belonging in the Filipino community, regardless of generation, age, and gender.

Because CM, as a form of postcolonial trauma, is noted as a contributing factor to the lack of ethnic pride and cultural appreciation for many Filipino Americans (David and Okazaki 2006), this finding indicates low levels of CM among the study's sample. Additionally, because a strong sense of ethnic identity has often been found to serve as a protective factor for mental health and distress among minority groups (Mossakowski 2003; Smith and Silva 2010), results suggest that Filipino Americans in Hawai'i may experience better mental health and well-being compared to Filipino Americans in the continental United States. The high levels of ethnic identity among respondents may be attributed to either Hawai'i's diverse demographics compared to the continental United States, as the Filipino Americans hold some of the largest population numbers on the island chain (Tamura 2000), or the high educational attainment of the study's participants, as experiences in higher education provide opportunities to question ideologies of cultural inferiority and reclaim a Filipino identity (David 2011; David and Okazaki 2006a; Eisen 2019; Freire 1970; hooks 2010; Nadal 2004; Strobel 1996; Tuason et al., 2006).

Despite the strong sense of Filipino ethnic identity demonstrated among respondents, the semi-structured interviews revealed some signs of postcolonial trauma in Hawai'i's Filipino-American community. This finding is particularly significant because it indicates that Filipino Americans in Hawai'i may continue to experience postcolonial trauma regardless of Hawai'i's large population of Filipinos (Tamura 2000) and the high educational attainment and income levels of the study's sample. First, there was notable discourse surrounding the question of "what is Filipino?" Several participants acknowledged various cultural influences throughout the Philippines' history (e.g.,

Spanish colonization, Japanese occupation, U.S. imperialism) and questioned the nature of Filipino identity and practices. Although this question regarding what is authentically Filipino is not a stated effect of CM, this confusion is a noteworthy effect of Philippines' colonial history. Second, Catholic practices were frequently referenced in association with Filipino traditions and culture. The theme of Catholicism is indicative of the ongoing effects of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines, as the Catholic Church was utilized to "civilize" Filipinos under Spanish rule (David and Okazaki 2006). Thus, Filipino Americans' perception of Catholic practices as Filipino traditions is a significant effect of colonialism in which the colonized develops a sense of self as defined by the colonizer (Fanon 1952). Third, the interviews demonstrated the duality of language. Unsurprisingly, English proficiency was greatly valued among the interviewees, which is consistent with the literature on the Filipino-American experience – English continues to be the primary language in Filipino schools, and Hawai'i-born Filipinos are less likely to know a Filipino language as a result of (1) differentiating themselves from immigrants by highlighting that they do not share cultural practices, such as language and speech patterns, in order to earn status through assimilationist practices, and (2) their families discouraging Filipino identity by refusing to teach the younger generations a Filipino language in efforts to reinforce assimilation (David 2011; Labrador 2015). Based on participant responses, English competency appears to be a means for Americanization and adaptation to the larger American society. This high regard for the English language in the Philippines and the United States serves as evidence for experiences of postcolonial trauma among the study's sample, as the interviews illustrated the importance of speaking English to adapt to mainstream American culture. However, it

was interesting to find that speaking a Filipino language was valued simultaneously. The results showed that speaking a Filipino language was instrumental in fostering Filipino identity, culture, and community. Participants who did not speak a Filipino language noted feeling like an "outsider" and "not Filipino enough." Thus, knowing a Filipino language appears to play a key role in the strength of Filipino ethnic identity.

The semi-structured interviews also revealed significant perspectives on local identity and the Filipino-American experience in Hawai‘i. First, it appears that generational status plays an important role in the strength of one's local identity, as Hawai‘i-born Filipino Americans may be more likely to identify as local (Labrador 2015). However, the results showed that all 1.5-generation, second-generation, and third-generation participants identified as local and/or spoke with respect for local culture. It seems that the 1.5-generation may also be likely to identify as local due to their immigration to Hawai‘i at an early age. Conversely, first-generation participants did not identify as local and distinguished themselves from Hawai‘i's local community. Second, multiple participants shared the difficulty in distinguishing Filipino culture from local culture due to the diverse cultural influences in Hawai‘i, which serves as an important consideration in better understanding how the long history of Filipinos in Hawai‘i affects contemporary Filipino-American experience on the island. Though it is not an effect of Filipino postcolonial trauma, findings indicate that Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i must navigate their identity in an environment where individual ethnic identity is not as pronounced in comparison to the continental United States. However, although participants expressed difficulty differentiating Filipino and local culture, this did not seem to affect the strength of one's Filipino ethnic identity. It is also worth mentioning

that while respondent perceptions of local culture did not exhibit Filipino-American postcolonial trauma, participant conflation of local-Hawai‘i and Native Hawaiian culture does highlight a significant feature of settler colonialism in Hawai‘i, demonstrating how ongoing structures of colonialism serve to construct racial and ethnic identities on the island.

Regarding the second research question, the present study found that generational status may influence one’s sense of belonging in the Filipino community. While the majority of the sample expressed they felt a sense of belonging in the Filipino community, the 1.5-generation participants shared it depends on the group, noting that other Filipinos may perceive them as more Americanized. While this finding does not provide evidence of CM among 1.5-generation Filipino Americans in that they are not actively distancing themselves from the Filipino community, it presents us with meaningful insight: The results highlighted the unique experience of Filipino Americans in the 1.5-generation, as there is an acute awareness surrounding the distinction between being Filipino in the Philippines versus being Filipino in the United States.

Additionally, the context of age appeared to play a role in feeling ashamed or embarrassed to openly practice Filipino customs or speak a Filipino language. While most of the interviewees conveyed that they have never felt a sense of shame or embarrassment to openly practice Filipino culture, others shared that they felt feelings of shame and embarrassment to openly practice Filipino culture around school age. However, these participants noted that they no longer felt this shame and embarrassment at their current ages. This finding indicates that some Filipino Americans may experience higher levels of CM at a younger age rather than at an older age.

Compared to previous research on CM, the present study's findings expand our understandings of the postcolonial trauma of Filipino Americans by specifically examining their experiences in Hawai‘i. As mentioned previously, the majority of participants identified as Filipino and felt a sense of belonging in the Filipino community, implying low levels of CM among respondents. This may be attributed to Hawai‘i's long history of Filipino immigration (Tamura 2000), its distinct demographic profile compared to the continental United States, and/or the high educational attainment levels of the study's respondents (David 2011; David and Okazaki 2006a; Eisen 2019; Freire 1970; hooks 2010; Nadal 2004; Strobel 1996; Tuason et al., 2006). Additionally, all the participants in the study's sample were Ilokano. Because previous research on CM has not concentrated on Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i, where Ilokanos represent a large number of the Filipino-American population (Aquino and Magdalena 2010; Labrador 2015), the examination of Filipino-American postcolonial trauma was broadened to focus on a particular Filipino subgroup. Finally, the interviews provided considerations of local culture on the Filipino-American experience in Hawai‘i, as respondents articulated challenges in distinguishing Filipino culture from local culture. It appears that Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i must navigate various, competing cultural influences on their ethnic identity – not only in the Philippines (e.g., Spanish and U.S. colonial influences), but in Hawai‘i as well.

Limitations

Methodological approach. Although the methods of the present study aim to be as appropriate and relevant as possible, there are potential limitations. First, the current COVID-19 pandemic affected the nature of data collection. Due to social distancing and

gathering restrictions, the ability to meet with participants, build rapport, and offer flexibility outside of virtual interactions was limited. Second, generalizability may be an issue, as the sampling was not randomized (Bryman 2015) and the semi-structured in-depth interviews may be prone to bias (Bernard 2006; Boyce and Neale 2006). Furthermore, the narratives and experiences from four multigenerational Filipino-American families are interconnected (e.g., family income, shared histories and values, location of residence, etc.) and may not be representative of the experiences of most Filipinos in Hawai‘i, as the sample size is fairly small. Nonetheless, the focus on multigenerational families speaks to the Filipino-American experience across generations and may meaningful in illustrating how the perspectives and experiences of Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i may or may not change over time.

Participant characteristics. In addition to the study's methodological approach, there are also limitations regarding participant characteristics. Accessibility to other family members proved to be an issue, as I found particular difficulty recruiting participants from Family 2, Family 3, and Family 4. Additionally, while the focus on Ilokano narratives expanded our current understandings of CM in the Filipino-American experience, this may also serve to limit our understandings of the broader Filipino-American postcolonial experience in Hawai‘i.

Overall, the sample lacked diversity in certain socio-demographics, such as age, education level, and income level. In particular, all participants were highly educated, indicating the lack of socioeconomic status variation in the study's sample, therefore making it difficult to analyze experiences of postcolonial trauma across demographic contexts. The generally high levels of educational attainment and income of the sample's

participants is especially notable, as this does not highlight the dominant image of Filipinos in Hawai‘i: underrepresented in managerial occupations, overrepresented in the service sector, less likely to obtain a college degree, and earn significantly less income than other groups (Okamura 2008). Thus, the study's sample of Filipino Americans may contribute to our knowledge by focusing on Filipino Americans with higher markers of socioeconomic status, illustrating that Filipino Americans may experience elements of postcolonial trauma regardless of socioeconomic standing.

Researcher positionality. My own positionality as a researcher may also contribute to the study's limitations. Although I have a family history of Filipino plantation work in O‘ahu, I was not born and raised in Hawai‘i or the Philippines. This may have limited the rapport built with participants throughout the interview process. Additionally, I do not speak a Filipino language, thus affecting the nature of recruitment (English-speaking participants).

Implications

Although the findings of the present study uncover meaningful information on the Filipino-American postcolonial experience in Hawai‘i, there are several implications for future research. Because the sample size was quite small and focused on the island of O‘ahu, it would be meaningful for future studies to recruit a larger sample size across multiple Hawaiian Islands in order to be more representative of the Filipino-American community in Hawai‘i. Future research should also represent a wider range of participant age, education level, and income so we may enhance our understandings of Filipino-American postcolonial trauma in Hawai‘i across these demographics. Finally, it would be

significant for this study to be replicated to include various Filipino subgroups in order to represent narratives beyond the Ilokano experience in Hawai‘i.

CONCLUSION

Based on this study's findings, I conclude that Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i experience forms of postcolonial trauma regardless of age, gender, generation, education level, income, and Hawai‘i's diverse demographic. While Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i must navigate Filipino identity in an environment where ethnic identity is less pronounced because of the existence of local culture, it appears that Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i may be better protected against the negative effects of postcolonial trauma due to generally high levels of ethnic identity.

Overall, this study aims to enhance our understandings of Filipino-American ethnic identity and postcolonial experiences. Efforts to further investigate ethnic identity and the effects of the Philippines' colonial history can provide meaningful information to scholars, mental health experts, and the local community, hopefully promoting a fuller awareness of colonial and postcolonial experiences, the contexts of these experiences, and their effect on colonized and previously colonized communities' mental health and well-being. Examining the role of ethnic identity in postcolonial experiences of Filipino Americans in Hawai‘i may be particularly insightful. Because Hawai‘i has a very distinct and diverse demographic profile in comparison to the continental United States (Tamura 2000), it is important to investigate how its environment and local culture may contribute to Filipino-American ethnic identity and postcolonial experiences.

However, it is also imperative to acknowledge the harmful implications of "local" culture and identity in Hawai'i. As stated previously, local identity serves to hide how ethnicity structures social hierarchies in Hawai'i (Okamura 1990, 2008). Not only does it render the marginalization of Filipino Americans as invisible, it also masks critical distinctions between Kānaka 'Ōiwi (Native Hawaiians) and non-Native groups. Kānaka 'Ōiwi face distinct forms of colonial oppression that non-Natives are given every opportunity to participate in and benefit from (Saranillio 2018). While local Asian groups have experienced ascendency and success in Hawai'i since the plantation era (e.g., obtaining seats of power in Hawai'i legislature), Kānaka 'Ōiwi "remain a politically subordinated group suffering all the legacies of conquest: landlessness, disastrous health, diaspora, institutionalization in the military and prisons, poor educational attainment, and confinement to the service sector of employment" (Trask 2000:3). Thus, "local" serves as an essential factor in facilitating multicultural forms of settler colonialism in Hawai'i, as it denies the ways that non-Native peoples in Hawai'i may benefit from, and oftentimes facilitate, forms of settler colonialism at the expense of Kānaka 'Ōiwi (Saranillio 2018).

By recognizing the ways in which the "local" category perpetuates settler colonial relations, we can push beyond binary conceptions of power (e.g., oppressor/victim, white/nonwhite, settler/Indigenous, settler/migrant, etc.) and consider how the intricate relationality of power organizes differences within Hawai'i (Saranillio 2018). This critical understanding may call in non-Natives to support Indigenous movements and politics, as opposed to only working within the U.S. colonial system. In thinking through strategies for co-resistance, movements may not only require resistance, but reflection and radical transformation beginning with the individual. This can create spaces for

growth, openness, vulnerability to challenge, and most importantly, ensuring one's politics and strategies for resistance do not solidify into a trap for oneself or others (Boggs 1998). Filipino Americans, in particular, can realize how U.S. imperialism has prompted shared histories of displacement and dispossession for Filipinos and Kānaka ʻŌiwi – this awareness may meaningfully work to nurture possibilities for solidarity across racial, ethnic, and political divides in order to imagine and work towards our collective liberation.

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APPENDIX

Interview Guide

Personal/Familial Background and Identity

(1) Tell me about yourself.

PROBE: Tell me the story of your life.

(2) How would you identify in terms of race/ethnicity?

PROBE: How would you describe what it means to be Filipino?

PROBE: How would you describe what it means to be local in Hawai‘i?

(3) Tell me the whole story of how you/your family ended up in Hawai‘i.

PROBE: Describe what drove your/their immigration to Hawai‘i.

(4) Tell me the story of your life.

PROBE: Tell me about where you have resided in Hawai‘i. What is the best thing about that area and why? What is the worst thing about that area and why?

PROBE: Tell me about the schools you went to. Tell me about your teachers. Describe a few of your most memorable experiences in school. Tell me how you feel about school. Tell me about any challenges you may have faced in school.

Postcolonial Experiences and the Filipino Community

(1) Tell me about any advantages to identifying as Filipino in Hawai‘i and why?

(2) Tell me about any disadvantages to identifying as Filipino in Hawai‘i and why?

(3) Tell me about any advantages to identifying as local Hawai‘i and why?

(4) Tell me about any disadvantages to identifying as local in Hawai‘i and why?.

(5) Describe how frequently you interact with Filipinos outside of your family.

PROBE: Describe where these interactions take place (e.g., neighborhood,

school, work, church, online, etc.). Tell me about how you feel about interacting with Filipinos outside of your family.

PROBE: Have you ever felt a sense of belonging within the Filipino community in Hawaiʻi or beyond? Why?

(6) Tell me about any Filipino practices or traditions that you and your family practice, if any.

PROBE: Can you speak a Filipino language? Tell me about how you learned/Tell me why you did not to learn.

PROBE: Have you ever felt ashamed or embarrassed to openly practice Filipino customs or traditions? Why?