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The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

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Volume 43  
Issue 3 September

Article 10

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2016

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Maria J. Ferrera

DePaul University, mferrera@depaul.edu

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### Recommended Citation

Ferrera, Maria J. (2016) "The Burden of Colonial Debt and Indebtedness in Second Generation Filipino American Families," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 43 : Iss. 3 , Article 10.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol43/iss3/10>

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## **The Burden of Colonial Debt and Indebtedness in Second Generation Filipino American Families**

### **Cover Page Footnote**

- This research was supported in part by a grant from the National Institute for Mental Health through the Council on Social Work Education Minority Fellowship Program -Thanks to Kristin Renault who has provided hours of research assistance on this project. -Special thanks to all study participants who have shared their story.

# The Burden of Colonial Debt and Indebtedness in Second Generation Filipino American Families

MARIA J. FERRERA

DePaul University

*Some research suggests that Second generation Filipino Americans (SGFAs) are more likely than other ethnic groups to be depressed and engage in risk behaviors. I discuss challenges SGFAs face with particular focus on the intersection of colonial mentality and intergenerational family conflict. In-depth interviews were conducted with thirty SGFAs. Narratives revealed evidence of both colonial debt, a form of colonial mentality or sense of gratitude for "civilizing" their indigenous culture, and family indebtedness to first generation parents. Combined with a strong inclination to assimilate, the weight of this indebtedness has had a detrimental effect on SGFAs emotional well-being.*

*Key words: colonial mentality, colonial debt, family indebtedness, Filipino American, second generation youth*

I think them coming here was the greatest thing they ever gave me and my sister. I would always tell people that if I grew up in the Philippines I would probably be selling mangos by the side of the road right now ... 'cause there is no opportunity over there. All the overseas workers ... like almost every Filipino, if you open the American borders they would just get on a boat tonight and come over right now. It's hard over there so I would not want to live over there.

Cocoa, 22 years old

Cocoa is a second generation Filipina American who is thankful for her American-born life. Her story suggests a profound sense of gratitude to her parents and the hardship they faced to provide a life for her in the United States. However,

Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare, September 2016, Volume XLIII, Number 3

Cocoa's story also illustrates two forms of indebtedness: (1) to her family for bringing her to the U.S. to pursue a better life; and (2) to the Philippines' colonial rulers who "civilized" the indigenous culture. Taken together, these forms of debt complicate and constrain the cultural adaptation of second generation Filipino Americans (SGFAs).

The complexity and hardship of migrating Filipino families from a so-called third to first world country cannot be understated. As Cocoa reveals in her interview, "father always says that the Philippines needs a 'benevolent' dictator" that oversees and has "total power over the Philippines—someone who actually cares about the welfare of the people so that they administrate social services and clean up the government." Her father's sentiment is reminiscent of the U.S.'s colonial and patriarchal relationship with the Philippines that endorses benevolent assimilation and U.S. presence. I argue that the impact of colonial mentality, or internalized oppression, and colonial debt, a form of colonial mentality or sense of gratitude for "civilizing" their indigenous culture, is inherent in the intergenerational family dynamics in Filipino American families. Also within and related to these family dynamics, SGFAs have a deep sense of indebtedness toward their first generation parents that may compromise their social and emotional health and exacerbate intergenerational family conflict.

### The Social and Historical Context of SFGAs

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, there are an estimated 2.5 million Filipinos (represents "Filipino Alone" category, not "Mixed Race Filipinos") in the United States—a 38% increase since the last census was taken in 2000. Nearly 75 percent of all Filipino Americans live in California and Hawaii. Illinois is the third state with the largest Filipino population—estimated at 114,724 with approximately 34,609 residing in the city of Chicago (23.1% of Chicago's total Asian population) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Filipinos are the 2nd largest Asian group (after the Chinese) in Chicago. Although Filipino Americans are one of the largest and oldest Asian Pacific ethnic groups in the United States, little is known about them. There is also a paucity of information about the incidence of mental

disorders or the general state of mental well-being in this population (Nadal, 2009).

There is growing concern surrounding the "immigrant paradox," in which assimilated children of immigrants experience more undesirable educational and developmental outcomes than their parents (Garcia-Coll & Marks, 2012). The more "Americanized" they become (the more fluent in English, increasingly adopting American values and behaviors), the more likely they seem to be at risk for behaviors such as substance abuse, unprotected sex, and delinquency. For example, rates of depression among SGFAs are high (Willgerodt & Thompson, 2006) and although middle-class Filipino immigrant youth are the most "Americanized" of contemporary Asian-origin groups and the most socio-economically advantaged, they have higher rates of suicidal ideation and attempts than most other immigrant, ethnic minority youth (Rumbaut, 1999). Given the paradoxical relationship between socioeconomic status, assimilation, and poor mental health outcomes among SGFA, this study posed the following questions: What is the nature of the challenges they experience? What factors may contribute to the complexity of their lives and compromise their mental health and emotional well-being?

### Historical Context

I adopt a historical, developmental and familial perspective to understanding the cultural adaptation and identity development of SGFAs. Cultural adaptation refers to how ethnic minorities modify their attitudes, beliefs, values, and/or behaviors in the cultural context in which they are embedded. In addition to school performance, language knowledge and use, salient outcome areas include ethnic identity development and level of parent-child generational conflict (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). While all adolescents face developmental pressures related to identity formation, Filipino culture's emphasis on interdependence (Nadal, 2009) may create profound challenges for SGFAs as they adapt to U.S. society. SGFAs are also influenced by complex systems throughout the life course, including such historical, political, and structural systems as the family system, the culture of origin and the political history

of the homeland, and Western theories of psychological constructs/human and child developmental models. Utilizing an ecological systems framework was thus critical to consider the flaws of racial categories, notions of essentialism, racialized social structures, multi-systemic forces, and human agency, as well as the dynamic nature of individual identity development over time (Garcia-Coll et al., 1996; Samuels, 2009).

The historical narrative of the colonial relationship between the U.S. and the Philippines is particularly unique and relevant to the developing collective identity of Filipino Americans today. U.S. expansionism began by identifying Asia as its "new frontier," where the "white man's burden" was fueled by the idea of civilizing the uncivilized, "barbaric" Filipino (Ignacio, de la Cruz, Emmanuel, & Toribio, 2004). After 350 years of Spanish rule, the Philippines was purchased from Spain by the U.S. at the turn of the century. In 1898, like Spain before it, the U.S. took the Philippines by force of arms during the Spanish–American War, which began as a "pious endeavor" to liberate Cuba from their Spanish oppressor (Karnow, 1989). An estimated 200,000 to more than one million Filipinos were killed by American soldiers during the war. Filipino villages were destroyed and many Filipinos were murdered, raped, tortured or placed in concentration camps by the U.S. (Ignacio et al., 2004). It has also been documented that during this war Filipinos were victims of the U.S. army's first use of the "water cure" torture (known today as "waterboarding") (Einolf, 2014).

Following the war and in America, Filipinos were subject to fierce, geopolitically-informed eugenics that sought to preserve the purity of a "White" America (Tyner, 1999). Because the Philippines was a colony of the United States, the Filipinos held a unique status as "neither foreigners nor citizens" (Tamayo-Lott, 1976, p. 167). Following the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the 1907 Gentlemen's Agreement suspending immigration from Japan, China and other "Asiatics," an estimate of 120,000 Filipino "U.S. Nationals" established the first migration to relieve the labor shortages experienced by Hawaiian plantations (Teodoro, 1981, p. 14). A second migration followed to west coast states that also consisted of predominantly male Filipinos. Regarded as a new iteration of "yellow peril," there was growing debate about the "Philippine Problem" (Tyner,

1999, p. 66) and whether imperialistic pursuit was justified or independence should be granted. In America, being "U.S. Nationals" was an ambiguous status that technically gave Filipinos in the U. S. very limited rights and privileges, which excluded the right to vote, the right to own property, and the right to marry whom they chose. Filipinos were barred from public places, subjected to a culture filled with anti-Filipino stereotypes and images, such as "goo-goos" or "monkeys," and were often regarded as criminally minded and called "head-hunters" and "untamed." Notably unique was that Filipino immigrants received their education in the Philippines, where the U.S. systematically imposed its educational system that promoted American superiority in culture and worldviews. However, their experience in America discounted teachings of the Thomasites who preached the American ideal of meritocracy, in which advancement is based on achievement or ability (Bacho, 1997).

The enactment of the Tydings-McDuffie Act in 1934 eventually granted independence to the Philippines within 10 years, simultaneously capping immigration to a quota of 50 per year and establishing Filipinos as "aliens." It has been argued that before independence was to be granted in 1946, the U.S. ensured the establishment of a liberal-democratic political foundation, the public educational system, and the socioeconomic infrastructure of the country (Radics, 2004). Recognizing the strategic importance of the island nation in the region, the U.S. also ensured that the succeeding administration would sign a series of defense treaties that would provide them with exclusive access to its national territory (Radics, 2004, p. 116). This occurred despite growing anti-U.S. nationalist sentiment in the Philippines. It is notable that while U.S. strategic military bases maintained a presence on the islands for many decades, the over 250,000 Filipino war veterans who were promised equal treatment for serving in the U.S. armed forces during the second world war have continued to fight for benefits (Asian News Today, 2013).

With this backdrop, U.S. colonial relations with the Philippines arguably continue to persist through neo-colonial control, as U.S. ubiquitous presence continues via the military bases interspersed throughout the country. Despite the closure

of U.S. military bases in 1992, a former naval base at Subic Bay continues to serve as a strategic port for military activity as the Obama administration continues to negotiate the political climate of the Asia Pacific and more recent threats in the South China Sea. Large portions of the base have been reserved for use by the U.S. Navy, courtesy of the Philippine Department of National Defense (Whaley, 2013). There is evidence that the Philippine military look to the U.S. for bolstering their own military defense, as they have allowed the U.S. military access to eight Philippine military bases based on the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), signed in 2014. In its fight against Islamic terrorist groups since 2001, the Philippine military has received guidance and instruction from close to 500 U.S. Special Forces troops (Tritten, 2012). Following a recent visit from the current U.S. Secretary of Defense, it has been reported that both nations have signed an agreement that allows the United States to build facilities at five Philippine military bases, allowing a significant increase of American troops, planes and ships into the Philippine islands. Philippine military leaders appear to welcome this presence and identify the benefits, including modernizing its military and building a "credible defense force" (Whaley, 2016). This has remarkable implications on the commercial and community development surrounding each of these military bases where military personnel must reside.

Given this history and the persistence of colonial relations, Paolo Freire's (1970) analysis of colonial mentality and colonialism's potentially negative consequences for formerly colonized people is relevant to Filipinos. He writes that the colonial process "begins with dehumanizing cultural invasion ... cut off from her cultural memories, yet not entirely de-racinated, the victim becomes detribalized or inauthentic" (p. 50). Leny Strobel (2000) defines colonial mentality and internalized oppression as the colonization of an individual who, consciously or subconsciously, accommodates the ideals, values, and behaviors of the colonizers. Indeed, the colonized experience is universal to all groups who have been colonized, whether Nigerians, Algerians, or Native Americans. Over 400 years of such inscription by both European and U.S. governments makes the Filipino immigrant experience unique and worthy

of ongoing analysis as it relates to contemporary views of how Filipino Americans view themselves.

The original policy of benevolent assimilation declared by the McKinley administration in 1898 marked the beginning of U.S. colonial relations with the Philippines and involved U.S. military control over the entire country and the "fulfillment of the rights of [American] sovereignty" (Diokno, 2002, p. 75). Rafael (2000) refers to this benevolent assimilation as patriarchal-motivated "white love," bestowed on the Philippines and considered a "moral imperative" (p. 21), despite the extent of violence that occurred and the use of force that was systematically utilized by the U.S. during the war. With this and its history of Spanish colonization, Rafael asserts that Filipinos were already familiar with racial hierarchy and a racialized social structure very early on. Although Puerto Rico and many other Asian countries like China, India, Korea and Vietnam may have experienced Western imperialism, the Philippines seems to stand out as a country that has been uniquely impacted due to the duration of colonial subjugation and the scope of influence among Filipino people and its migrants to the U.S. over time. Although Filipinos are considered "highly Americanized," the psychological legacy of colonialism defies the narrative of the voluntary immigrant (David & Nadal, 2013). Considered "de-tribalized," Filipinos and Filipino Americans continue to struggle with the implications of colonial mentality (David & Okazaki, 2006; Strobel, 2000).

Despite this history, Filipinos continue to aspire to settle and succeed socioeconomically in America in significant numbers and for multiple reasons. There were over 430,000 who applied for a U.S. visa in 2012, positioning the Philippines with the second largest applicant wait list (Immigration Policy Center, 2013). Filipinos currently make up the second largest Asian American group after the Chinese. The median household income and education attainment rates are higher compared to those of the U.S. general population, with most speaking English well compared to other Asian Americans (Pew Research Center, 2012). Filipina immigrants outnumber the men, with many employed within healthcare and related occupations (Stoney & Batalova, 2013), perpetuating a gendered labor market and allowing U.S. employers to continue to

benefit from cultural practices, social relations and stereotypes that are patriarchal (Tyner, 1999). In 2012, money sent home by Filipinos reached a new record of \$21.391 billion, with the U.S. remaining as the top source of remittances (Magtulis, 2013).

### *Layered Meanings of Debt*

David & Okazaki (2006) distinguish between covert and overt manifestations of colonial mentality. Covert manifestations are characterized by internal feelings of shame and resentment about being a person of a colonized culture, while overt manifestations are more blatant, including trying to look white, or more Eurocentric, such as trying to pinch one's nose so that nose becomes narrower, or discriminating against newer immigrants described as "fresh off the boat," or "FOBs." Colonial debt is considered a form of colonial mentality—the perception that the colonizer is not only perceived as superior but also as "well-intentioned, civilizing, liberating or noble heroes" (David & Okazaki, 2006). The colonized thus forgive the historic oppression as the price to pay for "civilizing" their people.

The concept of family indebtedness, which is developed in this paper, stems from notions of family obligation. Filipinos, together with Chinese adolescents, were found to have the highest level of academic motivation, and placed more value in succeeding in school and going to college than adolescents from Latin American and European backgrounds (Fulgini, 2001). Education serves as a "means to a valued end" (p. 72), and may lead some to dissociate education from pleasure, satisfaction or genuine individual interest. Family indebtedness not only involves a family obligation to succeed in school, an ingrained cultural value, or fear of family estrangement, but also involves an internalized motivation developed intergenerationally over time.

### Methodological Approach and Rationale

To understand the complex processes, including family socialization, colonial mentality and ethnic identity formation that may affect the mental and social well-being of SGFA, I conducted in-depth interviews with 30 second generation Filipino

Americans (SGFAs). The study uses an indigenous perspective and life story narrative approach. The indigenous paradigm encourages and empowers indigenous people to bring to light the traumas of colonization (Smith, 1999), while the life story narrative provided the means for participants to express how they see their own experiences, lives and interactions with others over time (Atkinson, 2002). The study employs a "decolonizing" methodology, in which members of colonized ethnic groups who have been disconnected from their original culture and history, marginalized and "Othered" (Smith, 1999, p. 6) are re-centered through the research process. An indigenous approach considers historical power dynamics in attaining and disseminating knowledge, and the detrimental effects of totally subscribing to a dominant, western perspective. This indigenous frame honors *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, or Filipino psychology (Enriquez, 1993). Referred to as a liberation psychology, *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* considers the lived experiences of individuals and peoples who have suffered the violence of colonization, emphasizing the importance of this sacred knowledge as the foundation of Filipino consciousness, defining "the totality of the Filipino" including "material and spiritual aspects" (Enriquez, 1993, p. 3). Thus, an understanding of indigenous Filipino beliefs and values, including Filipinos' communal culture, shared history, and collective memory that has developed a community psyche, or *kamalayan* (Enriquez, 1993, p. 34) comes to the fore.

Patricia Clough (2009) discusses notions of trauma and affect, recognizing the complexity of humans and being human as "unspeakable"—so complex as to not fully be captured by words. Her notion of "the multiplicity of time" recognizes historical trauma as a very present lived experience, allowing "memory in its varied forms" that "may not be personally understandable" (p. 15). Those who have experienced the detrimental effects of historical trauma on a multi-generational level (Hill, Lau, & Sue, 2010) may not be able to articulate the full meaning of how their community has impacted them, but it no doubt does. These notions of affect, trauma, and longing for indigenous memory tap into the Filipino collective values that represent transcendent forms of resistance and resilience, including *Kapwa* (the self that is shared with others), *Pakikiisa*

(existential sharing in being human), Bahala-Na (determination), Kalayaan (freedom) and Babaylan (healer) (De Guia, 2010).

### *Data Collection*

This paper focuses on the qualitative findings in a mixed methods study that included a survey questionnaire consisting of several standardized survey tools and in-depth, individual life story interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 SGFAs (12 male and 18 female) between the ages of 18 and 22 years old. Each interview was conducted in two parts. During the first part of the two-hour interview, the participant completed a series of questionnaires that measured family conflict, colonial mentality, ethnic identity, perceived discrimination, individualist/collectivist thoughts and values, family cohesion, self-esteem and depression. The second part of the interview included life story interviewing, in which respondents discussed their experiences with family, challenges growing up as a Filipino American, their sense of ethnic identity, their perspectives of Filipino culture and what role it played in their lives.

Respondents were included in the study if they met the following criteria: (1) born to at least one parent who is of Filipino descent (thus, second generation); (2) between the ages of 18 and 22 years of age; and (3) living in the city of Chicago or Chicagoland area at the time of interview. Thirty SGFAs in this sample were recruited with the assistance of various student-run organizations and social networks in the Filipino American community. Respondents were recruited through flyers hung in various community and educational institutions, and emails sent to 11 organizational listhosts. The Filipino organizations in schools assisted in identifying Filipino Americans. Snowball sampling was also used, in which some participants helped identify other SGFAs. I conducted all interviews. Informed consent was obtained and each participant agreed to be interviewed and be audio-taped. All interviews were approximately an hour and a half to two hours in length and were conducted in locations that were chosen by the participant. Each participant received \$30.00 as compensation for his/her time. Each interview was transcribed verbatim and

handwritten notes were taken during each interview. This verbatim record of the participant's responses to questions during the in-depth interview has served as a starting point for analysis. Transcriptions were imported into a database using NVivo software program, which assisted in the management of the qualitative data.

Following the in-depth interviews, several research assistants and members of a qualitative seminar group assisted in the reading, coding and analysis process. Analysis of the qualitative data was rooted in both inductive and deductive philosophies, utilizing Fereday and Muir-Cochranes' (2006) approach to thematic analysis. With this approach, it was necessary to understand both: (1) the content of the interviews and the shared experiences of each participant, and how these experiences both affirm and refute the theoretical frameworks examined in this study; as well as (2) understand the subjective meaning behind each participant's statements and narrative, and the context from which they were made within the interview. The "trail" of evidence needed to demonstrate credibility, integrity and competence (Fereday & Muir-Cochranes, 2006, p. 3) and involved iterative readings of each transcript with layered searches of: (1) general content of each interview; (2) relevance of his or her shared experiences to theoretical framework; and (3) emerging patterns or overarching themes among the sample as a whole. Initial readings of the transcripts involved listening to each interview and ensuring that transcripts accurately reflected what was said during each interview (including adding notes on contextual elements missed by transcribers or clarifying inaccurately transcribed statements).

A second reading of the transcripts involved the development of a summary about general themes and content of each interview, as it pertained to relevant theoretical frameworks. Potential biases or conflicted personal reactions I may have had were also articulated. Each synopsis write-up included notes of impressions provided by the research assistants. Descriptive coding was then conducted to organize data in broader conceptualizations. Several transcripts were reviewed to identify repeating ideas (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003) with the help of a qualitative seminar group and research assistants,

who were asked to independently identify emerging themes. Coding then gradually moved toward a more selective list of codes that involved specific, overarching themes and patterns (Charmaz, 2006). As overarching themes and patterns were identified, a template or codebook of each category within NVivo was developed based on the research questions, theoretical frameworks, and emerging themes. Several rounds of coding occurred among several coders. The use of multiple coders as well as field notes that took the form of regular journaling and synopsis writing for each interview contributed to the "audit trail" and trustworthiness of the data (Anastas, 2004).

The transcripts were also examined and compared to the quantitative data collected to identify areas of congruence in content as well as paradoxes and contradictions. To establish another level of trustworthiness, or "member checking" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I conducted a focus group with study participants. All those who participated in the interviews were invited to participate in this focus group. Participants gave feedback on whether the preliminary analysis and interpretations made sense given their individual experiences. In this way, participants were given opportunity to engage in both critical reflection and reciprocity in the research process.

## Findings

### *Colonial Debt and Colonial Mentality*

More than half (19 out of 30) of the SGFA participants in this study agreed with the following statement: In general, Filipino Americans should be thankful and feel fortunate for being in the United States. Dominick (Pseudonyms were used for all participants quoted in this article.), a 19-year-old participant, when asked to expand on his stated belief that Filipino Americans are more admirable, more civilized and generally superior to Filipinos in the Philippines, and further, that Filipinos should be thankful to the United States for their history of intervention, states:

I also think that the Philippines should stay with America and not try to get independence so much,

because like, I heard a lot of disagreements that they would just become another Hawaii. But because of America's involvement in Hawaii—like, there is so much. They get a lot of money, it's a great place to be, all the Hawaiian people are pretty happy and richer and all that stuff. And in the Philippines it's poorer. My mom always said that the Philippines should have stayed with America, and my mom wouldn't have had to come to America, because America would have come to them. My mom always said, "they [the Filipinos] should have just stopped being so proud and just let them [Americans] do their thing."

Dominick's argument against independence for the Philippines seems to emerge in large part from his mother's perspective. In the end, Dominick ascribes his own feelings to his mother—that the Philippines would be a better place had its people fully accepted governance by the United States rather than remain as an independent country.

Ben, a 21-year-old participant, also seemed to internalize his parents' view of the positive influence of intervention by the United States. He expressed that if he had children he would particularly want them to know about the history of Spanish rule as well as the history behind the relationship between the Philippines and the U.S.: He stated,

... my parents would always tell me how stupid the Filipinos were to get rid of the U.S. naval bases there. Because they see how much the economy is in shambles over there. ...it [the presence of the bases] was such a huge income and that the country was moving in such a positive direction then—when the U.S. was there. My parents always questioned why the Filipinos didn't want them there. They said they didn't want the bases. When in my parents view, it was such a positive influence.

When Ben was asked, "do you agree with that?" he responded, "I do."

In addition to gratitude and tolerance of U.S. intervention, some participants also expressed an idealization of America.

Filipino Americans often associate lighter skin, a narrow bridged nose, and other European phenotypical traits with wealth and prestige. Several participants allude to using skin whitening creams as a result of their parents wanting them to be lighter skinned. This idealization also involves access to opportunity and material things. As Cocoa describes it, the desire to "make it in America" is inaccessible to many Filipinos who are profoundly limited in means and resources within their country, as well as legally barred from migrating to the United States. Material things indicate socioeconomic success, and she suggests that Filipino Americans not only feel the need to flaunt this success, but to use their children's success as markers of attainment. This dynamic may serve as a complex, compounding factor that reinforces assimilation, colonial mentality and debt. As Cocoa states:

American Filipinos are the worst when it comes to materialism. 'Cause I think they have something to prove, especially when the adults will talk to each other about their kids. They have the fanciest cars and things like that. And they are not having it to have it, they are having it to show off ... I think maybe because when you are born really poor, and when you come to a lot of money later on in life you want to enjoy your life. And they might be doing it subconsciously—I don't think they do it on purpose like they are bad people. But sometimes when you come from so little the change is so dramatic you really want to enjoy yourself and you want other people to see that you've become a success—that you came a long way. You want to get that recognition that you never had when you were growing up.

While the association between socioeconomic achievement and assimilation to American values and culture seems to support movement away from ties to the Philippines, some SGFAs in this study explained that, in the end, Filipino Americans sustain a loyalty to America for very collectivist, or family-focused reasons. Filipino Americans send a substantial amount of money back to relatives in the Philippines in the form of remittances, suggesting a strong desire or duty to give back to their family "back home." Like other interdependent

cultures, first generation parents seem to carry the responsibility for the future welfare of their own immediate family as well as their grandchildren. This dynamic is particularly gendered, with Filipinas bearing the brunt of this responsibility. Filipina mothers, considered repositories of tradition and family cohesion, hold the primary responsibility of socializing children, "holding the cultural line, maintaining racial boundaries, and marking cultural difference" (Espiritu, 2001, pp. 431-432). These gendered norms have influenced the construction of cultural attitudes and values of the group as a collective. These norms are then channeled intergenerationally by the female(s) in the household, further differentiating a "moral distinctiveness" relative to Americans who are considered more individualistic (p. 421). This is notable for female SGFAs whose individual actions often reflect the family as a whole, and arguably face the added burden of negotiating family expectations around loyalty, cohesion and traditional gendered roles of domesticity and virtue with the norms of a pervasively individualistic western culture.

This underlying collectivist motivation retains kinship ties to their homeland, complicates and reinforces the inclination for Filipino Americans to maintain colonial mentality and a sense of colonial debt. In this sample, most second generation participants (28 out of 30) felt the following was true or very true for them: "I would help within my means if a relative told me that he or she is in financial difficulties." There appears to be a belief that succeeding in America and their ability to financially support family back home is not only contingent on their own socioeconomic success, but also on their children's success—to assimilate within their social, academic and professional arenas. This dynamic undoubtedly plays a role in the enculturation of SGFA families, and the way first generation immigrant parents may be constrained in their efforts to retain and translate their culture among their children (Ferrera, 2013).

### Family Indebtedness

As colonial mentality and the endorsement of colonial debt plays a role in the enculturation processes within SGFA families, family indebtedness becomes particularly salient for SGFAs, and may be the root of a distinct tension between

SGFAs and their first-generation parents. Of the 30 participants, 23 expressed some level of indebtedness toward their parents, or some level of appreciation and gratefulness for their parents' struggle and how hard they have worked as immigrants. Andres, an 18-year-old SGFA participant, described coming to this understanding, and the strong sense of indebtedness he "always" felt as a result:

.... just remembering what they've [his parents] been through, they always remind me of how hard their parents worked—like back in the Philippines, and how hard it was for them to come over here. [His parents emphasized] to not take anything for granted or just to do everything right the first time or do your best, otherwise you are just wasting your time. ...I just try to remind mom to get her dream car when I graduate 'cause they have done so much.... As I grew up I just sort of got the sense that they worked so hard to get here... just from knowing what other family have gone through, just knowing how hard it was for them to transition and still just try to be in America.

Having learned about his parents' hard work seems to have led Andres to feel invested in their happiness and reward. In this case, he hopes that his mother's reward is his graduation. Ben, who also expressed a sense of colonial debt, also talked about how he admired his parents, and how there was a focus on family and taking care of each other financially:

... they promised us as we were growing up that they would...they would take care of our education. Just so that we can get a better start than what they had and they hoped that we would, when we are able, help take care of them and to provide for our children a lot easier, and not have to worry about it.

The respondents' sense of indebtedness affects their decisions in various ways, including: which area of study they should pursue; how they want to "give back" to their parents as a result of their graduation or success; and their decision-making about schools in the context of financial constraints. For Ben, the choice to change his concentration to be a doctor,

a profession his parents wanted him to pursue, was a difficult one, because he knew that entering the medical profession translated to financial stability and a legacy of security in his parents' eyes. As he states in his interview,

I was pre-med for three and a half years. I got out of it because I realized that it wasn't going to make me happy, that I was doing it for the wrong reasons. ... I understand where they [his parents] are coming from, 'cause they came from nothing in the Philippines and they were just worrying about our future ... that's the whole mentality of it.

The appreciation and gratefulness for parental sacrifice over many years clearly motivates SGFAs to succeed academically and professionally. However, for some, such pressures and the accompanying sense of indebtedness seems to be overwhelming. At least seven SGFAs out of the 30 in this study revealed that negotiating this sense of indebtedness had compromised their own mental and emotional well-being in some way. When Ann, a 22-year-old SGFA participant, was asked if she is surprised about high depression rates among Filipino Americans found by some researchers, she replied,

No. It doesn't surprise me. There is a lot of burden that is put on us. A lot of parents telling their children what to do—that puts a lot of stress. If I set the bar high [for myself], they would always expect me to do better. I didn't want to go and fail them, knowing how much work and effort that they had gone through to get where they are... So I know how much burden was on them.. I felt it was my duty to give back, at least grade-wise, so I can finish on time. I didn't want them to always have all the burden and stuff. I put too much pressure on myself, that's why ... I guess ... grades slipped ... it was more test anxiety ... like I need to get this grade.

Ann's "duty to give back" suggests an internalization of the sacrifices her parents made, which may be what compels her to accept her own "burden" and excel in school despite the costs. Ann was diagnosed with clinical depression in her first year of college (three years prior to this interview). Her grades

were dropping at that time, and she attributed her depression to her parents' high expectations, and her strong commitment to pleasing them as the eldest child.

Another respondent, Riku, described his decision, despite his academic ability to attend a top-tiered school, to attend a smaller, less expensive and less prestigious school so that his parents would not have to make the same sacrifices that Ana's parents had. He stated,

The [his] school is so cheap and you could have a minimum wage job and pay tuition. ... But that's not the reason why I went to this school. My parents could afford any school. But I didn't want them spending that kind of money on me, 'cause I wanted them to have money for themselves. 'Cause they work hard, so I wanted them to have whatever they wanted. If they worked hard to get their dream car, I want them to have that, instead of spending money on my school. 'Cause they already put me through school—they did their part ... I don't want to take everything away from them ... I don't want their quality of life to decrease to compensate for my high tuition.

Riku chose to be a commuter student in order to save his parents' money. However, he shared that it is difficult to make friends because he is not living in the dorms. He reported that this sense of social isolation and not feeling academically challenged led to feelings of depression.

Cordella, a 22-year-old SGFA, talked at length about the impact of collectivism, and a strong sense of interdependence between her family and other extended family members, both here and in the Philippines. This interdependence brought with it a responsibility for the welfare of generations to come. During her interview, she also described how much the sense of indebtedness and interdependence within family can be a source of internal conflict that detracts from individual self-exploration. She stated: "... they can be your support or they can be the weight on your shoulders.... that interconnectedness is a good thing—[it] can be a support but it can be a burden as well." When Cordella was asked about how she thinks her ethnic or cultural identity affects her sense of self and

individual identity, she replied, "I think it's hard to find, because you're so... you're worried that you are not disrespecting [family] so much, you're worried [about] what everyone else wants you to do in your family."

## Discussion

Young SGFAs come of age in a historical and contemporary context that often devalues their unique contributions and foregrounds the experience of western colonialists over indigenous experience. Certainly, the context and the experiences of their migrant parents who choose to settle in the U.S. impact them. The departure from a country whose history has been stripped of its cultural memories is psychological as well as physical. The journeys of Filipinos to America are shadowed by the hundreds of thousands of applicants who wait in line to follow them. This desire to leave is undoubtedly fueled by a history of colonization and a tolerance of over 400 years of being historically de-racinated. The irony is a constant and steady flow of migrants who have sought settlement in the land of her colonizer, and a sustained, deeply driven pursuit of the American Dream.

Given the interdependent nature of Filipino culture, SGFAs and their parents easily embrace the socioeconomic opportunity that living in America provides, because it allows them to not only financially support their extended families "back home" but also to care for their immediate, extended families and the generations to come. All of these factors contribute to an idealization of America, a solid endorsement of a colonial mentality, and an ingrained sense of colonial debt. Although collectivist values that prompt a sense of loyalty and indebtedness to immigrant parents may be considered a strength among second generation Filipino Americans (SGFAs), it may also be considered a psychological and emotional burden. For SGFAs who express longing for more knowledge and access to Filipino culture and connection (Ferrera, 2013), the exploration of ethnic identity, in effect, is stifled. This is of great concern, as ethnic pride is considered protective of depression (Mossakoski, 2003).

SGFAs must reconcile the tension between the ideals of

the Filipino collective and those of a western culture that emphasizes freedom of choice, independence, and the pursuit of individual pleasures and desires that may fervently conflict with this sense of indebtedness. Family indebtedness supports a broader understanding of family obligation that involves the process of increasingly feeling beholden to parents, that then inspires a profound sense of purpose for second generation children. Compelled by their stories of the trauma of being cut off and separated from family, working multiple jobs, experiences of cumulative microaggressions and/or discrimination, ethnic and social isolation, second generation children empathize and internalize the weight of their parents' hardship as immigrants. As a result, SGFAs come to believe that their sacrifices should be rewarded, and feel charged to justify the enormous price they had to pay—to "give back" to their first-generation parents. This charge often seems to take precedence amidst more individualistic pursuits and dynamic processes of identity development.

During adolescence and young adulthood for SGFAs, as personal choice is critical, this cultural dissonance becomes increasingly tense. Like other ethnic youth, SGFAs face multiple challenges, including: balancing roles and responsibilities; negotiating ethnic, cultural and individual identities; exploring independence; gaining academic and social competence among peers; as well as the negotiation of loyalties and responsibilities to the family. Family indebtedness proves to be more poignant for SGFAs, who are further confronted with: the pressure to adapt and assimilate; internalized inferiority, or colonial mentality; constrained enculturation that may leave them less proud of their Filipino ethnic identity and unprepared for racist experiences. Given the hardship their parents experienced as immigrants, SGFA's experience guilt and pressure to succeed academically and professionally.

Filipinos and first generation Filipino Americans indubitably have experienced what bell hooks (2010) refers to as the "colonization of mind," internalizing, albeit consciously or subconsciously, the "civilizing presence of the colonizer." The idealization of western values and the internalization of colonial debt serve as effective mechanisms that distance the community from the indigenous and processes of decolonization

(Strobel, 2000), sustaining a disjointed cultural and historical knowledge. Although each of these dynamics of debt—colonial debt and family indebtedness—were commonly experienced in this study's sample, it was beyond the scope of this study to invoke narratives that discusses in depth the co-existence and their combined effect over time. It cannot be assumed that all SGFAs will experience either or both. Adopting a critical, ecological systems perspective stresses the need to understand individual experiences of this group as highly complex and contextualized amidst social, political, historical and psychological factors. The legacy of colonialism among Filipino and other ethnic immigrant groups cannot be underestimated. Individual meanings of debt may surreptitiously challenge and complicate the experiences of SGFAs as well as other ethnic individuals with similar histories in their identity formation and cultural adaptation. Layered colonial debt and familial indebtedness represents a departure from origin and homeland on both a physical and collectively psychic level, fostering a diaspora that must be understood and interrogated within the context of intergenerational family processes and a history of colonization.

Acknowledgement: This research was supported in part by a grant from the National Institute for Mental Health through the Council on Social Work Education Minority Fellowship Program and Research Council Grant through DePaul University. Thanks to Kristin Renault, Sherry Petrea, Amanda Berenguel, and Roz (Rosalind) Jenkins, who have provided hours of research assistance on this project. Thanks also to Bernadette Sanchez and Tina K. Sacks for providing critical feedback on previous drafts of this work. Special thanks to all study participants who have shared their stories.

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