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In this book, Anthony Christian Ocampo aims to probe into Filipino Americans' self-identification about ethnicity and how they fit themselves within the American racial hierarchy. It is also a thought-provoking book on racial dilemmas and the pan-ethnic possibilities of minorities in the United States. In order to obtain first-hand material, the author interviewed eighty-five Filipino American adults between the ages of twenty-one and thirty, who were second generation Filipino immigrants and currently living in two middle-class, multi-ethnic neighborhoods in Los Angeles, namely, Eagle Rock and Carson.

The book begins with the puzzling case of Filipino Americans' racial identity. The U. S. Census classifies Filipinos as Asian, but all of the interviewees disapprove of the classification, which seems to them only a geographic coincidence. On the contrary, they assume that because of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines they share more traits with Latinos than with Asians, including last names, religion, language and culture. Though they feel torn encountering the racial identification question on a form, they sing the praises of the hybridity of their ethnic culture because of the historical influences from Spain and the United States. Unlike other Asians, who reside as ethnic cliques, Filipinos think of themselves as "racial chameleons," capable of adaptation to the multiethnic neighborhood environment.

Thus race is not merely about the color of one's skin; it depends on one's social context. Filipino "color" changes depending on where they live, where they go to school, and whom they befriend. In neighborhood communities, there is little ethnic estrangement between Filipinos, the "Mexicans of the Asians," and Latinos. However, in schools, especially in public schools, academic tracks are almost always
stratified by race. In the absence of other Asian American stu-
dents, Filipinos are stereotyped as "typical" Asians, expected
to excel in academics and supposed to be on the honors track,
while Latinos are assumed to be less academically ambitious
and expected to stay on the regular track, even if they have
the ability to excel. As a result, students are inclined to self-
segregate by race, and racial tensions at times erupt into physi-
cal conflicts.

After they enter universities, Filipinos find themselves un-
derrepresented minorities, changing from model students in
high schools to at-risk undergraduates. "In both Eagle Rock
and Carson, Filipinos account for more than 80 percent of the
total Asian population, and they are the predominant Asian
group in their high schools" (p. 46). However, within the racial
context of college, the overwhelming majority of whites and
East Asians cause Filipinos to encounter an unprecedent-
ed cultural shock during freshmen orientation. This results
from the fact that they had little or no practice interacting
with whites and Asians, since, according to the author,"Even
among Filipinos from Eagle Rock, where a third of residents
are white, interactions with whites were minimal" (p. 154).
Racial integration doesn't necessarily mean actual social in-
corporation. With a sense of both cultural and academic mar-
ginalization and isolation, Filipinos exclude themselves from
"real" Asians while promoting "a shared sense of peoplehood"
with other minorities, and Latinos in particular. Meanwhile,
they are more eager than before to embrace their ethnic heri-
tage. Filipino Culture Nights, for instance, are annual show-
cases sponsored by Filipino student organizations throughout
the United States to help people learn about Filipino history
and culture.

Filipino racial ambivalence is the product of post-colonial-
ism and cultural imperialism. By means of disseminating in
colonies a discourse that assumed the normality and preemi-
nence of everything occidental, cultural imperialism effective-
ly imposed its power on the oriental, an exotic and inferior
Other. With their native cultural heritage eroded, the colonial
Other is subordinated and marginalized, and the hybridiza-
tion of colonial languages and cultures leaves them perplexed
about their ethnic identity. Unlike other Asian Americans,
who have more "pure" cultural heritage, Filipino Americans find it awkward to fall into these same racial categories.

On the other hand, certain cultural and linguistic advantages inherited from the Spanish and U.S. colonial period enable Filipinos to integrate in multi-ethnic social contexts with greater adaptability than other Asian Americans. In addition, it facilitates Filipino American ability to straddle Latino and Asian racial categories. How they negotiate panethnic boundaries, in turn, brings to light the flexibility and inclusiveness of race.

Developing more intimate ties with Latinos than with other Asians, Filipinos can only think of chopsticks, Japanese mountains, pho noodles and so on when talking about Asian Americans. They distance themselves from each other for lack of cultural recognition and social interaction. At the same time, "their status as racial minorities still hinders some whites from regarding them as full-fledged Americans" (p. 33).

Accordingly, it is a tough job to balance being Filipino and being American. Whether and how to maintain ethnicity in immigrant countries is a common racial dilemma for all ethnic minorities. Nevertheless, in the present age of economic globalization and cultural integration, we should discard minority stereotypes, increase understanding and celebrate differences through mutual respect and equal exchange. As no culture flourishes in isolation, every culture needs to absorb foreign cultural elements to renew itself, and one's cultural identity must be forged out of the co-existence of multiple cultures.

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