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Filipinos in the U.S.: Historical, Social, and Educational Experiences

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to better understand current Filipino American communities and their educational experiences by examining the historical and social context of their immigration to the United States. Filipinos are the second largest Asian American group with a distinct immigration history that has been complicated by centuries of colonization by Spain and later the United States. Based on an adapted model of incorporation and literature review, the article examines government policies, societal reception, co-ethnic communities, as well as other barriers and opportunities, which influenced their acculturation both before and after the Immigration Act of 1965. Government and societal reception of Filipinos have ranged from hostile to mostly neutral positions through four waves of immigration. Earlier Filipino communities were stronger often serving their economic, cultural and social needs, but have become more dispersed over time as Filipinos have become less reliant on their co-ethnic networks. Despite their overall success, there is research showing mixed educational achievement levels across later generations. The Filipino community is steadily growing and more research and support are needed for Filipino American students. Historical contexts can provide a comprehensive lens to understand current educational issues.

Key words: Filipino American, immigration, history, communities, education

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Filipinos en USA: Experiencia Histórica, Social y Educativa.

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Resumen

El propósito de este artículo es conocer mejor las actuales comunidades filipino-estadounidenses y sus experiencias educativas a través del análisis del contexto histórico y social de su inmigración a los Estados Unidos. Los filipinos son el segundo grupo cultural asiático-estadounidense más grande, con una historia inmigratoria distinta que se ha complicado debido a siglos de colonización por parte de España y más tarde Estados Unidos. Basado en un modelo adaptado de incorporación y revisión de la literatura, el artículo examina las políticas gubernamentales, la recepción social, las comunidades co-étnicas, así como otras barreras y oportunidades que influyeron en su aculturación, tanto antes como después de la Ley de Inmigración de 1965. Las posturas gubernamentales y la recepción social de las personas filipinas han oscilado desde posiciones hostiles a actitudes más neutrales a lo largo de cuatro olas de inmigración. Las primeras comunidades filipinas se mantuvieron fuertes cubriendo sus necesidades económicas, culturales y sociales pero con el tiempo se han vuelto más dispersas ya que los filipinos y filipinas se muestran menos dependientes de sus redes co-étnicas. A pesar de su éxito global, hay investigaciones que muestran que han alcanzado niveles educativos mixtos a lo largo de las generaciones posteriores. La comunidad filipina está creciendo de manera constante y es necesario realizar más investigaciones y aportar apoyo a los y las estudiantes filipino-estadounidenses. Estos contextos históricos pueden proporcionar instrumentos de análisis para entender los problemas educativos actuales.

Palabras clave: Filipino-estadounidense, inmigración, historia, comunidades, educación

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According to the U.S. Census 2010, there are almost 18,000,000 Asian Americans or roughly 6% of the U.S. population. After Chinese Americans, Filipinos constitute the second largest Asian group at 3.4 million, representing approximately 18% of the adult Asian population in the U.S. (Hoeffel, Rastogi, Kim, & Hasan, 2012; Pew Research Center, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Filipino Americans have had a long history in the U.S., tracing back as early as the 1500s in present-day Morro Bay, California (Nadal, 2011). For centuries, Filipino Americans have clearly had a long presence in American society, with unique historical, social, and educational experiences. However, few research studies have focused strictly on Filipino Americans; more often they are included as part of broader examinations of Asian Americans, assuming a homogeneity of histories and current experiences.

Historically, mainstream American society has had the tendency to treat all persons of Asian ancestry alike, making an Asian American panethnic identity instrumental in addressing common issues and challenges facing different Asian American ethnic groups (Chan, 1991; Espiritu, 1993). Unfortunately, given the heterogeneity of Asian American communities, the "Asian American" label has deemphasized the distinctive experiences of specific groups and masked key differences including but not limited to educational attainment, socioeconomic status, language ability, regional residency, and gender (Lee, 2006). It is important to acknowledge the complex ways in which these factors may distinguish the educational and later career experiences of specific Asian populations such as Filipino Americans (Museus & Maramba, 2011). Moreover, their complex colonial history involving centuries of Spanish rule and later American occupation, warrants a closer look at this community. Their distinct immigration patterns both before and after the Immigration Act of 1965 also underscore their unique story.

Currently, there are few studies that examine the linkages between the historical and social experiences of Filipino Americans with present-day educational patterns and issues. An exploration of factors such as societal reception, government support, co-ethnic communities, settlement patterns, language ability, class status, education, occupation, and time of arrival to the U.S. would help to understand success outcomes for this group. This

type of historical analysis of the immigration experiences of Filipino Americans would provide a long-lens perspective and insight that is limited in contemporary educational research (Paik, Kula, Saito, Rahman, & Witenstein, 2014).

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to provide a historical examination of Filipino immigration experiences to better understand Filipino communities and their current outcomes in education and related issues. This article specifically: 1) employs a model of incorporation adapted by Paik et al. (2014) to understand the experiences of Filipino American communities, 2) presents demographic, educational, and sociocultural background and context on Filipinos, 3) provides historical context on waves of Filipino immigration both before and after the Immigration Act of 1965, 4) systematically analyzes historical experiences based on the theoretical framework and through the review of the literature, and 5) discusses findings and implications as it relates to Filipino immigration experiences and educational outcomes.

Theoretical Framework: Modes of Incorporation

Paik and colleagues (2014) adapted Portes and Rumbaut's (1990, 2001) early work on modes of incorporation to examine the immigration experiences of Asian communities in the U.S. and their impact on later group outcomes (e.g. educational and occupational). The original model looked at the reception of immigrant groups by *government policy*, *society*, and *co-ethnic communities*. Paik et al. (2014) added factors related to *other barriers and opportunities* such as time of arrival; location and settlement patterns; class status, occupation, and educational level; and language abilities. The model is adapted to the historical immigration experiences of Asian communities, including Filipino Americans, capturing the changing migration patterns and demographic features of the communities based on policies specifically targeting immigrants from Asia in the pre and post-1965 eras (Paik et al., 2014; Portes, Fernández-Kelly, & Haller, 2009; Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998). The adapted modes of incorporation focuses attention on educational outcomes, providing historical, social, and political contexts

for understanding the broad impact of Filipino immigrant experiences. Brief descriptions of the framework's factors are below and will be described further for Filipino American communities in the following sections:

Government Policy

The reception of immigrants through government policy may be categorized as "receptive", "indifferent", or "hostile" (Portes & Rumbaut, 1990; 2001). Prior to the implementation of the 1965 Immigration Act, most Filipino immigrants along with other Asian immigrants met "hostile" policies, which blocked or severely curtailed immigration to the U.S. After 1965, policies were either "indifferent" (or neutral) – allowing for open immigration without any assistance – or "receptive" – offering assistance or incentive programs for immigration. Unique to Filipinos than any other Asian group, they experienced hostile, indifferent, and receptive policies throughout their immigration history (Paik et al., 2014).

Societal Reception

Societal reception is a key aspect of the immigration experience. Public perception and prejudices against immigrant populations may strongly influence the types of employment and institutions that are open to new immigrants. Upon entry into the U.S., immigrants may face "prejudiced", "not prejudiced", or "neutral" reception. All Asian immigrants experienced "prejudiced" reception upon arrival pre- and post-1965; there was no group who experienced "unprejudiced" reception. However, Filipinos and South Asians were the only two Asian groups who had more receptivity or "neutral" reception after 1965 (Paik et al., 2014).

Co-ethnic Communities

Co-ethnic communities are members of the same ethnic or national origin group often living in geographic proximity to one another (Portes &

Rumbaut, 1990; Zhou & Bankston III, 1998). Large ethnic clusters of residential and business districts may be found in metropolitan areas, known as ethnic towns (or enclaves), or suburban areas, also known as ethnoburbs (Li, 2009). According to Portes and Rumbaut (1990, 2001), immigrants may encounter one of three types of communities upon entering the host country: "weak", "strong", or "dispersed". The strength or weakness of a co-ethnic community is determined by the concentration or disbursement of laborers, professionals, or entrepreneurs. The lack of or presence of these workers in ethnically concentrated communities may greatly influence the types of opportunities available to new immigrants in terms of education, jobs, or other key resources (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, p. 48). The strongest communities are highly concentrated in numbers and offer the most opportunities and resources, while the weakest communities are smaller and less skilled, limiting their resources and opportunities. Dispersed communities, such as Filipinos who arrived post-1965, are less reliant on their ethnic communities for resources in general. Their earlier pre-1965 communities were stronger, but became more dispersed over time. While sense of community is still important for them, their ability to speak English upon arrival, their educational background, and professional skills allowed them to live in less ethnically concentrated areas, allowing them to navigate mainstream America more easily than most new Asian immigrants.

Other Barriers and Opportunities

Paik and colleagues' (2014) addition of other barriers and opportunities to modes of incorporation highlight six other factors that are critical to understanding immigration experiences, particularly Filipino immigration. As previously mentioned, the reception of Asian immigrants in the U.S. differed depending on their *time of arrival*. Immigrants that arrived before 1965 typically faced more challenges and barriers, particularly in terms of government policies, than those that arrived after 1965 (Chan, 1991; Takaki, 1998). The immigrant experience is also influenced by *location or settlement patterns*. Immigrants to places such as California or Hawaii have greater access to large co-ethnic communities and face less challenges to

acculturation than those that are dispersed in regions with limited numbers of co-ethnic populations (Chan, 1991; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990, 2001; Takaki, 1998). Demographic factors such as *class status (SES), occupation, and educational levels* upon arrival to the U.S. are also significant factors in the immigrant experience. In general, higher levels of education, more professional skills, or higher-class status afford immigrants with greater resources and opportunities. Lastly, *language ability*, or English-language fluency, may help to reduce challenges and ease acculturation into mainstream America. These additional barriers and opportunities for Filipinos will be further delineated in the following sections.

Background, Cultural Context and Educational Trends

Filipino American communities comprise a diverse mix of individuals in terms of levels of acculturation, number of generations living in America, socioeconomic background, geographical origin, dialect/languages, and even culture (Lai & Arguelles, 1998). The following section will provide demographic background, cultural context, and educational trends that influence the current population.

Current Demographics and Geographic Distribution

As previously stated, with a population of over 3.4 million, Filipino Americans comprise the second largest Asian American group in the U.S. This figure includes single ethnicity individuals, as well as individuals who identify with one or more groups (Hoeffel, Rastogi, Kim, & Hasan, 2012). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, there are nearly 2,650,000 individuals identifying solely as Filipino American, an increase of 38.9% since the 2000 Census, while the overall number including mixed ethnicity increased 44.1% (Hoeffel et al., 2012). Over 65% of the Filipino American population resides on the West Coast, with the largest proportion living in California at nearly 1.5 million; additionally, at least 100,000 Filipino Americans live in each of the following states: Hawaii, Illinois, Texas, Washington, New Jersey, New

York, Nevada, and Florida (Hoeffel et al., 2012; National Federation of Filipino American Associations, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Moreover, Filipino Americans are the largest Asian American group in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Washington, and Wyoming (Hoeffel et al., 2012).

Cultural Context

Past studies have often cited the family as a crucial component of Filipino American identity and cultural, with a strong emphasis on the larger extended family, or clan (Agbayani-Siewert, 1994; Chan, 1992; Cimmarusti, 1992). The Filipino extended family typically includes a network of blood relations, family members related by marriage, godparents, and close family friends (Agbayani-Siewert, 1994). The compadrazgo system ritually bonds godparents to their godchildren and the children's parents through socioemotional and economic support (Salvador, Omizo, & Kim, 1997). Additionally, compared to other Asian families, the Filipino family structure is described as primarily egalitarian in nature (Chao & Tseng, 2002). The egalitarian family structure encourages any family member, female or male, to advance the family status and resources through educational and financial success (Okamura & Agbayani, 1997).

The behavior of Filipino Americans may also be impacted by three primary cultural values that are reflective of the strong emphasis placed on relationship building especially within the extended family network (Salvador et al., 1997). Respect, especially of one's elders, is often acted out through the concept of *utang na loob* or debt of gratitude. *Utang na loob* evokes feelings of reciprocal obligation, especially in terms of repaying acts of kindness (Agbayani-Siewert, 1994; Nadal, 2011; Salvador et al., 1997). This sense of gratitude may manifest in children feeling familial pressure to succeed in school as a way of "repaying" parental sacrifices to provide educational opportunities. Individuals who do not follow this code of gratitude are viewed as disrespectful and may be ostracized, which violates another key value known as *pakikisama* or harmony (Agbayani-Siewert, 1994; Bankston, 2006; Cimmarusti, 1992). Maintaining the appearance of

harmonious social relations (or group solidarity) requires people to always act in a respectful manner towards each other, even if it means suffering in silence rather than initiating a conflict (Cimmarusti, 1992; Salvador et al., 1997). Lastly, the emphasis on not bringing *hiya* or shame to the family reinforces the need to maintain harmonious relations and meet obligations (Agbayani-Siewert, 1994; Nadal, 2011). These cultural concepts may influence critical life choices like an individual's educational or career decision-making process, where a person may feel obligated to pursue a major or career chosen by their parents or other elders. Choosing against elders' wishes may not be in line with concepts of *pakikisama* or *utang na loob*.

Educational Trends

In general, Filipino American educational achievement levels are high – Filipino adults aged 25 and older have a higher rate of educational attainment (47%) compared to the national population (28%) overall (Pew Research Center, 2013). However, Museus and Maramba (2011) pointed out that disparities exist in the Filipino American educational experience, especially when looking at regions where the largest numbers of Filipino Americans reside. Their research revealed educational attainment of Filipino Americans has a bimodal character and that underrepresentation continues to exist at four-year post-secondary institutions in states where Filipino Americans are concentrated. Additionally, Zhou and Xiong (2005) found that postsecondary achievement levels varied by generation with first generation students achieving significantly higher than second. Though limited studies are available on the K-12 educational experiences of Filipino Americans, existing studies suggest that the mixed character of educational success is also reflected in K-12 education. In particular, one study of ten U.S. urban communities found that while high achievement among Filipino American K-12 public school students existed in six areas, patterns of underachievement were found in four other California and Hawaii cities, homes to large and long-established Filipino communities (Museus & Maramba, 2011; Ogilvie, 2008).

Immigration History

The complex nature of Filipino Americans in the U.S. is greatly influenced by the immigration policies that have excluded and invited immigrants from the Philippines at different times in history (Lai & Arguelles, 1998). The changing patterns of Filipino immigration makes it challenging to generalize the population which is comprised both of long-standing communities eight generations old to the continuous influx of present day immigrants throughout the United States. The following section traces key waves of Filipino immigration.

First Wave of Immigration

The Philippines has a long history of overseas migration stemming back to the times of Spanish colonization from 1521 to 1898 (Bonus & Maramba, 2013). Filipinos, then known as "Manilamen", first arrived in North America as a result of the Manila-Acapulco galleon trade between 1565 to 1815 (Bonus & Maramba, 2013; Cordova, Cordova, & Acena, 1983). The earliest documentation of a Filipino American settlement is the Louisiana fishing village of St. Malo dating as early as 1843; however, other scholars have noted Filipinos in the U.S in the late 1700s as many escaped brutal conditions on the Spanish galleons and formed communities in the region (Lai & Arguelles, 1998; Lee, 2015; Nadal, 2011). During this long period of Spanish colonial rule, other Filipino seafarers, forced into service on Philippine-made Spanish vessels, landed in California, British Columbia, Washington, Alaska, and Hawaii (Cordova et al., 1983).

Second Wave of Immigration

American annexation of the Philippines following the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898 enabled steady immigration of Filipinos to the

United States (Cordova et al., 1983). Filipinos were not considered citizens; yet, as members of a U.S. territory, their status as American nationals made them exempt from early immigration laws that prohibited other Asian immigration (Chan, 1991; Takaki, 1989). The first formal group to arrive during this period were the *pensionados* – students whose postsecondary education in the U.S. were subsidized by the Philippine territorial government (Cordova et al., 1983; Lai & Arguelles, 1998). Under the Pensionado Act of 1903, which lasted until 1938, *pensionados* entered into a contract by which for every year of education, they were obligated to work for the Philippine colonial government. Approximately 14,000 students took advantage of this program, many of whom returned to the Philippines.

The *pensionados* were also followed by self-supporting students seeking greater economic opportunities in the United States (Cordova et al., 1983). These students were often encouraged by American teachers in the Philippines, who were part of the new educational system set up in the country to assist Filipinos in learning the English language and familiarize them with American culture (Agoncillo, 1990). Among the *pensionados* and self-supporting students that remained in the U.S., few were able to find acceptance in mainstream white communities and often ended up working menial jobs not commensurate with their education level (Nadal, 2011).

However, the largest group to arrive in the U.S. during this time was primarily young male laborers under the age of thirty (Lai & Arguelles, 1998; Takaki, 1998). Filipinos from poor rural communities were first recruited in large numbers to work in Hawaiian sugar and pineapple plantations in 1906. These workers were recruited as a response to the loss of Japanese and Chinese laborers, whose immigration had been severely curtailed by exclusionary immigration laws in the late 1800s and early 1900s (Lai & Arguelles, 1998). As demands for cheap labor grew, Filipinos were also recruited to fill jobs on California farms and in the Alaskan fishing industry. Based on these early immigration patterns, Filipinos, like the larger Asian American community, were concentrated in a few states, particularly California and Hawaii. About 45,000 had moved to California from Hawaii and the Philippines during the 1920s, and by 1934, there were 119,470 Filipinos working and living in Hawaii (Lai & Arguelles, 1998).

Third Wave of Immigration

By the late 1920s and early 1930s, Filipinos faced increasing hostilities from the white majority population as a result of diminished opportunities stemming from the Great Depression (Cordova et al., 1983; Lai & Arguelles, 1998). Demands to exclude Filipinos from U.S. immigration policies grew as negative public perception of Filipinos as economic threats and social deviants heightened (Chan, 1991; Lai & Arguelles, 1998). The Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 transitioned the Philippines from an American territory to commonwealth, guaranteeing independence within 10 years. It stripped Filipinos of their status as nationals, and restricted their annual immigration quota to fifty individuals (Cordova et al., 1983, Takaki, 1998). After the Tydings-McDuffie Act was implemented, societal pressures further called for repatriation of Filipinos living in the U.S. resulting in the Filipino Repatriation Act of 1935 (Lee, 2015).

During World War II, Filipinos were recruited to serve in the U.S. military. Though immigration during this time was minimal, exceptions were made to enable the military recruitment of thousands of Philippine-born Filipinos, particularly into the U.S. Navy (Lai & Arguelles, 1998). This became a major influence in later Filipino American immigration patterns. Immediately following the War, Asian immigration restrictions slightly eased with the Luce Celler Act of 1946 raising Filipino immigration quota from 50 to 100 and also allowing them to become naturalized citizens (Kang, 2012).

Fourth Wave of Immigration

The largest-scale migration from the Philippines occurred after the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, which abolished the national origins quota system and gave preference to family members and certain skilled workers (Bankston, 2006; Pew Research Center, 2013). Like their earlier counterparts, many Filipinos immigrated to the United States seeking better employment opportunities, though many also came to escape political persecutions under the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos (Pew Research Center, 2013). Many Filipinos immigrating to the United States in the 1960s

were highly trained professionals primarily recruited to fulfill shortages in fields such as healthcare, science, and engineering. This occupational-based recruitment continued through the years resulting in the stereotype of Filipinos occupying primarily high status professional occupations in science or medicine, particularly nursing (Bankston, 2006). Moreover, with the 1990 Immigration Act limiting the number of visas to family members, more Filipinos have utilized employment-based preferences to enter the U.S. (Lai & Arguelles, 1998), impacting the demographic characteristics of newer immigrants. Furthermore, more than one-fourth of all Filipinos in the U.S. have immigrated since 2000 (Terrazas & Batalova, 2010).

Modes of Incorporation, Barriers, & Opportunities for Filipino Americans

Using the modes of incorporation theoretical framework (Paik et al., 2014), the following section will review the literature and provide further analysis of the immigration experiences of Filipino Americans. As described in the previous section, the history of Filipinos in America have been influenced by government policies, societal reception, availability of co-ethnic communities, and other demographic factors such as settlement patterns, class and occupational levels, education, and fluency in English.

Government Policy

Through the four waves of immigration, Filipinos have experienced different levels of support from the U.S. government. Given their unique and long history, they are the only Asian group to experience *hostile*, *indifferent*, and *receptive* policies at various times (Paik et al., 2014). Some of these policies include the Pensionado Act of 1903, Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934, Filipino Repatriation Act of 1935, and Luce Celler Act of 1946. U.S. recruitment efforts pre- and post-1965 also differed in terms of their overall support and receptivity.

As with all newly arrived Asian immigrants in the pre-1965 era, the first

waves of Filipino immigrants was also largely met with *hostile* policies blocking immigration to the U.S. (Paik et al., 2014). Though some Filipinos came to the Americas during the Spanish colonial era, mass immigration of Filipinos to the U.S. did not occur until after the Philippines became a U.S. territory at the end of the Spanish American War in 1898 (Lai & Arguelles, 1998; Lee, 2015). In light of the immigration restrictions placed on Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans during the late 1800s to early 1900s, Filipinos were welcomed and heavily recruited to work, particularly in the agricultural sector (Takaki, 1998). As previously mentioned, their status as American nationals (prior to the Tydings-McDuffie act of 1934) allowed for relatively free entry into the U.S. though it did not confer other rights reserved for citizens (Lee, 2015). Filipinos found themselves barred from living in certain neighborhoods, unable to own property, and included in various states' anti-miscegenation laws (Lai & Arguelles, 1998; Lee, 2015; Matsouka & Ryujin, 1991). These simultaneous inclusionary and exclusionary government policies highlighted the unequal status of Filipinos in America during the second and third waves of immigration. Despite the fact that Americans in the Philippines touted the U.S. as a place to achieve economic success and encouraged Filipinos to see themselves as part of America, Filipinos arriving to the U.S. during the early 1900s may have found most government policies stacked against them. The Pensionado Act of 1903 was an exception as it was seen as one of the more *receptive* policies allowing students (pensionados) to study higher education in the U.S. The Philippine government supported the students with the agreement that they would return and work for the colonial government (Cordova et al., 1983; Lai & Arguelles, 1998). Self-supporting students experienced more *indifferent (or neutral)* support. They were allowed to enter, but they did not receive any support from the U.S. or the Philippines (Cordova et al., 1983).

Several *hostile* policies developed in the 1930's. The Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 (also known as the Philippine Independence Act) was considered a *hostile* policy. By granting the Philippines its independence from the U.S., Filipinos were effectively barred from entering the country with limited exemptions; an immigration quota up to 50 was allowed per year (Cordova et al., 1983; Takaki, 1998). The Filipino Repatriation Act of 1935 soon called for Filipinos to return to the Philippines, providing one-way support for Filipinos and their U.S. born children (Lee, 2015). The

program only lasted for three years and was not successful in eliminating undesirable Filipino immigrants (Lee, 2015). In 1946, the Luce-Celler Act on the surface looked more receptive, but the policy was still hostile in nature as it only slightly raised Filipino immigration from 50 to 100 (Kang, 2012).

The fourth wave of immigration saw *indifferent (or neutral)* and even more *receptive* policies and support with the implementation of the 1965 Immigration Act lifting the national origins restriction. The newer immigrants were primarily educated professional and technical workers specifically recruited to fill a shortage in fields like healthcare (e.g., nursing, engineering, etc.). However, as positions were filled, restrictions were once again placed on Filipinos and other immigrants from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean (Lai & Arguelles, 1998). Many Filipinos also experienced downward occupational mobility as they found the validity of their professional degrees and licenses earned in the Philippines unrecognized by U.S. institutions (Chan, 1991; Lai & Arguelles, 1998).

Societal Reception

The restrictive government policies, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century, were a reflection of *prejudiced* reception of Filipino Americans that grew with rising economic hardships and the advent of the Great Depression. Initially welcomed as a cheap source of labor, the increasing Filipino American population of the 1920s and ’30s became seen as an economic and social threat as competition for jobs increased. The fight for limited opportunities fueled racist and nativist sentiments calling for the expulsion of Filipinos from the U.S. (Chan, 1991; Lee, 2015). Violent attacks against Filipinos were justified by portrayals of Filipinos as uncivilized criminals and sexual deviants. The Filipino Repatriation Act of 1935 confirmed the unwelcome receptivity during the pre-1965 era (Lee, 2015).

By comparison, post-1965 reception has been more *neutral*. Many Filipino Americans have found economic success due to their overall high professional skills and have been able to comfortably integrate into American society. Their ability to speak English has also been helpful in

their assimilation. However, with the growing influx of Filipinos, immigration trends show more low-/semi-skilled and skilled workers, attracting immigrants who subsequently occupy low to middle wage positions with few opportunities for career advancement (Lai & Arguelles, 1998).

Co-ethnic Communities

During the pre-1965 era, Filipinos had *strong* co-ethnic communities as they were highly dependent on each other for support and survival (Paik et al., 2014). As previously stated, early Filipino immigrants to the United States were primarily men recruited to work in the agriculture sector or canneries. In the first waves of Filipino immigration, the gender ratio was greatly imbalanced. There were 2,500 Filipina women compared to the overall population of 42,500 Filipinos living in California in 1930; while in 1934 Hawaii, only 8,952 were women compared to the total population of 119,470 Filipinos (Lai & Arguelles, 1998; Lee, 2015). Recruiters discouraged the immigration of women possibly as a way of discouraging the establishment of permanent Filipino American communities. However, Filipinas in the early twentieth century played an instrumental role in supporting families, building communities, and propagating Filipino culture (Lee, 2015). Because Filipinos were prevented from settling in mainstream American neighborhoods, Filipino communities – "Little Manilas" or "Filipinotowns" – were established in cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, and New York (Paik et al., 2014). These co-ethnic communities had eventually developed into thriving businesses, which catered to the needs of Filipino residents and families for many decades (Lee, 2015).

After 1965, Filipino communities have become more *dispersed* throughout the United States, with many living away from significant Filipino immigrant centers (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Fewer Filipino Americans lived in urban ethnic enclaves; many more moved to the suburban areas (Nadal, 2011). Despite the lack of co-ethnic community support, newer Filipino immigrants have been able to adapt more readily to American society due to the continued political, economic, and social

influence of the U.S. in the Philippines in concert with their ability to speak English and their typically high levels of education and professional skills (Espiritu, 1996). These skills have allowed them to eventually rely less on their own ethnic networks for support (Paik et al., 2014).

However, Filipinos still continue to have organizations to help advance the welfare of Filipinos and Filipino Americans (Espiritu, 2003). Many of these organizations help to maintain social and economic ties to the Philippines, particularly to regional hometowns; other organizations promote Filipino culture, especially amongst children of immigrants and later generations, and offer a range of social and cultural activities (Espiritu, 2003; Reisch, 2008). Through these organizations, Filipino Americans primarily derive co-ethnic social and cultural support.

Other Barriers and Opportunities

Time of arrival has clearly impacted the types of barriers and opportunities encountered by Filipino immigrants throughout the four waves of immigration. Filipinos arriving to the U.S. at the turn of the twentieth century found easy entrance to the U.S. due to their status as nationals. Unfortunately, they encountered a hostile and racist social climate, which at times led to violent encounters like the Watsonville, California riots in 1928 which led to murder (Chan, 1991; Lee, 2015). Severe immigration quotas curtailed opportunities until the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act when the restrictions were lifted.

Compared to second and third wave immigrants, many recent Filipino immigrants were primarily recruited to work in *occupations*, such as professional and technical fields. As a result, they have been characterized as *highly educated* and arriving to the U.S. with *higher socioeconomic status* (Bankston, 2006). As for their *location and settlement areas*, Filipino Americans continue to be concentrated in the West, with the highest proportion (43%) living in California (Hoeffel et al., 2012; Pew Research Center, 2013). Lastly, the combination of having been educated in an American-style educational system and familiarity with the *English language* enables today's Filipino immigrants to be less reliant on the

support of co-ethnic communities for jobs or other socioeconomic resources (Lee, 2015; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

From Historical Immigration to Present-Day Communities and Educational Experiences

Filipino immigrants' experiences with American government policies, societal reception, and co-ethnic communities were strongly influenced by other barriers and opportunities. An examination of the waves of Filipino immigration to the U.S. reveals the significant impact that time of arrival had on these factors. Filipinos who arrived prior to 1965 were primarily laborers with little education who were recruited to work on farms and canneries along the West Coast. They were negatively received by mainstream society, which viewed them as economic and social threats. Government policies intensified these experiences by enacting a series of barriers ultimately leading to a strict restriction of immigrants from the Philippines with the passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Act in 1934. The Luce Celler Act in 1946 appeared to be more receptive, but still had limitations and controlled Filipino immigration and naturalization. These restrictive government policies alongside the negative societal prejudice severely limited economic and social mobility.

While most policies were hostile, neutral and more receptive policies were offered to Filipino students to study in the U.S., including government-supported students as well as self-supported students. With immigration restrictions lifted, post-1965 immigrants also encountered much more neutral and receptive government support. Often recruited to work in professional and technical fields, newer immigrants generally came from higher socioeconomic brackets and had higher levels of education than their predecessors. However, these immigrants encountered employment barriers such as new licensure requirements, extensive recertification processes, or workplace racism (Lee, 2015). As a result, many professionals arriving in the U.S. experienced downward occupational mobility, such as Philippine-trained nurses who found themselves working as nurse's aides or lab technicians rather than nurses (Espiritu & Wolf, 2001). Many immigrants take supplementary courses or pursue additional degrees in order to meet

licensure requirements to work in their fields despite extensive training prior to arriving in the U.S.

Despite the dispersed nature of Filipino co-ethnic communities, they were historically a significant source of support for newly arrived Filipinos. Particularly in the years prior to 1965, the co-ethnic community often served not only as a space of safety against the hostile dominant society, but provided other important resources such as job leads, spaces for social and cultural interactions, or access to goods and services that were typically closed to Filipino immigrants outside of these ethnic enclaves (Lee, 2015). In the fourth wave of immigration, increased professional skills, higher education, and ability to speak English enabled newer Filipino immigrants to enter dominant culture neighborhoods and the labor market with more ease. The less hostile societal reception mitigated the need for the economic and social buffer previously provided by co-ethnic communities; post-1965 immigrants were able to acculturate at a much quicker pace and became more dispersed over time (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). New immigrants arriving from countries like the Philippines often move to places near family, friends or other co-ethnics, helping to establish urban ethnic communities and ethnoburbs in several states.

The Filipino American population resides throughout the United States, with the vast majority residing in the West (Lai & Arguelles, 1998). The historical legacy of labor recruitment in California and Hawaii helped to establish large Filipino American communities and networks that exist to this day. A large Filipino community also developed in Illinois, partly due to the communities established by early *pensionados* studying in places like the University of Illinois, but also thanks to the military (naval) recruitment connection which saw many Filipinos settle in places like Chicago, San Diego, and Norfolk (Lai & Arguelles, 1998; Pak, Maramba, & Hernandez, 2014; Yang, 2011). Job prospects within the tourist and retail industry in states like Nevada and New Jersey, have also attracted many newer immigrants seeking better economic opportunities (Lai & Arguelles, 1998).

Immigrants tend to reflect the socioeconomic and educational backgrounds of their sponsors; therefore, the constant influx of individuals ranging from low-wage job workers to professionals account for the economic diversity of the current Filipino American population (Espiritu & Wolf, 2001; Lai & Arguelles, 1998). Changes in the demographic

composition of Filipino immigrants over the four waves of immigration has characterized today's Filipinos as having higher levels of assimilation, acculturation, and socioeconomic status compared to other immigrants (Bankston, 2006; Espiritu & Wolf, 2001; Pew Research Center, 2013; Wolf, 1997). Not surprisingly, Filipinos naturalize at a much higher rate than the US average and have the highest percentage of naturalized immigrants among Asian American groups (Reeves & Bennett, 2004; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

A long history and significant presence in the United States has not shielded Filipinos from facing continued societal prejudices such as being perceived as perpetual foreigners (Pak et al., 2014). English proficiency, a long history of exposure to American culture, and ability to adapt economically have not necessarily helped with acceptance into mainstream society. Second generation Filipino Americans have reported lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of depression compared to other immigrant groups (Espiritu & Wolf, 2001). Filipino American youth still straddle two worlds, which inevitably influence their social, emotional, and academic skills. Outcomes such as education, ethnic identity, acculturation, and related issues need to be further explored (Paik et al., 2014).

Despite the overall high educational attainment levels, research highlighting disparities in educational progress do exist particularly for later generations of Filipino Americans (Espiritu & Wolf, 2001; Museus & Maramba, 2011). Overall, immigrant children tend to perform better than children of native-born Americans; therefore, levels of acculturation may have an impact on later educational achievements (Portes & Rumbaut, 1990, 2001). A study by Eng et al. (2008) found a negative relationship between higher levels of acculturation and poorer academic performance among Filipino American adolescents, signaling a need for further examination of this phenomenon. Like many students of color, Filipino Americans also experience barriers to success in the postsecondary sector (Buenavista, Jayakumar, & Misa-Escalante, 2009).

Postsecondary experiences of Filipino Americans continue to be mixed. Often categorized with other Asian American groups, Filipinos are sometimes considered a model minority and are excluded from support programs in colleges and universities. This label has a negative effect due to

the fact that it masks challenges and risk factors experienced by students in need of support. Filipino youth are not devoid of such experiences and more research is needed to understand why educational levels vary across students and the needs to support this group.

Conclusion and Implications

A review of the historical context of immigration among Filipino Americans offers a clearer understanding of their social, economic, and educational outcomes and mobility. The adapted modes of incorporation (Paik et al., 2014) provides context for these experiences through an examination of the government policies, societal reception, co-ethnic communities, and other barriers and opportunities experienced by Filipino Americans through four waves of immigration. Historically, the Filipino community has undergone a long and complicated history in the U.S., which have undoubtedly influenced their co-ethnic communities over time. Facing extremely negative attitudes and mostly exclusionary policies in the early twentieth century to mostly neutral positions after 1965, the Filipino American community has adapted and persevered.

Though generations of Filipino Americans had established communities in the U.S. through the first three waves of immigration, the most significant influx of Filipino immigrant came in the fourth wave after the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. Many post-1965 immigrants initially arrived to address shortages in professional fields such as the healthcare industry. Additionally, many also utilized the family reunification clause of the Immigration Act to reunite with family members living in the U.S. and to pursue better economic opportunities unavailable in the Philippines.

These four waves of immigration contribute to the current diversity of Filipino Americans and reveal generational differences. Future researchers may want to further explore the implications for generational status on social, economic, and educational outcomes as it may lead to a greater understanding of the mixed nature of achievement among Filipino Americans. Furthermore, rates of acculturation may vary not only among immigrant groups but among families. Family dynamics may be influenced

by differing rates of acculturation between parents and children, thereby impacting school experiences and educational outcomes. Generational status and levels of acculturation may also influence ethnic identity development among successive generations of immigrants and their children. However, it is unclear whether the continued influx of new immigrants would reinforce a transnational identity and strong ethnic community with sustained ties to the Philippines, or if ties would lessen and Filipino Americans become more dispersed over time. It may also be prudent to ask the question "what influence would these generational changes and levels of acculturation have on later achievement outcomes?" These considerations are beyond the scope of this paper, but more research is needed to disaggregate these findings.

This article provides a comprehensive model for analyzing historical experiences of the Filipino American experience. Exploring a community's historical context is a critical exercise that provides a greater understanding of immigrant group experiences and later achievement outcomes. The diverse composition of American schools and communities warrant a greater understanding of students' familial and ethnic backgrounds. Social and historical contextual factors may help educators to work more effectively with parents, community members, and other key stakeholders to create positive home-school-neighborhood partnerships for student educational success.

Researchers and policymakers also benefit from understanding historical context because it may help anticipate and effectively address potential issues, as well as predict possible outcomes and trends. As evidenced by the experiences of Filipino Americans over four waves of immigration, the experiences of immigrant families and communities are not stagnant and evolve over time. Consequently, history provides a long-lens perspective to understanding and addressing current social and educational concerns.

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