RACIALIZED IDENTITIES IN A COLORBLIND CONTEXT: FILIPINO AMERICAN YOUTH NEGOTIATING DISCOURSES OF RACE, IDENTITY, AND DIVERSITY IN SCHOOL

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Abstract

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This dissertation is an ethnographic study that examines the discursive process by which 1.5 and second generation Filipino American students construct racial and ethnic identities in the context of school. Using a theoretical framework that focuses on the racialization of immigrant students, this study investigates some of the underlying assumptions about race, ethnicity, culture, and diversity that impact the institutional discourses in a large, northeastern high school. It explores the discordance between a context in which race is not supposed to matter and students' experiences with race everyday. Findings suggest that at the institutional level, race is viewed as polarizing, rooted in bias and prejudice, and a threat to community. Thus, discourses are aimed to defuse and downplay race by calling for students and faculty to put racialized differences aside. In contrast, race proved to be a significant factor in youth participants' daily school experiences. They participated in activities bounded and defined by race, and dialogued with their peers about ethnic and racial categorical meanings, which manifested in conversations as cultural stereotypes, yet verged on outright racism. Findings also show how Filipino youth found innovative ways to offer alternative representations to dominant perceptions of culture. Traditional notions of culture and identity as fixed were challenged and instead are shown to emerge as socially-embedded systems of meaning.

Importantly, this study provides a deeper understanding of the interracial connections not just between non-whites and whites, but among non-whites. Filipino American youth in this study contended with a dominant bipolar racial discourse that marginalizes the racialized experiences of Asians and Pacific Islanders. However, instead of feeling invisible or marginalized data point to how they negotiated a black-white racial discourse to decide when and how they enter dialogues about race. Youth reconceptualized this racial binary to position themselves on a continuum to form the racial "middle ground" between blacks and whites. Importantly, rather than a racial hierarchy that places whites at the top, youth used discursive strategies to place themselves on a *racial continuum* that emphasizes the interconnectedness among racial minorities.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Study

This dissertation is a critical ethnography that examines the processes by which Filipino American youth in high school construct ethnic and racial identities through the negotiation of discourse. Though a relatively small body of literature, much of the scholarly work on Filipinos focuses on those living on the west coast (see for example, Espiritu & Wolf, 2001; Maramba, 2008). The literature on the secondary educational experiences of Filipino Americans is even more limited. Thus, this study expands the research on this significant population.

My experiences as a second generation daughter born to parents who immigrated to the United States from the Philippines have informed and shaped this dissertation. I grew up in a suburb of a large metropolitan area where the student population was predominantly white, middle class. I was constantly navigating between the social worlds of my friends and my family, embodying and creating discourses that granted me membership in each. These discourses are the meanings that structure and map the world around us and they give meaning to what we call identities. This project investigates school as a discursive space where institutional discourses created within the school context impact student perspectives, beliefs, and actions regarding ethnic and racial diversity. The research questions guiding this study are:

- What discourses impact/frame the racial and ethnic understandings of Filipino American students in a northeastern urban high school?
- How do Filipino American youth (re)create and make sense of discourses to position themselves within their social worlds?

- How do they negotiate discourses to construct ethnic and racial identities?

This dissertation draws on data collected over a period of six months at a large, high school located in New York City called Mission Catholic High School[1]. I utilized ethnographic methods such as participant observation, interviews, and focus groups to examine how school functions as a discursive space in which understandings of race, ethnicity, diversity, and identity are formed. I looked at institutional discourses; the patterned ways administrators and faculty spoke about and framed issues of race, ethnicity, and diversity. I draw from a variety of contexts such as the classroom, school-wide events, and conversations. I also focused on student discourses; how students frame and make sense of race and ethnicity, and in turn how students enacted and performed their identities.

As a former colony, the Philippines has had a long-standing connection to the United States. Yen Espiritu (2003) has argued that Filipinos are Americanized even before coming to the U.S. because of strong economic and cultural connections. Upon arrival, Filipinos tend to blend more easily into the American landscape, becoming an invisible minority. This may be because of certain characteristics that distinguish them from other immigrants, many of which result from the historical relationship to the United States such as their relative proficiency in English and their familiarity with American cultural practices. Also, a large number are of professional, middle-class backgrounds, which eases their transition to and incorporation into American society. Consequently, other Americans are often unclear about Filipinos as a distinct group yet they are deemed as somehow different, foreign, and often mistaken for Chinese, Japanese, Korean, or even Black or Hispanic (Espiritu & Wolf, 2001; Bankston, 2006).

[1] Mission Catholic High School is a pseudonym for the school.

There are an increasing number of students of color, particularly 1.5 and second generation immigrant students in schools (C. Suarez-Orozco & M. Suarez-Orozco, 2001). According to William Frey (2011) the United States has reached its "demographic tipping point" where 49.8 percent of infants under one are racial/ethnic minorities, many of whom are of Asian or Pacific Island (API) descent. As such, scholars in education and in the field of Asian American studies are contributing to a small but growing body of literature that critically examines the racialized experiences of APIs and immigrants of color in schools. However, in education research and even in the field of Asian American studies, much of the research does not disaggregate the API sub-groups, which results in a standardization of experiences (Buenavista, Jayakumar, & Misa-Escalante, 2009).

Increased attention to the growing diversity of the United States population can be found in vast sources from popular media, to scholarly articles, to presidential primary debates and questions of what to do with increasing diversity emerge. From the banning of ethnic studies in Arizona, to the increased policing of immigrants in states such as Georgia and Alabama, the claim that we live in a post-racial society is a fallacy at best. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2010) questions how individuals "explain the apparent contradiction between their professed color blindness and the United States' color-coded inequality" (p. 2). He argues that a contemporary racial ideology, which he terms *colorblind racism*, creates the perception that the civil rights movement in the 1960s has removed structural barriers to social mobility, effectively leveling the playing field. Racial differences, thus, are explained as resulting from non-racial dynamics. What is more, this creates a racial discourse in which individuals have become so concerned about not being perceived as racist that they "forsake the more central project of understanding the contours of structural racism" (Leonardo, 2009, p. 79). As a result, race becomes taboo,

especially for those who may experience racial privilege and view naming race as impolite (Tatum, 2003).

Importantly, colorblind and post-racial ideology avoids a critical analysis of structural racism and corresponding power relations. Schools are implicated in this framework. Throughout this dissertation I present data that reveal how school can function as a discursive space in which understandings of concepts such as diversity, race/ethnicity, culture, and identity are constructed and communicated. Such discursive knowledge impacts the experiences of youth in schools, particularly ethnic and racial minority youth. For example, scholars such as Stacey Lee and Angela Valenzuela have documented in their school ethnographies that some educators hold the belief that immigrant cultures are obstacles to the integration of immigrant youth into the American mainstream. This belief leads to the subtractive process of schooling such that youth are divested of their social and cultural capital, and their cultural identities are undermined (Lee, 2005; Valenzuela, 1997).

Rather than focusing on theories of assimilation to understand the adaptation and experiences of immigrants this dissertation focuses on the process of racialization as an alternative lens. This is the process by which individuals are sorted into broad racial categories and take on a racial identity (Lee, 2005). Although race may be an ideological construct it has material consequences (Leonardo, 2009, p. 133). Mica Pollock argues that even though schools are believed to be "the great equalizer" (2004, p. 4) they "are key places where we rank, sort, order, and differently equip our children along 'racial' lines" (ibid.).

According to Ian Lopez (2006), "[S]ome people genuinely believe that the best way to get beyond racism is to get beyond race" (p. 9). However, this perspective has risks. According to Zeus Leonardo (2009), multicultural education, when critical, "is a form of transformative

education that allows both whites and students of color to know more deeply their own histories as inflected by other groups' struggles" (p. 147). When uncritical, it takes for granted the diverse perspectives, histories, and struggles for the sake of unity. Thus, a colorblind racial ideology that actively avoids engaging race especially in its institutionalized forms is uncritical and risks upholding discourses that reproduce and perpetuate racial, ethnic, and cultural hierarchical differences. Yet, it is common today to believe that we as a society have moved beyond race, or at least should have, and that anyone concerned with race is simply *playing the race card*.

Historical Contexts: Filipinos in the United States

According to historical records, the first individuals of Asian descent to arrive in North America were Filipinos. They arrived in 1587 in Morro Bay, California on Spanish trading ships. However, the first Filipinos to settle long-term were in the Louisiana bayous and are thought to have been established in 1765 (Cordova, 1983 as cited in Coloma, 2006). After this initial arrival, few Filipinos came to the U.S. until the first half of the twentieth century when an influx of Filipino migrant workers came due to American imperialism in Asia and the Pacific (Baldoz, 2004). This influx is characterized as the first major wave of Filipino immigration. Arriving as colonial subjects to fulfill labor demands, scholars argue that the postcolonial relationship between the two nations impacts the experiences of Filipinos in the U.S. today.

Early Filipino migration: The first wave

The first major wave of immigrants from the Philippines came in the early twentieth century and was largely due to the United States occupation. After the Philippines was annexed to the U.S. from Spain tens of thousands migrated to Hawaii and the mainland. Thus, unlike

other immigrants of Asian origin who were prohibited to enter, Filipinos arrived from a territory owned and occupied by the United States (Baldoz, 2004). This first wave was overwhelmingly male and under the age of thirty. Most arrived in the western and southern parts of the country, fulfilling the demand for cheap labor in the agriculture industry. A small number were government-sponsored students, while the vast majority was migrant workers from poor and uneducated families (Bankston, 2006; Takaki, 1989).

The primary purpose of their migration was to pursue economic opportunities abroad. After the Philippines became a territory of the United States, distribution of land and wealth changed. Property was seized and imperialist landowners frequently were far removed from their lots. As a result, resources were drained from local towns, as were many of the local farming jobs. The most promising path to reclaim or achieve economic prosperity was to go to America where they could earn money and return to the Philippines with newfound wealth (Takaki, 1989). However, conditions were not quite as they anticipated. Carlos Bulosan (1973) authored a story of a young migrant worker from the Philippines following the dream that America will lead to great success and fulfillment of happiness. His story is an autobiography, but it also gives voice to thousands of migrant workers of this first wave. What he encountered in the United States was a world of racism, discrimination, and outright violence perpetrated against a hated nationality. Filipinos were often exploited and treated as criminals, forbidden to marry whites, and fired, beaten, or killed, if suspected of organized action to better their conditions.

The Immigration Act of 1924 established a national origins quota. Rick Baldoz (2004) argues that this policy was integral to nation building, which merged national and racial identities that favored immigrants from Europe while excluding immigrants from Asia. Thus, immigrants from Asia were effectively barred from entering the United States. However, as an

American territory of the U.S. Filipinos migrated as nationals, fulfilling the agricultural sector's demand for cheap labor. By the 1930s there were more than 45,000 Filipinos in America working mostly on the west coast. In 1934 the Tydings-McDuffie Act reclassified Filipinos from American nationals to aliens as a result of growing anxieties over Filipinos' demand for political and social representation (Baldoz, 2004). Admissions were restricted to fifty per year. A year later, the Repatriation Act provided free transportation to the Philippines for any who wanted to return, yet a large majority stayed in the United States, finding it difficult to return to the Philippines. If they were to return to the Philippines their only chance to return to the U.S. was only as part of a 50-person per year quota (Bankston, 2006). Migration to the new world separated the migrant workers from their lives in the Philippines both physically and psychologically. Even though they faced extreme hardships in America, it became their home (Bulosan, 1973; Espiritu, 2003).

Post-1965 immigration: The second wave

A small increase in Filipino immigration occurred after World War II when the quota increased to 100 and U.S. military bases were established in the Philippines. Additionally, a wave of nurses came from the Philippines, and though they were legally obligated to return many stayed because of the healthcare demand (Bankston, 2006). However, it was the Immigration Act of 1965 (also known as the Hart-Cellar Act) that generated a great wave of migration to the United States. The Act reopened doors to immigrants following a period when the relatively conservative, restrictive, policy of 1924 governed immigration. The Act relieved the country-of-origin quota for new arrivals in the United States that favored immigrants from European countries. As a result, an increasingly large number of immigrants arrived from Latin American

and Asian countries since 1965. During the period from 1965 to 2002 approximately 8.2 million immigrants were admitted to the United States, 34 percent of whom came from Asian countries. 1.6 million arrived from the Philippines, rendering the Filipino immigrant population the largest during this period (Min, 2006, p. 26-27).

Unlike the first, the second wave of Filipino immigrants came largely from cities, and they arrived mostly as settlers rather than as sojourners. This second wave consisted of a bifurcated group of Filipino immigrants. On one end, a substantial number included professionals such as engineers, scientists, accountants, teachers, lawyers, nurses, and doctors (Takaki, 1989, p. 432). On the other end, taking advantage of the family reunification provision of the law, many arrived as unskilled immigrants joining family members already in the country creating a chain migration. A large number were women, unlike those preceding, who were predominantly male. Altogether these characteristics make the second wave of immigrants distinct from the first wave and have influenced their incorporation into the United States.

Current and local contexts: Filipinos in New York

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Filipino Americans are the third largest immigrant group in the United States, outnumbered by immigrants from Mexico and from China. Although the Philippines was granted independence from the U.S. in 1946 and ceased to be a territory scholars have argued that its social and economic dependence on American industries undermines its sovereignty (Buenavista et al. 2009). The Philippines is the second largest labor-exporting country in the world, second to Mexico (Carlos, 2002). Workers who migrate tend to be more skilled and employable than those who stay behind. As a result, the economic development of the Philippines lags. In 2003, 30.4 percent of the population was estimated to

live below the poverty line (Soraya, 2007). The majority of Filipinos abroad send remittances back to the Philippines. As one of the youth participants in this study stated, "But instead of buying ourselves a ticket to come there, they [her parents] work more and bring in money and giving it back over there to my relatives over there." In 2005, remittances accounted for 14 percent of the Philippines' Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (ibid.).

Nearly all of the parents of the youth participants in the study came to the U.S. in the early or mid-1980s. In the late 1980s President Aquino created labor policy that formalized the contributions of Filipinos abroad to the local Philippine economy. She created programs that facilitated the deployment of overseas workers as well as supported overseas workers while abroad[2] thereby institutionalizing the dependence on overseas workers (Carlos, 2002).

According to the 2009 American Community Survey there are approximately 3.2 million Filipinos in the United States making them the second largest Asian-origin group. New York has the second highest concentration of Filipinos after California. According to data compiled by the Asian American Federation of NY, New York City is home to 64 percent of the state's population, a 21 percent increase since 2000. Figure 1.1 contains demographic information regarding Filipino's educational attainment, poverty, and income rates as compared to New York City's general population:

[2] The Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA), the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) are all programs initiated to facilitate labor deployment and support overseas workers (Carlos, 2002).

Figure 1.1

	Filipinos	NYC
Education		
< 9th grade ed	4%	10%
no HS diploma	6	21
some form of post-secondary ed	84	51
Poverty		
below poverty	4.4	18.9
children in poverty	3.3	37.8
Income		
median household	78,075	47,581

(Asian American Federation of NY)

Overall, Filipinos fare well as compared to the city's general population in terms of educational attainment and percent living in poverty. Filipino families' median household income is higher, however they have larger households and are more likely to live in crowded conditions.

In the 1960s and 1970s Filipinos were one of the largest groups (the other being Indian) to arrive by acquiring professional visas. A chain migration to New York and New Jersey occurred due to this occupation-based migration. After naturalization, many of these professional immigrants invited parents and siblings for permanent residence increasing their presence. A substantial number worked in the medical industry. In 2000 about 13 percent of Filipino Americans were physicians, surgeons, nurses, or medical technicians with nurses alone comprising nearly 9 percent (Min, 2006).

However, it is important to note that this specialization was, and is, largely concentrated amongst immigrants and not U.S.-born Filipinos (Bankston, 2006). Thus, the concentration in the medical field is due to immigration policy and not necessarily to the attainment of subsequent generations. In fact, U.S.-born Filipinos have lower educational attainment than their foreign-born counterparts. Of those born in the U.S., 36 percent obtain a college degree compared to 48

percent of those born in the Philippines (Min, 2006). This suggests that somewhere in the adaptation to American society children of immigrants are facing some barriers to attainment.

On Culture and Identity

Critical scholar Yen Le Espiritu (1994, 2003) argues that the historical relationship between the United States and the Philippines plays a significant role in how Filipinos construct their identity in America. Military and economic connections were established while the Philippines was a U.S. colony. But importantly, a cultural connection was manifested that produced a pervasive Americanization of the population. Their educational system was modeled after the American system, and English was the language predominantly used in instruction. Consequently, Filipinos were encouraged to regard American culture, society, values, political systems, and way of life as superior to their own. This has had a significant impact on the migration trends from the Philippines to America, a "land of opportunity and fair play" (Espiritu & Wolf, 2001, p. 158). Thus, Filipino identity is contingent upon not only racialized minority status within the United States, but also upon this colonized national status. The latter influencing greatly those who, upon arrival in America, see themselves as arriving in their "homeland" but face certain discrimination and racism.

An important caveat to bear in mind is that immigrants are not simply "bringing culture with them" nor are they adopting American culture. Rather, immigrants construct distinct new cultures and subcultures in response to social, economic, and political structures that constrain their adaptation (Espiritu, 2003). Filipino women and men "as simultaneously colonized national, immigrant, and racialized minority – are transformed through the experience of colonialism and migration and they in turn transform and remake the social world around them"

(Espiritu, 2003, p. 2). In other words, immigrants do not simply insert or incorporate themselves into existing social spaces in the United States; by adapting existing skills and assets to the structural constraints of their new contexts, they transform and create new cultural spaces.

Since reaching the "tipping point" the demographics of the new immigration are changing, as are the contexts in which they are settling. In contrast to older generations that are largely white, increased globalization has caused a rise in global migration, a growth of global cities, and a growth in racial and ethnic minority populations in the United States. According to Saskia Sassen (1998, 2001) privatization, deregulation, digitalization, and the geographic dispersal of economic activities are impacting societies around the world. As such, a cheap labor force is in great demand, which has resulted in an increase in global migration and a growth of global cities. What is more, Bonilla-Silva reminds us that these market dynamics create a color-coded labor force. These factors interact to create discourses that children of immigrants must negotiate to form their sense of self. In other words, global migration has immense social and cultural implications for the children of these immigrants.

Integrating current scholarship on immigration with scholarship on race provides a more relevant conceptual framework to begin understanding how youth are navigating the different social worlds in which they occupy. However, like Latinos, Blacks, and Asians, all *immigrants* cannot be lumped into the same category. The experiences of various groups differ widely, which has much to do with attitudes towards immigrants, historical and contemporary relations between countries, and structural barriers. Such factors contribute to the production of discourses impacting the process through which immigrants adapt to their new settings.

Overview of chapters

Chapter 2 presents a review of literature for the theoretical framing of the dissertation. Theories of assimilation are frequently used as dominant frameworks to understand the adaptation and incorporation of immigrants into the United States. However, such theories lack a critical understanding of the structures of race and the process immigrants undergo to become racialized individuals. The process of racialization is discussed as an alternative lens through which to understand the experiences of immigrants of color. It moves beyond an analysis of the economic incorporation of immigrants into American society and takes into consideration the centrality of race in structuring society.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used for the dissertation including research design, researcher positionality, and the limits of the dissertation. Ethnography is based on the belief that knowledge is locally produced and context-specific. This project is based on the notion that identities are dynamic, relational constructs that are best understood through qualitative inquiry. It focuses on discourses, or the taken-for-granted assumptions and knowledge that groups of people learn and share through participation in their daily social lives. In what Burawoy (1998) calls the *extended case method* researchers must go into the field with preexisting theory to help guide and make sense of empirical phenomena, but then to extend back out, and build upon this theory to bring the particular in conversation with the general. Thus, the research design, data collection methods, and process of data analysis support the methodological intent of locating everyday experiences within larger, social and historical contexts.

Chapters 4-6 present the data and findings of the study. Chapter 4 focuses on the institutional racial discourses of the school. It analyzes the distinct patterns of talking about and framing racial and ethnic diversity, both by the institution and by students. Findings from this

chapter suggest that race is viewed by the administration and faculty as polarizing, rooted in bias and prejudice, and a threat to community. Institutional discourses, therefore, were aimed to defuse and downplay race, and a distinct avoidance of talking about students' racial and ethnic self-understandings was evident. In contrast, students explained how diversity provides them with a source of connection and comfort, a sense of personal security, and exposure to multiple perspectives, ideas, and activities.

Chapter 5 examines more in-depth the youth participants' experiences and understandings of race and ethnicity. It presents salient discourses for participants and examines the multiple ways in which they negotiate them to construct understandings of race, diversity, and their sense of self. Findings suggest that race was an important factor in students' daily school experiences. Youth participants negotiated discourse and used various strategies to make sense of their racial and ethnic identities that entailed participating in racialized activities, dialoguing with peers, and positioning themselves within racial discourse. They drew on discourse about Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Filipinos to rearticulate racial and ethnic meanings to construct their identities. Thus, youth engaged others' perceptions, cultural stereotypes, and a broad racial category that often leads to ethnic lumping and frequently being misidentified. Importantly, Filipino youth positioned themselves within a bipolar racial discourse as the "middle ground" between blacks and whites. They reconceptualized a racial binary and emphasized a *racial continuum*.

Chapter 6 focuses primarily on the event, International Night, which is Mission Catholic High's annual multicultural event. The event functions to solidify a sense of community among the racially and ethnically diverse student body. The chapter also examines the ways in which students use discursive strategies to creatively (re)construct notions of culture and identity

through performance. Importantly, it also addresses some of the limitations of International Night, which are couched in simplistic views of culture.

Chapter 7 is the final chapter in which the findings of the dissertation are summarized. I discuss theoretical and methodological implications. Focusing on the discourses at MCH allows for the examination of the complex, conflicting, and multiple nature of culture. Discourses also provide insight into the ways in which students position themselves within their social worlds. I also argue for the importance of an alternative analytic framework that investigates the processes of racialization and the interracial connections among non-white minority groups. Such an analytic framework can provide a deeper understanding of the experiences of racial and ethnic minority students in schools. I also discuss implications for a critical multicultural education that provides students with the opportunity to critically engage their racialized identities, experiences, and notions of inequality. Such multicultural efforts contextualize students within current and historical structures when textbooks often do not, and give all students the opportunity to better understand the contours of democracy.

CHAPTER 2

ASSIMILATION REVISITED: THE RACIALIZATION OF IMMIGRANTS

This chapter presents a review of literature for the theoretical framing of the dissertation. Theories of assimilation are frequently used to understand the adaptation and incorporation of immigrants into the United States. However, with the increase in immigrants of color in recent years, especially among the second generation, a focus on racialization has become preeminent. Racialization entails the process by which individuals position themselves and are positioned by others within racial categories, and it is implicated in the construction of racial and ethnic identities. I begin with an overview of the dominant theories of assimilation, and discuss their shortcomings in terms of 1) their take on culture and assumptions that cultures and identities are static, comprehensive categories, and 2) the lack of analysis on the structuring power of race. I then discuss racialization as an alternative lens through which to understand the experiences of immigrants of color.

Theories of Assimilation

In the case of immigrants of the early twentieth century, their destiny within the United States was predicated upon a straight-line model of assimilation. The longer they spent in the United States the better off they would be, both economically and socially. According to Warner and Srole (1945):

> Each consecutive ethnic generation pushes progressively farther out of the bottom level and into each of the successive layers above. That the class index of an ethnic group is related to the length of its settlement in the city is a manifestation of the continuous

> advance achieved in the hierarchy of each new generation (as cited in Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, & Holdaway, 2008, p. 6).

Immigrants were expected to gradually lose their distinctiveness, shed their native cultures and "Americanize." In recent decades, however, this explanatory framework has been deemed by social scientists as "a worn-out theory that imposes ethnocentric and patronizing demands on minority peoples struggling to retain their cultural and ethnic integrity" (Alba & Nee, 2005, p. 35). Critics claim such linear models were developed in connection with the experiences of European ethnics under different economic and labor settings and no longer apply to current immigration streams; that because of relatively similar phenotypical and cultural characteristics, Europeans were more accepted than current immigrants who come from predominantly developing Asian and Latin American countries (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Linear assimilation models have argued by moving "a further step away from ethnic 'ground zero,' the community and culture established by the immigrants, and a step closer to more complete assimilation" later generations inevitably experience upward mobility (Alba & Nee, 2005, p. 39). However, other immigration scholars argue that second generation assimilation patterns follow a more segmented path. In other words, children of immigrants do not face a singular trajectory of upward mobility through adopting American ways. Rather, children assimilate into different segments of society depending on individual and family characteristics, varying modes of incorporation[3], and vulnerability factors (e.g., color, location, and absence of mobility ladders). Such a complex of factors mediate the experiences of

[3] Modes of incorporation include factors in the receiving context that determine paths of assimilation. They include: 1) policies of the host government; 2) values and prejudices of the new society; and 3) characteristics of the co-ethnic community (Portes & Zhou, 2005, p. 90-91).

immigrants in their new settings (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; C. Suarez-Orozco, 2005; Portes & Zhou, 1993).

Problematizing assimilation

The conceptualization of culture is problematic in this previous view of assimilation. In essence, the three paths are based on assumptions that culture remains static, and an unchanged majority culture either accepts or rejects minority cultures. However, "'American culture' is a moving target," according to Kasinitz, et al. (2008) and the notion of an American identity is undergoing reconstruction and evolution. This ethnogenesis is in large part due to the new waves of immigrants from distinctively non-European countries and the increasing transnationalism that perpetuates ties with the country of origin (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; C. Suarez-Orozco & M. Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Smith, 2006). Importantly, assimilation theories are based on the assumption that immigrants import their culture, rather than cultures being conceived of as adaptations to the host society.

A more recent theory is offered by the authors of *Inheriting the City* (2008) who found that on measures of educational attainment and labor force status, two-fifths of the second-generation have already surpassed their immigrant parents (p. 16). Their success is attributed to a number of factors, yet they conclude that the second generation's distinct advantage comes from the *interaction* of structure and culture, which opens up substantial life choices. While their research showed examples of both traditional linear and segmented assimilation for immigrants they state another possibility: second generation immigrants occupy a unique position that gives them the ability to select the best traits from their immigrant parents and their native born peers,

which places them at an advantage over their parents and in some cases, their native-born counterparts.

They make important steps towards addressing the mutability of culture and the agency individuals and groups possess to form and inform their cultural worlds. In other words, they give credence to the notion that immigrants reconstruct cultures in response to conditions and available resources in the United States (Alba & Nee, 2005; Espiritu, 2001). However, in spite of this acknowledgement, in their study Chinese immigrants and white Americans are used as comparison groups in order to judge the incorporation of the second generation into American society. This orientation toward economic incorporation with a blatant disregard to racial, ethnic, and cultural differences ignores the fact that immigrants contend with a racial structure that privileges whites, and ignores the processes by which this hegemonic structure is secured (Leonardo, 2009).

Theoretical Framework: The Racialization of Immigrants

Racial differences mediate the everyday experiences of immigrants of color. Omi and Winant (1994) define race as "a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies" (p. 55). It is an unstable construct consisting of social meanings utilized and transformed by political struggle. They go on to say that although racial categories invoke some type of biological characteristic (e.g., skin color), "selection of these particular human features for purposes of racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process" (ibid.). *Racial formation*, then, is "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (ibid.), and *racialization* is the process by which individuals locate themselves and are located within

racial categories (Lee, 2005; Waters, 1990, 1999; Kasinitz et al., 2008). I argue, as evidenced in chapter 5, that it can also be applied to other social phenomena such as activities.

Conceptual framing: Figured worlds, discourse, and identities

The theoretical framing of this dissertation is based on particular understandings of culture, identity, and discourse. Cultural studies scholars define culture as:

> Both the meanings and values which arise amongst distinctive social groups and classes, on the basis of their given historical conditions and relationships, through which they 'handle' and respond to the conditions of existence; and as the lived traditions and practices through which those 'understandings' are expressed and in which they are embodied (Hall, 1980, p. 63).

Such a definition encompasses how individuals and groups experience structures[4] and conditions, and importantly, how interpretations of these are lived. It is important for this project because it captures the significance of individual and collective understandings of the world and, in turn, how these understandings impact social action. It also suggests the importance of commonalities such as nation of origin, immigrant status and class background.

However, Lila Abu-Lughod (1991) cautions that anthropological meanings of culture create differences between groups of people that "enforce separations that inevitably carry a sense of hierarchy" (p. 466), especially among groups defined by national origin, ethnicity, and

[4] In *A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation* William Sewell (1992) states structures are "sets of mutually sustaining schemas and resources that empower and constrain social action and that tend to be reproduced by that social action" (p. 19). Schemas, broadly, are ideas and procedures that are rooted in cultural frameworks, which makes structures variable both in their impact on social action and in their susceptibility to change due to agency. "Agents are empowered by structures, both by the knowledge of cultural schemas that enables them to mobilize resources and by the access to resources that enables them to enact schemas" (p. 27).

race (Eisenhart, 2001). These separations are based on essentialized meanings that gloss over contradictions and conflicts of interests for the sake of making differences between groups of people seem self-evident. Thus, in order to resist the production of hierarchies, scholars should allow "for the possibility of recognizing within a social group the play of multiple, shifting, and competing statements with practical effects," (ibid., p. 472) to come through in their research. She goes on to say that "Both practice and discourse are useful because they work against the assumption of boundedness" (ibid.).

Dorothy Holland offers a theoretical perspective that works towards this goal. In *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (1998) she emphasizes locality, coproduction of meaning, and participation in what she terms *figured worlds*. She characterizes a figured world as a social space. She states,

> Figured worlds take shape within and grant shape to the coproduction of activities, discourses, performances, and artifacts. A figured world is peopled by the figures, characters, and types who carry out its tasks and who also have styles of interacting within, distinguishable perspectives on, and orientations toward it (p. 51).

She goes on to say,

> By "figured world," then, we mean a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others. Each is a simplified world populated by a set of agents…who engage in a limited range of meaningful acts or changes of state…as moved by a specific set of forces (p. 52).

Recognizing the complexity in defining culture, I draw from these conceptions and view it as the following: a social (or *figured*) world that has particular frames of reference that provide

meaning to people, activities, and objects, and other such phenomena. Such meanings are interpreted and enacted through individual and group participation. Therefore, culture includes not just the systems of meaning that individuals share with others, but also their manifestations through peoples' actions. As such, people are "making and remaking their material conditions of existence" (Willis, 2000, p. xiv). Culture, then, is practiced in spaces where social interaction takes place, which gives individuals the potential to reproduce, resist, and create systems of meaning.

Discourse and narratives are a focal point of this study, because they constitute, and are constituted by, the knowledge and the 'truths' we come to know as we live and interact in social, cultured spaces. According to Naomi Quinn (2010), discourse "is the best available window into cultural understandings and the way these are negotiated by individuals" (p. 239). She later states that "things people say offer certainly not an unproblematic record of the cultural understandings that people have in mind when they say them, and certainly not the only record of these shared understandings, but simply the fullest and most decipherable record available" (ibid).

According to Michel Foucault, power is everywhere, in all unequal relationships, and is comprised of discursive force and resistance. These mold and form the social body through the production and circulation of "discourses of truth" (as cited in McHoul & Grace, 1993, p. 59). Resistance creates fractures and cleavages in society and individuals that allow for groupings and regroupings of social hierarchies and identities (Foucault, 1978). The disciplinary nature of power is of particular importance. In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault (1977) discusses how disciplinary power acts to produce docile bodies, or subjects, that are integral to the functioning of a social body. Rather than conceiving of power as oppressive or exercised through violence, power is productive and exercised through discourse and resistance; the accumulation and

circulation of discourses attempt to normalize, categorize, and ultimately distribute individuals to fit within ranks of society. These processes produce ways of being that allow for society to function efficiently. As Foucault states, they operate for the "management of life" (Foucault, 1978, p. 147). Power without resistance would result in a society of outright domination and coercion.

Surveillance and "the art of punishing" are technologies that ensure "the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved" (Foucault, 1977, p. 182). Every day individuals are interpreted and evaluated against a narrativized world (Holland, 1998). For example, in Holland's study, women who deviated from the discourse of an ideal women and her life path "were judged to be aberrant and problematic in some way" (Holland, 1998, p. 217). Thus, as discourse structures and maps the world around us, it governs our decisions, activities, and perceptions, as well as our standards of behaviors.

This occurs in schools as well. School ethnographies have documented how surveillance and discourse operate to attempt to normalize behavior of certain groups and individuals based on socially constructed categories such as race, gender, class, and sexuality (see for example Paul Willis, 1981; Stacey J. Lee, 1994, 2005; Jamie Lew, 2006; and Daniel Yon, 2000). Therefore, discourse is what we know about our worlds, and has important, practical effects. Drawing from Foucault and Naomi Quinn (2010), discourse then represents implicit cultural meanings as they are enacted and produced in social interaction.

Narrating, according to Colette Daiute (2011) is a sense-making process. She argues that young people's narratives are a place where they explore a range of social issues and construct social consciousness. Through narratives, young people make sense of the world in terms of their experiences. And also, narratives provide opportunities for cultural interaction and social

development when young people experiment with different social positions, take on different social roles, and explore the dynamics of power and powerlessness (Daiute, 2000). These manifestations of their understandings reinforce and perpetuate the power and institutions that make such knowledge possible, emphasizing the productive nature of discourse, narrative, and power (Daiute, 2000; Foucault, 1977).

In "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Stuart Hall (1990) challenged the essentialist notion that authentic identities exist and are accomplished, and are then represented in cultural practice (p. 392). He stated instead, that identity should be thought of "as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (ibid). This project focuses on discourses of identity, rather than identity itself. This perspective resists the notion of identity as existing fixed, within the body, and instead looks at the ways in which we speak about and perform socially-constructed concepts. Thus, this idea of "becoming" (Hall, 1990, p. 394) is a way to begin writing *against* identity.

According to Hall (1990), "We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always 'in context'" (p. 394). Hall goes on to say, "identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (p. 394), and I would add, the present and imaginings of the future. Individuals learn about their cultural worlds and begin to locate themselves in those worlds. People "are recruited into and gain perspective on such practices and come to identify themselves as actors of more or less influence, more or less privilege, and more or less power in these worlds" (Holland, 1998, p. 60). Thus, an important part of participation in a cultured world is learning how to act, and how to limit activity based on concerns of what is acceptable and unacceptable for certain individuals and groups. Like Hall, Holland emphasizes

positionality and action. She argues that social contexts provide "meaning and action in which social positions and social relationships are named and conducted," (ibid). Therefore, this dissertation focuses on discourses and the discursive strategies individuals use to represent themselves in social and relational contexts.

Centrality of race

According to Solórzano (1998) critical race theory is "an evolving methodological, conceptual, and theoretical construct that attempts to disrupt racism and dominant racial paradigms in education" (as cited in Buenavista et al., 2009, p. 71). Although many scholars focus on issues of subordination and oppression, I turn less to concepts that undermine the agency and power of individuals. I am not arguing that racial hierarchies do not exist, but rather I take into consideration the perspectives and self-understandings of youth participants who do not embody disempowered racialized identities. However, this dissertation is informed by critical race theory in that 1) it argues race is central to understanding the experiences of people of color especially in terms of inequality, 2) it is critical of notions of neutrality, objectivity, and color-blindness, and 3) it maintains that the voices and experiences of people of color are integral to informing research and practice (Buenavista et al., 2009; Solórzano, 1998). What is more, this project is also informed by Zeus Leonardo's *critical social theory of race and education* insofar as it aims to provide a critical analysis of how race operates in the context of school.

Race is an axis around which social structures and everyday experiences are organized. As stated earlier, we read others' bodies and form expectations. Someone not acting in accordance with our expectations can give us pause, which reveals preconceived notions of racial categories. However, many Americans maintain that race is no longer relevant. In his book,

Racism Without Racists (2010) Bonilla-Silva outlines the current racial ideology that characterizes the post-Civil Rights era. This ideology posits that overt means for maintaining racial inequality through racist practices (i.e., legal segregation) have been removed effectively giving individuals equal access to opportunities regardless of race. However, he argues that this colorblind racism "otherizes softly" (p. 3) such that racial inequalities are not talked about in terms of race, but rather personal characteristics of the individual. Such a belief turns focus away from "racialized social systems" in which privileges have historically been awarded to "Europeans (the peoples who became 'white') over non-Europeans (the peoples who became 'nonwhite')" such that a structural analysis of race is avoided (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 9). It prevents an examination of "the *state* of being dominant" and the "direct processes that secure domination and the privileges associated with it" (Leonardo, 2009, p. 9, emphasis in original).

Orienting the racialization of immigrants: Towards an alternative framework

To begin to understand current racial structures, the socio-historical process by which race has become institutionalized is necessary. Importantly, integrating immigrants of color creates a more robust framework for analyzing the complexity of how race operates. Bonilla-Silva's work, despite making great insights into current racial ideology, draws from data that includes only blacks and whites, leaving out the experiences of immigrants of color, and APIs in particular.

Scholars argue that the construction of race and the racialization of immigrant groups have historically been implicated in the creation and defining of the nation state. Rick Baldoz (2004) argues that imposing racial categories onto groups have functioned to determine citizenship. He focuses primarily on Filipinos in the early half of the twentieth century who

immigrated to the United States as colonial subjects fulfilling the demand for cheap labor. As a territory of the U.S., Filipinos were nationals, so they did not have access to the rights or protections of citizens. Baldoz argues that America's incorporation of Filipinos into a racial hierarchy was a strategy for legitimating their imperialist presence in the Philippines and exploiting its people and resources. What is more, by conflating race and national identity Filipinos were denied access to citizenship in the U.S., and they were denied the same rights and protections afforded to white ethnic immigrant workers.

The notion that race is conflated with an American identity is evident today. Currently, an American identity is often conflated with whiteness (Espiritu, 2001; Lee, 1996, 2006; Wu, 2002). This undoubtedly occurs with the influx of immigrants. Immigrants of color must contend with the current social structure of the United States, which in terms of race, is organized around a black-white discourse (Alcoff, 2003). According to Omi and Winant (1994), "this bipolar racial discourse tends at best to marginalize and at worst to eliminate other positions and voices in the ongoing dialogue about race in the U.S." (p. 154). This is especially true of Filipino immigrants whose relatively large numbers go unnoticed both within the public realm as well as within academic research. Scholars contend that Asian immigrants are rendered invisible such that the various struggles or barriers many Asian Americans face go unaddressed (Lew, 2006) or perceived as perpetual foreigners (Lee, 2005; Wu, 2002). The model minority stereotype, which is one used frequently to characterize Asians in the United States, functions in interracial relations as a "hegemonic device" (Lee, 1995, p. 6) to 1) silence claims of inequality, and 2) silence the experiences of the many Asian Americans who do not achieve the model's level of success (ibid., p. 125).

Importantly, children of immigrants may relate to their parents' countries of origin (or their countries of origin). While Omi & Winant focus primarily on race, for immigrants, ethnicity may be a more salient construct, a way of resisting racialization. For example, West Indian immigrants, phenotypically similar to native black Americans resist being positioned as a perceived disempowered racial minority (Waters, 1990).

As stated in Chapter 1, the postcolonial relationship between the Philippines and the United States mediates the experiences of Filipinos in America, especially in terms of their racialized identities. Integral to legitimating imperialism in the early twentieth century, which effectively rendered Filipinos colonial subjects, was the creation of a discourse that hailed American culture and ways of life superior to their own. Thus, a pervasive Americanization of Filipino culture exists before Filipinos arrive (Espiritu, 2003). The cultural and economic connections between the two countries facilitate the blending of Filipinos into American society, and thus create discourses with which second generation Filipino Americans must contend. Vicente M. Diaz (2004) writes of the distinction between the terms Asian American and Pacific Islander, specifically as they relate to academic fields of study. He argues that the distinctions can be found in the histories of European and American imperialism where Asian countries have largely remained free from western colonization whereas Pacific Islanders have frequently been made colonial subjects. Subsumed under a homogeneous racial category, Filipinos tend to be racialized as Asians. However, continually negotiating a postcolonial relationship that distinguishes them from other Asian ethnicities they are often engaged in debates (socially and academically) of whether they are more accurately Pacific Islanders (as discussed in Chapter 5), which may represent a form of resistance to the process of racialization.

Schooling of Immigrants

Historical context

The city of New York has historically been a major entry port for immigrants. From 1899 to 1914 the city's schools experienced a 60 percent increase in enrollment (Tyack, 1974). This unprecedented growth impacted public schools in two significant ways (relevant to the current discussion). One was a shift to large, factory-like comprehensive schools to accommodate the large numbers of students moving to cities. Another was a more ideological impact: it reinforced one of the purposes of public education, which was to socialize individuals to fit within the society in which they are embedded. With the arrival of so many immigrants the focus turned sharply to assimilation. Both effects impacted the foundations of education such that they are part of the common landscape of public schooling today.

To accommodate the large numbers of people moving to the cities, schools had to expand their capacity. It became common to have 50 to 60 students per classroom. Keeping with the momentum of industrialized cities, schools adopted the factory model. Efficiency became a means for order, peace, and stability not just in society but also within schools. The management of factories served as a model for school management (Kliebard, 2004). This focus on factory and business models led to the structure and governance of schools today. Thus, the large, comprehensive schools within large, bureaucratic districts are artifacts of the early twentieth century fixation on industrial models.

Another important effect of the growth in the immigrant population was the reinforcement of one of the original purposes of public education. This was the Americanization of children, which was rooted in the eighteenth century context of "modernization" (Kliebard,

2004; Tyack, 1974). During this time individuals had to learn skills in order to be competent in an increasingly industrialized and urban society. When the country began experiencing the rapid growth in immigrant populations, foreigners were expected to integrate into society and Americanization meant more than just modernization. It entailed not only learning new skills such as reading and writing but also the shedding of an old culture. Total assimilation was the ideal, and educators demanded nothing less than complete Anglo-conformity. In this attempt to homogenize American behaviors and beliefs, informal practices such as the shaming of foreign cultures were widespread in schools (Tyack, 1974).

Presently, schools play a similar role in the adaptation of immigrant students. They are institutions where children are expected to be inculcated with the skills, behaviors, and attitudes valued within a particular society. Thus, for immigrant children schools are the primary institutions where young immigrant children learn American cultural ideals and figure out their place within society. An historical perspective shows that schools are places that may affirm or disaffirm cultural affiliations. Given the strong push towards assimilation in the past and current documentation of the Americanization of immigrant children (see for example, Angela Valenzuela 1997, and Stacey J. Lee, 1996, 2005) the dominant ideology seems to support disaffirmation. However, through critical research subtractive assimilation does not have to be the only viable option, nor is it the only option when the activities of young people are studied (see for example, Mica Pollock, 2004, and Daniel Yon, 2000). An analysis of discourse, narrative, and activities allow for an investigation of how young people resist, reproduce, and position themselves vis-a-vis identity categories and negotiate discourse as they navigate the social space of school.

Current contexts

Schools are sites where students work upon and create notions of culture and their senses of selves. Yon's ethnography, *Elusive Culture* (2000), demonstrates how meanings are far from stable:

> Popular youth cultures effectively defy the more rigid multicultural categories of race and ethnicity. For example, Hon can be Vietnamese and at the same time also belong to hip-hop culture, a move which both extends and transcends the meaning of *Vietnamese* while also challenging youth cultures as racial or ethnic property. Marta can be from Serbia and yet see herself as Spanish because *Spanish* is about music, clubs, and a mode of dress with which she identifies. In the process, identity categories like *Spanish* and *hip-hop* defer rather than displace *Serbian* and *Vietnamese* (p. 57).

While all high school students contend with discourses that normalize and set cultural standards, immigrant students from minority populations are faced with messages that define them as outsiders. By not being black or white, or as one of the "two faces of America" (Lee, 2005, p. 4), Asian American students in particular are invisible in the bipolar racial discourse, often deemed as perpetual foreigners.

Race is undoubtedly a sensitive topic, and the significance of racial and ethnic identities in schools is similarly sensitive. Even in schools where the student population consists primarily of minority students, the notion of "minority" and "majority" culture is interpreted as a numerical rather than a political issue (Valenzuela, 1999). In *Subtractive Schooling* (1999), Angela Valenzuela noted the perspective of a teacher who found it difficult to understand how young people can possess a bicultural sense of self that was neither "ethnic" nor "American." The teacher struggled in understanding the experience of a Mexican American student who felt

frustrated when her Mexican relatives denied her own identification as Mexican and called her a *gringa, agringada, or americanizada*. She became bothered when he voiced his assumption that she was American, revealing his predisposition for simple identity labels, and lack of understanding that for immigrant youth, the term "Americanized" is a pejorative term (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 182).

According to Mica Pollock (2004), classroom curriculum can contribute to the simplification of diversity into manageable units, requesting students to classify themselves and others into "single 'peoples,' 'cultures,' and 'races.' She found in her study, "While students conformed to the student world by proclaiming racial mixture, then, the classroom world typically prompted students to select single, lump sum identifications within a finite system of options" (p. 33).

Invisibility and American-ness

Asian Americans are frequently absent from discussions of race in America. This is due in large part because of the prevailing black-white dichotomy in racial discourse, and the perception by dominant society of Asians as perpetual foreigners, "often being characterized as being unable or unwilling to assimilate into American culture and society (Lee, 2005, p. 4). These messages are internalized by Asian American immigrant youth who feel as though they are permanent outsiders, an invisible racial minority, and whose struggles and barriers are left unaddressed by larger social institutions (Lee, 2005; Lew, 2006). As Lee (2005) states, "While the descendents of European immigrants have become accepted as authentic Americans, Asian Americans are always considered to be foreigners regardless of the number of generations their families have been in the United States" (p. 4-5).

Amongst immigrant minority populations, inherent in the definition of being American is being white. In Lee's (2005) ethnography, her Hmong American participants repeatedly reserved the term "American" to refer to white people, while using ethnically or racially specific terms to name themselves and other people of color (p. 49). In the United States, being white is considered the norm, while minorities, including Asian Americans, are consistently racialized. Multicultural events at school reflect this notion, in that they tend to contribute to students of color as being thought of as culturally different or possessing culture, while white students do not. These representations can contribute to a racial hierarchy that, because of imposed categorization, relegates minority students to a lower status (Lee, 2005; Lew, 2006).

While this can certainly be disempowering to racial and ethnic minorities living in America, creating boundaries around an immigrant identity can also be a form of resistance to being 'American' or 'white'. This boundary-marking can serve as a way assert pride and empowerment against a dominant social group (Espiritu, 2001). Scholars have argued that panethnic identifications are proactive and political strategies that support solidarity, strength, and power to access resources (Espiritu, 1992; Lee, 1996). In fact, many immigrant parents view the forces of *Americanization* as a significant threat to their children and families, values, and strong cultural identities (Gibson, 1988; Lee, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999; Zhou & Bankston, 1998).

Jamie Lew (2004, 2006) argues that social class is a factor that intersects Asian American students. She distinguishes between low-income and low-achieving Korean American students and high-income and high-achieving students. She found the low-income and low-achieving students align themselves with other racial groups as opposed to Koreans of middle class status. In other words, like all young people of low socioeconomic status, living in poor, isolated neighborhoods can leave students without adequate resources, social capital, and the protection

of strong familial networks (Anyon, 1997, 2006; Portes & MacLeod, 2005). As a result, they "are likely to assimilate the cultures and norms of their poor, minority peers and adopt an oppositional cultural frame of reference" that impacts their senses of self and others, differentiating themselves from wealthier, privileged Koreans, Asians, and Whites (Lew, 2006, p. 99-100).

While the dichotomy between "traditional" and "Americanized" is often used to organize immigrants, Yen Espiritu has asserted that children of immigrants learn "to negotiate and reconstruct distinct new cultures and subcultures where their identities were multiple, hybrid, and situational depending on given social and economic contexts" (as cited in Lew, 2006, p. 79). Willis (2000) argues that making and remaking material existence is a matter of basic survival, which also entails the making of meanings (p. xiv).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

My research took place in Mission Catholic High School[5], a private Catholic high school located in a large northeastern city. Though a relatively small body of literature, much of the scholarly work on Filipinos focuses on those living on the west coast. The literature on the secondary educational experiences of Filipino Americans is even more limited. Thus, this study expands the research on this significant population. I chose this particular setting because of the relatively significant population of Filipino students. The school is located in one of the most diverse counties in the country with significant immigrant populations from Asia, Latin and South America, the Caribbean, and Europe. The student population at Mission reflects the diversity of the area with a population consisting of 48.5% White, 14.7% Black, 14.9% Asian, 21.7% Hispanic, .002% American Indian, and .19% Multiracial in the 2010-2011 school year. Given that the school does not disaggregate the racial/ethnic data the broad racial categories mask the extreme ethnic diversity within each.

Undoubtedly, my personal experiences inform this project as a woman born in a northeastern suburb to immigrant parents from the Philippines. As one of the only students of color at my school, I was surrounded by friends of predominantly European descent. Few Filipinos lived in this area. My town was relatively close-knit, comfortably middle to upper middle class, and consisted of families largely with professional backgrounds. I was included in this demographic having a father with an M.D. and a mother with a B.A.

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[5] Mission Catholic High School is a pseudonym for the school.

I am fortunate: I cannot recall incidents when I faced overt discrimination or exclusion. Yet, upon reflection, navigating between friends, family, school, and the community, it was evident that these were discordant social worlds that, for many of my friends, seemed to fit seamlessly together. Friends' parents were actively involved in school events, formed tight-knit circles via their children, and frequently socialized with each other. They seemed to be bound by similarities, other than having children who attended the same school. Moreover, images in the media normalized their lives while I internalized notions of being an outsider. As such my perceptions are bound to the social, historical, and cultural contexts in which I grew up. I resisted and embraced (and everything in between) being Filipina American depending on where I was, who was present, and what was being done. However, the boundaries I created between being 'Asian,' 'Filipina,' and 'American' were underscored when others imposed labels on me. If I was assumed to be a foreigner, I emphasized my Americanness; if I was told I was too American I would feel resentful. A friend once called me "as American as apple pie" and I took that as an insult. I was frustrated with labels even while adhering to them.

The individual as research instrument can never be entirely objective, the subject matter can never be devoid of the researcher's interpretations (Roth, 2005). The stories composed through our research reflect our positions, beliefs and experiences, and this project is no exception. I must acknowledge that my experiences inform my views and interests in this study. They have shaped my perception of school as a field of discourse where young people learn about, participate, and become part of communities, or cultured, figured worlds. Specifically, my experiences have also motivated my inquiry into how young people negotiate discourses on race, ethnicity, and culture in the context of school to form a sense of self.

Discourse and narratives are my units of analysis because I resist the notion that identities exist within the core of the body, rather they are constantly constructed through the negotiation of discourses of identity that describe and instantiate the worlds in which we live. Discourses, the knowledge that frames what we know to be true, are co-constructed by individuals, and they are also routinized and institutionalized through daily activity. As Dorothy Holland states, "When talking and acting, people assume that their words and behavior will be interpreted according to a context of meaning – as indexing or pointing to a culturally figured world" (p. 52). Thus, my research examines school as a discursive space enabling me to examine the processes by which cultures and identities emerge as socially-embedded systems of meaning.

Ethnography

The concern of ethnographers is to write about groups of people, yet in the process they run the risk of 'creating others'. Lila Abu-Lughod (1991, 1993) argues that the anthropological study of cultures create differences that, in effect, smuggle in hierarchy. Although this dissertation focuses on a group of young Filipino Americans, the goal is not to reinforce differences, but to weave their experiences within the broader fabric of social life through theoretical engagement. Michael Burawoy (1998) states that, through ethnographic research, we destabilize our views of the world and throw ourselves "off balance" (p. 4). He argues "We keep ourselves steady by rooting ourselves in theory that guides our dialogue with participants" (p. 5). In other words, theory keeps researchers grounded, and it serves as a map that guides us as we enter the research field (S. Schensul et al., 1999, p. 2). In what Burawoy calls the *extended case method* researchers must go into the field with preexisting theory to help guide and make sense of empirical phenomena, but then to extend back out, and build upon this theory to bring the

particular in conversation with the general. In this way, research is connected to its local context and to the world to which the research belongs rather than being self-contained, divorced from time and place (Burawoy, 1998; see also Willis, 2000). This is of particular importance in educational research. Jean Anyon (2009) argues that educational research must be grounded in critical social theory if "attempting an explicit analysis toward social justice" (p. 2). She states, "we assume one cannot understand or explain *x* by merely describing *x*. One must look exogenously at *non-x*—particularly the context and social forces in which the object of study is embedded," (ibid.). This enables the researcher to investigate larger political and social meanings that create material social structures for students in schools (ibid.; see also Yon, 2000).

In chapter 2, I discussed the theoretical framing for the dissertation. I provided an overview of dominant theories of assimilation and critiqued them in terms of their shortcomings. I discussed an alternative lens through which to examine the experiences of immigrants of color. This lens includes a critical analysis of race and emphasizes how racial discourse organizes and structures everyday experiences, and in this study, I focus on the context of school. A dominant racial discourse in the U.S. is organized around a black-white dichotomy. This discourse marginalizes the experiences and voices of those that do not fall within either category, Asian Americans in particular, which impacts individuals' understandings of race, culture, diversity, and identity. What is more, an analysis of the social, political, and historical relationship between the United States and the Philippines greatly informs the experiences of Filipino Americans in the U.S. today. These theoretical considerations provided the theory that structured my inquiry and guided me in the research field.

This study uses qualitative methods that situate the observer in the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). It is an ethnography, a rigorous mode of scientific inquiry that investigates social

and cultural patterns and meanings for groups, communities, or institutions. Ethnography is based on the belief that knowledge is locally produced and context-specific. Importantly, ethnographers aim to "discover what people do and why before they assign meaning to behaviors and beliefs" (S. Schensul, J. Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999, p. 1). They research perceptions, beliefs, and the truths that people construct (Patton, 2002). Thus, the tools for ethnography are designed for discovery. Ethnographers seek to understand the actions of those in the research setting and how they generate and assign meaning themselves before imposing interpretations that are potentially irrelevant or misrepresentations. According to Robert C. Bogdan and Sari Knopp Biklen (2010), ethnography is "thick description":

> [T]he ethnographer is faced with a series of interpretations of life, of common-sense understandings, that are complex and difficult to separate from each other. The ethnographer's goals are to share in the meanings that the cultural participants take for granted and then to depict the new understanding for the reader and for outsiders. The ethnographer is concerned with representations (p. 38).

Ethnographic methods are structured methods of data collection so that the research may be understandable to others, and can be replicated by other researchers even if the field changes. Thus, ethnographic methods ensure the collection of scientifically valid and reliable data (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). My primary data collection methods included the following ethnographic methods: 1) participant-observation, 2) semi-structured interviews, and 3) focus groups. I also did identity-mapping with participants in focus groups and shadowed two students for three full days as they went about their daily routines at school.

Although a significant portion of the data collection took place in a school setting, this study is not a school ethnography per se, because it does not aim to explicate specific formal or

informal school functionings or policies. Rather, school is the social context, the discursive space in which young Filipino Americans negotiate and (re)construct racial and ethnic discourse. According to Zeus Leonardo (2009), "The ideology of race has produced racial discourses that recruit racialized subjects who find their sense of self through them" (p. 41). Thus, this project examines the racial discourses that students negotiate as they "find their sense of self."

Research Context

Mission Catholic High School is located in the area of Queens. Figure 3.1 shows the county's demographics as compared to citywide.

Figure 3.1

	Queens	NYC
Population	2,230,722	8,175,133
Foreign-born	48.1%	36.8%
White	39.7%	44.0%
Black	19.1%	25.5%
American Indian & Alaska Native	0.7%	0.7%
Asian	22.9%	12.7%
Native Hawaiian & other Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.1%
2 or more races	4.5%	4.0%
Hispanic or Latino	27.5%	28.6%
White not Hispanic	27.6%	33.3%

(U.S. Census 2010)

Queens is notably more diverse than the city with fewer whites. The black population is smaller, the Hispanic/Latino population comparable, while the Asian population is significantly larger than the city at large. Queens is filled with various ethnic enclaves and neighborhoods are often described or named by the immigrant population residing there.

New York has the second highest concentration of Filipinos in the U.S. after California (Min, 2006). According to the American Community Survey 2005-2007, 64% of the state's Filipino population lives in NYC, and it has grown by 21 percent since 2000. Of the five

boroughs, Queens is home to the highest percentage at 60 percent, followed by Manhattan (14%), Brooklyn (10%), Bronx (8%), and Staten Island (7%) (Asian American Federation), which is largely why I chose this area to conduct my research.

The school

I chose Mission Catholic because of its visible Filipino student population relative to the overall student population. Because this study focuses on discourses of identity, including racial and ethnic discourses, I aimed for a setting where participants were confronted on a daily basis with individuals and groups of non-Filipino background.

The student population of Mission reflects the diversity of its surroundings. The majority of students live in Queens. Figure 3.2 shows the student population breakdown by county.

Figure 3.2

	Percent
Queens	95.64%
Manhattan	0.18%
Brooklyn	1.44%
Bronx	0.04%
Nassau County, LI	2.70%

I had originally intended to conduct research in a public high school, however I only identified two that have a significant Filipino student population relative to the entire student population. I made several attempts to gain access by emailing and telephoning the administration. I also tried to meet with a principal in person when my calls and emails went unanswered, however I was turned away at the door because I did not have a scheduled appointment.

While I was researching a possible research site, Mission Catholic High School was always one of the first high schools recommended, but because it was private I did not pursue it. However, when it proved to be extremely difficult to obtain consent to conduct research in the two public high schools I identified, I made an appointment to meet with someone at MCH. I met with Jack O'Donnell, an assistant principal. I explained the nature of my research and that I hoped to spend at least two days a week at the school doing observations throughout the campus and to recruit students for interviews and focus groups. He gladly accepted my request and gave me a tour of the school the same day.

During my first few visits to the school I was immediately struck by how friendly the staff and faculty were towards me. Nearly every teacher smiled and said hello, offered to help direct me somewhere if they thought I was wandering (which, oftentimes, I was). Throughout my time at the school staff and faculty were mostly friendly and happy to talk with me, and they would frequently ask how my research was going. It was generally a very warm environment. On my last day, exchanging pleasantries and thank-you's, many invited me to stop by and keep in touch.

Data Collection

I collected data from January 2011 to June 2011. My primary data collection methods included observations, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups. During the focus groups I had students draw identity maps, which are images created by participants that are self-representations. I also collected school documents such as flyers, school newspapers, and the school calendar.

I recruited participants by making an announcement at one of the Filipino club meetings early in my fieldwork. I asked for volunteers to participate in focus groups and/or interviews. I informed them that they would receive compensation in the form of movie tickets, that snacks would be provided, and should any additional travel expenses arise, they would be covered. I also said they would be entered to win a fifty dollar gift card at the end and that their names would be entered into the pool as many times as they participated in an activity[6]. I distributed movie tickets through email and I sent the fifty dollar gift card directly to the participant's home address as per her request.

At this meeting, Gabrielle, the president of Filipino club, encouraged students to participate. I sent around a sign up sheet so that those who were interested could put their names and email addresses down. However, despite these efforts, I had to supplement this recruitment by asking students directly during lunch or when I would see them in school or at subsequent club meetings.

All of my participants were Juniors and Seniors. This was unintentional; those who were actively involved in club tended to be the upperclassmen, and when I attempted to get to know some of the younger students (i.e., during lunch) they were markedly less willing to engage in conversations with me (this will be discussed in the Limitations section later in this chapter).

Observations

Participant-observation was the point of entry into the field because it provided the opportunity to learn about the physical and social context of the school, and the daily lives of the

[6] For example, if they participated in a focus group and an interview, their names would be entered twice into the final drawing pool.

participants as they engage in social life. In qualitative research, participant-observation allows the researcher to: 1) identify key informants and the building of relationships, 2) gain knowledge of physical and social boundaries as defined by participants, 3) be exposed to actions and activities that may not be easily addressed or may proceed undiscussed because of certain constraints, and 4) experience phenomena to inquire about with participants (Creswell, 1998; S. Schensul, J. Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999).

I spent at least two days a week in the school for one semester. I conducted observations in multiple settings: classrooms, hallways, the lunchroom, and the library. Early on, most of my time was spent getting to know the layout of the school, the class schedule, and understanding the basic flow of the day. Immersion in the daily life of the school afforded me the opportunity to identify other potential events for data collection. As a school rich in extra-curricular activities it was at times difficult to identify when and what events to attend. However, I focused my efforts on Filipino club meetings as well as institutionalized events such as the winter pep rally, International Night, Graduation, awards ceremonies, class assemblies, and Reconciliation.

I chose Filipino club meetings because it seemed to be the most direct way of getting to know the Filipino students at Mission Catholic and to recruit participants. It was through club that I got to know Kai, Luisa, and Gabrielle. As stated earlier, though I made an announcement at one of the meetings inviting students to participate and handing out flyers, it was usually by approaching students in the cafeteria or library who I recognized from club that I was able to recruit participants. Choosing to be a member in Filipino club also denotes some affiliation with being Filipino so I attended as many club meetings as I could because that sense of *being Filipino* was something that I wanted to understand through my research. I also chose to attend school events such as the pep rally, awards ceremonies, and class assemblies because they

constitute the everyday life of the school. Importantly, they provided opportunities to collect data on the institutional discourse of the school.

International Night was an event that I made sure not to miss. Students and faculty alike talked about it months before it took place. Its significance to the students, faculty, and administration was evident early on. It also provided opportunities to investigate how discourses on race, ethnicity, culture, and diversity manifested in an event aimed to celebrate such concepts.

Data from my observations consisted of detailed field notes and audio recordings of conversations and events when possible. During participant-observation I was able to have countless conversations with students, teachers, staff, and faculty to understand their perceptions and experiences of and about life at school. Conversations ranged from quick and compulsory to longer, in-depth conversations, and they occurred throughout my entire time in the field. Observations were valuable for piecing together discourses on race, ethnicity, and diversity at Mission Catholic.

One of the first people I met was Kathy Welch, the moderator for Filipino Club. She provided me information about when Filipino Club would meet, however I soon learned they usually scheduled meetings only the morning of and oftentimes it would be canceled last minute. I attended a number of club meetings, however in the beginning of my fieldwork they occurred infrequently. It was not until they began preparing for International Night that they met almost weekly, mostly for rehearsals. It was during the meetings when I would chat casually with students, who later became participants in my study. Attending Filipino club was a valuable opportunity to get to know and understand the social lives of the students. I was able to see firsthand, the laid back, social, fun atmosphere that many of the participants described in their interviews and focus groups. The comfort and connection that they felt with each other, so often

described by the youth participants, was highly evident during club. I found myself reflecting on my own high school experience. There were no other Filipino students and hardly any other Asian students in my school. I thought about how I missed out on feeling that sense of connection with others of the same cultural background as me. Though I developed close relationships with my childhood friends, some who are my best friends today, I envied the Filipino students' sense of community as they peppered their conversations with Filipino accents to mimic their parents' or they randomly broke out into song and dance. Spending time in the meetings I began to understand what at least one of my youth participants meant when he said that everyone has love for each other in Filipino club. I also began to understand what another participant meant when she said she feels safer amongst her other Filipino friends. Everything that set them apart from their white, black, Hispanic, and other Asian peers, was normalized and familiar, and there was no need to explain jokes to others not of Filipino descent.

Through participant-observation I documented aspects of the social context, in this case, the school, that impact the lives of students. This method of data collection gave insight into the social structures and processes that constrain and enable discourses of identity. I shadowed two participants: Kai and Luisa. I shadowed Kai for two days and Luisa for one. Shadowing entailed accompanying participants on their daily routine: going with them to classes, eating lunch with them, and basically learning about their lives by hanging out. Kai and Luisa were quite different in their personalities, which also mediated my experience of their days. Kai was much more social, and he was more intent on explaining his life and his friends to me. He asked what it was like when I was in high school, what music I listen(ed) to, and what my prom was like. He introduced me to his friends as someone doing research on him because he is "so awesome." Luisa, on the other hand, had a quieter disposition. She explained that most of her friends are

outside of school; people she knows mostly through family. She said she usually studies during lunch, somewhere other than the cafeteria to avoid the chaotic scene, but when I shadowed her she wanted to sit in the cafeteria. Unlike Kai, she did not initiate conversations with me but rather responded to my questions. Most of my time was spent trying to put her at ease by asking questions about what seemed to make her more comfortable, and that tended to be about dance. Kai and Luisa provided me with different experiences of the school: shadowing Kai allowed me to see what it was like to have a more active social life, to wander the halls and say "Hi" to numerous people between classes; whereas shadowing Luisa enabled me to experience the school as a quieter student who blends into the background.

Fourteen of my seventeen class observations were done as I shadowed Kai and Luisa, thus it provided me the opportunity to see a wide range of courses and subjects typical of students' schedules. It also gave me the opportunity to meet some of their friends and be a part of casual conversations to learn more about what was important to them at the time (e.g., prom) or how they interpreted particular events (i.e., a girl storming out of class mid-session).

Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with seven students[7]. The open-ended format allowed for a range of responses, and allowed us to cover topics in detail, and address new ones as they arose (S. Schensul et al., 1999, p. 121). Each interview, except for one that was conducted via email, was audio-recorded and transcribed either by a transcription service or me. If transcribed through a transcription service I double checked for accuracy.

[7] I had originally planned for ten to twelve interviews, however due to the difficulty in recruitment I conducted seven.

Each of the interviews was conducted at school, usually during students' "frees," which are the equivalent of study hall. Thus, interviews ranged from approximately 45-60 minutes long. All of the interviews were conducted individually in order to provide participants with opportunities to address more personal experiences, or share what they may not have felt comfortable sharing in a group setting. I was able to go more in-depth with them on issues brought up either in a focus group (if they participated), in casual conversations, or from participant-observation. It was during interviews that I got to know more intimately their thoughts, beliefs, values, and perspectives. It provided opportunities for them to reflect and act without the added pressure from peers. I originally planned to select interviewees based on issues or events that I would want to question further in a more private setting, and whether they appeared willing and comfortable talking with me. However, due to the difficulty of recruiting participants I asked all students who participated in a focus group to do an interview, and anyone from whom I was able to obtain email addresses (I discuss this more in the Limitations section later in the chapter). I also conducted informal interviews with the assistant principal, various staff members such as security and one of the librarians, and three teachers.

Focus groups

I conducted two focus groups, one with two participants and the other with three. The former was approximately 65 minutes long and the latter was approximately 75 minutes long. Both took place after school when the majority of extracurricular activities meet. I had originally intended to conduct three focus groups with five to six participants in each. Though I was neither able to recruit that many students nor coordinate schedules, upon reflection, a group that size would have been too cumbersome. I would not have been able to go as in-depth with participants

nor would their responses have been as personal and thoughtful. Because I wanted to understand the social process through which students make sense of their ethnic and racial identities, it was important for me to have students interact in a group setting. Two to three proved to be a good number because they played off each others' comments/responses and each participant had a chance for their voice to be heard.

Focus groups consisted of discussions, conversations, and activities to investigate discourses on race, ethnicity, and identity that frame their figured worlds and them as actors in these embodied communities. I focused on discourse because, according to Naomi Quinn, discourse is based on

> the assumption that people in a given group share, to greater or lesser extent, understandings of the world that have been learned and internalized in the course of their shared experience, and that individuals rely heavily on these shared understandings to comprehend and organize experience, including their own thoughts, feelings, motivations, and actions, and the actions of other people (2010, p. 238).

I began the focus groups with an identity-mapping activity as a mode of data collection. Students were asked to draw themselves using aspects from their daily lives such as things they are proud of, concerned about, or things important to them (Sirin & Fine, 2008, p. 199). This method was used by Sirin and Fine when they conducted a participatory action research project with Muslim American youth. According to them, identity mapping allows participants and researchers to examine "hyphenated selves" and "agitates for a thick understanding of *how* these selves coexist, how they make and struggle in the same body" (2008, p. 195, emphasis in original). Because my project is based on the notion that identities are relational, dynamic, and multiple I utilized this

method. I prompted students by explaining that identity maps are images created by them to form self-representations. I stated the following:

> Identity maps are drawings you create that represent you. Draw a map of your self at school, at home, in your neighborhood. Include any aspects in those contexts that are important to you that tell a story about yourself.

This method of data collection allowed students to reflect upon their situations and experiences, and allowed for them to express the ways in which they make sense of themselves. Participants were asked to share their maps and to discuss the different images they drew and why. I also asked if they had trouble finding "one" way to represent themselves and to explain some of those difficulties. These discussions were audio-recorded as part of the focus group and analyzed for an understanding of how they construct and conceive of their varying identities.

The questions I asked during the focus groups aimed to understand the social lives, embodied communities, and figured worlds of students. Thus, my questions focused on their perceptions of school, perceptions of self, and the their selves in relation to others. Early on I refrained from asking questions that use an identity category because of the belief that a particular label assumes its fixedness and forces participants to work within its confines and may miss opportunities to understand conflicting and contradictory meanings. I relied on participants to bring up issues of identity organically, without prompting. However, I soon realized that they did not necessarily speak about their racial or ethnic identities without being asked pointedly, "When people ask, 'What are you?' what do you say?" Once I began asking more direct questions about their backgrounds they shared their experiences and perceptions of their racial/ethnic identities. Importantly, I soon learned that asking them direct questions about their identity did not necessitate a static conceptualization of identity. Rather, they spoke about

themselves and their interactions with others in so many different ways throughout the conversations in a variety of situations that the "multilinear and varying process…whereby people define and redefine their ethnic identity" was more than evident (Espiritu, 1994, p. 253).

Data Analysis

Analysis, according to Wolcott, is "the search for *patterned regularities* in the data" (as cited in Creswell, 1998, p. 152; emphasis in original). I analyzed data from observations, focus groups, and interviews as well as from school documents. Triangulation, or the use of multiple methods, is an attempt to gather an in-depth understanding of complex phenomena. Triangulation finds points of convergence and contradiction, and different versions of understandings so as to "build a confirmatory edifice" (Fine, Weiss, Weseen, & Wong, 2003, p. 187).

As stated earlier theory framed my inquiry, guided my work in the field, and provided structure for my interpretations. I used a grounded theory of analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 1998) informed by a situational analysis (Burawoy, 1991) to code for salient categories that emerged from the data as well as codes drawn from relevant literature. I draw from both methods because a situational analysis, according to Burawoy (1991), sees "the situation as shaped from above" but I also draw from grounded theory and analyze how situations are "constructed from below" (p. 276). More specifically, I analyzed school as a social, local context, but in my analysis (in the following chapters) I engage broader theories to make sense of the data. As Burawoy states, "grounded theory can build up the macro from its micro generalizations, and the extended case method can give rise to generalizations through reconstructing theory" (ibid., p. 274).

I began data analysis by open coding transcripts of interviews and focus groups, which entailed developing categories for different phenomena. According to Corbin & Strauss (2008), coding "involves interacting with data (analysis) using techniques such as asking questions about the data, making comparisons between data, and so on, and in doing so, deriving concepts to stand for the data, then developing those concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions" (p. 66). Coding was accompanied by memoing, which served as an ongoing dialogue with the data that allowed me to draw connections between and across data and make theoretical connections throughout the process of analysis. The process was iterative in that I coded data (e.g., an interview), brought the coding scheme towards analyzing more data, which in turn expanded or modified the scheme, which I then used to analyze more data. Thus, memos comprised a substantial portion of the analytic work and they increased in complexity and clarity as the analysis progressed (ibid., p. 118). Like piecing together a puzzle, I grouped the memos according to the codes to create a scheme consisting of topics, themes, and sub-themes that provided the basis for writing the analysis presented in chapters 4-6.

Ethical Considerations

This study did not introduce any risk greater than those encountered in everyday life. The potential risks to participants were minimal and limited to minor discomfort, or embarrassment especially given that the nature of qualitative research aims to go in-depth with participants. I aimed to mitigate such feelings by stating they can refrain from answering any question without any repercussions if they feel uncomfortable. I also asked that all participants respect each other and each other's opinions and privacy and not share what could be perceived as sensitive information outside of the group.

Prior to conducting the research I saw a potential benefit as youth will have the opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns as Filipino American high school students in an urban school in forums not typically available to them. On the day that I shadowed Luisa, she informed me that she and Carol, as future vice president and president of Filipino club, respectively, hope to conduct focus groups the following year so that they can talk about their experiences. Such an activity is similar to those I conducted with them suggesting that this forum for dialogue was something they did not get, but desired, from club (this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5).

Consent

All of my youth participants were under age 21. Thus, I used Parent/Guardian consent forms to inform parents of the nature of the study and to document their consent. Assent Forms were given to participants under 18 for them to sign to document their consent. All forms will also request consent to audio-taping. Parent/Guardian consent forms were delivered in an envelope to parents/guardians via the youth participants. Participants were unable to participate in the study unless they returned their consent forms to me. One participant who was part of a focus group came with Gabrielle. He did not have a consent form so data from him was not used in the study.

Data security

Audio recordings were transcribed either by my or by a transcription service. Pseudonyms are used in place of participants' real names, as well as the school's name.

Identifying data will only be accessible to myself and my advisor, as needed. Electronic data is stored on my personal computer, protected by password.

Researcher Positionality

Wendy Luttrell (2010) argues that qualitative researchers must question *research relationships*, the processes by which we learn with and about others as well as ourselves during the research process. She asks researchers to question, "How are you part of the setting, context, and social phenomenon you seek to understand?" (2010, p. 161). She argues, to be reflexive as a researcher is imperative in order "to harness our predispositions, imagination, and empathy towards others," rendering qualitative research a "craft" for which to understand multi-dimensional and dynamic lives (p. 160).

The most notable research relationship I negotiated was with the Filipino youth participants. As a Filipina American, I may be considered a "member" of the same ethnic/racial community as my participants. Qualitative research methods claim intimacy and inseparableness between participants (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Kleinsasser, 2000), which is underscored by the fact that I share from a nominal perspective, the same background as my participants. However, presumed similarities based on ethnic background create an imagined relationship, which obscures hierarchies implicit in the researcher-participant relationship. While in the field I continually negotiated the researcher-participant relationship. It always seemed that the difficulties I faced in recruiting participants were due in part to my position as an older, unfamiliar person "researching" the lives of adolescents. My motivation to understand the processes by which school functions as a context in which racial and ethnic identities are formed and negotiated perhaps placed more emphasis on these processes than young people do. At the

end of each focus group or interview I always asked participants if they had any questions for me. At least three asked me why I was conducting my research, and particularly, why I was focusing on Filipino students. I always responded by describing my personal experience growing up and my motivation for understanding the varied experiences of Filipinos in America especially in a preeminent institution like school. I emphasized that Filipinos are an under-researched group despite being one of the largest immigrant groups in America. While this seemed to satisfy students I could not help but read my continual struggle with recruiting participants as an unwillingness to open up to an unfamiliar researcher.

I faced considerably less trouble getting staff and faculty to speak frankly with me. This was perhaps due to my position as a graduate student seeking a Ph.D. MCH is a private preparatory school that combines a rigorous course of study with an emphasis on pursuing higher education. One of the teachers said she was willing to help anyone in pursuit of a higher degree. This, however, may have placed undue status on me as an expert on the lives of youth, with faculty at times asking me why students sit "together" at lunch (read: in groups bound by race/ethnicity) or even as a sounding board for struggling Korean students. Such occurrences always reoriented me back to my role as a qualitative researcher who aims to examine how *participants* understand and make sense of why they sit together, or what it means to struggle, and how such phenomena are impacted by the school as context.

Limitations

The most significant limitation was the difficulty I faced in recruiting youth participants. Eager to begin learning about the lives of Filipino American students at MCH I joined a pair of sophomores during lunch that I identified from Filipino club. I asked their permission before I sat

down but even though they granted it to me, I immediately felt as though I was an intruder. Their conversation stopped and my attempts to engage them by asking questions about their interests and activities fell short. I immediately reassessed my approach and decided to approach students more cautiously. I was able to collect a number of email addresses from students who at first said they were willing to participate, however many would be unresponsive when I tried to schedule interviews and/or focus groups. When I spoke with Kathy she always described them as being very busy, and that "they're just kids."

I often had to schedule and reschedule focus groups and interviews numerous times before actually meeting. There were a number of times when I waited for students to show up for their interviews. After not showing they often said they forgot or they had to attend a review for class. Eugene was scheduled to be a part of a focus group but he had a rehearsal that ran late. He arrived late to the focus group and I asked that he reschedule an interview with me because of how far into the discussion we already were by the time he arrived. At his scheduled interview Vanessa showed up with him asking if it was okay if she joined since she had an interview with me the following day. Because of the continual difficulties I had been facing I allowed her to join. This, then, became a hybrid focus group and interview. I did get a chance to speak with Vanessa for about 5-10 minutes afterwards specifically following up on issues brought up in the focus group, which approximated some of what I wanted to ask her in her interview.

Upon reflection, five or six participants per focus group, which was in my original research design, would have been unwieldy. Having 2-3 participants allowed for more in-depth conversations and allowed me to probe and follow up on issues participants brought up throughout the course of the focus group.

CHAPTER 4

RACIAL DISCOURSE: THE DIFFUSING AND DEFUSING OF RACE

This chapter focuses on the institutional racial discourse of Mission Catholic High School. In particular, this chapter maps the school's major discursive understandings about race, ethnicity, and diversity. According to Naomi Quinn (2010), discourse "is the best available window into cultural understandings and the way these are negotiated by individuals" (p. 239). Distinct patterns of talking about racial and ethnic diversity emerged as I spent time at the school. Key findings suggest that race is viewed as polarizing, rooted in bias and prejudice, and a threat to community. Discourses, therefore, were aimed at defusing and downplaying race, racialized identities, and experiences. Faculty and students developed frameworks of meaning that both celebrated and subverted the racial and ethnic diversity of its student body. I draw from interviews, focus groups, and participant-observation to understand the ways in which faculty, staff, and students construct and understand race, ethnicity, and diversity, and how such understandings are communicated throughout the school.

A framework of meaning for the concept of diversity was evident throughout my time at Mission. For the administration and faculty, "diverse" referred primarily to students, and particularly to their physical attributes. While "diverse" was typically the first word used to describe the school by both faculty and students, a deeper understanding of the diverse experiences of students based on their racial, ethnic, and cultural differences were left unexamined. This was evident primarily through: 1) the taken-for-granted power dynamics of the school where a predominantly all-white faculty teaches the largely racial and ethnic minority

student body, and 2) an avoidance of talking about students' racial and ethnic self-understandings.

In contrast, for youth participants, "diversity" provided them with a source of connection and comfort. They expressed that a diverse environment enables them to blend in more easily and to not stand out. This gave them a sense of personal security knowing that there are others there who are like them, and who will support them in an environment where racist remarks are widespread. Youth participants also described the importance of being in a diverse environment. They stated that such an environment is important for exposing one to multiple perspectives, ideas, and activities.

Also evident at Mission was an overwhelming emphasis on community. Ceremonies and school-wide events occurred to instantiate a strong sense of community at Mission. Institutional discourses deemphasized racial and ethnic differences because of a prevailing belief that race and ethnicity divide communities. Thus, a discourse of community calls for faculty and students to push racialized differences aside.

For students, race and ethnicity were expected to be talked about and interpreted as funny jokes. Youth participants described cultural and racist stereotypes as rampant, and students as having become used to racism. Participants, thus, negotiated a context where race is not supposed to matter and their experiences with race everyday.

Analysis of the data presented in this chapter is informed by theories of colorblind racism and post-racial ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Leonardo, 2009; Pollock, 2004; Tatum, 2003). As discussed previously, these concepts are based on the belief that because in the post-civil rights era, overt means for maintaining racial inequality through racist practices are illegal, then race *should no longer be* a significant factor that structures people's lives. Racism, then, is

personalized and the best way to truly overcome the effects of race is to not talk about, or downplay, racialized experiences. This results in an avoidance of critically engaging the racialized experiences of individuals and an aversion to deconstructing how race *does* impact the lives of students.

Inside Mission Catholic High School

Mission Catholic High (MCH) is located on the corner of a busy boulevard in Queens. Perched on a hill, the building wraps around the street corner, and is visible from the expressway, which is filled with a constant flow of cars and trucks commuting to and from the city. When classes let out in the afternoon a flurry of students fill the sidewalks outside of the school. Though only a fraction are outside (a significant number of students remain inside the building attending various extracurricular activities) it seems an entire student body has been let out. MCH had a total enrollment of 2704 students, with an average grade consisting of 676 students for the 2010-2011 school year.

There are two main lobbies: the east and west lobbies. The west lobby doors open only at dismissal. Visitors enter the main entrance located in the east lobby. Janet, a long-time employee of the security staff, sits at the front desk and signs in visitors. She is in her sixties, and her New Yorker gruffness is often punctuated with a warm smile. She has worked at Mission for many years and became the welcoming face during my time at the school. After a few days she greeted me one morning, "You're Filipino right? I read your letter," referring to the introductory letter I had written to Jack McDonnell, an assistant principal, wherein I introduced myself and provided background for my research project. Jack had posted the letter in the faculty lounge for teachers

and staff members to read. Over time Janet began letting me into the building without signing me in or requiring me to wear a visitors pass.

One wall in the lobby is lined with plaques of the Mission Brothers who have served at the school. Religious icons such as crosses and statues can also be found in the lobby and halls. Two flatscreen television monitors are mounted in the east lobby and two in the west lobby to display school announcements ranging from try-outs for sports teams and orchestra, to opportunities to fulfill community service hours, and ticket sales for school events. Also among the rotation of announcements are winners of awards such as Perfect Attendance, highest fundraiser, or sports team victories. Always posted are "Our Values":

- to be seekers of Truth
- to develop a critical intellect
- to treat all with respect and dignity
- to lead lives of justice, integrity, and compassion

When classes are in session the halls are typically quiet, with handfuls of students walking through. There are designated areas in the school where students can spend their free periods, called "frees." The library and the cafeteria are two areas where most students spend their frees. Some also stay in the Ministry Office, but students can often be found sitting by their lockers, at the end of halls, or in stairwells. Teachers gently admonish students for being in these areas and ask them to return to one of the designated areas. Students usually comply by going to the library or the cafeteria, or by slowly making their way to another clandestine part of the school. When the bell rings and students change classes the hallways go from relatively quiet to filled with a loud, crowded, clamor of bodies. There is slight respite from the crowds in the east

and west lobbies, but in the halls lined with lockers and classrooms the 2500+ students move shoulder to shoulder, slowly, down the halls.

Looking at the student body is like looking at a Benetton ad: young people of all races, ethnicities, and religions mingling, socializing, and weaving seamlessly among one another. They represent the diversity that is touted by the administration and by the students themselves. White students now make up less than half the school's population. The demographic breakdown by race (the school does not collect data disaggregated by ethnic sub-groups) for 2010-2011 was:

White	48.5%
Black	14.7%
Asian/PI	14.9%
Hispanic	21.7%
American Indian	.002%
Multiracial	.19%

The faculty and students proudly identify the school as diverse both in culture and in extracurricular opportunities. It is often described as having "something for everyone" and offering a club or activity for any type of interest. As a participant observer I was immediately struck by the diversity of students, meaning not only the large number of students of color, but also the diversity in ethnic and religious backgrounds. One participant stated in an interview that it is not uncommon for a student "to say something crazy like, oh I'm half this, quarter that" when describing their background, "Because there's so many different people that you don't know what to expect" (Hector, Interview).

In addition to the racial and ethnic diversity I observed, I noticed the student dress code. I learned that the dress code represents an ethos at Mission that encourages a deep association

between and among students, the activities in which they are involved, and the MCH community. The dress code is described as more relaxed than other Catholic high schools in the area. Students do not wear uniforms. Instead, they wear pants and shirts with the MCH logo stitched on, which must be purchased from the school's uniform company or from the school bookstore. Most notable was that the shirts prominently displayed the clubs and sports teams in which students participate. Unique designs, fonts, and colors distinguished each activity, and thus, each student. I saw football, soccer, and handball team shirts; Filipino, Greek, and Indian club sweatshirts; and Harry Potter hoodies, for members of the Harry Potter Club, to name a few. Jack, the assistant principal, appeared pleased when I told him that one of the first things I noticed was the array of activities represented on the students' clothes and the prominent display of the MCH logo. He said he wants students to be able to identify with something at MCH about which they feel pride and passion. My observation seemed like a casual one, however I soon realized it was part of an institutional discourse that encourages a strong sense of community amongst the students at MCH that is tantamount to—and at times can be threatened by—students' racial, ethnic, and cultural differences.

Discourse of Diversity

There is no mistaking that Mission Catholic High is a racially and ethnically diverse school. *Diverse student body* was one of the first things I jotted down in my fieldnotes on my first day at school, and "diverse" is one of the first adjectives used by students and faculty alike to describe MCH. In this section, I discuss how the concept of diversity was not one that simply described the school, but a discourse, a framework of meaning that constrains and enables an understanding of racial, ethnic, and cultural differences. This discourse creates a space in which

racial, ethnic, and cultural differences are acknowledged but rarely critically engaged. Students' experiences of such differences are left unexamined, especially in how such experiences relate to institutional structures. In this section I look at how pedagogical practices and decisions by faculty and administration that are based on this discourse of diversity remove race and ethnicity from the classroom and how at MCH, a discourse of diversity is less about difference than about how well everyone gets along.

The institution: Seeing and not seeing diversity

In the context of MCH, a discourse of diversity entails focusing on reading the physical attributes of students. Jack O'Donnell, assistant principal in charge of faculty and instruction stated:

> [W]hen I go out to other schools and do, let's say, do a Middle State's Evaluation of the school or visit other schools for some reason, I laugh when I hear them saying that they're so diverse. When I look at their population and it's 99% White, yet, but they have Italians, Polish and Irish, that's their definition of diversity. Whereas when you come back here and you just look at the faces of the students that we have, that's diversity for me.

He also compared MCH to the neighboring public high school, "That's primarily an Asian school; if you stand outside and just watch the kids come out. So, I don't know how many of the schools in this area have the diversity that we have right now." He defines what diversity is, and what it is not. He limits the concept to the physical attributes of students; one *sees* diversity in the students' faces, invoking the social construction of racial classifications based on biological differences (Omi & Winant, 1994).

Jack is an alumnus of MCH who graduated in the early 1970s. He taught physical education for a number of years before becoming an assistant principal. In addition to serving as an assistant principal he teaches health to juniors and seniors. He is fit, exudes confidence, and always dressed in a well-tailored suit. Kai, a senior and a star on the swim team, told me that he thinks Mr. O'Donnell is charismatic and that he has "swag," which he described as "the way someone walks, carries him/herself, and [their] attitude" (Fieldnotes, 5/12). Often speaking at school assemblies, Jack plays a significant role in creating and perpetuating institutional discourses. In an interview in which he talked about the genesis of International Night (the event is discussed in more depth in Chapter 6) he described the increase in students of color as beginning in the early 1990s:

> We have been, primarily, a white, middle class school and started seeing a big change, I guess, in the early 1990s and there was an influx of black population, Hispanic population, and Asian population. And when we looked at everyone at one time, what a change. So, a white-dominant population, majority of population went from about 95% in 5 years it was down to about 85% then 80%. And now, it's a little less than 50 percent.

He went on to say that this demographic change in the school was a result "of what happened out there," referring to Queens. He explained that white flight to the suburbs decreased the white population in the area. He also mentioned the dramatic increase in the Asian population, as well as the immigrant Indian and Caribbean populations that moved into the area, which prompted him to say, "we're surrounded with ethnicity." According to Jack, Queens is "the most ethnically diverse city in the United States" (Interview).

The demographic changes outside the walls of the school caused great changes inside. According to Jack, transitioning from a primarily white, middle class school created tensions

between students and teachers:

> There were faculty who were making crude jokes, racial jokes in school, ethnic jokes in school, and they thought they were funny. But, to the people sitting in the seats who were of those ethnicities, it wasn't funny. And we had more and more kids come to us saying, "I'm offended. I feel harassed," etc.

Here, Jack describes the frequent harassment of students of color in the classrooms by the primarily white faculty. Shielded by a common defense ("they [faculty] thought they were funny"), there was an attempt to exert power over students based on racial difference. According to Jack, there needed to be a shift in the school's approach to diversity,

> [W]e realized pretty quickly that we need to get to faculty to educate them about our growing diversity. And at first we call it "tolerance of other ethnicities." Then, we realized that "tolerance" was not a good word for us. Tolerance, meaning, "I'll put up with you and we move on" the way you always move on. And that wasn't good, so we quickly moved from "tolerance" to "respect." And "respect" really covers it for us because it is, "respect" is clearly in our mission statement.

Jack believes in the strength of the mission statement. He has it displayed on his wall in his office and it is posted in every classroom in the school. It states:

> Mission Catholic High School is a Catholic college preparatory school in the Mission tradition. Our mission is to enable all students to develop and broaden their spiritual, intellectual, creative, emotional, social, and physical abilities. We value the unique contribution each person makes to the MCH community. Together we create an environment filled with academic success, respect, integrity, and joy.

Jack believes it benefits the school to have such a strong mission statement to refer back to. Though "respect" is in their mission statement, relying on the concept as a strategy to stop the harassment of students has limitations. In other words, asking faculty to respect students of color avoids any analysis of the racially coded power dynamics. His consistent use of "we" underscores this limitation; specifically, "we" includes only the white faculty and administration as they figure out how to deal with the growing diversity of the students. Thus, diversity refers only to the students given that an all-white faculty belies Jack's definition of diversity. Consequently, an institutional racial hierarchy that reproduces a nearly all-white teaching staff and administration to this day remains largely uncritiqued.

The director of the Campus Ministry, Matthew Fitzpatrick, was the only faculty member critical of this phenomenon. In a conversation he stated that resumes submitted to teach at MCH tend to come from people who know people already at MCH. He said, "there's no analysis" of the fact that people in power are white and they know other white people (Fieldnotes, 2/9). Thus, a "white racial hegemony" (Leonardo, p. 9, 2009) exists such that a racially homogeneous staff teaches the racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse students at MCH. However, the discourse at the school that prides itself in its diverse student body excludes any examination of the predominantly white faculty and staff and its effects on the largely racial and ethnic minority student body. And because the diversity discourse is one that does not analyze institutional frameworks, there is a blind spot to the racially coded power dynamics of the school.

Zeus Leonardo argues that in order to critically examine how race operates in school to create and perpetuate racialized differences, there must be an analysis of white domination. He characterizes domination as the "patterned and enduring treatment of social groups," which in

the U.S. has historically operated to benefit those constructed as white[8] (Leonardo, 2009, p. 77). He argues that institutions and individuals recreate domination everyday by participating in racial discourses that maintain social structures. At MCH, a diversity discourse is one such discourse; it limits the conceptualization of diversity to the student body (and bodies of students) and excludes the administration or faculty. As such, whites remain in positions of power and the institutional racial hierarchy is maintained.

According to Bonilla-Silva (2010) people rarely engage in a critical analysis of race because of a racial ideology that characterizes the current post-civil rights era. This ideology, which he calls *colorblind racism*, creates the perception that because overt means for maintaining racial inequality through racist practices (e.g., legal segregation) have been removed all individuals have equal access to opportunities regardless of race[9]. As a result, an analysis of how racial differences are institutionalized is forsaken, because race is not considered central to understanding the experiences of people of color.

The classroom: No space for race

I visited 17 classes[10] ranging from freshman to senior classes. Some visits were arranged with the teacher beforehand, while others were on days when I shadowed students.

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[8] Examples can be found in textbooks where whites find their racial identities affirmed in history and literature, and through concepts such as "founding fathers" and "inalienable rights" that have historically excluded people of color, women, and the working class (Leonardo, 2009).

[9] It is important to note that this ideology does not suggest that individuals do not see racial differences in individuals, rather this ideology suggests that individuals *do not believe race does or should matter* in individuals' daily experiences.

[10] Classes included: Physics, Health, Chemistry, Math (Pre-Calculus, Algebra II, Geometry), AP U.S. History, Forensics, Religion, Physical Education, Freshman and Junior English, AP English Literature, and Shakespeare.

Classrooms are located in the basement, first, and second floors of MCH. “Smart Board in Every Classroom” is prominently displayed on the front cover of the school calendar, and on a sign posted outside of the school. Each classroom varies in decoration from minimal, to filled with inspirational and educational posters and flyers. Desks are arranged in rows and filled the rooms to accommodate the nearly 35 students in each class. Classes reflected the diversity of the student body in race, ethnicity, and gender. Each class followed teacher-led, lecture-style direct instruction, save for Forensic Criminology, an elective where students worked in groups to solve a murder case. Lessons were fairly standardized. For example, I sat in on two consecutive sophomore geometry classes. Though each class consisted of a different group of students, the teacher taught the class in almost identical fashion, making the same jokes, and following the same format and order.

In my observations and conversations with students and faculty I found a clear distinction between personal experience and formal curricula such that student experiences were left out of classroom content. The Filipino students who participated in my study all confirmed that neither their race nor ethnic background ever come up in the classroom. Hector, a junior, stated that it means a lot to him to be Filipino. When I asked him about whether his personal experiences ever come up in class he said, “like what you doing Memorial Day and that’s about it.” I asked further whether his personal experiences are ever included in lessons. He said, “Not really. Well, usually like in history class like you could be like, ‘my grandfather was alive during that time period’ but nothing really more than that.” Hector has a laid-back demeanor accented with slight arrogance that, at first, comes off as stand-offish. When I first approached him and his friends to participate in my study during lunch he sat back in his seat with his arms crossed. He rarely made eye contact and I observed a slight smirk on his face when I spoke about my project. He, along with

a few others, reluctantly gave me their email addresses, however he was the only one of the group to respond. During our interview it did not take long for him to become comfortable.

Hector discussed how students' racial/ethnic identities are not talked about in class except in history lessons, nor are they integrated into classroom discussions. I asked whether his race or ethnicity ever comes up in school and he replied,

Hector: Well, like in a—are you talking about in books?

EC: How about in the classroom?

Hector: Well, yeah when there's talking about the—like Spanish rule over the Philippines and it was under, how the U.S. came in and they took control and then they left and they allowed the Filipinos to govern themselves.

EC: So it's more like in history lessons?

Hector: Yeah.

He went on to say that his cultural background comes up in Spanish class where "you could relate like, they—how similar words are. Like forks and spoons, say same thing, but otherwise, nothing really."

Unlike some of the other participants, Hector did not seem intent on giving me canned responses that he thought I wanted to hear. Instead, contrary to my first impression of him, he was thoughtful and interested in conversing. At the end of our interview he gave me a hug. While not explicitly stating it, he seemed to appreciate the opportunity to talk candidly about his personal experiences at school and thoughts about his Filipino identity.

Carol, also a junior, communicated with me mostly through email. She wrote that neither her race nor her ethnicity comes up in class discussions. She wrote "I haven't come across a situation where we talked about anything Filipino related" (email).

Every time I asked a teacher whether she or he had Filipino students in his/her class they responded that they did not know, or that they did not pay attention. Marla, one of the librarians, who comes into contact with students frequently due to the library's function as an "academic commons" said, "I don't notice anything like that," referring to student's ethnic and racial backgrounds. "I'm awful about distinguishing ethnicities. Sometimes I'm like, 'Oh, yeah, you're Korean, right?' and the kid's like, 'No, I'm totally not" (Interview) suggesting that she does notice. However, her example suggests that rather than inquire about students' racial or ethnic identification she (inaccurately) imposes them on students.

Richard, a teacher in the Social Studies department, said that he does not talk about race or ethnicity in class, in large part because he might get that immature kid who "draws lines" (Fieldnotes, 6/7) and he does not want that to happen. For him, drawing lines entails creating divisions between groups based on their racial or ethnic backgrounds, which would be undesirable in the classroom. It even suggests to him a sign of immaturity. I asked Richard if students' personal experiences in terms of their racial/ethnic backgrounds ever enter class discussions, and he said that they do not. He said that "students don't share or offer up discussion so he doesn't want to push it. As an explanation, he said that maybe students think older people don't want to talk about race so they don't" (Fieldnotes, 6/7). In his criminology class, though he admits to mentioning gender, he will "take it [race] out of the equation because criminals come in all shapes and sizes" (Fieldnotes, 6/7). He said a student only asked once about a criminal's racial background. He told me that he emphasized to the class that this particular criminal was not reflective of all individuals of the same racial background, and that it was his bad choice to commit the crime.

Although a colorblind, post-racial ethos is invoked in the classroom (i.e., not noticing or taking account of one's racial background) data suggest race is indeed significant. Mica Pollock, in her school ethnography *Colormute* (2004) found that teachers work to delete race words in an effort to not reinforce or implicate themselves in racial orders. However, she stated, "Most frustrating, we all must negotiate a world in which our very confusions over when to talk as if race matters help re-create a world in which it does" (Pollock, p. 17). Richard said that as a teacher, he does not notice who is saying what. And Marla, the librarian, though she claimed she does not notice "anything like that" described a hypothetical (or not) situation in which she identifies—incorrectly—a student as Korean. She utilizes a colorblind framework that, from her perspective, seems to absolve her from reifying racial differences, but in effect does the opposite. What is more, such a framework allows her to turn a blind eye to how her words might impact students' racial identity formation, and how imposing inaccurate racial/ethnic identities on students may contribute to feelings of invisibility, marginalization, or the essentializing of Asian minorities (Lee, 1996, 2005; Lew, 2006; Ong, 1996).

Richard's example of intentionally leaving out any discussion of racial identities, which was repeated in other teachers' classrooms, signifies to students that their racial identities are unimportant compared to official, formal curricula, as are their experiences with current racial structures. Pollock argues that deliberately ignoring race actually reinforces its significance. However, I would argue that providing the critique that deleting race reifies its significance is not enough; it does not get at the underlying assumptions of why race is so taboo. Whites especially are uneasy discussing race because such a discussion implicates white privilege and racial domination. In *Race, Whiteness, and Education* (2009) Leonardo argues, "the discourse on privilege comes with the psychological effect of personalizing racism" (p. 79). In other words,

focusing on alleviating feelings of white guilt avoids critical reflection. This makes sense: identifying with a racial group that has secured domination through "patterned treatment" of other social groups may create feelings of responsibility, individual blame, or worse yet, resentment and offense. However, an overemphasis on alleviating such guilt to the point race is never discussed avoids a deeper understanding of race's structural origins and interracial relations (p. 79).

Furthermore, when youth participants state that their race almost never comes up in class discussions this indicates a pedagogical decision to avoid an analysis of how race has been structured historically. For example, scholars have argued that American colonization of the Philippines was a racist project (see for example Ignacio, de la Cruz, Emmanuel, and Toribio, 2004 and Omi and Winant 1994). Buenavista et al. (2009) argue that racializing Filipinos as Asians decontextualizes the colonial relationship between the two countries, which facilitates "a historical amnesia that obscures any trace of American imperialism in the Philippines" and its effects (p. 75). Also Baldoz (2004) has argued that Filipinos' racial status was imposed to legitimate their status as a disenfranchised labor force in the U.S.

These examples begin to address the goals of multicultural education, which is to have students understand how their own histories constitute and are constituted by other groups' struggles (Leonardo, 2009). What is more, multicultural education is an "opportunity to challenge students to think critically and reason beyond the text by providing them with the knowledge, perspectives, and resources needed to engage in meaningful dialogue and interactions with different others" (Chan, 2007, p. 137). However, being overly concerned about deleting race from the classroom, especially as it relates to the students, can miss such opportunities.

Comfort in diversity

For the students I spoke with, diversity entails more than reading racial differences on bodies. For them, a diverse school creates a social context in which being an ethnic or racial minority is the norm as opposed to the exception. Students describe the diversity at MCH as providing a comfortable environment. In my interview with Hector he said that what he likes most about his school is its cultural diversity:

> EC: What do you like most about your school?
>
> Hector: Diversity. The individualism I guess if that's a word?
>
> EC: Yeah…
>
> Hector: Like individuality.
>
> EC: What do you mean by it?
>
> Hector: Like everyone can fit in with, like there's always, there's always another person for someone in this school cause… There's so much like, so much different cultures in one place. You can always find like, where you want to be and there's like clubs and everything, activities. So there's always something for you to do. There's always something, there's always people there for you.

What Hector seems to be describing is that having so many "different cultures in one place" facilitates a sense of belonging; he feels as though there are always people who will be there for him.

Carol echoes Hector's sentiment and explicitly mentions her feelings that diversity provides comfort and connection with others. The following is an excerpt from our email conversation:

> Carol: I also think diversity helps provide a little comfort to people when it comes to making friends.
>
> EC: How/Why does it provide comfort? And for whom does it provide comfort?
>
> Carol: It provides comfort because I don't know how to explain it, but you feel a personal security. There are people out there just like you, who think like you, and who you could relate to in some way. There is someone who could understand your perspective or even hold their own perspective and expand your views on the world. It provides comfort to everyone. Loneliness is often one thing no one wants to bear. Everybody needs a friend or someone to talk to at least.

Carol, though finding it difficult to articulate, expresses how being within a diverse environment increases the likelihood that "there are people out there just like you." She describes how that provides a sense of "personal security" suggesting one might feel insecure and lonely without people with whom to personally connect.

Luisa, a soft-spoken, studious junior is an active member of Filipino Club. However, she does not normally hang out with most of the members who tend to be louder, gregarious, and more social. She loves to dance and her peers respect her for that. Despite her shy disposition she was voted as the following year's Vice President for Filipino Club. Luisa talks about how she likes being part of a diverse student body because she is able to blend in:

> I don't like saying it's because of the race but I feel like when a place is—has too many of one thing I would get bored or I would not feel any—I would not feel like I would be able to blend in as easy (Interview).

For Luisa, she does not feel singled out because of her racial or ethnic background, whereas if there was "too many of one thing" she might. Her point is similar to Carol's in that they both

describe diversity as lessening the possibility of standing out or feeling lonely; diversity facilitates comfort and connection.

Kai, though not speaking explicitly about race or ethnicity, but speaking more in terms of his different groups of friends, theorizes about the importance of diversity:

> I mean, I… I think it's not like a good thing to have just one set group of friends throughout high school, throughout college, cause you don't know anyone else. It's—I think it's weird cause, um, hmm... You don't have that like variety like I said before. It's cause um, you know I think that your friends mold you, as a person, you mold them. So having different molds is a good thing.

These students believe diversity is important for exposing one to multiple perspectives, ideas, and activities. Diversity creates comfort because differences are normalized. However, within a diverse context students express the need for some familiarity. There is a constant ebb and flow, a negotiation, between racial/ethnic difference and sameness that creates the ultimate form of comfort. For students, the sense of community that is created through shared background and shared interests is important when talking about diversity at MCH. Diversity entails not just a variety in the physical attributes of students but a source of connection for students who desire that sense of security and sense of belonging.

Pedagogy of community

> Talking in racial terms about how students "got along", I came to realize, one of Columbus students' and adults' most scripted ways of claiming to one another that race mattered (Pollock, 2004, p. 52).

According to Holland (1998), "significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" in our figured worlds, which are understood and achieved through discursive strategies (p. 52). Institutional discourses at MCH are geared towards creating a harmonious community. As discussed in the previous section, a discourse of diversity structures the way in which students and faculty conceive of and approach matters concerning racial and ethnic difference. This diversity discourse goes hand-in-hand with what I call a pedagogy of community, which at MCH values a harmonious existence among its community members (i.e., students). A pedagogy of community deemphasizes racial and ethnic differences because of the belief that race and ethnicity *divide* communities. This pedagogy has similar intentions to a diversity discourse, in that both aim to defuse the danger of race. Thus, in an effort to create a sense of community within the walls of Mission, a pedagogy of community calls for students and faculty to put racial differences aside, and anything that violates that effort is not tolerated.

Defusing race

Jack, as assistant principal, makes it his mission to have faculty and students put aside their racial, ethnic, and cultural differences for the sake of community. As he described the change in demographics in the early 1990s, he suggested that the increase in diversity was, or could have been, seen as a threat to the MCH community. During our interview he stated, "[W]ith that growing diversity came a need to communicate to everyone that although we may look different, we are still under one roof, under one school, under one name of Mission Catholic High." He said that this required a lot of work by school leaders. As discussed earlier, students frequently reported feeling harassed by their teachers because of their race. Jack stated that racial

tensions existed amongst students. He recounted an incident surrounding the O.J. Simpson trial in 1995. He said,

> I'll never forget this scene. We have television sets in the west lobby and the east lobby. It was the OJ Simpson trial and the verdict came in at about one o'clock and I forget the date. But I walked out of my office and the television set normally is not on at one o'clock. It was on, someone turned it on and they turned on a news program and it was a special report that OJ Simpson was found "Not guilty" and the scene in my head, still today is, a whole clump of students standing around the TV when they should have been in class. I had the Black kids cheering the verdict and the White kids upset that it was released. And I get that feeling that they had. But, that was a symbol to me that there was some polarization here as well, not only with faculty but with students. We needed to bring that together (Interview).

What Jack is describing is students' expression of racial identification during a time when a media storm placed institutional racism (with blacks on one end and whites on the other) in the limelight. While I do not have any data from the students themselves, Jack's description matched that of a public dialogue in which racism in the courts and by police was openly critiqued[11]. This incident signified for Jack an unacceptable display of racial bias and prejudice:

> But I'm not naïve to think that when you are in this environment, with this many personalities and students and ethnicities, that things like that are not going to happen because people are going to bring bias and prejudice to schools, to their workplace, to their businesses. It's going to happen, it's part of the United States of America. But at the

[11] See for example: Bates, K.G. (2005). The O.J. Simpson Verdict, Race and the Media. Retrieved from http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4934067.

> same time, when I say that, there needs to be someone there to say, "Not acceptable." And we don't treat each other that way. And we need to send that message constantly 'cause I know the challenge is always going to be there in this population (Interview).

While it would be unfair to draw conclusions based on his description of an incident sixteen years ago, my analysis strongly suggests that the emphasis he places on the need to send a message that their behavior was unacceptable underlies the institutional approach to diversity and community today. His interpretation of the incident as a display by students of bias and prejudice is suggestive of his, and the school's approach to race and racial identification: that race can polarize a student body and threaten a sense of community if not pushed aside.

What is more, Jack suggests that the bias and prejudice that needed to be addressed was in the students. As such, conversations that concern bias and prejudice in society's institutions are avoided. Instead of encouraging students to discuss race and institutional racism, and to understand *why* race may polarize, such discussions are stifled by the overwhelming uncritical emphasis on a unified, harmonious community. He later said,

> So, we've always emphasized that diversity is our strength. And we want people to be proud of their heritage. Yet, again, we come back to the foundation and the principles and the mission statement of Mission Catholic and live within that envelope. And it's worked for us (Interview).

He is convinced that such a discourse has helped change the attitudes of faculty and defused the threat of race. He said, "It's not tolerated and it will be addressed and people know that making those remarks, being sarcastic in their comments, not showing respect to people, it's not something that we will tolerate and the faculty knows that."

However, Jack's narrative is contradictory. As discussed in the previous section, Jack stated that they (school administrators) prefer to utilize a framework of "respect" over "tolerance" when addressing conflicts engendered by the diverse student body. Jack explained, tolerance means, "I'll put up with you and we move on." However, in his narrative of students' reactions to the O.J. Simpson trial verdict he said that such behaviors were "not acceptable" and behaviors like that are "not something that we will tolerate." Jack may not realize this contradiction, which effectively upholds the 'no tolerance' approach. Or, he is suggesting that being respectful necessitates putting aside racial differences for the sake of a harmonious community. The latter interpretation is in accordance with a pedagogy of community, which views race and ethnicity as divisive. What is more, he states that the 'no tolerance' messages need to be constantly communicated indicating his belief that unwanted divisions along racial lines are ripe "in this population."

Distinctions and ceremonies: Reminders of community

I attended a number of school assemblies. Most notable were the end of the year assemblies held for the juniors and seniors, respectively. "Usually in assemblies they always constantly remind us to help others, not make fun of others, think of others before yourself, follow in Mission's ways, etc." (Carol, email). Assemblies are a time when students, and sometimes families, gather in the auditorium, typically by grade level. They are addressed by the administration, usually Jack, Father Joseph Todd, the school's part-time chaplain, and Brother Michael. Assemblies are infused with institutional discourse and they provide distinct opportunities to create a sense of community, especially ceremonies marking rites of passage for members of the MCH community.

The Junior ring ceremony is one that marks juniors' transition into seniors and occurs on what MCH calls "Junior Day" (Fieldnotes, 5/26). Students receive a token, such as a ring, which symbolizes this rite of passage. It is an important ceremony for the students, and apparently for faculty as well. I spoke with Kathy Welch, a school guidance counselor and also the moderator for Filipino Club, days before the ceremony and she was very unhappy that she was going to miss it. She was asked to chaperone the sophomores at City Zoo. It was the first fieldtrip of its kind in that the entire class of 685 students would attend together for science class. Kathy said many of her students asked her if she was going to attend the ring ceremony, and when she would tell them "No" they would respond disappointed, saying, "You won't be at my ceremony?!"

I too was asked to chaperone, but because it fell on the same day as the ring ceremony I declined. Jack had presented the two as a choice between "more curriculum" or "more tradition." The ring ceremony itself is rooted in deep tradition, and because my research focuses on discourses I wanted to investigate an institutionalized event. The discourse of community pervaded the ceremony. The following is an excerpt from my fieldnotes that describe the ceremony's proceedings:

> Bro. Michael then took over "as Principal of Prep." He began by talking about the symbolism and history of the class ring. He said that more than 185 years ago rings represented pride and achievement, the desire to belong, and the ring identifies you with a specific school and class. He said they were "coming of age as seniors," and there were some cheers and applause. He then talked about the history of the design of the ring. He said that they are setting an example by being a better Christian and a better student. He concluded, "Congratulations, you are seniors at MCH!"

The event itself was an activity that reinforced the significance of membership in the MCH community. Family members, all dressed in formal attire, attended the ceremony to participate in these students' rite of passage. The ceremony is framed as a tradition, one that bestows distinction upon students who are becoming the new leaders in the MCH community. As Brother Michael stated in his opening remarks, "You become the example; underclassmen look up to you," (Fieldnotes, 5/26). The ceremony itself was permeated with discourse that enforced this knowledge. The ceremony reminded the students how integral they are to the MCH community. The administration made it very explicit that it was significant to become a senior at MCH. "Becoming seniors" and "You are now the seniors" was proclaimed many times throughout the ceremony and the seniors-to-be were congratulated again and again. Both Brother Michael and Jack emphasized how with their change in status the students face increased responsibility for, and increased respect from, the underclassmen. What is more, Brother Michael told them that the faculty and staff at Mission are there for them "to make life and next year happy," underscoring seniors are deserving of that honor as the most important and revered members of the Mission community.

Even the celebrated "International Night" (see Chapter 6), which is an event originally called "Awareness Day" meant to celebrate the ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity of the students, must ultimately function to solidify community. Jack stated:

> When we got to the students, they were proud of who they were. They were proud of going to school here, they were proud of who they were, they were proud of their race and ethnicity. So, we then decided to have an Awareness Day, which was - we called "International Night" and then that evolved into "International Week." And what we attempted to do was on International Night have every ethnic club in the building come

> together, bring in their own food, set a booth up in the cafeteria, and if they wanted to perform a show for let's say a 5-minute show, a dance, that was popular with their own ethnicity.

He went on to explain how the event has evolved into a series of performances by student ethnic clubs, and that he fears it has become a dance competition. Though he believes "the spirit of it is still running pretty strong" he anticipates having to address the competitiveness soon. He said that each club wants

> to be the best… And I don't think it's a matter of changing what they're doing. I think it's a matter of sending the message that although we're proud of our own ethnicity, we are still one under of Mission Catholic High. And I think that message has to be out there loud and clear. I'm not sure if it is right now (Interview).

Here, he expresses his concern that International Night could become a threat to the unified community of MCH. He is not necessarily concerned with students wanting "to be the best." In fact, the school holds competitive talent shows where there are winners and losers. However his concern is suggestive of an underlying belief, which is that racial and ethnic differences, and importantly strong racial/ethnic identification, are polarizing and a threat to the MCH community.

A family-like sense of comfort

Through participation in a discourse of community students come to see themselves as integral members of the Mission community. They construct and negotiate a strong association between themselves and Mission both through their daily social interactions and in the vast array of activities. According to Holland,

> Forming an identity… takes (and makes) personal experience to organize a self around discourses and practices, with the aid of cultural resources and the behavioral prompting and verbal feedback of others. It takes the heuristic developments of disposition and savoir faire to imagine the world and to identify with the figured world and to identify with the figured world (1998, p. 285).

The discourse of community is embodied by students at Mission. Participants frequently referred to school as their family or second home and invoked the sense of camaraderie they feel. They described their teachers as caring. Eugene, an active, energetic junior said that one of the things he likes most about the school is "how the teachers are so helpful and they like, they, um—what's the word…They're just cool!" He laughed, continuing, "Whenever you need help, they always try to help you with it." In nearly all of my classroom observations the teachers had a friendly, jovial rapport with students.

The notion of family is invoked in many aspects of the school, even in their homeroom. Their homeroom is called "Cor," which is the Latin word for heart. Cor meets between first and second period every day. Students are sorted alphabetically freshman year and they stay together, with the same teacher, through all four years. The school's newspaper, published an article specifically on Cor. The following is an excerpt:

> Cor is what we call our homeroom here at MCH. But it's not your typical come in, sit down, take attendance, hear announcements, and walk out type of deal. Cor is so much more. Cor is lively and warm. Your cor is your family at MCH (October 2010).[12]

[12] Though none of my participants spoke specifically about Cor, the article was one student's reflection on what she will miss about the school after graduation.

As discussed earlier, participants spoke of the sense of comfort, belonging, and familiarity they feel at MCH. Some participants expressed both appreciation of and frustration with the academic rigor of MCH. Hector called it a place where "you really have to keep your head straight." Struggling with what he feels is "so much extra work," he believes he would do better at another school. However, he said he could never imagine leaving the environment,

> I enjoy the environment, like just walking around school and then, you know, just seeing everybody, saying 'what's up' to everybody. It's a great environment… [P]eople here like, they're all a good influence, like they're all good examples and the people here are my friends too. So I can't imagine just like leaving (Interview).

Eugene transferred to Mission when he was a sophomore. He said,

> After transferring here in sophomore year, it was a very welcoming environment, a lot of people spoke to me and I made friends quickly. It's such a big school that you meet a new person everyday like, this is my second year here and I still meet a new person every day so, it's just a great school (Interview).

Gabrielle, the bubbly, outgoing President of Filipino Club, was particularly nostalgic because as a senior, she was facing the end of her time at MCH. She frequently invoked the notion of school as a family and home. When I asked her what she will miss most about Mission she stated,

> It's just being here all day, every day, it's like this is my life… Like, people here I would consider my family. I spend more time here with these people and these teachers, like the students, more than I do in my own house, because when my dad… like when my parents are at work and my sister's in college, you know, she's hardly home the same time I am… it's just really comfortable here. Like, I would consider Mission my home. I'm here from 7:30 in the morning till like, 7:30 at night and on weekends, depending.

She went on to say,

> So I'm just going to miss like, my routine, like, knowing that I'm going to wake up at this time all time; I'm going to go to school at this time, I'm going to do this, this and that, in that order. And now I'm going to college, it's like, I don't have that same schedule, or whatever. I'm not going to have that same uniform time to wake up, to get ready for school the way I do here. It's going to be a big adjustment, but I mean, it's got to happen sooner or later (Interview).

Mission is a significant social world for Gabrielle, which, through her constant participation provides her with a family-like sense of comfort. As mentioned earlier, Mission encourages a deep association between student and the activities in which the student is involved. In other words, encouraging students to be actively involved in extracurriculars at Mission facilitates a deep association between student, the activities in which the student is involved, and the school itself. Thus, a strong sense of belonging to the school community is established.

Eugene, Hector, and Gabrielle are suggestive of the discursive effects of a pedagogy of community as they describe Mission as being such a "great environment" and a "second home" to them. They have come to identify Mission as a significant social world, and they have come to identify *with* the social world of Mission as members of the community. In the following section I present a particular event in which the seniors embody and perform that sense of community.

Celebrating the seniors: A performance of community

Holland emphasizes the importance of individuals who perform discourse as key to figuring social worlds. In this sense, discourses are enacted, and thus "performed." The seniors

embodied and performed a strong sense of community on their last day of classes. The following is from my fieldnotes:

> Bruce was at the circulation desk and said to me, "Welcome to the circus!" He told me it was the seniors last day, and he said that someone is walking around with a bike horn, which, "sounds like a foghorn." He laughed and said that I will probably hear the word "penis" being yelled out because that is "apparently the word of the day" (Fieldnotes, 5/19).

Bruce is the chairperson of the library. He is a gentle, softspoken man in his sixties. He was one of the first faculty members at Mission with whom I became familiar. On my first day he offered his desk in the library for me to sit, access to a computer, and he even offered me paper and pens if I needed them. He recounted some of the pranks seniors pulled in the past in a mildly amused way. He said there is always some sort of prank each year, and that it has been bad in the past. He said students left baby parakeets in the library about eight or nine years ago. They have also stampeded through the halls. As a result, they close the library doors to make it more difficult to stampede through the school. "But," he said, "they just go around" (Fieldnotes, 5/19). Bruce said he just goes with the flow but he will tell them not to do anything stupid that prevents them from walking at graduation, especially considering their parents spend $30,000 and they want to see them walk.

Bruce's narrative aligns with what was said at the senior assembly held two weeks prior. There was a lot of hype leading up to the seniors' last day. The senior assembly legitimized and ceremonialized the students' last day as something big. Students were given administrative information regarding final tuition payments, donation of school clothing and school supplies, and a reminder to return all library books. The seniors were also given instructions regarding

graduation tickets, procedures for collecting their diplomas, and securing tables at prom. Importantly, they were given warnings about exhibiting problematic behavior on their last days. Specifically, students were told not to perform any inappropriate acts or create any problems otherwise they may not be permitted to attend prom or graduation. For example, they could not cut class on their last day, graffiti the school, or do any damage to the building. Students were warned not to run around the building, which roused excited chatter from the students. The entire warning was framed by saying there is a difference between "celebration" and "ceremony." There was a lot of anticipation of the day and surveillance of the students but also a resignation that the students were going to do something celebratory, if not destructive.

In the days prior to their last day, seniors followed a "relaxed dress code" which allowed them to wear non-MCH clothing. On their last day many wore their 'seniors shirt' which was a black and gray tee-shirt with "Seniors Class of 2011" written on the back in graffiti lettering. On the front it had a paw print, emblematic of their mascot, and "MCH" printed, also in graffiti lettering. This day is entirely celebratory of the senior class so much so that the underclassmen were forced to adjust their schedules for the seniors. The entire Mission community participated in the ritualized distinction of the senior class.

Juniors and freshmen adjusted their lunch periods, either having lunch in a separate area or ending early for the final "Senior Lunch." At the start of lunch students filtered in and some screamed, "Yeahh!!" When friends would enter those who were already there would erupt into cheers. Chants broke out "MCH! MCH!" and "Seniors! Seniors! Seniors!" A group also started a "USA!" chant, which received some boos. The excitement was palpable and I saw happiness, nostalgia, excitement, and sadness all over the students. It certainly seemed as though students were celebrating having reached the pinnacle of their time at Mission.

Students congregated in their usual groups, which were bounded by race or ethnicity. Early on in my time at Mission Kathy, the guidance counselor, described the school cafeteria as an interesting place because "the kids are all separate." She said, "you can find anything and everything" at this school but "for whatever reason" they sit in separate groups at lunch (Fieldnotes, 2/10). Richard also characterized students sitting in similar racial/ethnic groups in the cafeteria as antithetical to the so-called harmony in the classroom. He said that he is naïve to think that all his students like and know each other. He said that in the classroom they are very diverse, but they tend to get along. However, he said, in the cafeteria "You see it," meaning the division of students by their race/ethnicity (Fieldnotes, 6/7). When an institutional discourse of community builds a foundation of oneness and harmony on characteristics other than race or ethnicity it is unsurprising that school leaders are puzzled when students hang out in groups of similar racial or ethnic backgrounds. Kathy and Richard's statements are also indicative of the belief that racial identification by students at MCH is contrary to them feeling a sense of community; they perceive such patterns as suggestive of polarization.

Jack described past senior lunches:

> You have the black table, you have the Football table, you have the Asian table, Hispanic table, and then everything else in between. You know, the girl table, where the cheerleaders sit or something like that. And it's sort of - you know, they're all doing their own thing on that last day. Like one year, we had the black kids brought in a boom box, you know, and they were playing some music and they were rapping to it, you know, all fine stuff, all clean stuff. But they all did it in a different way, you know, and it was no challenging from one ethnic group to the other ethnic group 'cause of what they were doing.

Because, as mentioned earlier, there is this belief that racial identification signifies prejudice and polarization, an event like the seniors' last lunch is surveilled. In her study, "*Why Do All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?": And Other Conversations About Race* (2003), Beverly Tatum found that when black students sit together they are perceived as oppositional and "school administrators want to know not only why they are sitting together, but what can be done to prevent it," (p. 62). Tatum argues that "racial grouping" occurs in racially diverse settings when students turn to each other for support when faced with the stress of racism (ibid.). At Mission, such grouping occurs with all groups, not just black students (racial grouping at Mission is discussed in the next section). Jack went on to say,

> Now, I'm not saying that they had *feelings* about what was going on, but certainly didn't surface or show. So, again, it's setting the tone, it's saying to people, "We have an understanding here of who we are and what we want to accomplish," (Interview).

Jack sums up his narrative of a past senior lunch by saying that even if they had feelings they "certainly didn't surface or show." This narrative is important in two ways. First, it is suggestive of his assumption that racial grouping means tension exists between groups and thus has potential for "challenging". Second, he explicitly states that putting aside, or playing down, racial differences exemplifies "the tone" that he wants to set. According to a discourse of community, banding together with close friends who were of similar racial and ethnic backgrounds is acceptable as long as there is no evidence that harmony might be threatened.

As mentioned earlier, I also observed students congregating in groups marked by racial and ethnic similarities. During the seniors' last lunch, by milling around talking to others with whom they normally do not students showed to the faculty and administration that their racial differences would not get in the way of community. As Gabrielle described:

> Like, we're all walking around and stuff, you know, with different people cause you don't know the next time you're going to hang out with them, so I mean, I mostly spent time with my friend Joy, who's like my best friend for the past four years and my friend Franki, who I've been best friends with since we were seven. So it was just like, oh guys, we're not going to be in school together anymore, so it was bittersweet, and then, Obviously we were walking around, talking to other groups of people; everyone's hyper and excited, screaming, singing and all that good stuff (Interview).

At the end of lunch, Kai and Gabrielle were walking out of the cafeteria together. They said "Hi" to me and Kai asked, "How'd you like that?" The question exhibited pride and excitement, and also an established sense of belonging within the Mission community. He participated in an event that was meant specifically to celebrate a group of students united by their distinction as the eldest members of the Mission community and a shared accomplishment of completing their tenure at Mission.

Stereotypes as Jokes: Intentions and Reactions

Bonilla-Silva (2010) states, "The central component of any dominant racial ideology is its frames or *set paths for interpreting information* (emphasis in original)" (p. 26). In a context where institutional discourse diffuses race and defuses its potential for tension and polarization, participants describe their racial and/or ethnic backgrounds invoked only as stereotypes, jokes, and not to be taken seriously. They describe a world where race is expected to be talked about and interpreted as funny jokes (re)producing a field of discourse in which cultural stereotypes abound and students become inured to racism. In this world, comments walk a fine line between a stereotypical joke and outright racism, and the onus to determine which it is falls on the person

at whom the joke is aimed. Gabrielle explains, "Like, no-one cares, no-one really means it to be serious. But I think it depends who you say it to, like, they could either take it seriously or as a joke" (Interview). She went on to say,

> Maybe they're having a bad day, or they've dealt with something before, like, where they felt attacked because of their race. Or maybe they just don't like the person they're talking to (laughs), so they would think whatever comes out of their mouth would be offensive.

She continued, "I think it's just the person that it's coming from and who they're talking to. Like, I don't think they mean to stereotype as a whole race, or attack a whole ethnicity." Rendering race as harmless jokes diffuses it in that it enables one to talk about it in an unfocused, unintentional way. However, even if "they don't mean to stereotype" the racial discourse is such that they can, and do, behind a shield of humor. The following exchange during a focus group exemplifies a relatively harmless stereotype:

> EC: Are there times at school when you feel like your racial or ethnic background, or being Filipino, or Chinese, or Burmese ever comes up? (couple of seconds of silence, voices also lower in the following)
>
> Kai: No.
>
> Gabrielle: No. I've never come into anything like that (kind of mumbles).
>
> Kai: I mean unless you're like joking with someone like, you know like, about a stereotype or something, but… Nothing like, too serious.
>
> Gabrielle: Yeah nothing serious. Like, if you come in with a shirt from Supreme, 'Oh you're so Filipino.' (laughs, talk over each other)
>
> EC: Say again, if you come with a shirt from?

> Gabrielle: If you come wearing a shirt from Supreme, it's like this store in SoHo that a lot of Filipinos shop at. So when you come in they're like, 'Wow, way to fit the stereotype (laughs)' you know? But it, it's not anything serious –

Roberts, Bell, and Murphy (2008) state, "The role of laughter in bringing people together and rendering funny that which is otherwise hurtful makes the transformation of stereotypes into jokes potentially affirming, providing a way to deal with injury and create spaces of self-definition" p. 348). She goes on to say, "Although not unproblematic as they themselves note, relating to one another through redeploying derogatory terms youth argue is a way to "die out" the negative connotations" (ibid.).

Hector describes a situation in which insults are based on racial stereotypes. He said someone might say, "I can't drive, you have small genitals, can't see well, that we eat dog, I mean I don't know. Sometimes it's gets like annoying." I asked Hector to elaborate and tell me about a conversation that he may have with someone. He said,

> Well, alright, if we're just talking, right? And then people are just like, 'You have a small dick,' right? It's like, 'What?' And like, and then from there, it just like escalates, like, this and that, Asians, Asians and then from there, I have to like, I have to think of the stereotype about them. That's just how conversation is.

A discourse of diversity couched in a colorblind framework, and a pedagogy of community that demands students put aside racial/ethnic differences for the sake of unity create a space in which race and ethnicity *should be* conceived of as jokes, which misses opportunities to identify when racism is operating. Luisa stated,

> Luisa: I feel like racism is something that people have become more accustomed to and that they've grown to accept more, and so that's why most people laugh at them. In a way

that's not ok, because you don't know whether or not they're being hurt inside unless they show it.

EC: Do you think that people are doing it just for laughs or do you think that they're trying to offend people?

Luisa: Most of the time I feel like it's for the laughs but I think a lot of people have learned that to be intentionally racist is not right. Because how would they feel if they were being discriminated against? (Focus Group)

Luisa astutely describes what Bonilla-Silva calls *colorblind racism*. This ideology, Bonilla-Silva argues, gained momentum after the civil rights era of the 1960s. He argues that in the post civil rights era individuals have developed ways of talking about racial differences and racial inequities as *nonracial* phenomena because of the fear of being deemed a racist. What is more, individuals view racism as single acts made by individuals because of the belief that structures have been effectively removed to allow for equal opportunity regardless of race. As Luisa stated, "people have learned that to be intentionally racist is not right." Thus at Mission students frame race as funny stereotypes and jokes. She is critical of this by saying that such comments can be hurtful.

Another tenet of colorblind racism is the belief that people from similar backgrounds gravitate towards one another naturally, shifting focus from segregation or discriminatory practices to notions of likeness and similarity. While many of my participants support the notion that people hang out with others from similar backgrounds, they say a large part is because of the safety derived from their friends. Vanessa, a junior who is actively involved in extracurricular activities including Filipino Club, discussed that hanging out in club "you feel safer. And if anything bad happens to you, people will back you up with anything," (Focus Group). She

stated, “I mean, even when I walk around, people are really racist. Like, even in class.” When I asked her to elaborate she said:

> I mean like, even in class, like one of my friends – we were in Spanish class – and someone threw like, a Black joke, saying, “Oh her lips are really big” or whatever, and it was another Asian that I knew, she was from Thailand. And they were like, “Oh, go make me some pork fried rice” or like, or even like anything. My friend, who’s Puerto Rican, they said to her like, “Oh, go fix my garden” or something, you know? It’s just so stereotypical around here that you don’t know how to react to it, cause it’s coming at you out of like, nowhere.

Vanessa is expressing frustration with the discordance between a colorblind context where race is not supposed to matter and her experiences with race every day. I asked her how teachers deal with it and she said, “They just say, ‘Sto-o-p’ or ‘Talk to me after class’ but you never really know, like that doesn’t take away what they said to you, and how you felt about it” (Focus Group). She described another instance when racial stereotypes, under the guise of jokes, were directed at her:

> In science class there was one time when I came to school late and my teacher was like, “Got caught up in traffic?” and everybody else was like, “Ooooh!” and I didn’t catch it at first; I didn’t understand what they were talking about, I thought it was a true, like a real question. But they were saying that like, “Oh just cause she’s Asian she probably got caught up in traffic,” or something. Or, in math class, like nobody knew how to solve the question and they look to me and they’re like, “Oh you want to answer it? You’re Asian, you’re really good at it, you don’t even need a calculator.” But then in reality, I’m doing so bad in it and they don’t know how much it hurts to hear that. Like to think, for

> everybody else to think that I'm so good at something that I'm really not, and have to live up to what they believe in too.

Her last point invokes the model minority myth that generalizes all Asians as good students who are exceptional in math, which marginalizes the experiences of a significant number of Asian American students who struggle in school (Lew, 2006; Lee, 1996, 2005). The jokes directed at Vanessa taps into racial stereotypes, and because the racial discourse of the school frames the interpretation of such comments as jokes, she is left feeling hurt and frustrated.

Carol wrote:

> The most I really hear is just stereotypes sort of thing, and it's just students commenting onto something we learn or other situations. Like if a teacher tells someone to be quiet, and the student resents and complains how someone else was talking too, sometimes I'd hear the phrase "Is it cause I'm black?" or something else. It's usually used as a joke, but sometimes I feel students are being serious (email).

She describes the fine line between making a joke and being serious. There is ambiguity such that both can be true of the speaker's intent. But, because race is seen as polarizing, is constantly being diffused, and not critically discussed in or out of the classroom, comments about people's racial or ethnic backgrounds are unaddressed and "left to die a little death" (personal communication, Lisa Patel).

This is not to discount that students have found effective ways to use "rhetorical devices of humor" to grapple with their own racialized experiences (Roberts et al., 2008, p. 335). However, such a framework effectively reproduces a dominant color-blind ideology that renders any attempt to discuss racial hierarchies, inequities, or disparities as simply 'playing the race

card' (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Lewis, 2003, as cited in Roberts et al., 2008) especially among communities of color.

The Facebook incident

A colorblind ideology that asserts race no longer matters dominates mainstream racial discourse (Roberts et al., 2008). In *Race, Whiteness, and Education* (2009) Zeus Leonardo argues that a preoccupation with whether one comes off as racist "forsake[s] the more central project of understanding the contours of structural racism" (p. 79). The racial discourses at Mission create and recreate a school context in which race and racial difference *should not* matter, and in fact be put aside. This is rooted in the belief that racial identifications are potentially polarizing, based on bias and discrimination, and a threat to community.

I began observations at MCH as a racial "flare-up" was coming to an end. I draw from fieldnotes, focus groups, and interviews to reconstruct what was known as "the Facebook incident." The incident manifested a polarization by race, a polarization that a pedagogy of community aims to combat. My analysis of this incident suggests the institutional discourse of the school played a significant role in how the incident was resolved. The institutional discourse allowed for a student who wrote a racist comment to be commended by faculty for standing by his word. This occurred because the racial discourse of the school places an overwhelming emphasis on creating a harmonious community, and it undermines any analysis of white privilege and racial domination.

The incident began when a white, male student in his senior year commented on the social networking site about Black history month stating that they (African Americans) did not even deserve an hour. According to Jack, students "piled up" and a lot of inflammatory

comments were made on both sides. A black, female student generated a hit-list that consisted of people who defended the original poster. She and the original poster were both suspended. Jack said that the following day there was a senior mass. At the end of the mass he spoke up about the incident and that as soon as he mentioned it he could tell everyone in the room knew what he was talking about. He invited students to a meeting after school that day to talk about it. He said about 100 students were in attendance, half were white boys and the other half were black girls. He said that students "needed to vent about some things, and he also said he wants to address issues like this when they flare up to encourage dialogue, cooperation, sensitivity, and harmony because it is such a diverse student body" (Fieldnotes, 2/9). Jack invited me to the follow-up meeting that was being held after school, which was suggested by one of the students at the first meeting.

I attended the meeting and only three students showed up, which was in stark contrast to the 100 students at the previous meeting. Jack had anticipated a low attendance given that students tend to move on quickly and he has not heard much talk in the hallways about the incident. The three students were juniors and they said they were there to hear more about what happened. Three faculty members were also in attendance: Jack, Matthew (Director of Ministry), and Father Joseph Todd. Jack relayed the story to the students, saying that the "student claimed he wrote it as a joke to his white and black friends." He said a hit list was generated and "what was supposed to be a joke became a threat" (Fieldnotes, 2/9).

Similar to how participants described that race comes up only as jokes or funny stereotypes the original poster claimed that he said it as a joke for both his white and black friends. The racism in the comment was ignored, and instead, the three faculty members commended him for standing up and standing by his comment, emphasizing his moral stature

and integrity. Furthermore, the incident was described as threatening only when a hit list was generated. Why was the original posting not considered threatening? An analysis of the racial discourse of the school provides insight into how and why the student was commended and the incident framed as it was. A discourse that frames race and race identities as jokes was the shield used by the student and his allies to defend himself. Furthermore, an overwhelming pattern of racial diffusion enabled students to say, "Oh, it's just an opinion, deal with it," which, according to Luisa, was what students were saying (Focus Group, 3/23).

The institutional pedagogy of community was used as a way to resolve a racially divisive incident, and ultimately diffuse the polarization that occurred between black and white students. It was the goal towards which the administration was aiming: harmony and unity as a class and to move beyond tolerance towards a community of brothers and sisters[13] (Fieldnotes, 2/9). One of the girls at the meeting said that in her English class kids were talking about the incident but that the teacher stopped the conversation saying she did not want to hear about it anymore. Jack said, "Isn't that part of the problem, that the conversation stops?" (Fieldnotes, 2/9). Matthew questioned "how do we get to a point where we talk about race and community in school when we have all these other things to do in our curriculum?" (ibid.). While this is a concern of teachers today who are overwhelmed with test preparation and increased standardization it indicates how removed curriculum is from the racialized experiences of students. In a school so

[13] The notion of a "community of brothers and sisters" may remind readers that MCH is a Catholic high school. Although this is an important point to consider, the participants in this study did not cite religion as playing a significant factor in their enrollment at MCH. Instead, they overwhelmingly mentioned the academic reputation of MCH as the main reason for attending, or a preference to *not* to attend a public school. Also, the school has a religiously diverse student population.

invested in the diversity of its students and developing a critical intellect[14] perhaps figuring how to integrate the cultured, racialized experiences of students into the curriculum should be an imperative. Thus, issues of students' "race and community" can be critically examined and be part of the schooling experience.

At the meeting, Matthew also mentioned the fear, difficulty, and tension associated with talking about race in class. The reluctance of teachers to talk about such issues is also rooted in a colorblind ideology because such tensions are not supposed to exist in a colorblind world. Matthew described a teacher who had attempted to discuss the incident in class. The teacher said some of her students genuinely did not understand why there is a Black history month. The teacher said it was tense until one student who was black spoke of her personal experience as a child when she was discriminated against. The teacher said the tone changed and that students began to realize, "this isn't about race or prejudice, this is about a friend of mine" (Fieldnotes, 2/9). While this incident illustrates an attempt to begin talking about race and racism, it became a message that "this isn't about race" (ibid.), reframing racialized experiences as nonracial, (re)producing a colorblind ideology in which historical and institutionalized racial orders are ignored.

Jack assured the students with a reminder that they are important members of the Mission community. He said that the first 45 minutes of the first meeting were difficult and that there was a lot of finger pointing. However, by the end there was more talk of unity as a senior class. Although the school leaders exhibit genuine intentions towards creating a harmonious atmosphere at school, the discourses on race, or the meanings that underlie their orientations towards race and diversity, uphold a colorblind space in which race is removed from the

[14] See "Our Values" earlier in the chapter.

processes by which it is structured. Consequently, there was no undoing of the privileged position from which the white student wrote his offensive remarks.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the institutional racial discourses of MCH are discussed. The pedagogical practices and decisions by faculty and administration are based on discourses that view race as divisive, polarizing, and a threat to a harmonious community. As a result, racial and ethnic differences are constantly being diffused and downplayed. A discourse of diversity that acknowledges racial, ethnic, and cultural differences but rarely critically engages them goes hand-in-hand with a pedagogy of community that places great value on harmony within the walls of MCH. Together these discursive understandings perpetuate and create a context in which racial differences exist but discussions of structural racial privilege are discouraged.

Faculty and students use various discursive strategies to construct their understandings of diversity. For the assistant principal, diversity is primarily *seen* in the faces of the students. In other words, the concept of diversity is limited to the physical attributes of the students. He does not include faculty members or administrators when discussing diversity given that the predominantly all-white faculty and administration at MCH belies his definition. As a result, the racially coded power dynamics of the school are uncritiqued.

A current racial ideology that Bonilla-Silva calls *colorblind racism*, provides insight into some of the underlying beliefs of the discourse on diversity. Bonilla-Silva argues that this ideology creates the perception that race is no longer a factor in structuring inequities. What is more, this ideology avoids a critique of white domination and privilege, or the enduring patterned treatment of social groups that have historically benefited whites. Leonardo argues that

this racial ideology avoids any analysis of white privilege. As a result, an institutional discourse on diversity avoids a closer look at how race's structural origins lead to the institutional racial hierarchy at Mission. And also, diversity is discussed more in terms of how well everyone gets along.

Importantly, racial and ethnic identities are not suppressed at Mission. Rather, what *are* suppressed are discussions about, and deeper understandings of, the racialized experiences of students.

Discussions about race and diversity with faculty and administration are suggestive of a belief that racial and ethnic diversity might lead to polarization. This underscores their assumption that race is rooted in prejudice and bias and can threaten a sense of community if not pushed aside. Richard, a social studies teacher, chooses not to talk about race in class because he does not want an "immature kid" to draw lines. For Richard, calling attention to divisions between groups along racial and ethnic lines signals immaturity and it represents an act he wants to avoid. Thus, a pedagogy of community is geared towards defusing race. Anything perceived as a potential threat is not tolerated. The school hosts events and ceremonies to instill in students a sense of belonging in the Mission community. Students are bestowed with honors and distinctions that underscore their membership to the Mission community. Even the celebrated International Night, which is meant to give students the opportunity to exhibit pride in their ethnic, racial, and cultural identities must ultimately function to solidify community.

Conversations with youth participants suggest that they negotiate the institutional racial discourses to position themselves within the Mission community. For them, student diversity provides a comfortable environment, which facilitates a sense of security. Race was a significant factor in their school experiences. They discussed the close connection they feel to their peers of

similar backgrounds. However, some youth participants also described distinct racism in the school. They described a context in which race is expected to be talked about and interpreted as funny jokes, which is suggestive of the regulatory nature of discourse. At Mission, cultural stereotypes abound and students are supposed to view them as harmless. Ultimately, students must make sense of stereotypes that walk a fine line between jokes and outright racism. As a result, students draw on their friends for safety and comfort to cope in a context where stereotypes are rampant. Also, because of the perspective that race is no longer a factor in structuring inequities, openly talking about how race operates to create and perpetuate racialized differences is often forsaken for fear of being deemed a racist.

In the next chapter I examine the social process of identity formation. Specifically, I look at how youth participants use a variety of discursive strategies to make sense of their racialized identities.

CHAPTER 5

HYPEBEASTS, CHINESE-MEXICANS, AND BLACK ASIANS: CONSTRUCTING FILIPINO IDENTITY

> People come up to me saying, "Oh, are you Asian?" and I was like, you can say, "Yes," I mean, I get confused sometimes, too, and I try and look it up or something like, "Oh, no." "But you're Pacific Islander, right?" And then sometimes they think I'm Japanese or like Korean. They just—I mean, like majority of people here do know that I'm Filipino because of like what I do also. They're like, "Oh, you sing and dance? Okay, you're definitely Filipino," and all that. But then they look at my skin color, "Wait, but you're really light. So I don't think you are." (Vanessa, Focus Group)

The racial discourse of the school constructs a figured world, or "the imaginary and the embodied communities in which we live" (Holland, 1998, p. 192) where identities are produced from the discourses that frame these worlds. While the previous chapter focuses on the school, this chapter focuses on students. In particular, I focus on discourses of identity that students (re)create and negotiate to make sense of their racial and ethnic identities. In the above excerpt from a focus group Vanessa exemplifies the complex process by which we conceive and construct our identity. It shows the conflicting senses of self that we possess at any given moment and how we make sense of others' perceptions. It also shows how ethnic and racial minorities are subject to imposed identities based on phenotypical features (Waters, 1999).

Scholars have long written about the complexity of identities, especially the identities of immigrants and children of immigrants. According to Yen Espiritu children of immigrants learn

"to negotiate and reconstruct distinct new cultures and subcultures where their identities [are] multiple, hybrid, and situational depending on given social and economic contexts" (as cited in Lew, 2006, p. 79). Stuart Hall (1990) states identities are "a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (p. 392). Moreover, he states, "We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always 'in context'" (ibid., p. 394). My data support such concepts and show how students' identities and their sense of self are in constant flux, multiple, and rarely talked about as static, defined entities. Instead, their sense of self changed depending on what others say, with whom they were interacting, and the racial discourses constraining and enabling their understandings of identity. In particular, youth engaged others' perceptions, cultural stereotypes, and a broad racial category that often leads to ethnic lumping and frequently being misidentified. What is more, my data show that identities are performed. In other words, one's identity is based on one's actions and is as much what one *does* as who one *is*.

Findings suggest that race was a significant factor in students' daily school experiences. They negotiated discourses and used various strategies to make sense of their racial and ethnic identities that entailed participating in racialized activities, dialoguing with their peers, and positioning themselves within racial discourse.

Scholars have argued that a dominant bipolar racial discourse prevails in the U.S., which results in the institutional invisibility of Asian Americans and their racialized identities (Alcoff, 2003; Lee, 1996, 2005; Lew, 2004, 2006; Omi & Winant, 1994). As discussed previously, Yen Espiritu has argued this is especially true for Filipino Americans. While such conceptual understandings initially framed this study, my findings suggest otherwise. By focusing on the discursive understandings of youth participants, it became evident that Filipino youth in this

study were far from feeling invisible or marginalized. Rather, using various discursive strategies they embodied strong racial and ethnic identities by reconceptualizing the racial binary to emphasize interracial connectedness among non-whites. Filipino youth positioned themselves within a bipolar racial discourse as the racial "middle ground" between blacks and whites. Using various discursive strategies, they reconceptualized a racial binary to place themselves along a *racial continuum*. Participants aligned themselves closely with their black and Spanish friends, described themselves as the "Blackest Asians," and they distanced themselves from their white peers by citing differences in values, behaviors, and especially in respect for their parents and teachers. For them, such cultural elements were racialized.

Participants also demonstrated how their racial and ethnic identities are deeply connected with the activities in which they participate. They were involved in activities bounded by and characterized by race. Similar to findings in chapter 4, students explained the comfort and connection they feel with people of similar backgrounds.

Although youth participants exhibited certain pride in their Filipino identity, they lacked opportunities for understanding their histories, cultural traditions, and the Philippines as a country. Yet, they often drew on racial discourse about Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Filipinos to rearticulate racial and ethnic meanings to construct their identities. Some participants negotiated a relationship with a country about which they knew very little, but which was an important part of their lives.

Negotiating and Creating Identity Discourses

My analysis is grounded in the notion that identity is a social process whereby understandings of who one *is* are interpreted and reinterpreted by individuals based on when,

where, and with whom they are interacting. According to Holland, "People tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say they are" (1998, p. 1). She goes on to say that "these self-understandings, especially those with strong emotional resonance for the teller, are what we refer to as identities" (ibid.). In this section, I analyze how identity is produced socially and culturally by students through a negotiation of discourses.

The self in progress

Identity maps are images created by participants and are self-representations. During focus groups, I asked participants to draw identity maps. Students were asked to draw themselves, using aspects from their daily lives such as things they are proud of, or concerned about that represent them (Sirin & Fine, 2008, p. 199). This method of data collection allows students to reflect upon their situations and experiences, and allows them to express in their own voices the ways in which they make sense of discourses relevant to them (see Appendices for students' identity maps).

Sirin and Fine utilized identity mapping as a method in order to examine what they call, "hyphenated selves" (2008, p. 195). They argue, "the hyphen" is "the pivotal psychological hinge where identities cast 'in tension' are at once joined and separated," (ibid.). However, the youth participants in this study agreed that it was difficult to find one way to represent themselves. Vanessa stated,

> Because part of it is because I don't really know who I am yet. And I'm always confused of like, who should I listen to, should I follow what they're doing? Should I listen to my parents all the time? Or can I be right sometimes and just follow what I believe. And like,

> I didn't know what to express myself because sometimes we're not taught a way that we can express ourselves, like society-based I guess. It's just really difficult, yeah, like letting yourself be known (Focus Group).

Holland argues that individuals are "composites of many, often contradictory, self-understandings and identities whose loci are often not confined to the body but 'spread over the material and social environment,'" (1998, p. 8). This complex picture makes sense of the difficulties students had with choosing representations of themselves. While identity mapping is a powerful method for understanding a hyphenated self that is multiple and contradictory, it did not allow youth in this study to capture their *process* of identity: the, active, relational identity-in-progress. In the above excerpt, Vanessa expresses the process of making sense of her self. She makes explicit an inner dialogue wherein she questions whether to follow her parents or herself.

Luisa based her representation in terms of others' perceptions. She said,

> But I somewhat see a cycle in my past years of how people have said – well, how people have talked about me – not necessarily in bad ways. But like, they usually say I'm really quiet, or I don't say much, and I'm very pristine, I guess. And so, I figured, that's who I am if a lot of people say that about me, and I think so too. And I don't see it as a bad thing. It just makes me who I am (Focus Group).

Luisa defines her self in terms of others' perceptions, or "an orchestration or arrangement of voices" (Holland, 1998, p. 211) with which to construct a complex, dynamic, self. What Luisa also captures is the relational nature of identity. That is, the apprehension of one's self is dependent on those with whom one relates. Saying, "It just makes me who I am" underscores her reliance on other people's perceptions in order to gain a sense of self.

Asian or Pacific Islander: Debating identity

The Asian vs. Pacific Islander debate was one that was described or alluded to by nearly all Filipino youth participants. This debate occurs amongst students and illustrates how creating an understanding of one's self can entail a literal social negotiation between individuals. It involves the question of whether Filipinos are considered Asian or Pacific Islander and participants attempt to answer this question by dialoguing with their friends. They use discursive strategies to draw on racial discourse about Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Filipinos. In the process they rearticulate racial and ethnic meanings.

This debate invokes larger questions that deal with the social, political, and cultural histories of nations in Asia and the Pacific. Vicente M. Diaz (2004) argues that a history of imperialism and colonization by the United States and European countries in the Pacific problematizes the broad, racial category of API, wherein "Pacific Islander" is often subsumed by "Asian." Asian countries have largely remained free from western colonization whereas Pacific Islanders have frequently been made colonial subjects. Filipinos occupy a liminal position defined as "the literal and figurative position of being between two states that are characterized by ambiguity" in that they have historically been positioned as foreigners *and* as colonial subjects (Buenavista et al., 2009, p. 75).

As discussed in the previous chapter, race and ethnicity are hardly ever talked about in class, especially as they relate to students' identities. However, in his interview Hector discussed how racial and/or their ethnic identities come up frequently when talking with friends:

> Hector: Actually, a lot because like people dispute if Filipinos are Asian or Pacific Islanders among like socially and then like, if, how we're part Spanish or part Chinese.
>
> EC: So socially, you mean amongst your friends?

Hector: Amongst- yeah, my friends.

He went on to say that such conversations begin when racial stereotypes are brought up. As stated in the previous chapter, a discourse of diversity couched in a colorblind framework, and a pedagogy of community that demands students put aside racial/ethnic differences for fear of racial polarization create a space in which race and ethnicity should be conceived of as jokes or stereotypes that are not to be taken seriously. I asked Hector how conversations about his identity come up and he said,

> Oh well like, basically it started up because of stereotypes. Like generally like oh, Asians can't drive, this and that. And I'm just like, I didn't realize that those are mainly about like Chinese, Korean people. You don't ever see like Filipino people like, you know the stereotypes are like aimed towards like, people who are really like from the center of Asia, and I'm like, from my own experience I know my family can drive (laughs), this and that.

He named other racial stereotypes that are often deployed and described that such conversations involving racial/ethnic stereotypes escalate such that he then must think of stereotypes about other groups.

For Hector, constructing his racial/ethnic identity involves negotiating racial discourse with his friends to position himself relative to others in a racial hierarchy. In this case he positions himself relative to other Asian subgroups such as Chinese and Koreans. Positioning himself as distinct from Chinese and Koreans entails his resistance to discriminatory, hurtful stereotypes. These stereotypes are based on false constructs of homogeneity (Lew, 2006), but they are ones that are frequently used to characterize Asian racial and ethnic groups. Hector said, "Well, I think stereotypes, well—they are like, specifically I think they are for Chinese people.

Like they are not really—they don't really apply to Filipinos and that's what I think." So he uses discursive means to distinguish himself from other Asian ethnicities. The construction of his identity is rooted in this social interaction in which he describes having to convince his friends that "those stereotypes wouldn't apply," while at the same time participating in the (re)creation of stereotypes for other groups. The literature frequently emphasizes the imposing of identities on immigrant, racial minorities, especially as they come into contact with social institutions (see for example Stacey J. Lee, 2005) but pays less attention on how these students impose identities on others, especially when resisting racial stereotypes. Hector is complicit in the perpetuation of a homogenous conception of Asians while distinguishing himself from the category. My data show that coming to an understanding of one's identity is a social process. Youth draw upon discourses in their figured world and they learn to identify themselves in their worlds by learning the discourses that saturate the worlds with meaning. At MCH, the institutional racial discourse impacts Filipino students' understanding of race, ethnicity, and diversity. The discourse creates a space in which race and ethnicity are openly discussed by students but only in the form of jokes and stereotypes.

During Hector's interview, he asked my opinion about the Asian vs. Pacific Islander debate suggesting that this is a topic of importance to him. I considered both sides, and sharing in his confusion, admitted that both could be correct. He seemed to agree with the claim that Filipinos are Pacific Islanders because the Philippines is an island country in the Pacific Ocean, separate from the rest of the continent of Asia. This supported his own inclination to resist the derogatory stereotypes that, within the context of the debate, apply only to Asians and thus not to him.

Eugene had a strong opinion on the subject. In his interview he said, "I'm going to go really hard on this." He proceeded then to distinguish between Asian and Pacific Islander. He argued that the latter term is more apt because of the geographic location of the Philippines. But he said, "If you want to go just like main groups, we are considered Asian. Like, if you want to really specify, then Pacific Islander. I mean, there's no wrong answer." He mentioned Japan, which is also an island nation. "Japan is also an island on the Pacific Ocean, but they are considered Asian. Probably since they look more Asian where we are like more of Spanish-Asian-whatever thing." Eugene added to the complexity of racial/ethnic identification by bringing up physical features, which echoes Vanessa's claim in the opening excerpt that peers impose identity on her based on her skin color.

Race has long been argued to be a social construction. Omi & Winant (1994) argued that the selection of biological features "for purposes of racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process" (p. 55). They also argued that race is identified and signified through "discursive or representational means" and becomes routinized through institutions (p. 60). Being racialized as "Asian" decontextualizes the history of colonization of the Philippines by western countries, the process that facilitated Filipinos' presence in the United States. What is more, the racial category "Asian" is deeply associated with the model minority stereotype that was created in the civil rights era of the 1960s (Wu, 2002) and that has been written about extensively by scholars today. Stacey J. Lee (1996) argues that the stereotype is largely a myth that functions to support a color-blind meritocracy. The stereotype upholds Asians as a model minority who, despite their racial minority status, have proven that hard work, perseverance, and a certain dedication to overcoming discrimination are key to social and economic mobility despite one's circumstances. This myth ignores the varying levels of achievement within an

extremely diverse racial group and diverts attention from systemic inequalities against which racial minorities fought in the civil rights era. As such, the model minority myth has served as a "hegemonic device" (Lee, 1996, p. 6) based on stereotypes that tend to pit racial minorities against each other by sending the message, *if they can do it why can't you?* Furthermore, the discourse of this racial category maintains the dominance of whites. Thus, Filipino youth negotiate discourses that pertain to their status both as racialized Asian immigrants and as colonized national.

My analysis also indicates that youth participants negotiate their identities and in the process form and transform racial meanings. Omi and Winant argue that this happens through "a process of *rearticulation*, which produces new subjectivity by making use of information and knowledge already present in the subject's mind. They take elements and themes of her/his culture and traditions and infuse them with new meaning," (1994, p. 99). In the Asian vs. Pacific Islander debate youth draw upon their knowledge of what each category means and rearticulate the categories' meanings in order to suit themselves. Importantly, they do so to distance themselves from hurtful stereotypes while being complicit in applying such stereotypes to others.

"It's specific and I'm not just some other Asian": Defining Filipino

In this section, the discussion continues about how youth create dialogue around their identities as Filipino Americans to rearticulate racial and ethnic categories. Participants insightfully describe the fluid nature of identity categories. I asked them what they say when people ask them about their background, and their responses indicate their creativity and agency in defining their sense of self, or in eluding their interrogators. Gabrielle was the most certain in her response:

> Gabrielle: I say I'm a Filipino American.
>
> EC: Why?
>
> Gabrielle: Because I'm born here, I'm raised in an environment where I'm surrounded by like, a wide variety of ethnicities, but I'm brought up in a household where my parents value Filipino traditions. They speak to me in Tagalog. You know, it's just that people I'm surrounded by—it's not all Filipinos all the time and the fact that I'm born here (Interview).

She explains why she says she is Filipino American. To her, being Filipino has to do with her parents and family, more specifically their values, traditions, and language. Yet she is also American because of the fact that she was born in the U.S., and because of the diversity of her surroundings. When I asked if she ever says that she is Asian she replied,

> Sometimes, depending who I'm talking to, but usually I just say Filipino, because mostly, if someone were to talk to me and say, oh, I'm Asian, you would think Chinese, Korean, or something; you wouldn't really think of Filipino, because it's like an island and stuff. So usually I just say I'm Filipino.

Gabrielle invokes the Asian vs. Pacific Islander debate, distinguishing Filipinos from Asians because for her "Asian" means East Asian ethnicities such as Chinese or Korean. She said that she says 'Asian' to "someone that's ignorant," and she laughed. She mocked an exchange, "Like, 'oh, where's the Philippines?' 'It's in Asia.' 'So you're Asian?' 'Yes, I'm Asian.'" Like Hector, Gabrielle's narrative shows how she positions herself relative to others as she makes sense of her chosen identity. Daiute (2011) argues that narrating is a sense-making process during which young people explore social issues and construct social consciousness. In this case, Gabrielle conceives of her hypothetical interlocutor as someone who is "ignorant" showing her disdain for

people who do not know the Philippines and for people who do not distinguish between Asian ethnicities.

Because of a mainstream black-white racial discourse Asians are often marginalized as a significant racial group (Lee, 2005; Lew, 2006; Omi & Winant, 1994; Ong, 1996; Wu, 2002). In this process, many scholars contend that Asian immigrants are rendered invisible (Lee, 2005; Lew, 2006; Wu, 2002). This is especially true of Filipino immigrants whose relatively large numbers go unnoticed both within the public realm as well as within academic research. Filipino youth who participated in my study contend with racial discourses that exclude them. Luisa said she tells people she is Filipino "because if I just say that I'm Asian someone would say—would wonder what kind of Asian. And if I say Filipino, it's specific and that I'm not just some other Asian" (Interview).

Couched in a racial discourse that is dominated by two races—black and white—Asians face relative invisibility as a significant racial group. Gabrielle described her surprise and frustration at those who are not familiar with the Philippines:

> It makes me think like, you're surrounded… you're in an environment where there's so much diversity, so many different kinds of people around you, how do you not know what I'm talking about? So it's just like, wow, you're ignorant. But, it's just like, I'm surprised if someone doesn't know what I'm talking about, but it's just like, oh, let me just give them the benefit of the doubt; alright, I'm Asian, like, let's narrow that down for you – do you know where Asia is? But it's surprising, like especially the people that I'd be talking to that don't know that, are at least my age, maybe older, so it's like, you're in school, how long, you hang out on the street for how long, see different kinds of people and you don't know? (Interview).

She uses discursive strategies to resist the perceptions of people who do not know Filipinos as a distinct ethnicity. She thinks lowly of them, calls them ignorant, and believes there must be something wrong with their understanding of the world. Ultimately she is condescending when says, "Let's narrow that down for you: Do you know where Asia is?"

Hector deploys a different discursive strategy, utilizing the framework discussed earlier in which race and ethnicity should be conceived of as jokes and funny stereotypes. Like Gabrielle, he places the onus of correct racial identification on the other person, but he aims to intentionally confuse them to his amusement. He said,

> I joke around with them because I will tell them that, I tell them that I'm Chinese and I tell them that I'm Mexican because no one ever says like, oh straight off the bat, you're a Filipino because they're like, because my eye—because my mom's eyes are—they're chinky. So they're like, 'Oh you're Chinese.' And then, apparently, I look Spanish since I saw a Mexican (inaudible). And then, so then people—people who I don't really know like, people I've just met, like say some people I met yesterday, and then they ask me what I am. And I say, 'Oh, Chinese-Mexican,' and they just laugh and they're like, 'Really?' And I had this serious face on. And then afterwards, I tell them Filipino (Interview).

He says this is "to start conversations a little bit" and joke around but that it is really because he is annoyed by being persistently mistaken for another Asian ethnicity:

> Hector: [S]ometimes I get annoyed like, if you're calling me Chinese, like I'm Filipino.
>
> EC: Why is that annoying?

Hector: Because everyone assumes like, if you have chinky eyes, straight off the bat, Chinese. Like they won't even say like, that's just like the general stereotype I guess, Chinese. Sometimes it just gets like, repetitive.

Hector is in dialogue with multiple identity markers, which entails joking around, but underlying the joke are feelings of annoyance. He dislikes that he is often mistaken as Chinese. He resists imposed identities using discursive strategies to make a joke out of the question. He went on to say, "Yeah. Because I mean, when I say that, no one's ever like because like, seriousness like, questioning it—it's like, it's like a funny kind of move like, nothing really serious." What is more, Hector deals with persistently having inaccurate identities imposed on him with humor. This relates closely with the institutional racial discourse discussed in the previous chapter that imparts humor into racial discourse. In the above excerpt, Hector describes a situation where he rearticulates questions about race and ethnicity as a funny joke (re)producing a field of discourse in which cultural stereotypes abound.

Vanessa internalizes the uncertainty and fluidity surrounding her racial/ethnic identity. In the following exchange she expresses her confusion:

Vanessa: Because like at first when I was younger, I'd always think, 'Okay, I'm Pacific Islander.' But then, um, I think I looked on Google. Wikipedia's not like a thing that you should really—what's the word?

Eugene: Trust?

Vanessa: Not—well not… Use as…

EC: Rely on?

> Vanessa: Yeah, rely on as a resource but, it says that we're just Asian. This not—I don't know. I get confused myself so I just say, 'I'm Filipino' and I'm really—I'm Filipino-American like—Filipino American? (to herself) Yeah (laughs).

Vanessa continued her discussion of how she feels as though she is in a constant state of confusion about her identity, or how she *should* be identifying herself. She said that because of the confusion over her *racial* identity, she chooses to identify by her ethnicity: Filipino American. In this sense, like Luisa, being Filipino American gives her more of a secure, defined identity as opposed to using a category that she views is more ill-defined. Vanessa said, "So they could say whatever they want but I honestly just get confused also. Cause like, even on the test papers, it says 'Asian/Pacific Islander' so, you wouldn't know what to—you really can't—yeah…" This uncertainty and confusion was evident throughout our interactions. Her uncertainty ranged from not knowing how to identify to not knowing how to handle racial stereotypes rampant throughout her daily experiences at school.

Students' confusion over the meanings of broad racial categories and which one is most appropriate for them throws into question the seeming coherence of such categories used in the United States. Their confusion underscores the within-group differences amongst ethnic subgroups. It also challenges the empirical nature of such categories and the changing meanings such labels have as individuals embody identities. Although Vanessa experiences such confusion *about* her racial/ethnic identity, along with other youth participants, she *enacts* it by performing and participating in racialized activities, which is discussed in the following sections.

"Smack in the Middle": Filipino Youth Along a Racial Continuum

Scholars of immigration argue that immigrants undergo a process of racialization through their experiences: in other words, incorporation entails both locating themselves and being located within racial categories (Lee, 2005; Waters, 1990, 1999; Kasinitz et al., 2008). This process is especially salient for youth of color who are born in America to immigrant parents for they must negotiate discourses that identify them both as ethnic immigrants and racialized minorities (Smith, 2006). While much race/ethnicity and education research use a comparative analysis framework that evaluates racial and ethnic minorities against normalized white, European Americans (see for example, Stacey Lee, 2006 and Aihwa Ong, 1996), Roland Sintos Coloma (2006) argues that many scholars are developing frameworks that analyze the "interconnected processes of racialization in the USA" (p. 10). Thus, rather than placing groups on a racial hierarchy that claims one group does better than another, researchers are analyzing inter-racial connections between and among racial groups.

A number of studies conclude Asian Americans, and Filipinos in particular, internalize feelings of invisibility due to a racial binary (see for example, Yen Espiritu, 2001; Stacey Lee, 2005; and Jamie Lew, 2006). My findings suggest that Filipino youth in this study do contend with a dominant bipolar racial discourse that marginalizes the racialized experiences of Asians. However, they were far from feeling invisible or marginalized. Instead, data point to how they negotiated a black-white racial discourse, using their agency to decide when and how they enter dialogues about race. Importantly, rather than a racial hierarchy that places whites at the top, they used discursive strategies to place themselves on a *racial continuum* that emphasizes the interconnectedness among racial minorities. This reconceptualization and transformation of racial orders (Coloma, 2006) enables them to claim space within a racial discourse dominated by

a black-white binary (Lew, 2006). Transforming racial orders into more of a continuum gives them leeway to move along the continuum for their own benefit, depending on the social context. As such, they negotiate institutional discourses and use discursive strategies to inform their own racialized identities.

Not white or black: Asian

The Facebook incident discussed in the previous chapter involved white and black students, manifesting a bipolar racial discourse that excludes other races. In his interview, I asked Kai's thoughts about it. He stated that he did not think it was any of his business because, "I'm not white or black." After the interview I chatted off-tape with him. He said, "If it happened to an Asian kid I don't think anyone would care" (Fieldnotes, 3/31). I asked him if he thought other Asians would care and he said that they would, but no one else. He said that if anything like that was directed at an Hispanic or Asian student, then no one would really care. We then talked briefly about how this lack of institutional support—reified by institutional invisibility, racism and discrimination—has motivated this research project (Fieldnotes, 3/31).

Without prompting, Kai had stated the effects of a dominant bipolar racial discourse that excludes and marginalizes the racialized experiences of non-black or white races. What is most concerning is his presumption that if it was an act of racism, something bigoted and threatening, he was certain that it would go unnoticed. This is an example of not just the theoretical power of a black-white discourse, but also the practical ramifications of such a discourse.

Kai's prediction, "I don't think anyone would care," captures how racism and discrimination can create a lack of institutional support and institutional invisibility. Scholars like Stacey Lee and Jamie Lew found that the needs of Asian American students often go

ignored because of racial discourses that exclude their experiences as racialized Americans. In Lew's study, *Asian Americans in Class: Charting the Achievement Gap Among Korean American Youth* (2006) Korean American students pointed out that they felt invisible because of the belief that Asian Americans are "a racial minority absent altogether from racial discourse" (ibid., p. 82). A number of students in her study faced great difficulties in school. These students, along with higher achieving Korean Americans, believed that because of a black-white racial discourse the various struggles and barriers many Asian Americans face are ignored and/or unaddressed. Both Lew and Lee found that their participants internalized feelings of being a perpetual foreigner because "whiteness and blackness are constructed as the two faces of America" (Lee, 2005, p. 4). This framework of invisibility is evident in Kai's narrative of why none of the Asian students attended the Facebook meeting and in his prediction that no one would care.

The institutional discourse at Mission must also be taken into consideration. There are risks to an institutional discourse that disapproves of talking about race and race identities, and discourages such conversations for emphasis on a united community based on nonracial terms. In our interview Kai tried to make sense of the incident. He said that it was not any of his business "cause I'm not white or black." Kai shows how a dominant racial discourse affects how he views himself in racial matters. As an Asian—not black or white—he believes it is not any of his business even as a racialized minority. He also rationalizes his disengagement by saying that he would not understand because he is not black. His framework views race and race identities as personal matters rather than embedded in larger social dynamics. Kai does understand the risk in disengaging from racial disputes. He said, "But I guess that's not right for me to say either because, I mean, it could affect me too."

Kai's disengagement may also be seen as a way to remove himself from racial disputes and maintain neutrality, which may be desirable in an institution where racial differences are constantly being defused and diffused. Gabrielle captured this sentiment most aptly. She said,

> I feel like that would never happen to us because we're like smack in the middle: we're not white (chuckles), we're not black. We're just like, there. It's just like, 'Ok, you guys are gonna fight? We're just gonna sit here and eat lumpia (laughs) (Focus Group).

She frames not being black or white in a more light-hearted way, which is part of a discourse that characterizes Filipinos as generally laid back, open (non-exclusive), and able to hang out with all groups. Such characteristics support a neutral position of not being involved in racial disputes, and a safe position of not being targeted.

Locating themselves along a racial continuum allows them not only to remain neutral but also gives them the advantage of being able to hang out with everyone. Gabrielle stated,

> So it's just like, I guess they feel less intimidated talking to Filipinos, because we're not black—we're not white though—but we're very friendly because we don't like to be rude to people outside of our group, especially because we don't want them to get a bad impression or label us or anything like that. So it's just easier that way, I guess (Interview).

She also said in a focus group, "It's like we're that common ground between white and black people (laughs). Like, we do things that um, both groups of people enjoy doing but we always do it differently." Gabrielle negotiates a racial/ethnic identity by placing Filipinos in a neutral position between two racial poles. So when they talk about race in terms of themselves they position themselves in a non-volatile, neutral way, which fits nicely within the institutional discourses that deem racial talk or racialized identities as polarizing and inflammatory.

"Blackest Asians": Interracial connections

Using discursive strategies, youth participants transform racial orders. Sliding along the racial continuum and asserting Filipinos' close proximity to blacks, youth participants produce a discourse that favors groups of color relative to whites. They do not talk about academic attainment, or other traditional educational outcomes; rather they talk about their social lives, popular youth culture, and what they like to do on weekends.

Youth participants described Filipinos at their school as being closely associated with blacks because of shared interests, activities, and skills. Hector said his friends say, "you guys [Filipinos] are the black in Asia" and that the Asian vs. Pacific Islander debate is ultimately resolved with the conclusion that "Filipinos like, are different," (Interview). Carol echoes the sentiment. She wrote that Filipinos are considered the "blackest Asians" (email). Both explain that Filipinos are perceived this way because their interests are more similar to blacks than other groups. Carol wrote that Filipinos and blacks have similar style; they wear the same brands, and have similar "music interests, like hip hop, r&b, rap type." What is more, participants simply stated they have more fun and feel more comfortable with blacks, as opposed to whites.

Gabrielle stated that being the common ground between blacks and whites makes it "easier for us to hang out with either group, as opposed to those two groups associating," (Interview). She suggested that it might be because Filipinos are more involved in "things that more minorities are part of" such as Step, which is described as mostly black and Filipino (ibid.). When participants described their social lives, they distanced themselves from whites with whom they said they are least comfortable hanging out, and said they prefer to hang out with groups of color instead. They were particularly critical of whites because of their unvarying choice of activities: partying and drinking. The following is an excerpt from a focus group where Kai and

Gabrielle described why they feel least comfortable hanging out with "the white kids from Wilmette[15]."

> Kai: It's kinda like, I mean, they're interested in partying, drinking, and stuff like that. I don't know, I don't have—I mean sure, I like to drink, but it's not like them where it's every weekend you have to go out, get drinks, and party, you know?
>
> Gabrielle: Yeah, that's like all the white people do (laughter). They drink in someone's basement.
>
> Kai: (Gabrielle also talks, laughs while Kai talks; Kai gets more animated talking about this) Yeah, that's what they do you know? That's what they do in someone's basement. Like, they uh, line up all the cups for beer pong, and uh, that's what they do! That's all I see on Facebook. I've been, I've been to like so many of their parties and, I've been to like maybe 5, 6 of them. That's all they do and it's so boring. I mean, it's fun in the beginning when it's like, alright cool ya know? I mean it's not like a new group of people to hang out with but, at the end of the day, hanging with the, and you play—it eventually gets old—
>
> Gabrielle: Yeah, it's like you're with the same people, doing the same thing, it's the same house, over and over again.
>
> Kai: You can only get so much better at like, beer pong.

They went on to say that, in contrast, their black friends go to clubs, drink, and they are generally more fun to be around. "It's a lot more chill cause they're just like, more open to talking to other people. When you hang out with the white people, it's just like, they wanna stick to the same people that they always talk to," (Gabrielle). They say their Spanish friends are also fun to be

[15] Wilmette is a pseudonym for the neighborhood.

around, and emphasize that hanging out with them entails dancing. "It's *just* dancing," they said fondly and went on to name the different dances: salsa, meringue, and pechada. They said, "You can't do anything else," you must be dancing.

Though they clearly prefer going to their black and Spanish friends' parties, Gabrielle and Kai describe Filipino parties as exceptionally fun.

> Gabrielle: Filipino parties on deck, all the time (Kai: Yeah!). Those are the best ones cause we have like—yeah we have like dominantly Filipinos and like, Asian people, but we can have black people in that mix, we can have white people in that mix.
>
> Kai: Yeah, we can have—we get everybody.
>
> Gabrielle: Everybody's just relaxed. We either drink together, or we dance, we sing together (chuckles) (Kai: Yeah). We're always doing something different.

Senior prom is described as "huge" because nearly all of the senior class attends plus their dates resulting in an event of more than 1,000 students. After prom students go to after-parties. Gabrielle said, "Oh my god, prom was so much fun!" She described the night, "Okay, so I was with, like, all the Filipinos; we had two limos, because there is forty of us, with like, all our dates and stuff. So we split into two, we're sort of forty… There was twenty of us from Mission, plus our dates." As expected, the after parties broke down along racial/ethnic lines similar to their parties. Gabrielle said, "Mostly the white kids went to Mick's and all the Spanish, Filipino, blacks mostly went to BB Kings. I mean, give or take, there were a few white people that showed up at BB Kings, but mostly the white people went to Mick's" (Interview).

These examples show how some of the youth participants reconceptualize racial orders in their figured world based on groups that they cast as more or less desirable to hang out with. They negotiate their place within their worlds through discursive strategies that (re)position

different racial groups relative to each other. Gabrielle and Kai state that Filipinos have the best parties because they bring together blacks and whites. Although they say they get along with white students as well, ultimately they align themselves more closely with groups of color, distancing themselves from their white peers from school.

While Gabrielle and Kai invoke different events in their social worlds, they also draw on values they share with other groups of color that are distinct from their white peers. Kai used an incident that I observed when I shadowed him earlier in the semester to illustrate. A girl who was white walked out of class in mid-session announcing that she was going to go to the dean after yelling at her teacher that he did not know how to teach. As the teacher announced his plan to review for the final exam, the girl requested that he compile a list of other teachers' schedules so she could review with them instead. She whined, "*I don't understand the way you teach!*" (Fieldnotes, 5/12). According to Kai, this level of disrespect and disruption was common for her. In the focus group he posited that she exhibits the same behavior towards her parents. "I don't know if you noticed in my Physics class, remember that girl that walked out? She probably does the same thing, like give an attitude to her parents. That doesn't roll with my parents." Gabrielle agreed, "Psshhh, I would've get smacked across the face if I gave my parents attitude! That's why I run upstairs (smiles)." They both agreed that Filipinos "have more respect for your parents," and they clearly disapproved of the girl's behavior.

Kai stated explicitly that he saw differences in white kids. Kai, who is Burmese, grew up in Kuwait and lived there until he was in the fourth grade. Both in our interview and in the focus group he talked about differences between kids in the U.S. and "kids over here." While making a distinction between children of immigrants and U.S.-born children, he saw a distinct difference

between white and non-white kids. He said, "I don't know about their parents but, when they're with towards teachers like, you see most of the white kids that act out," (Focus Group).

Gabrielle, who was born in America, emphasized racial differences, "Yeah, like you would see all the Fili—like Asians and Black people—sitting back, relaxing like, 'Okay, I'm not gonna say anything, I'm not gonna get myself in trouble." While having strict immigrant parents denotes a different set of values, it also marks acceptable behavior for Gabrielle and Kai's peers. They clearly value respect for their parents and adults in contrast to "kids here" or "white kids" and they value the behavior it produces in both themselves and their non-white peers. The following excerpt exemplifies fundamental differences in acceptable behavior for kids and parents:

> Gabrielle: I have more respect for my elders (K: Yeah.). Like yeah, I can have slip of the tongue every once in a while (K: Yeah) but that's natural.
>
> Kai: It's not like all the time, you know?
>
> Gabrielle: (inaudible- G and K talk over each other) People that aren't raised the way I am? Yeah, but it's definitely different. I would never, like, call my mom a bitch or anything, especially not to her face! (laughter)
>
> Kai: But that's what they do, like, I remember going to my friend's house –
>
> Gabrielle: I would never cross that line.
>
> Kai: he was just yelling at his mom, and his mom just took it!
>
> Gabrielle: I *hate* that!
>
> Kai: I hate that, th-th-that's so – like *I* wanna hit like, my friend!
>
> Gabrielle: Like it's so rude! How're you gonna – first of all, talk back to your parents in that manner? How're you gonna call them names and expect them not to beat you? And

what surprises me more is the parents! Like, they don't do anything, like they just let it happen.

Kai: Yeah, yeah. But what surprises me is that, the parents, when the parents do something about it, the kid goes, 'You can't touch me like that. You can't do that. You can't do this.'

Gabrielle: Dude, that's your parents! They gave you life they can take it!

Kai: That's your parents! They can do whatever the f they want! (A and K talk over each other) Yeah! That surprises me a lot. Especially going to like, a whi –

Gabrielle and Kai together: White person's! (laughs)

Kai: A white kid's house –

Gabrielle: Especially!

Kai: It's *bad*.

Gabrielle: Like if I go, like my friend Jayna, she's half White, half Filipino, but her mom is totally different from my mom. Um, she, she also came from the Philippines, but I guess cause she came when she was younger it was different? But when I go to Jayna's house like, sometimes like her brother or whoever, when they talk to her parents, it's just like you know, 'I'm your kid, uh things are gonna go *my* way.' And I'm sitting there like, 'I don't know what to do! (laughs) This is awkward for me to witness.'

Yen Espiritu (2001) argues that racialized groups often use a "strategy of resistance" against dominant society to claim power denied to them by racism. She found that Filipino immigrants asserted moral superiority over mainstream society to reaffirm their self-worth "in the face of colonial, racial, class, and gendered subordination" (2001, p. 415). Her participants characterized the morals and behaviors of whites in contrast to their own. Specifically, her participants claimed

that white women are sexually immoral as compared to "the virtuous Filipina daughter" (ibid., p. 416). Espiritu's analysis asserts that the concept of femininity is co-constructed with other racial and cultural categories. Thus, by contrasting a *Filipina* woman with a *white* woman gender and sexuality are co-constructed with race and ethnicity.

Similar to Kai and Gabrielle, Carol also characterized her white peers such that fundamental differences in values set them apart. She wrote,

> Sometimes I talk to my friends, and sometimes we joke around how if we get in trouble if their parents are more traditional and conservative they will go ballistic, and bring out the "broom" or the "slipper" or the "belt" almost like I hear some of my friends get. We usually joke around with that, but I know some people who had to go through that both black and Filipino while growing up (email).

According to Coloma (2006), because of the ever increasing number of students of color in schools a deeper understanding of the interracial connections not just between non-whites and whites but among non-white minority groups is necessary. The data presented here show how Filipino youth make sense of their racial and ethnic identities not only in relation to whites but also in relation to other groups of color. They used discursive strategies to characterize whites to distance themselves from their white peers. Similar to Espiritu's findings, youth participants in this study used narratives that set them apart from whites facilitating a sense of pride in being Filipino. What is more, my findings suggest pride is engendered from racial permeability. In other words, students took pride particularly in their ability to hang out with all groups who otherwise do not go out of their way to hang out with each other. This maintains their place on a racial continuum with blacks on one end and whites on the other.

Filipinos: Open, laid back, and comfortable with everybody

As discussed in the previous chapter, an institutional discourse of diversity prevails at MCH. While such a discourse focuses on the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the student population, it was ultimately about how everyone got along *in spite of* these differences. Analysis shows that such a discourse permeates Filipino youth participants' negotiation and creation of ethnic and racial identities. One of the most salient ways youth participants characterized themselves, and Filipinos in general at MCH, was by the diversity in their friends, their active social lives, and their openness to hanging out with all ethnic/racial groups. Infused with the institutional discourses of diversity and community, participants took pride in their social flexibility and their willingness to step outside their ethnic/racial group and hang out with everyone. They bridged the gap between groups, or as Gabrielle said, they formed the "common ground" between blacks and whites. They created a discourse about their ethnic identity permeated with notions of fluidity and adaptability, everything that is the antithesis to a polarized and biased ethnic/racial identity. Carol wrote,

> Truth is all the Filipinos at Mission take on different personalities and personas, hang out with different types of people, and truthfully I don't think we have our own established type of perception. Most of us in the school assimilate with different cultures and different people (email).

Hector said, "I'm cool with everybody" (Interview). Gabrielle said in our interview:

> Yeah, like, a lot of us are comfortable talking to anyone; we don't really put up a wall because, oh, you're not Filipino; I'm not going to talk to you, or oh, you're white, I'm not going to talk to you. Like, it's not like that. A lot of us are just really open to hanging out with like, a bunch of people, because we like doing different things. We don't like sitting

> in the same place like, talking about the same stuff, like… we like going out, trying stuff that are new and all that; going out, depending who's available, so… yeah, we're really just open to hanging out with anyone.

Gabrielle describes the openness as characteristic of her Filipino friends. What is interesting is that many of the youth participants say this quality is unique within the school. Nearly all described the school as cliquey. In my interview with Luisa, she said that most people hang out "amongst their cliques and I guess amongst their race".

In Filipino Club, the dynamic is also laid back. Gabrielle described members of the club as "more lenient with who participates," (Focus Group). She said,

> We don't really have the heart to tell people, 'No, you can't do this' … It's a club that everyone wants to be a part of, they don't wanna feel pressured, they don't wanna feel like they're gonna be denied the right to just perform and try new things.

She said the same about current members: she does not want to force anyone to attend or participate if they do not want to, but she does wish there was more participation. Their laid back attitude about club makes it so they would never close their doors to anyone who wanted to join. They are not exclusive, which they say is different for other ethnic clubs.

Kathy Welch, the moderator for club, described the meetings as a place where students come in and out, hang out, and sometimes bring friends. She said, "They're very social," (Fieldnotes, 2/10). My observations of the general activity of club were similar to Kathy's description. At any given time in a meeting, when there actually were meetings, anywhere from 15 to 25 students were present. More often than not students came late, or left early. Some brought their non-Filipino friends. Some non-members would poke their heads in just to say hello. The meetings were held a few times a month, but occurred more frequently as they

prepared for International Night. The highest attended meeting was when members were given their Filipino Club sweatshirts (also with the MCH logo necessarily displayed).

As the Filipino students described and characterized themselves and their Filipino peers, they also embodied and enacted discourses that (re)produce the figured world of which they are a part. Institutional discourses on race function to defuse and downplay race and racial identities. Students, thus, appropriate and communicate such discourses as they construct ethnic and racial identities. They used discursive strategies to create perceptions of Filipino students at MCH, which are that they are laid back, open, and "cool with everybody."

Racialized Activities

Discourses are also appropriated, embodied, and communicated through daily actions. In this section I analyze the way race structures the activities and actions of students at MCH. While they use discursive strategies through dialoguing with their peers, students also embody discourses to enact and perform racial and ethnic identities. According to Holland, identities are formed and performed in "the day-to-day activities undertaken in their name" (1998, p. 60). At times students resisted the notion that they did anything *because of* their race or ethnicity yet they frequently invoked the ways in which race structures their daily lives. Youth participants explained that racial grouping occurs mainly because of similar interests, and they suggested race and ethnicity were incidental. However, students often described activities by their racial composition, or as stereotypically something (i.e., "You're Filipino, you must sing and dance"; "Step squad is black and Filipino"). And youth participants described Filipino students and how they "stick together" or, in other words, how they perform ethnic identity through, and by, sticking together.

The reasons they gave for having similar interests were not always racial. Instead, participants suggested that people hang out in groups of the same race or ethnicity because they come from the same neighborhood, and so they are used to hanging out with each other. Bonilla-Silva describes this as part of the framework of a colorblind racial ideology. He argues that the "naturalization of race-related matters… normalizes events or actions that could otherwise be interpreted as racially motivated (residential segregation) or racist (preference for whites as friends and partners)" (2010, p. 37). He argues that this naturalization of self-segregation is put forth primarily by whites, yet Filipino youth participants provided this explanation as well. Given that the institutional discourse of the school does not allow for the analysis of race as it relates to social structures, it makes sense that these students would want to explain racialized activities as being as natural as coming from the same neighborhood.

Alternatively, the data may show a limitation of Bonilla-Silva's framework. He suggests racially motivated segregation is imposed by whites. However, youth participants spoke at length about the comfort, connection, and safety they derived from their friends of similar backgrounds. Thus, the choice to be with others of similar backgrounds may be suggestive of students' agency, and suggestive of the agency individuals possess in negotiating their place in figured worlds not evident in Bonilla-Silva's framework.

Noticing racialized activities

Some research suggests that in the United States, young immigrant students of color undergo a process of racialization (Lee, 2005; Waters, 1990, 1999; Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, & Holdaway, 2008). Racialized activities then, are activities organized by race. I attended the Winter Pep Rally that was held on a Friday afternoon in the gymnasium. In a casual

conversation with Jack days later, he described pep rallies as "standard protocol" (Fieldnotes, 3/3). He said they occur so students can stay in touch with extracurricular activities beyond athletics such as jazz band and theater. However, the various sports teams seemed to be the main focus of the pep rally and their presence was what most aroused the students' spirits. I mentioned to him that I noticed the racial differences amongst different groups like the Step squad, which was predominantly black. He said that it was "interesting" (ibid.) that I had noticed even though, as an observer it would have been difficult not to notice. The pep rally ended with Step. Step had the highest number of performers, and their performance garnered the most cheers and hoots from the students. Hip-hop blasted over the speakers while the complex arrangement of stomps and claps echoed through the gymnasium. Everyone's attention was turned to the performers. He described Step squad as mostly African Americans, some Latino, and Filipino.

According to Jack, Step was created about fifteen years ago. He said tension ensued between the cheering squad, which was all white, and Step, which was all black. Following an institutional pattern, he went on to say that the cheering squad had incredible amount of support for Step. And not only that, the faculty, who did not want competition between the two, "got on it" (ibid.) to make sure there was enough support for Step. Ultimately, he said, faculty have been successful in bringing them together.

Many teams at the pep rally were mixed race and ethnicity, however a noticeable number were dominated by a certain race or ethnicity. Richard, a teacher in the Social Studies department, talked about "ethnic activities" (Fieldnotes, 6/7), which are activities that students of the same race/ethnicity tend to migrate to. He added that such activities are typically athletics. He used Step as an example and wondered whether it began because of feelings of alienation from an all-white cheering team. An institutional discourse on diversity hampers a critical

engagement of such a question. Jack's description of the genesis of Step is infused with institutional discourses that deem race and racial difference as polarizing. It is not my intention to claim that they are not, however, such a taken-for-granted assumption about race subverts a more critical understanding of the racialized experiences of students.

Comfort and connection

The institutional discourse of the school views race as divisive, polarizing, and grounded in biases. Students, however, form their own understanding of the role race plays in their everyday lives. They focus not on distances between groups but on the comfort and connection they feel with people of similar racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Kai and Gabrielle spoke at length about how their social activities overlapped with their black and Spanish friends but distanced them from their white peers. They often said that similar racial backgrounds engender similar interests and shared beliefs.

Carol wrote, "They [cliques] mainly go along interests and sports and racial backgrounds. It's mainly racial backgrounds, but usually the people of the same racial backgrounds almost have the same interest, at least that's what I mainly see" (email). Hector described the cliques in the lunchroom, "[I]f you walk into the lunchroom that you'll see the separation like, you'll see one table this race, one table this race, one table this race" (Interview). I asked him what he thought about that. He replied, "Well, I mean, I don't look down upon it. It's just a normal thing because people would tend to stick with people with their own race because they're closer and they share the same beliefs and everything." He later said, "I mean, like they don't sit separately because they hate each other or anything, but just because like, that's their clique you know? But everyone has a—no one hates each other because of that."

When discussing their reasons for joining Filipino club, most youth participants cited the sense of comfort they derived from having a basic connection with other students. Vanessa stated,

> [W]hen I was a freshman I was really scared of like, 'Oh will I make friends, or will people like me?' And my first instinct was, okay, I need to join some sort of thing in high school and get involved somehow so why not start with my own, like, culture so I could meet people who are similar to me and hopefully make good friends there (Focus Group).

Luisa shared the sentiment. She said,

> I joined Filipino Club because previous members told me that you can make a lot of friends there with common things, things they share in common with you like, how they act with their family, or certain foods, or what they like to do in their spare time. Because, well, obviously if you're both Filipino you probably share the same ideals, the way that we've been raised, stuff like that. And how, like general life at home (Focus Group).

She said that she certainly feels that way in club. She said, "[W]hen we say something that we do at home or we do during our spare time, and someone would be like, 'Oh, same here.'" She went on to say that this makes her feel like she is an insider.

Hector underscored the ease with which he can relate to other Filipinos. He said that his closest friends are Filipino, "Well, you know, the majority of them are Filipino because like, if you're a Filipino—if whatever race you are—it's just easier to make friends with because you guys can relate with each other," (Interview). He gave the following example:

> Because like—since we're both from the same cul—like, we're all Filipino. We're all from the same circle and like our parents, like we can relate how they act at home and

like making fun of their accent and everything. They're like, 'Oh, we went home, eat 'pancit,' so it's easier when you give—you can make conversation.

In this excerpt Hector discusses how similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds creates shared experiences. Certain aspects of life are normalized, such as the accents of their parents or misunderstandings in translation. This provides a point of shared understanding between those of the same background, in this case, Filipinos. He went on, "Like the way they say something. Sounds like something way different from English like the way inappropriate that you won't really say it. But if you say it in Filipino, it's just funny and it's alright." This normalization gives them the space to joke about things that could potentially create feelings of alienation. In effect, it produces a sense of comfort and familiarity between those involved in the discourse. It also distinguishes those on the outside. He said, "[A]nd then someone else's there and they're just like, 'What?' And we had to explain to them, 'Because my mom's Filipino accent.'"

Figured world of Filipino Club

Students are recruited into and learn to participate in, what Dorothy Holland calls, *figured worlds*. Wendy Luttrell and Caroline Parker (2001) studied the dialogic relationship between student identities and their figured world of school. They analyzed how students make meaning of themselves and their actions based on the "socially and culturally constructed realm[s] of interpretation" of their figured worlds of school (Holland, 1998, p. 52). Namely, Luttrell and Parker examined how students were positioned by teachers and also how they positioned themselves within their worlds through their literacy practices.

Similarly, Filipino Club functions as a figured world for students in that it provides significance to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others (Holland, 1998, p.

52). Because deciding to join Filipino Club presumes some sort of identification or affiliation on students' parts to a Filipino identity, I asked them varying questions about why they chose to join and what their experiences are like in club. Eugene said,

> I think Filipino Club is cool like, I guess not all Filipinos go to Filipino Club, but the people who do go, I guess it's like—after International Night or during the International night, we made like a group of friends. It was really great, cause even non-Filipinos came in. It's just, it's a great environment and Filipino Club is just something where we do have all something in common or something we like to do and we all put our talents together (Interview).

In many of the youth participants' narratives, they described the convergence between ethnicity, interests, and talents, which shows the multidimensionality of the concept of identity. Eugene said the primary reason he joined Filipino Club was "Cause I'm a Filipino (laughs). That's honestly why I chose to be in it." What prompted him to join in the first place was his ethnicity. What ensued, though, was a participation in a figured world "peopled by the figures, characters, and types," in this case Filipino club members, "who carry out its tasks and who also have styles of interacting within, distinguishable perspectives on, and orientations toward it" (Holland, 1998, p. 51).

Hector said, "It's just like hanging out with your own people like, because no one has a hate towards it. Everyone has love for each other in Filipino Club. Like everyone has a bond so then, it's just a good time and everyone's hanging and together," (Interview). Hector became more involved after he started hanging out with some of the members first, unlike others who joined when they were freshman looking to make friends. Carol wrote,

> It's a chance to meet new friends. I like my culture, and honestly I find it easy to make friends with people who are your own nationality. It is an easy thing to break the ice and talk about with someone. As a freshman I got all excited, I wanted to know what an actual club felt like and I also had the hopes of learning more about my culture and meeting more people (email).

The vibe at Filipino Club was fun and social. Especially during rehearsals for International Night students acted like an intimate, close-knit group of friends: they laughed, teased each other, and supported each other as they learned the dance routines. They were affectionate with each other and at times it was difficult to know if they were coupled up. Participants say the best thing about club is the bond amongst members. Luisa said, "It makes me feel really at home sort of because they share certain thoughts that I have about things, whereas like in a class with diverse people—I like diversity—but then I like feeling a connection with someone on basic things too at the same time." She describes what she gets out of club that she does not get from her daily school experiences.

Furthermore, participants described the bond forged outside of club. Gabrielle said, "But, it's just spending a lot of time with them, like you guys click right away," (Focus Group), and again, she cites having the same background as facilitating the connection. Many of the Filipino students, especially members of Filipino Club, frequently hang out together. Luisa describes a moment when she felt happiest at school, which consisted of being with friends she has made through club:

> And there's… there are those days where we would just come together in one side of the hallway and we would just sing songs and play guitar, all those random songs. I find

those one of the most fun times because… because there's no… no one really judges and I feel open.

According to Holland, people co-construct their own social positions and social relations with each other through participation in activities (1998, p. 51). In doing so they construct individual and group identities. Youth participants described how their Filipino friends hang out all the time, doing just about anything together. The following is an exchange with Gabrielle and Kai,

Gabrielle: I mean, when we're in school we're with the same people. Like, the Filipinos we all hang out (inaudible, Gabrielle and Kai talk over each other), handball, we all go out to get food together, we go as a group.

Kai: We eat lunch together.

Gabrielle: Go out, go shopping, hang out in the city, go out to eat, shoot pool, play basketball, play handball. Um, party together, dance together. Yeah, just anything. We never really stick to just one thing.

I observed that Filipino students did tend to stick together during lunch. However, I was told by a couple of participants that their groups at lunch do not compare in size to groups in past years. Gabrielle described this phenomenon as possibly occurring because there are slightly fewer Filipinos at school, but more because the tight-knit circle forged through participating in Filipino Club has gotten smaller. She said, "[T]hey didn't want to feel out of place, because we were already so close." Thus, while Filipino Club provides a space for people of the same background to become friends, individuals still need to participate in the appropriation and co-creation of discourses to become part of communities.

Given that a closer-knit group of Filipino students consistently participates in club leaves open the question of their relative impact on defining/creating Filipino identity at Mission (as

compared to others who chose not to participate). This question goes beyond the scope of this project, however, those who did participate in this project certainly created discourse that enabled a certain perception of Filipinos at the school that youth participants described. Eugene said, "Honestly, they assume that I'm Filipino like once I sing, they're like, 'Oh, you're Filipino.' Once I dance, 'Oh, you're Filipino, right?' 'Yeah, Filipinos always sing and dance.' It's like we have a—what is it? A image or something?" He went on, "Like, we're always singing and we're dancing" (Interview). Eugene talks about how once people know what he *does*—what talents he posses, or what activities he participates in—people identify him as Filipino. He shows how Filipino identity is known by non-Filipinos through knowledge of one's talents and activities. This discourse provides a framework for what it means to be Filipino in their figured world.

Vanessa had reservations with this perception and framed it more as a stereotype. She said,

> I also feel that they get the wrong image of a Filipino here. Like here they think, 'Oh, you're Filipino? You must know how to sing, or play an instrument, or dance.' Or like, 'You're on the Step squad?' Like, it's just always the commonly-asked questions. And it's like they don't even get to know who we are. They just ask like, the, they base it on like what they've been seeing throughout the years. Like, oh just because we've been in the talent show, or most of the Step squad is like black or Filipino, and like one white person randomly, like that's what basically what I hear all the time. So I mean, yeah, for the past few years it's basically how I felt how I was viewed too (Focus Group).

Vanessa describes school activities as racialized and how that affects people's perceptions of her.

Although racialized activities suggests that race plays a significant role in the activities in which students choose to become involved, there was still some resistance to the notion that race governs any behavior. Kai and Gabrielle suggested that people of similar racial and ethnic backgrounds have similar interests because they come from the same neighborhood. The following is an excerpt:

> Gabrielle: Yeah, it's really like, where you live. Maybe not so much your color. Just, where you live geographically.
>
> Kai: I think because of the neighborhood like thing, it's cause, that eventally leads to, you know, why the Black kids hang out with them, you know?
>
> Gabrielle: Yeah.
>
> Kai: Cause you grew up in that neighborhood, but just black kids are, you know.
>
> Gabrielle: And it's like, 'Oh if you're gonna hang out with people – say you have like a whole bunch of girls from Glenmore Heights hangin' out and you have one girl from Briarwood come in, it's like you feel out of place cause you're not with them on a normal basis. So it really depends on the person and how much you hang out with a certain group. It's not really that, 'Oh, you're Black, don't hang out with me, it's not like that. It's just, 'Oh if I'm used to hanging out with you I can hang out with you.'[16]

They explain racialized activities as resulting from where students live: students hang out with students from the same neighborhood, and neighborhoods tend to be segregated by race/ethnicity. Racialized activities are then framed as nonracial and instead based on neighborhood.

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[16] Glenmore Heights and Briarwood are pseudonyms for the neighborhoods.

This resistance to race or ethnicity as structuring activities came up a few times. Hector explained that he feels most comfortable at school when he is with his Filipino friends: "When I'm at lunch, and there's just like a whole big group of us just conversing about what we did like our weekends, or something our parents said, stuff like that. Just like, enjoying company." However, without prompting he qualified this as nonracial, "But I mean, it's not because I'm happy because they are all Filipino. It's just that during that time like it is most like I'm able to have more meaningful conversations." Carol expressed a similar sentiment. She wrote,

> It's not really nationality I'm aiming for though, it's basically how the people come off. Most of the friends I've made were just really friendly and they just happened to be Filipino or an Asian culture. It's not necessarily the other culture and race themselves, but it's the person.

These sentiments expressed by participants show how they resist the notion that race, ethnicity, or nationality govern their actions. Even though people readily explain preferences because of gender, they resist attributing their actions to race. In terms of the students' figured worlds, this discourse contradicts the common narrative that they hang out with friends of similar backgrounds because of feelings of comfort and connection. This hesitation to link the two is common amongst youth participants. Couched in a colorblind context, they make sense of their racialized experiences as separate from race or ethnicity. Also, like in Vanessa's case, in a context where racial stereotypes abound, they are perhaps actively resisting prescribed ways of being and instead view themselves as having control of their social lives, suggesting the agency of racialized individuals not found in Bonilla-Silva's framework.

Struggles with Ethnic Identity

School ethnographies have documented the subtractive process of schooling for first and second generation immigrant youth (see for example Angela Valenzuela, 1997). Scholars have argued that assimilation is a non-neutral process that divests immigrant youth of skills, knowledge, and positive sense of identification with an ethnic or cultural group. Angela Valenzuela (1997) writes,

> According immigrant subjectivity serious attention requires reframing racial and ethnic differences: they are more than "stock" that individuals possess, manipulate, and bring to bear on institutional life. These differences are dynamically linked to a larger historic process of subtractive cultural assimilation, more commonly known as Americanization (p. 162).

Youth participants, although exhibiting certain pride in their Filipino identity, negotiated discourses that excluded opportunities for understanding their histories, cultural traditions, and the Philippines as a country. Despite its diverse student body and despite having many ethnic clubs available for students, Mission's pedagogy of community creates a context in which second generation immigrant students had little to no opportunity to learn more about their cultural histories. This is particularly salient for children whose parents still closely identify with the Philippines and who must negotiate a relationship with a country about which they know very little.

Wanting more from Filipino Club

Filipino Club provides a space for youth to connect with each other, and to co-create and embody a Filipino identity. On the whole, Filipino youth participants enjoy Filipino club and the

friendships they have made because of it. However, some participants expressed what they did not get out of club. Vanessa, an active member of Filipino Club, frequently voiced confusion about her identity. In the opening excerpt of the chapter, she expressed the complexity of identity, citing her uncertainty about whether she is Asian or Pacific Islander and the frequency with which she is mistaken for another Asian ethnicity. She described how the only telltale sign that she is Filipino is that she sings and dances. The following is an excerpt from a focus group:

> Vanessa: So what I wanted to gain from joining the club was to learn more about the culture that way I could learn more about myself. Because you know, being over here, you don't really hear much about what's going on over there, or like how you even came to being.
>
> EC: There, you mean the Philippines?
>
> Vanessa: Mhm. What we really do is just dancing. But hopefully over time we'll learn more about—like we wear a sweater saying, 'We're Filipino and we're proud of it' but what are we really proud if we don't know? So hopefully over time we make it better. But I'm glad that I joined it because I've met really great people. And I've learned more about dances, for example.

Vanessa expresses her desire to know about Philippine history, about current events in the Philippines, and importantly, she believes that such knowledge would help her learn more about herself. Her statement, "like how you even came to being," suggests a belief that understanding the Philippines as a nation, its culture, and its history is important for understanding oneself. It also suggests the distance she feels from that understanding of herself.

Vanessa is also critical of what she views as a more superficial pride in being Filipino. She said, "What we really do is just dancing," and questioned what it means to be "proud" of

being Filipino if club members do not make any efforts to understand Filipino culture and history. Thus, she is unsatisfied with an identity discourse driven by performance and seems to suggest that "singing and dancing" comprises a very small portion of what she believes to be Filipino identity. She concedes that it has been a good thing that she has learned more about dancing, but she clearly is left wanting more.

Luisa expressed a similar opinion. She said,

> Well, like the dance let's say, people are just being told, 'Oh, hop, hop, hop, spin.' Or we're not—no one's ever told us like, 'This is what people have done' or 'This is what they do at home.' My parents told me that something like, um, this is really random, but my parents told me about like when, back then, they would do the rosary while they would be picking weeds I think, or picking fruit to um, pass the time and that's why a lot of Filipinos here are very into like, the Novina, those at-home, um, those at-home programs where you pray. And I think that characterizes a lot of Filipino families that pray at home, and I don't feel like I learn that here.

While Luisa spoke often about the connection she felt with her peers in Filipino Club, she simultaneously felt she wanted a different type of understanding of her ethnic culture.

Part of what makes the Filipino immigrant experience unique, especially for Filipinos in the northeast, is the distance between the U.S. and the Philippines. Cost is prohibitive and so it makes it difficult for young people to visit the Philippines. Vanessa discussed how her parents often talk about visiting the Philippines but they can never afford it. She said, "But instead of buying ourselves a ticket to come there, they work more and bring in money and giving it back over there to my relatives over there." She said they fill "Balikbayan boxes" with their old clothes and things they do not use anymore because "they can surely use it back over there." She

said that she wished she could put herself in the box because of the difficulty in going back and forth. When I asked her why she wants to visit she replied,

> Well, because it is from where I'm from so, I don't really know much about where I'm from and I just want to learn more and see the different things and when you're over there, you don't really have as much as you have here. So, you learn to appreciate things more and cause my relatives are there, too. It's kind of sad how I have people I'm related to but I don't even know anything about them.

Vanessa expresses the emotional distance she feels as a result of the physical distance from the Philippines. She was hoping by joining club she could lessen this distance, but the club's emphasis on performance undermines that desire.

Carol wrote of her desire at length:

> I mean, as a Filipino-American, I've had my share of the Filipino culture, but honestly I feel as if I grew up more Americanized compared to my other friends. Although I do a lot of things that are Filipino related and I've grown up with Filipino culture, I feel my parents were more Americanized compared to my other friends. The last time I've been to the Philippines was when I was two, and I barely remember anything. Sure, I see what some Filipinos go through on the TV and hearing from my parents and relatives, but I don't really know much compared to my other friends. I don't even speak or understand Tagalog or any dialect whatsoever. I wanna know past the chicken barbecue, the halo-halo, the sinigang. I want to know more dances past the tinikling and the pandango and the line dancing more popular in america. I even want to know the different traits of the different islands. Like the Visayans, the Bicols, I don't know if I'm spelling that right, but I find these whole different cultures within a culture very fascinating. Even though

> the Philippines is a little Americanized, there's still this unique culture I still have yet to learn and experience now. Honestly, I'd even wish I'd grown up with what my parents grew up with. As in the curriculum. They've basically learned everything they need to know in order to be on their own, and nowadays its either you learn it or you don't. I'd want to go back to the Philippines someday, even though I'm not good with heat and bugs. If not, I'd like to learn more from my friends who have lived with a more Filipino influence. I actually have been learning a lot more about my culture through them and my parents.

Like Vanessa and Luisa, Carol expresses the desire to better understand the experience and cultural history of the Philippines because it is so much a part of her life but also not a part at all. She struggles with her ethnic identity in that she considers herself Filipino American but she feels limited in her knowledge of what that actually means.

Carol and Luisa were elected to be President and Vice President of Filipino Club, respectively, for the following school year. In a conversation with Luisa, she said that they have been talking already about their plans. She said in addition to having more outings so they can bond and starting International Night planning earlier, they hope to bring in speakers who can speak about Filipino culture and history. They also plan to have focus groups where members can talk about their visits to the Philippines or their experiences as young Filipino Americans here in the U.S. Through their plans, Carol and Luisa want to add to the discourse of club that limit perceptions of Filipinos as singers and dancers. They want to work towards the goal of constructing and forming a deeper understanding their identities—their Filipinoness. Their intent is to create a space to not only perform and embody a Filipino American youth culture, but also

to discuss and negotiate what it means and what it is like to be a Filipino American in high school who has tenuous ties to an imagined home country.

Hypebeasts and creating culture

Youth were active participants in creating Filipino American culture in their daily lives, what Espiritu (2001) calls "cultural reconstruction" (p. 415). She argues culture plays a significant role for immigrant communities because it provides a base for immigrants to form their group identity in a new country while maintaining ties to their home country. She states that a process of Americanization for Filipinos begins long before entering the U.S because of the country's status as a former colony. Thus, for Filipino immigrants in particular, cultural reconstruction is especially significant for reaffirming and asserting a cultural identity against the assimilative Americanization process. For Filipino youth participants, creating Filipino American culture enables them to position themselves on the youth cultural landscape of their peers.

When talking with Eugene and Vanessa, the term "hypebeast" came up as one used to describe Filipinos at Mission. The following is an excerpt from my interview/focus group with Eugene and Vanessa:

> Eugene: Hypebeast. Hypebeast is we do things, we dress up, the way we dress, or whatever, just to seem cool—to seem like we're 'all that.' We do everything…
>
> Vanessa: So we're like, we're following the hype—we're like mainstream instead of original.
>
> Eugene: Yeah, we don't try to be different. We're trying to be cool and do what everything, all the others do.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Eugene: That's how we are labeled, but, I don't care. I just do whatever I want.

They continued to explain that hypebeasts are not particular to Filipinos. Eugene said, "I think every culture has a hypbeast." And Vanessa added, "I think it's more of, like an American thing." She continued,

> Instead of a—from a different country, like the term "hypbeast" came from America because of the fact that like, everybody looks the same and tries to be the same cause of how society puts it, and how celebrities dress like rappers, how they dress like we always dress. Like girls with those glasses also, the fake ones that are thick-rimmed. Or if they have a blond strand of hair, like they dye it differently.

She and Eugene describe characteristics of hypebeasts such as having a mohawk, wearing thick-rimmed glasses, big headphones, and wearing certain hats, cardigans, and Nikes. Although it is not a compliment, it is not necessarily an insult. Instead, it is a term used jokingly amongst friends to describe wearers of popular, mainstream style, and it represents how youth create, resist, and embody culture and identities to fit within their figured social worlds.

Conclusion

This chapter focuses on how Filipino youth participants negotiate discourses to make sense of their racial and ethnic identities. Conversations with them show how identity is a social process that is not confined to the body but "spread over the material and social environment" (Holland, 1998, p. 8). Their sense of self changed depending on what others say, with whom they were interacting, and the knowledges and understandings from which they drew. Participants use discursive strategies to make sense of their identities, at times dialoguing with their peers or

narrating events in their social lives. They showed how they negotiate other people's perceptions and identities imposed on them by other people. Time and again they show the ways in which they draw from discourses to understand themselves, and their social worlds. They also demonstrated ways in which they place themselves within their worlds. For them, identities were as much about what they *do* as who they *are*.

Participants revealed their sense-making process as they negotiate racial discourses. Omi and Winant (1994) argue that a bipolar racial discourse dominates discussions on race in the United States such that the experiences of those who are not black or white are marginalized. School ethnographies such as those conducted by Stacey Lee (2006) and Jamie Lew (2006) have argued that this black-white bipolar racial discourse impacts the experiences of Asian American students. By not being one of "the two faces of America" (Lee, 2005, p. 4) their struggles are typically unaddressed and/or ignored because the obstacles they face as racialized Americans remain unrecognized. However, my data suggest that Filipino youth participants are far from feeling like an invisible or excluded minority. They use discursive strategies to reconceptualize the racial binary and to place themselves on a racial continuum where they form the racial "middle ground." This enables them to stay neutral within a context that views race and racialized identities as threatening. It also enables them to hang out with everyone, creating a group identity characterized as fun, laid-back, and non-exclusive.

Conversations with youth participants indicate the closeness they feel with their non-white peers as opposed to white students at MCH. This underscores the significance of an analytic framework that investigates interracial connections not just between non-whites and whites but among non-white minority groups. This is of particular importance in a context that consistently aims to push racial differences aside for the sake of community.

At MCH, the institutional discourses cast race as polarizing and threatening to a harmonious community. However, participants explain that they derive comfort, connection, and safety from their friends of similar ethnic and racial backgrounds. Throughout this chapter I presented data that show how their identities are deeply connected with the activities in which they participate, thus providing insight into how race can structure their activities. Yet at MCH the institutional discourses avoid critical understandings of not only how race structures the lives of the students in school, but also how race structures power within institutions such as school.

CHAPTER 6

INTERNATIONAL NIGHT

This chapter focuses on International Night, an annual Mission event that is described in the school's newspaper as one night when "students come together to support their heritage and get a taste of everyone else's" (May 2011). I chose to devote a chapter to the event because it is a manifestation and embodiment of the salient institutional and student discourses on race, identity, and culture pervasive throughout the school. Drawing from observations of rehearsals, planning meetings, and the night itself, as well as data from interviews and focus groups I examine how the faculty/administration shapes, frames, and talks about the event as well as how Filipino youth participants talk about and prepare for it. I look at how the event enables students to use discursive strategies to (re)create cultures and identities as they plan their literal performances, but also how its function as a school wide event can limit students' creativity.

Although International Night serves as an event to showcase and celebrate the diversity of students, scholars such as Stacey J. Lee have argued multicultural events like International Night can be problematic. In her school ethnography *Up Against Whiteness* (2006) she found that Diversity Days, an event organized by a group of students of color "in response to what they perceived to be the Eurocentric nature of Fine Arts Week" (p. 30) may have "unintentionally perpetuated ethnic stereotypes" and "inadvertently contributed to the identification of students of color as being culturally different while simultaneously erasing White culture(s)" (p. 31-32). In contrast, Mission's International Night enables students to redefine and reconstruct their cultures. In this chapter I will analyze the ways in which discourses on race and ethnicity both constrain and enable students' production of identity and culture. And importantly, I will show how

International Night, rather than undermining the talents of participants, showcases their creativity and exceptional talent through elaborate performances. In their performances they integrated traditional music and dance with modern to create and show their own take on their cultures.

Institutional Discourse on International Night

A device that binds

As discussed in chapter 4, International Night functions to solidify community. The event began soon after Mission experienced an increase in the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of its student body. Jack, the Assistant Principal, described to me the origins of International Night. He said that as diversity increased in the school it became apparent that students were proud: "When we got to the students, they were proud of who they were. They were proud of going to school here, they were proud of who they were, they were proud of their race and ethnicity." The event was originally conceived of as Awareness Day.

> We called [it] 'International Night' and then that evolved into 'International Week.' And what we attempted to do was on International Night have every ethnic club in the building come together, bring in their own food, set a booth up in the cafeteria, and if they wanted to perform a show for—let's say a 5-minute show—a dance that was popular with their own ethnicity. And it really blossomed. You know, kids loved that.

In its beginnings, International Night was held in the cafeteria. Richard, a social studies teacher, described the space as unfit for the performances. He said students would form a circle around the performers, and as people would close in to catch a glimpse the circle would progressively get smaller and there would be pushing and shoving. He said that one year a student performed

martial arts and part of the performance was to break planks of wood. According to Richard, a piece of wood went flying past his head, which made it quite dangerous for the audience. He said it is much better now that it is held in the auditorium because students perform on stage and the audience is at a safer distance (Fieldnotes, 6/7).

The narrative of International Night tells of a progression from something small in the cafeteria to a large production in the auditorium. Jack said, "[It's] one of the biggest events we have in school in terms of faculty, parents, and also students. It's packed. It's sold out every year."

Jack said it began as an "awareness day" suggesting students should simply be aware of differences in food and dance. During International Week several speakers from the United Nations would come into the school and "talk about respect, diversity, tolerance, living together," (Interview). Then, the interests and needs of the students seemed to prompt the evolution of the event. Nowadays, he explains, there is more emphasis on "the theater part of International Night, the demonstration of the race and ethnicity that comes with the school."

From some of the faculty members' point of view, the shift to highlight performances, which also seems to have prompted a dramatic increase in the number of students involved in the event, is somewhat problematic. Jack said, "Personally, my fear right now is that it has turned into more of a competition than a device that binds us. And I think at some point, we need to address that. But the spirit of it is still running pretty strong." This concern also came up in the after-school meeting regarding the incident with Facebook (discussed in Chapter 4) when Matthew described International Night as becoming a dance-off. Jack continued,

> Well, you know, when the clubs get up there, they want to be the best. And I think that's normal, them wanting to be the best. You know, you have the Spanish Club get up and

> they do a very extravagant dance. You have the Italian Club doing the same thing. And I want them to feel that they want to be the best when they're up on the stage. And I don't think it's a matter of changing what they're doing.

As discussed in chapter 4, a pedagogy of community exists at the school and several events are held to instill that sense of community in the students. Importantly, this sense of community is grounded in a discourse that views racialized differences as threats. Jack says, "I think it's a matter of sending the message that although we're proud of our own ethnicity, we are still one under Mission Catholic High. And I think that message has to be out there loud and clear."

Jack further describes his thoughts on International Night and his fear of it turning into a competition. He fears that such a turn undermines its significance as "a device that binds us." Thus, its competitive nature threatens its effectiveness as part of the school's pedagogy of community. International Night, aimed to celebrate the diversity of the school, embodies the institutional discourses on race. Thus, even though International Night is one meant to provide Mission students the opportunity to show pride in their cultural backgrounds, the event must ultimately serve to instantiate a harmonious community.

I asked Jack what he hopes students get out of International Night. He replied,

> I hope to get a sense of Mission Catholic. I hope to get a sense of peace, love, and respect. And a sense of pride in their own community, pride in their own ethnicity, and at the same time understanding that we're all here together moving towards a certain purpose. And hopefully, if we come out of that we'll be a better community for it (Interview).

While his narrative shows a certain intent on showcasing a sense of pride in their diversity, this intent is trumped by an overall message that students must transcend racial, ethnic, and cultural

differences to form a harmonious community. Emphasis on such a value is not in and of itself problematic, and in fact, this value is reflective of larger societal discourses. As the United States has reached its "demographic tipping point" (Frey, 2011) where more than 49.8 percent of infants under age one are children of color, a concern for defining and maintaining a national cultural identity is growing, making a search for commonality a focal point. However, as analyzed in the previous chapters, Mission's approach to community is based on the assumptions that racialized identities are divisive and threatening, and that race no longer structures inequities. As such, race—and critical conversations about race—are pushed aside through institutional discourses at MCH. This abandons a deeper understanding of the experiences of racial and ethnic minority students in schools.

In their ethnographies, Stacey J. Lee (2005) and Mica Pollock (2005) both discuss multicultural events as potentially problematic in their simplistic and superficial representations of culture. Lee argues that multicultural events send the message that non-Whites are culturally different and culture is thus "embodied in the Other," (2005, p. 43). Pollock argues that such events often draw artificial racial boundaries around groups as if they had clear-cut borders. Much like the data I present in the following section, Pollock found that "racial categorizations were actually leaking all over the place," (p. 26). She found that students crossed groups when they performed such that students sometimes performed with groups that were different from their own racial/ethnic background. While this boundary-crossing certainly happened during International Night, there was also evidence of students redefining and reconstructing notions of their own cultures. As part of their own group's performances students would integrate modern, popular music and dance to their routines. As such, many of their performances were not just representations of traditional cultures but also of mainstream, American culture.

Creating Culture and Identity Through Performance

While International Night may verge on a talent competition, it serves as an event that enables students to create cultural representations and embody them through performance. This happened not just at the event itself, but also during the months prior as students planned for it. Students made decisions about what songs to use, what dances to perform, and what clothes to wear. They planned their performance based on the anticipation and expectations of the audience compelling them to create, and at times, uphold discourses on culture. The following is an excerpt from a feature article on International Night printed in the school's newspaper:

> Once people had gotten their share of international cuisine, the crowd began to trickle into the auditorium, awaiting the true excitement of the night: the dancing. With a mix of both traditional dances and modern dances, the Mission community truly got a feel for all the different cultures, (May, 2011)[17].

The writer describes that through each club's performance, audience members "truly got a feel for all the different cultures." This narrative is suggestive of a significant expectation of International Night. Specifically, that the clubs' performances are representations of their ethnic and racial cultures. The article continues:

> The auditorium was filled with the excitement of students and families cheering on their friends as they performed. Everyone was eagerly awaiting the dances from the clubs, watching with awe-struck expressions as they captivated us and momentarily brought us into their world and culture through dance (ibid.).

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[17] The clubs that performed were (in order of appearance): Greek, Chinese, Filipino, Italian, Haitian, Egyptian/Middle Eastern, Korean, West Indian, Indian, AAHC (African American Heritage club), and Spanish club.

These performances—and the beliefs that the performances are in fact representations of cultures—risk essentializing and glossing over the complexities of culture. However, through performance students found innovative ways to (re)create cultural meanings.

I arrived at Mission just after 6 pm and it was already crowded. Families and friends of students filtered in through the front door. I saw Luisa standing outside in costume, which was a white, fitted t-shirt, black spandex shorts and a scarf tied around her waist. It was just under 40 degrees outside, but she was waiting for her cousin to arrive so she could give her a ticket. The following description is from my fieldnotes:

> Some families stood in the front [lobby] waiting for their children to get them their tickets. Parents were taking pictures of their costumed kids in front of the display case. At one point I heard the two men collecting tickets talking loudly. They were looking for "the guy that walks around like this (mimics a macho, muscular stature). "The guido?" Someone replied, "Chiarelli." And they proclaimed, "Chiarelli!" They were looking for him because there were people who wanted to enter who did not have tickets. Mr. Chiarelli came to the front and announced that tickets were sold out (4/1).

The food tasting area was set up in the hall just outside the doors of the auditorium that connect the east and west lobbies. Each club had a table set up with students manning the tables. I walked through, beginning in the east lobby. In the following excerpt from my fieldnotes I describe the

> Each table was labeled with handmade or computer-printed signs identifying their club. They were topped with trays of food assumed to be typical fare for each culture. Some tables had information posters. Some had flags hung on the walls behind the tables. Students stood behind the tables serving food to the crowds.

> The atmosphere was that of excited energy. It was loud and warm inside. Students, friends, parents, and family members filtered through and were sampling each table's foods. No one table was over or under crowded. It was slow, shoulder-to-shoulder shuffling through the food table area (Fieldnotes, 4/1).

At the other end I saw Kathy Welch, the moderator for Filipino Club. She said she was happy to see me there, and informed me she had not seen Filipino club perform but she knows they have been practicing the entire day and the night prior. Father Joseph Todd came by to say hello to Kathy. He asked if I was enjoying the night. I said yes, and told them how Mr. Chiarelli had to turn away people at the door. They both replied that this was the most popular event of the year. Father Joseph was very excited about the food: "It's wonderful to get to taste a little of everything!"

Well before 7 pm people started filtering into the auditorium. Students and families were saving seats for each other, and many were on cell phones trying to find one another. The show opened with Mr. Chiarelli who welcomed the audience. He asked them to be respectful to the performers and not to be rude. He chastised the audience—parents and families included—for making noise while he spoke. Then Father Joseph offered a prayer in which he praised the diversity and "internationalness" of the night (Fieldnotes, 4/1).

While International Night functions as a "device that binds," for students it is an opportunity to show pride in their cultural backgrounds, which they may not have grown up knowing. As Lee states, "'tradition' is something largely imagined" (2005, p. 86) for youth. This gives them certain freedom to embody and perform ethnic and racial identities that integrate an imagined culture with which they may not necessarily have grown up, together with their own lived experiences. It is also a time to make themselves visible and distinct in ways that a

pedagogy of community downplays by giving them an opportunity to showcase their talent not just in traditional dance but in popular, mainstream dance. As a school event that has evolved into an evening of performances and food tastings, students literally perform, and they do so in the name of their ethnic background. Members of the various ethnic clubs choreograph dances and often combine traditional with modern dance to create notions of culture in new and innovative ways. As Lee found, adopting mainstream styles such as hip-hop was not evidence of "losing" their cultures or identities, rather adopting such styles was a way that her participants were searching for new ways of being Hmong (2005, p. 86).

Given that the night is framed such that students are representing their culture, there were times in which students were frustrated with the pressure of such a responsibility. This underscores their understanding that culture changes and is dynamic. But it also emphasizes the pressure that youth face in choosing self-representations. In *Pregnant Bodies, Fertile Minds* (2003), Wendy Luttrell found that pregnant teenage girls grappled with representing their own "selves" within their various social worlds. The girls continually made sense of their own feelings and experiences against dominant discourses that regulated, controlled, and (ab)normalized their bodies. Indeed, Luttrell argued that in creating our own narratives about ourselves we must also engage dominant discourses. The young women in her study show how we consider what are the ideal types and actors in our social worlds (i.e., ideal woman, ideal mother) and how our own selves are represented against them to be labeled, received, and judged by others (ibid., p. 110).

This notion of representation then, suggests that individuals are aware of ideal types. In the context of International Night the burden falls on students to find ways to represent their ideal ethnic/racial selves and/or ideal representations of their cultures. This can be empowering

in that students can choose to show off their talents, make themselves visible, and offer alternative representations to dominant perspectives. However, this can also cause tension where students must choose how to represent their dynamic, multifaceted cultures in one, single performance.

Creating and performing culture: Seeing "What they have to offer"

Preparations for International Night began months before the event. At a Filipino club meeting in early February, students were already trying to pull together ideas. At this meeting there were about 45-50 students in attendance. I learned the high attendance was because they were expecting the club sweatshirts to be given out. However, the shipment did not come in and many left after about ten minutes. About half of them stayed as Glenn, Filipino club's vice president, attempted to brainstorm ideas. He asked for suggestions for a modern song and also asked for volunteers to sign up as dancers. For the most part students hung out, socialized, and paid little attention to Glenn's efforts. His enthusiasm was undeterred. Towards the end of the meeting I talked briefly with him. He said that International Night is "what all these clubs are about" (Fieldnotes, 2/10). He also said that after all the hard work they put in last year it all paid off.

For the event, students are responsible for bringing in food for the food-tasting portion of the night as well as choreograph their dances and costumes. As the night neared, it seemed to me they were barely going to be able to pull together the performance: only two days before International Night, students were still learning their routines and seemed to have a long way to go. However, Kathy described past years as always coming together at the last minute. This year was no exception. As Gabrielle described it,

> I love being backstage, feeling like, 'Oh my god I can't wait to see what happens.' And then, once you hear the music start you're on stage it's like, 'Alright I already started, I might as well just do it. And then you, you get this really good sense of satisfaction—everyone did well, I love that (smiles) (Focus Group).

Filipino club's performance was based on the Tinikling, a traditional Filipino dance that involves two people using a pair of long bamboo sticks that they beat and slide against the ground and against each other in coordination with one or two dancers who hop over and between the sticks. Their performance opened with traditional Tinikling music and then morphed into modern pop and hip-hop music. They still used the sticks to beat and slide on the ground but they incorporated hip-hop dance as they jumped between and over the sticks. A search online pulls several hits on YouTube of students from various high schools and universities across the country doing such choreography. It is a highly inspired act of creating Filipino American culture. Filipino youth take elements of "traditional" Filipino culture such as the dance and the music, but then integrate it with popular American music, hip-hop style, and dance. Through their performance, Filipino club members use discursive strategies to display talent that adheres more closely with Americanized standards that were also necessarily their own. In the process, they construct a representation of Filipinos in the figured world of Mission. Lee (2005) argues multicultural events such as International Night risk othering and excoticizing ethnic groups. However, Filipino students at MCH were not necessarily perpetuating ethnic stereotypes nor were they showing a loss of culture by utilizing popular American music and dance. Instead, similar to the Hmong students in Lee's ethnography, the Filipino students were finding new ways of being Filipino.

Gabrielle, a frequent choreographer for Filipino club's routine, describes her process for choreographing the routine this year. She said, "[T]he way I choreograph I just listen to the music a lot, and I usually freestyle to whatever comes out and then somehow try to incorporate the Tinikling with the beats—the back beats from the music." She continues,

> It's just like, you know, whatever comes out, basically, I know that the sticks have to go to a certain beat, um try to stick to it so it doesn't change because I don't want people getting confused and most of the choreography goes to the lyrics so it's a little bit different, you know, the beat that you hear (Focus Group).

In rehearsals the performance went like this: boys start off dancing the Tinikling to traditional Tinikling music, followed by the girls. Then the music cuts to modern music by Kanye West and Nikki Minaj (both popular musicians with hit songs on the radio at the time). The girls exit and the boys come back on—some different—to dance to the modern music. They integrate some modern hip-hop moves to coordinate with the sticks, followed by the girls who do a similar performance. They end with boy-girl couples doing modern hip-hop dance in coordination with the Tinikling sticks. The club's performance at the night of the event was similar, however they took out the sticks for the boys and girls modern portion (the reason for which will be discussed later in this chapter). The club even added some breakdancing into the boys' modern routine, which entailed a handful of boys crouching in a line next to each other while another boy did a flip over all of them. What was impressive about the move was that the boy doing the flip started at one end, and in mid-air was pushed over and across the crouching boys to land on the other end. I had never seen this performed in rehearsal and in a conversation with Kathy a few days after the event, she stated that they do not practice those during club

because they know she does not like it. She described an incident years before when a similar type of move ended up with her having to take a student to the emergency room for stitches.

For students, their performances were dependent on the expectations of the audience, which included their friends, families, and the school community. Watching the rehearsals and meetings demonstrated how this event in particular is so geared towards fulfilling the expectations of the audience. In the following excerpt from a focus group Kai and Gabrielle explain:

> Gabrielle: There's a lot of expectations (said slowly and thoughtfully). Um, we sell out every year. Um, people wanna see things that change over the years. They wanna see—
>
> Kai: New stuff.
>
> Gabrielle: who gets better (Kai: Mhm). They want good food, they want, they wanna see—
>
> Kai: They always want food.

Gabrielle seems to feel the pressure of being not just the president of Filipino club, but the one in charge of leading the performance. She says,

> When you know that you're responsible for a lot of other people and how being an officer you're just like, everyone'll look to you to see—like when they see your club they think about you and the work that you put in. So basically your club represents your hard work. And it's kinda nerve-wracking sometimes, only because you worry about what other people think. Um, not that I really care what other people think about me, but like, I care what my work looks like to a fresh pair of eyes. You do it because you wanna know what other people think and you want feedback from it. So, that's why it's nerve-wracking

because you know that everyone is watching your club, and they know it happened that way because of you. You know, so it's a lot of pressure sometimes, but it's fun.

Gabrielle explains the pressure of expectations. She describes how participating, and taking on a leadership role in Filipino club is not confined to club. Rather, it is largely an opportunity for students to make themselves visible at a school event that celebrates diversity.

What is more, this visibility becomes a showcase of culture. As Vanessa stated, "And it's a fun night so it's nice to see everybody else's [club] besides our own and see what they have to offer. As well as putting something out there that we have to offer to" (Focus Group). And as Luisa stated in an interview, "I wanted to see what people of my own culture had to offer and what other things I could learn." Luisa also explained that she participates in International Night because she wants to show that even though she has grown up in the U.S. she stays connected with her roots. She also said that she never wants to "lose connection of who I am."

Identities in action

As discussed in Chapter 5, students negotiate and create discourses to make sense of their ethnic and racial identities. In many ways the process of using discursive strategies to construct identities and racial and ethnic understandings manifests in International Night. The quote in the previous section by Luisa suggests that International Night provides a means for which *to show* that she is still connected to her Filipino roots. Further supporting the notion that identity is performative, her statement also shows how her ethnicity is understood, framed, and performed in the context of International Night.

Participation in club culminates in International Night. It allows students to display and promote their ethnic and racial identities. In particular, club is a place where youth create and

define Filipino discourse that characterizes them as open, laid-back, and as talented singers and dancers (as discussed in the previous chapter). Many of the Filipino youth participants describe club as a place to bond with others of similar backgrounds. The comfort and connection amongst participants manifests in the preparation for International Night. Practice and planning for the event provides them ample opportunity to hang out and socialize with each other outside the regular school day thereby establishing connections with their peers. Gabrielle and Kai describe preparation two years before:

> Gabrielle: Yeah, we did the Pandango before, but to us it was just kind of like, 'Ooh, it's slow music and you're holding a candle.' But other people that don't know what it is, it's interesting to them, but for us to practice that—it was dangerous too. We broke a lot of candleholders.
>
> Kai: And the candles were on fire when we were (inaudible, Gabrielle talks over)—
>
> Gabrielle: The candles would go out while we swing them (laughs). We were scared things would catch on fire.
>
> Kai: We went to Philip's house, remember?
>
> Gabrielle: I have pictures from that (laughs).
>
> Kai: We played football in this kid's house!
>
> Gabrielle: His house is huge. We played touch football in his living room!
>
> EC: In his house?
>
> Gabrielle & Kai: In his house!
>
> Kai: I wouldn't even call that a living room, it was like a ballroom (laughter).
>
> Gabrielle: Yeah, cause his living room was on the other, the other—
>
> Gabrielle & Kai: other wing of the house (laughter)!

Kai: So it was like a ballroom. We practiced there. There was so much space. Everybody was you know—we ordered pizza, online (laughter)!

Gabrielle: (inaudible) Online!

Kai: Yeah, that was so awesome.

This excerpt shows how Filipino club offers a social outlet to the students. As they practice and rehearse they maintain the fun, laid-back nature of being in club and in spending time together. This contrasts to some of the other clubs that Gabrielle and Kai describe as more exclusive specifically because they only want talented dancers to perform at International Night. Gabrielle describes the atmosphere in Spanish club, for example, when they practice for International Night. She explains that she does not want to participate in the dynamic of Spanish club:

I don't really wanna be surrounded by that cause it's so much stress. Everyone gets mad at each other. Filipino club, yeah there's a few people that get upset, like I'll get upset if things aren't going fast-paced cause I'm used to that, but it's not like Spanish club. If you observe them (Kai: Oh my god) they're all yelling at each other, screaming at each other.

Gabrielle goes on to say that she wants to be in "a more relaxed environment." She says, "Yeah, like when you walk into the room you feel the tension. You know who doesn't like each other, you know who wants to punch each other in the face." She compares Filipino club to Spanish club, using the latter's patterns of behavior to contrast her own. She says, "It's a club [Filipino club] that everyone wants to be a part of, they don't wanna feel pressured, they don't wanna feel like they're gonna be denied the right to just perform and try new things." Gabrielle narrates how Filipino club leaves open the possibility of having friends who are not Filipino dance with Filipino club.

During one of the club's meetings a non-Filipino friend popped her head in to say hello. They asked if she was doing something with them, but she planned to dance with Caribbean/West Indian Club for International Night. As she left she said, "Goodbye my Pilipinos!" (Fieldnotes).

Dress rehearsals are scheduled the days right before International Night. During dress rehearsal each club has a time slot. Italian club went on just before Filipino club. I, along with most of the dancers from Filipino club and a handful of other members, was at rehearsal early and caught part of Italian club's rehearsal. Each club has the opportunity to practice their routine on stage and to also make corrections and adjustments as needed. Italian club, like Filipino club and nearly all the ethnic clubs, had male and female performers doing combinations of boys-only, girls-only, and couples dances. Throughout rehearsal some students who seemed to have taken on leadership roles in the choreography yelled at the other dancers, making corrections or chastising others for making mistakes. Kai came over to me and said, "Notice how the Italians do things a little differently? See how they're yelling at them? We don't do that. We'll say, 'You'll do it better next time.'" He compares Filipino club with Italian club, in effect using club as a proxy for comparing groups against each other. He points out how Filipinos behave differently, showing pride in and preference for how Filipinos treat each other.

This discourse of being friendly, open, and laid-back was also evident during club's rehearsals. At one of the rehearsals just two days before International Night, two girls had significant trouble getting the dance right. Gabrielle was not at the rehearsal because she was rehearsing for her own Debut, which is modeled after the American tradition of a debutante ball. For Filipinos, a Debut (pronounced "deboo") happens when a teenage girl turns 18 and she is officially presented to society at a formal ball during which she ballroom dances with a partner.

Gabrielle left Carol in charge of the rehearsal, but Carol did less large-group leading and more one-on-one help with the dancers, especially those who were struggling. When Vanessa arrived, she took on an active role in leading rehearsal. She encouraged the struggling girls by telling them they know the moves and that even when they mess up they should not stop; instead they should continue on because no one will know if they made a mistake. One of the girls apologized and Vanessa reassured her, "I'm not mad," as if to alleviate any stress she might potentially cause for the girl. Many of the members gave pointers at some point or another to the struggling girls. However, the frustration took over and one of the girls began crying. Carol hugged her and took her outside. A few minutes later they both came back, and the dancer appeared less anxious.

Many of the youth participants describe club as a place where they feel connected and comfortable with each other, where there is love amongst everyone, and openness. In this case there was overwhelming support for each other. The dynamics were such that even though the students were rehearsing and trying to perfect their moves there was a lot of joking, sitting around, and goofing off. It was a fun, light-hearted atmosphere, which is markedly different from how Gabrielle and Kai described some of the other clubs, Spanish club in particular.

"Something more costume, less street": Limitations of International Night

Representing culture

At a planning meeting for International Night I witnessed how the event can place pressure on students to showcase and represent their cultural identities. A student in the West Indian club discussed with Mr. Chiarelli some of the issues regarding what to choose for their costume. In a brief conversation with Mr. Chiarelli, he explained to me these issues arose

because past costumes had been perceived as too risqué by some parents. The student said they had chosen modern versions of traditional songs. Mr. Chiarelli encouraged her to be more traditional, and to focus on "traditional culture." He edited himself and said there is nothing traditional about culture because they are modern, but that they should try and find "something more costume, less street." Mr. Chiarelli acknowledges that culture does not only mean traditional, folk traditions even though International Night lends itself to that perspective, but that culture is also lived in the present, or "modern." In this exchange, the dichotomy between modern and traditional often used to conceive of culture is evinced. However, also evident is how International Night showcases, not exotic cultural practices per se, but how students adapt and blend traditional attributes of their cultures with their daily personal experiences and understandings of culture.

The following excerpt is from my fieldnotes as I reflected and made sense of the conversation between the girl from West Indian club and Mr. Chiarelli:

> She kept saying "I'm just confused" regarding what to do about the costumes, but it seemed to go deeper than that. It seems that what was confusing her went beyond what to wear for international night, but in choosing in what ways she could and should represent her culture. The event itself does force us to simplify our cultures and representations of cultures into discrete, manageable units, yet there is a complexity that is difficult, if not impossible, to resolve. This multicultural event paradigm seems to be at odds with what we mean by culture and the issue of representation. Although the girl was not talking explicitly about the complexities, or contradictions, there was obvious frustration. For example, the club had chosen a modern version of a traditional song. Here there is already a complex take on culture and representation, and to be asked to then represent

> that notion in a costume was proving to be a challenge to the student. This highlights the unexamined problems with events such as this. So while the event brings students out to identify with and celebrate their heritages, does not mean that the way in which it proceeds is unproblematic.

International Night indeed forces culture into discrete, explicit representations. Importantly, I found that pushing cultural representations into the limelight such that students are asked to showcase their culture necessitates the simplification of culture and cultural identities. Forcing this simplification can be quite difficult. The concerns over how to best make an impression on the eager audience underscores how socially embedded culture is and the conflicts that ensue regarding representation. As discussed earlier, individuals struggle with the burden of representing one's self. In social worlds, people must contend with dominant discourses that create ideal types against which we are judged. This greatly impacts how we come to see ourselves, which in turn places pressure on how we choose to represent ourselves to others.

International Night creates great expectations from students, of which they are acutely aware. They are expected to represent their ethnic selves and their cultures and ultimately put on a good show. Such an event is exciting in that it gives students opportunities to perform, showcase their talent, and display pride in their backgrounds. It is also exciting in its potential for allowing students to provide alternative representations that are different from dominant perspectives or expectations. However, International Night is also problematic in that it takes for granted the inherent difficulties with representation. Furthermore, the dynamic, multifaceted nature of culture is glossed over for the sake of creating a good show, casting it more as a commodity than a socially embedded system of interpretation and meaning.

Dominant discourses and cultural stereotypes

The order of performances was determined during the planning meeting. Each club's name was written on a slip of paper, folded up, and chosen randomly (by me, as per Mr. Chiarelli's request). Chinese club and Korean club were to perform one after the other. Mr. Chiarelli, the Student Activities Director at Mission, stated that the general audience might not like that because they were too close culturally. Students appeared uncomfortable, glancing at each other while he clumsily expressed the notion that the two cultures are indistinguishable because they were both Asian. One of the Korean club representatives was quiet until he finished, and then she replied that she did not agree. He asked her if they were doing "the same drum thing" they did last year, and when she replied that they were doing something with swords, he conceded that they would be in fact different, so it was okay for them to perform after Chinese club.

This exchange evokes common misperceptions of Asians as a homogeneous group, barely distinguishable from each other. It is also an example of how Asian students consistently find themselves up against a racial categorization that lumps Asian sub-groups together. In his book, Leonardo (2009) described an incident from his childhood that elucidated for him the insidiousness of race and racialized identities. During the incident, he and his cousins entered a playground in their neighborhood in Los Angeles, California and began playing basketball in the courts. Another group of boys told them, "'No Chinese allowed'" (ibid., p. 2), took their ball, and hit Leonardo in the chest. He described this incident as more puzzling to him than anything else because as a recent immigrant from the Philippines he thought of his ethnic group as clearly distinct from Chinese. Leonardo characterizes this incident as illustrative of a new identity that was being made for him, a racial one. This racialized identity forces a proximity between

Chinese and Filipinos and creates perceptions of homogeneity, which are perceptions that Asians in the U.S. continually face. In Lee's ethnography *Unraveling the Model Minority Stereotype* (1996) she found that students who adopted a pan-ethnic racial identity did not always do so out of choice, but did so because it was imposed on them by the dominant group. Jamie Lew (2006) also found that her Korean American participants were ascribed racial identities based on stereotypes and an unwillingness by others, particularly non-Asians, to differentiate among Asian sub-groups.

This incident during the planning meeting underscores a dominant perception of Asians in the U.S. based on cultural stereotypes, which is clearly taken for granted by Mr. Chiarelli. As discussed earlier, students must contend with dominant discourses as they negotiate self-understandings. This incident shows how International Night can facilitate a reliance on simplified, stereotypical understandings of culture, and unfortunately how it can go unchecked.

Limited focus

Another incident demonstrated some of the limitations of multicultural events like International Night. At dress rehearsal the clubs had a few minutes to practice their routine on stage. It occurred after school the day before International Night. Mr. Chiarelli coordinated rehearsal as well as International Night itself. He is gregarious, has a commanding voice, and wears tight-fitting dress shirts to accentuate his brawny stature. He ran the planning meetings and dress rehearsal. When Filipino club took the stage they had to start and stop several times. They were disorganized and a couple of the girls were not able to execute the complicated Tinikling dance, getting their feet caught in the sticks as they slid on the floor and clicked against each other. Mr. Chiarelli yelled, "You guys are a hot mess!" Gabrielle assured him, "We got it!"

After they finished their routine, Mr. Chiarelli made the suggestion of taking out the sticks, which he referred to as the "Click, click, clack," because it was "overkill" for the modern portion (Fieldnotes). He said that the traditional part is beautiful but that the sticks should be taken out when the students make the switch to modern. I immediately thought that this defeated the students' goal of integrating elements of traditional Filipino culture with something modern to construct a new take on Filipino American culture. I asked Gabrielle afterwards if she planned on making any changes. She said that they probably would not change much; however, she did describe taking out the sticks as Mr. Chiarelli suggested. She said they would probably do the modern portion as a simple dance and not use Tinikling sticks, but that they would keep them for the couples dance. I asked if that may be defeating the purpose of the routine, and she said, "Yeah, but what Chiarelli wants, Chiarelli gets."

The creative, innovative move on the students' part to create a new representation of their culture was callously called "overkill." The event vacillates between a literal performance and multicultural appreciation in the context of school where expectations of the audience are weighted so heavily. Thus, how students perform and create their culture is glossed over or even eliminated.

Gabrielle described the event as more for the parents and guests. She said in our interview,

> We [students] don't really ask too many questions about like, what the culture is. We really ask like, who's involved and stuff and when we find out, like, 'Oh, somebody else is doing it this year.' Like, 'Oh, that's really cool, it's good to know that they're getting out there.' But it's mostly for the guests that come into the school that ask about the different cultures.

With the overwhelming focus on performance and representation, International Night may offer little to no opportunity to learn about other cultures. Vanessa expresses her frustration over not having the opportunity to learn more traditional Filipino culture with International Night. The following excerpt is from a focus group:

> Vanessa: Like last year I was helping sell the food and when I was staring at the food and giving them out I just felt like, yeah they're getting to know what we eat or what we produce but I also feel like they're missing a whole 'nother part of it, and they're just getting an idea of it. Like there's turon. People are like, 'Oh, it's sweet, yeah it's good,' but then what about everything else? Or like, puto, okay like—I mean, it's nice to know that we're known as sweet but still, there's still a whole other thing to know about, like the Philippines. And other cultures too, other clubs.
>
> EC: Meaning food? What do you mean, "There's so much more to know"?
>
> Vanessa: I guess food-wise too. But just in general, like, there's a reason why we're all different. Like, so, but we just don't know what that reason is all the time.

Vanessa sees International Night as a possibility to learn more about "why we're all different" but she does not feel as though that is accomplished. She is critical of its limited focus. While the event may be a response to students' desire to represent and perform ethnic identity (as opposed to hearing speakers from the U.N.) Vanessa struggles with how these representations are limited.

This sentiment was also expressed in the after-school meeting to talk about the incident on Facebook (discussed in Chapter 4). One of the students present suggested that International Night does not have to be only about culture, but can also include the backgrounds and histories of the different ethnic groups. She distinguishes culture from histories and backgrounds. Stuart Hall and many cultural studies scholars define culture as,

> Both the meanings and values which arise amongst distinctive social groups and classes, on the basis of their given historical conditions and relationships, through which they 'handle' and respond to the conditions of existence; and as the lived traditions and practices through which those 'understandings' are expressed and in which they are embodied (Hall, 1980, p. 63).

Such a definition of culture includes the histories of groups. While it cannot be determined that the student necessarily distinguishes culture from history, she is pointing out how the current iteration of International Night does.

Culture has been "reformulated over time" (Eisenhart, 2001, p. 210). As discussed in chapter 2, anthropological discourses of culture enforce boundaries that "tends to smooth over contradictions, conflicts of interest, and doubts and arguments, not to mention changing motivations and circumstances," which inevitably makes "what is inside the boundary set up by homogenization something essential and fixed" (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 475). This fixed conceptualization facilitates stereotyping and ignores issues of power that mediate experiences of different social groups (Eisenhart, 2001). While scholars today work to write against culture (Abu-Lughod, 1990), the more traditional conceptualization of culture that defines social groups by their differences is desired by some of the youth participants. As discussed in chapter 5, Vanessa and Luisa talked about wanting more from Filipino club. Vanessa said, "[W]hat I wanted to gain from joining the club was to learn more about the culture that way I could learn more about myself… What we really do is just dancing." Despite the critique in the literature on conceptions of culture, and the data presented in these chapters that shows the creation and mutability of culture and identity, there is still a desire to know more about one's roots and

Filipino culture. Perhaps International Night, in conjunction with a broadening of curricula and ethnic club goals, can fill that need.

Conclusion

This chapter analyzes the highly anticipated multicultural event, International Night. Students were faced with the burden of representing their ethnic identities and cultures through food, costume, and short dance performances. Multicultural events like this can be problematic in that they risk putting forth simplistic and superficial representations of culture. However, through discursive strategies, students found innovative ways to reconstruct cultural meanings. Said another way, Filipino youth integrated traditional music and dance with modern to create and show new ways of *being* Filipino.

International Night did have its limitations. Bearing the burden of representing culture, the event forces boundaries for the sake of making differences between groups of people seem self-evident. The event also cast culture as a commodity in order to put on a good show. However, the event did enable students to provide alternative representations to dominant perceptions (e.g., the homogeneity of Asian ethnic groups).

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

This dissertation examines the ways in which Filipino American students construct racial and ethnic identities through the negotiation of discourse in the context of high school. I presented data that reveal some of the underlying assumptions regarding race, ethnicity, and diversity that impact the institutional discourses at Mission Catholic High. Through an analysis of discourse and narratives I show how the predominantly white administration and faculty view race and racialized identities as divisive threats to a unified community at Mission. This perspective is grounded in a racial ideology, which Bonilla-Silva (2010) and Leonardo (2009) call *colorblind racism* that posits in the post-civil rights era, race should not play a significant role in people's lives. At Mission, this racial ideology undergirds an institutional approach to the diverse student body, which is to instantiate a strong sense of community to defuse the potential threat of racialized differences.

Youth participants, on the other hand, use discursive strategies to negotiate and form their own understandings of their racial and ethnic identities in their social worlds. Rather than focus on differences, they explained that similar racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds provide them with a sense of comfort and connection, particularly in a context populated by youth of such varied backgrounds. Using discursive strategies they come to identify and position themselves within the MCH community.

One of the most surprising findings that emerged in this study was the strong sense of racial and ethnic identity held by Filipino youth participants. Contrary to the literature that

argues Asian American students face institutional invisibility due to a dominant black-white racial discourse (Alcoff, 2003; Lee, 1996, 2005; Lew, 2006; Omi & Winant, 1994), and for Filipinos in particular (Espiritu, 1994, 2003), Filipino youth participants reconceptualized this racial binary to combat marginalization. They place themselves on a continuum to form the racial "middle ground" between blacks and whites (Gabrielle, Focus Group). In doing so they make sense of dominant racial and cultural discourses that can downplay and marginalize their racialized experiences. Participants demonstrated how they transform racial meanings, and explain interracial connections not just between whites and non-whites, but also among their non-white peers.

Youth participants also provided rich descriptions of their discursive understandings of race and racism, which were significant factors in their school experiences. They described race and racialized identities as manifesting in conversations as harmless stereotypes intended to be jokes. However, such utterances walk a fine line between a joke about cultural stereotypes and outright racism. Some students, Vanessa in particular, expressed the frustration with the discordance between a context in which race is not supposed to matter and her experiences with race everyday. In the diverse context of MCH (at least diverse in terms of the students), race proved to be a significant factor. Participants spoke about their racialized identities in multiple ways (i.e., Filipinos are viewed as the "blackest Asians"), they participated in activities often bounded and defined by race, and they dialogued with their peers about ethnic and racial categorical meanings. Yet, the institutional discourse at Mission avoids deeper discussions on the structural contours of race and racism in order to avoid polarization. As a result, a critical look at how power has historically influenced the construction of race and culture is pushed aside.

Finally, I presented data that show how students, although burdened with producing cultural and ethnic representations, found ways to actively produce new ways of *being* Filipino. Examining the contexts in which participants construct identities provided insight into the social process of identity; the process of "becoming" (Hall, 1990, p. 394). In other words, focusing on the discursive strategies utilized by youth to position themselves relative to others provides insight into the contradictions, uncertainties, and multiple subjectivities of a social identity. By analyzing International Night, the school's multicultural event "celebrating diversity" (School newspaper, May, 2011), I show how students redefine and reconstruct notions of their own cultures. Even within the constraints of a multicultural event that is potentially problematic in its reliance on simplistic and superficial representations of culture, students found innovative ways to (re)create cultural meanings. They did so through performing, literally, for eager audience members expecting to be brought "into their [student performers] world and culture through dance," (ibid.). And rather than reinforcing ethnic stereotypes they creatively offered alternative representations to dominant perspectives. While not without its limitations, International Night enabled students to use discursive strategies to (re)conceptualize culture and identity.

Implications

For theory and method

This dissertation focuses on the discursive understandings of individuals as they participate in their cultured, figured worlds of school. One of the major intentions of this dissertation is to work towards challenging traditional notions of culture and identity that assume fixedness. Traditional understandings of such concepts are based on boundaries that tend to gloss

over contradictions for the sake of defining distinct cultural groups. This creates hierarchies and cultural 'others' (Abu-Lughod, 1991). Thus, it is not my intention to provide a characterization of *Filipino culture and identity* per se, but rather to provide insight into the discursive process by which cultures and identities emerge as socially-embedded systems of meaning. This is of particular importance when examining schools given that schools function as socializing institutions where young people learn to embody the skills and belief systems necessary to participate in society. As Daniel Yon (2000) argues,

> The emphasis on discursivity, as I have noted, works against the practice of simply representing the culture as a set of attributes. It pays attention instead to the qualities of discourses that circulate and which open or foreclose the different ways people can imagine themselves and the school. The larger question that this focus on discursivity opens up for researchers and educators alike concerns the conditions that might be created in order to allow people to explore fluidity rather than rigidity (p. 125-126).

Therefore, focusing on discourses enables researchers to examine how young people negotiate meaning to construct their own understandings of concepts such as race/ethnicity, culture, and diversity. And importantly, it allows the researcher to examine and critique larger political and social meanings that create material social structures for students (Anyon, 2009).

Using this conceptual framework for this dissertation enabled me to identify how and when dominant racial discourses infused the school's approach to the diverse student body. Specifically, it enabled me to understand how a colorblind racial ideology was implicated to create an uncritical conception of diversity, and forsake a deeper engagement of students' daily racialized experiences in school. It also enabled me to see when and how racism occurred or

when and how stereotypes were perpetuated. And importantly, this conceptual framework also enabled me to understand how students made sense of such incidences.

Ultimately, the conceptual framing of this dissertation helps provide another way of understanding how race operates in school. According to Yon,

> [A]s readers come to recognize the discourses that are present and to know the school through these discourses, the ethnography is clearly evocative of a real place and real people to which readers might relate. This means that Maple Heights might be any school, or it could be many schools. In this sense, while refusing claims to representativeness this ethnography might well provide the basis for reflecting upon the place of schooling in a more general sense (2000, p. 125).

This dissertation also has implications for researching the schooling experiences of Asian and Pacific Islander students. Throughout the dissertation I presented data that revealed how institutional discourses work to defuse and downplay the significance of race and racialized identities. However, the significance of race and racialized identities was more than evident in conversations with youth participants and in observations throughout the school context. While theories of assimilation provide great insight into the adaptation of immigrant students to America, they do not pay enough attention to the process of racialization. As Lee (2005) found in her research, immigrant minority youth form their identities "in response to messages about race" (p. 86), which are mediated by issues of power and an historical pattern of white domination (Leonardo, 2009). However, Filipino participants in this study were not interpreting messages that focused only on white versus non-white groups, nor did they reveal a sense of racial hierarchies that place whites on top. Rather, they actively negotiated discourses on interracial connectedness.

Coloma (2006) argues that the shifting racial demographics in the United States calls for alternative frameworks to understand the experiences of API youth in schools. Particularly, APIs are incredibly diverse despite perceptions of homogeneity (Lew, 2006) that are facilitated by a broad racial category. Therefore, Coloma argues that alternative analytic frameworks must be utilized by scholars studying API student populations in order to make sense of their "varying status as immigrants, citizens, aliens, colonized nationals, refugees, and racialized minorities," (2006, p. 4). Such frameworks, should also consider the distinct historical, political, and economic relationships between Asian and Pacific Island countries and the U.S. when forming an understanding of API students' educational experiences (ibid.).

For critical multicultural education

Zeus Leonardo argues, "In education, the very presence of multiculturalism is evidence of a reaction to a white normativity in school curricula, administrative structures, and classroom interactions" (2009, p. 129). A critical multicultural education provides not just an understanding of minority groups in American history but also the opportunity to discuss structural accounts of inequality (Lee, 2005). It also encourages students to understand how democracy has been constantly redefined and renegotiated through various groups' struggles such that students can come to see themselves as empowered agents of change (Chan, 2007; Leonardo, 2009). Through a critical multicultural education, students may then understand more deeply their own histories in relation to each other's to better understand how social groups today are embedded in systems of inequality. Ultimately, a multicultural education is for all students and, "It holds the promise of unity *and* diversity," (Leonardo, 2009, p. 147).

In order to achieve a critical approach to multicultural education, scholars, researchers, and educators should critically examine why discussing the significance of race and racialized experiences is perceived as undesirable. Such an examination may enable educators to provide students with opportunities to critically engage their racialized identities, experiences, and notions of inequality. It also allows educators to contextualize students within current and historical structures when textbooks often do not. While it may cause discomfort, giving students the space to talk about *how* and *why* race matters to them may be of great benefit in that it allows them to contextualize themselves in American society (Chan, 2007).

Although MCH prides itself in the diversity of its students, opportunities to bring in diverse viewpoints to provide constructive or deconstructive criticism of the dominant viewpoint (Parker, 2003, p. 99, as cited in Chan, 2007) are forsaken due to the belief that racial differences are biased and polarizing. Yet, without diverse viewpoints, "there can be nothing of the creative problem-solving needed to deal with the actual problems and always-changing circumstances of life" (ibid.).

Filipino youth participants often engage in dialogues concerning their racial identities. While using discursive strategies to draw on racial discourse about Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Filipinos, they rearticulate racial and ethnic meanings. In the process, they negotiate a sense of identity, but they are also complicit in the creation and perpetuation of cultural stereotypes, particularly those directed towards Asians. The debates in which students engage over whether Filipinos are Asian or Pacific Islander are rooted in the historical relationship between the Philippines and the United States. Due to American imperialist expansion into the Pacific the Philippines became a colonial territory of the United States. However, being racialized as Asian decontextualizes this history of colonization largely because Asians have not been subjected to

imperialism by western countries. Because race is hardly mentioned in class, particularly as it relates to the racialized identities and experiences of students at MCH, this historical understanding of Filipinos in the United States is abandoned. Also abandoned are discussions of how these historical relationships impact America today. Yet, such discussions could work towards the goals of a critical multicultural education.

For future research

As always, the theoretical framing guides the researcher in the field as she proceeds with her inquiry, but it also limits her focus. In order to provide a more thorough understanding of how race operates in schools future research studies may include students representative of all the racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds enrolled in the school. While this study focuses primarily on Filipino students, conducting interviews and focus groups with students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds may provide an understanding of racial discourses in a more general sense. Future studies may also include a larger sample of teachers and administrators to provide insight into the institutional racial discourses.

At the other end, to understand more deeply the experiences of Filipino students and the processes by which they construct ethnic and racial identities a larger sample of Filipino students could be included in future studies. What is more, a qualitative survey(s) developed after spending significant time in the field could be distributed to the entire school community. Such a survey may enable the researcher to draw on themes relevant to the social context, and it would help substantiate the findings through triangulation (Fine et al., 2003).

Finally, other socially constructed markers of difference such as class, gender, and sexuality intersect with race. Future studies may examine the “intertwined dynamics” of race,

class, gender, sexuality, etc. (Coloma, 2006, p. 9) to further challenge overgeneralizations, thus providing a more nuanced analysis of the multiple subjectivities of identities (ibid.). This may also provide insight into the complex experiences of APIs in schools who are constantly up against dominant discourses of homogeneity.

Appendix A

Focus Group Protocol

I am interested in understanding the lives of young people whose parents were born in the Philippines, or who immigrated from the Philippines at a young age; more specifically, their lives at school, at home, and among friends. We are one of the largest immigrant groups in the United States, yet when speaking with other Filipinos, it has been expressed time and again that many people do not recognize us as a distinct group. I want to write a dissertation so that the larger society can begin to understand the experiences of Filipinos in the U.S., the interactions we have on a daily basis with people and with institutions, and what it is like to contend with different identity categories.

I want us to have a safe conversation where we can feel comfortable sharing with one another aspects of our lives. There is no right or wrong answer to any of the questions, and if you do not wish to answer any of the questions, you do not have to. I expect to hear a wide variety of opinions and ideas, and not everyone has to agree with one another. However, I do expect everyone to respect each other.

I will audiotape our conversations, but no one except my advisor(s) and I will be allowed to listen. And I will not use names or any other identifiers for anything put in writing. We will begin with a drawing exercise (Sirin & Fine, 2008).

1. Identity Maps
    a. Identity maps are drawings you create that represent you. Draw a map of your self at school, at home, in your neighborhood. Include any aspects in those contexts that are important to you that tell a story about yourself.
2. Share/Discuss identity maps
    a. What are the different images that represent you?
    b. Are there any places of conflict? Overlap?
    c. Did you have trouble finding "one" way to represent your self in these different contexts? What were some of those difficulties? How did you arrive at your current representation? What other ways would you have chosen to draw yourself?
    d. What else is present in the maps? Why did you include them?
3. Perceptions of self and self in relation to others
    a. When do you feel most like yourself? Why?
    b. Who do you feel most comfortable with? Why?
    c. Who do you feel least comfortable with? Why?
4. Production, resistance, crossing of boundaries – School
    a. How would you describe your school to someone who is unfamiliar with it?
    b. Who do you hang out with in school? How did you become friends?
    c. Are there different cliques in school? Why do you think these students choose to hang out with each other?
    d. Do the different groups ever interact? Why or why not? When?
    e. Are you involved in any extra curricular activities? If so, what are they?
    f. What are your favorite classes? Why?

   g. What do you want to do when you graduate high school? College? Why?
   h. Have you ever been treated unfairly in school? Have you ever faced discrimination because of your background (e.g., race, ethnicity, immigrant, gender, class, other)? Who do you turn to in those situations?
5. Production, resistance, crossing of boundaries – Family
   a. Who do you live with at home?
   b. Does each person have different responsibilities? If so, what are they?
   c. What hopes and expectations does your family have for you at school?
   d. Describe what it is like for you to have immigrants as parents.
   e. About what things in life do you and your parents agree? Disagree?
6. Production, resistance, crossing of boundaries – Neighborhood/Community
   a. Describe your neighborhood. Who lives in your neighborhood?
   b. Do you socialize with other people or families in your neighborhood? If so, who? What sort of activities do you do together?

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Students

1. Discuss identity map
    a. Describe map (open-ended)
    b. Any follow-up to something brought up in focus group
2. School
    a. Tell me about your school. How would you describe it to someone who is unfamiliar with it?
    b. What do you like most about your school? Why?
    c. What do you like least about your school? Why?
    d. Describe a typical day at school.
    e. Describe some of the challenges of being a student in your school.
        i. Do some students face more challenges or obstacles than others?
        ii. Tell me a story of a difficult experience you had at school.
        iii. With whom did you speak about this experience?
        iv. Who do you turn to when you face challenges or difficulties in school?
    f. Who do you hang out with at school?
        i. What do you like most about your friends?
        ii. What do you like least?
    g. How would you describe the students at your school?
    h. Who hangs out with whom?
    i. Does your race or ethnicity ever come up in school? Tell me about that.
        i. Tell me a story about when you felt most happy at school.
        ii. Tell me a story about when you felt most frustrated at school.
3. Family / Home
    a. Who do you live with at home?
    b. How would you describe your parents?
        i. What kinds of things do you talk about with your parents?
        ii. What do you make sure not to talk about with your parents?
        iii. What are your parents' hopes for you at school? In the future?
        iv. Describe what it is like to be a son/daughter in your family.
        v. In what ways are your parents involved in school?
    c. What is it like being a boy/girl in your family?
        i. Tell me a story about how boys/girls are treated differently.
4. Neighborhood / Community
    a. Describe your neighborhood.
    b. What do you like most about your neighborhood? Why?
    c. What do you like least about your neighborhood? Why?
    d. How does it differ from the neighborhood of your school?
    e. What are some of the things you do in your neighborhood?
    f. In what community activities are you involved?
        i. What do you like about them?

g. In what ways are you involved in the Filipino community?
h. What motivates you to be involved in the Filipino community?

Appendix C

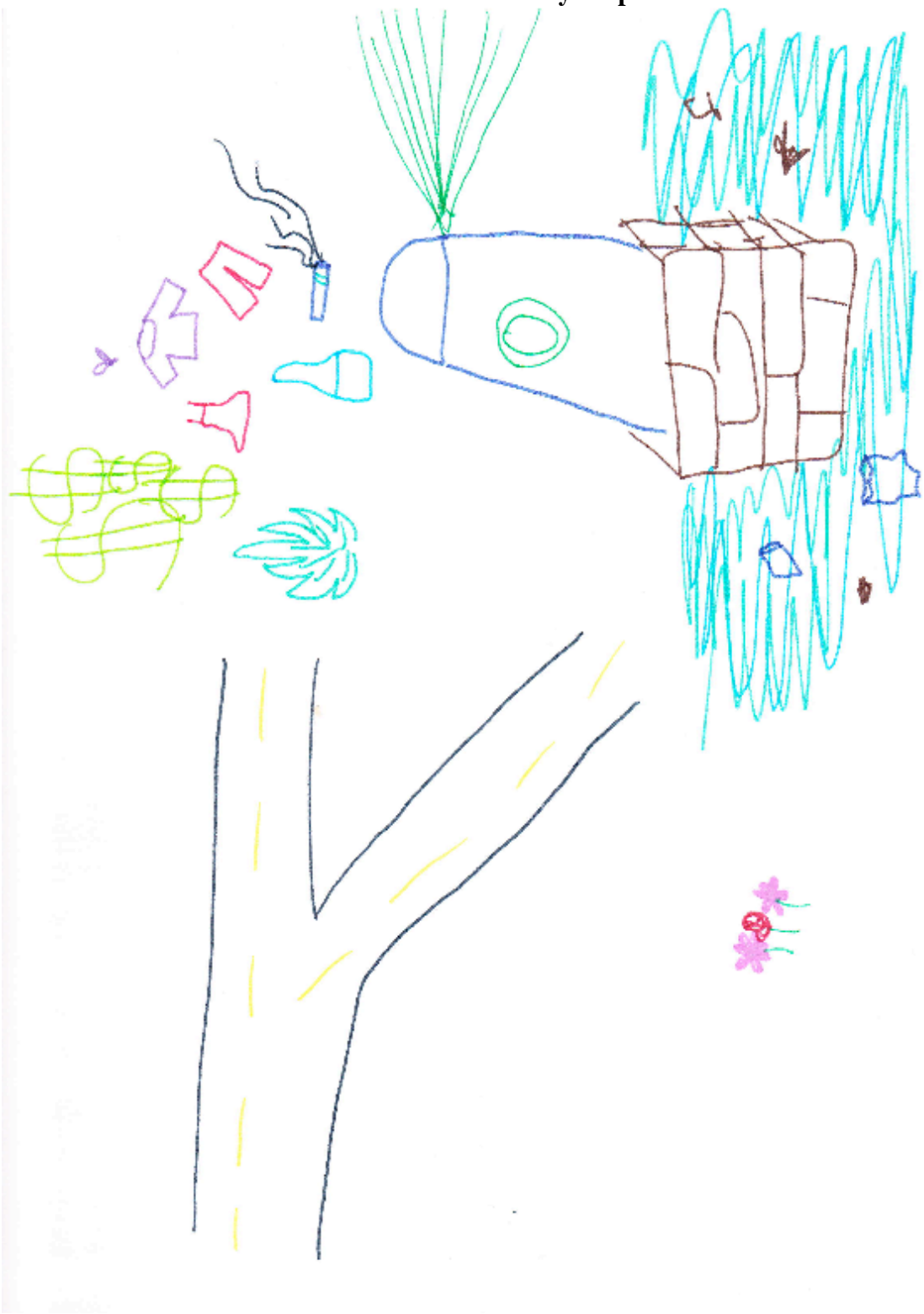
Gabrielle's Identity Map

Appendix D

Kai's Identity Map

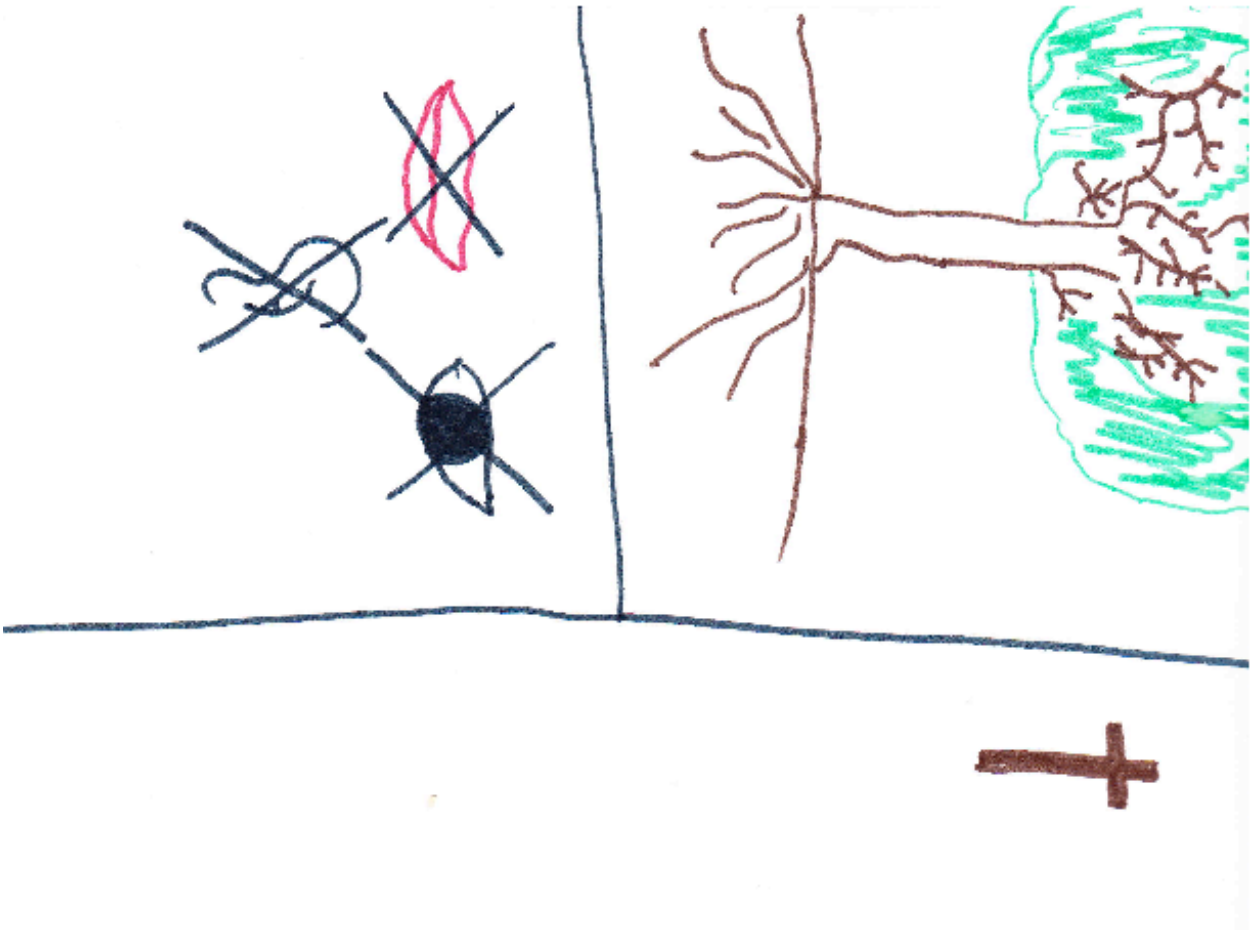
Appendix E

Luisa's Identity Map



Appendix F

Vanessa's Identity Map



Appendix G

Oral Script and Recruitment Flyer

Hello, everyone. Thanks for letting me visit your meeting/class. My name is Erica Chutuape and I am a doctoral student in the Urban Education program at the CUNY Graduate Center. I am currently conducting a research project about how Filipino American high school students, like yourselves/many of you, talk about your experiences and who you are as high school students, in an urban public high school like yours.

I'm looking for students like you to participate in focus groups during which we will have discussions and participate in activities. You will receive a free movie ticket, snacks and meals, and any travel expenses you incur will be reimbursed. If you're interested in the project, please take a flyer and has my contact information on it. Feel free to email me if you have questions about the research. Once you tell me that you are interested, I will send you two consent forms, one for you and one for a parent or legal guardian. If you are over 18 years of age, you only need the consent form for yourself. I must have these signed consent forms in order for you to participate in the project.

Attention: Filipino Students

Graduate student is looking for Filipino American students (Grades 9-12) to participate in focus groups.

Students will:

- Participate in discussions and activities
- Meet and socialize with other students

All participants receive movie tickets, snacks, food, and drinks.

Contact Erica Chutuape for further information:

echutuape@gc.cuny.edu
212-729-8068

Appendix H

Consent and Assent Forms (Interview and Focus Groups)

Ph.D. Program in Urban Education

The Graduate School and University Center
The City University of New York
365 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10016-4309
TEL 212.817.8280 FAX 212.817.1515
E-MAIL urban-ed@gc.cuny.edu

CONSENT FORM (Interview)

My name is Erica Chutuape and I am a student in the Urban Education Ph.D. Program at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project, entitled "Confronting Identity: Discourses of, About, and Without Filipino American Youth." This is a research study that explores Filipino American high school students and their experiences with various identity categories. The study is expected to provide an understanding of the experiences of Filipino Americans, who are the third largest immigrant group in the United States, and what it is like to attend high school in an urban school district. I would like permission to allow your child to participate in an interview about his/her experiences.

I will have 10-12 interview participants who will first be recruited on a volunteer basis. Other criteria considered when choosing interview participants will include potential willingness, and a need for more in-depth questioning on topics mentioned during focus groups. The interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes and will take place on school grounds. Participants will receive compensation in the form of a movie ticket, meals and snacks, and should any additional travel expenses arise, they will be covered. With your permission, I would like to audiotape the interview so I can record the details accurately. The tapes will only be heard by me and my advisor. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked file cabinet, to which only I, and my advisor, will have access. At any time your child can refuse to answer any questions or end the interview. Within legal and ethical boundaries I will maintain the privacy of all information obtained.

The risks from participating in this study are no more than encountered in everyday life. The benefits of your child's participation are that they will contribute to generalizable knowledge about Filipinos in America, whose experiences are underrepresented in scholarly literature. Also, their participation may contribute to a better understanding of Filipino youth's educational experiences and social adaptation.

I may publish results of the study, but names of people, institutions, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (212) 729-8068 or echutuape@gc.cuny.edu, or my advisor, Jean Anyon, at (212) 817-8277 or janyon@aol.com. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7525, kpowell@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for your participation in the study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

I agree to have the interview audio-taped [Please circle one]: Yes No

_____ _____
Participant's signature Date

_____ _____
Investigator's signature Date

_____
Child's name

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CONSENT FORM (Focus Group)

My name is Erica Chutuape and I am a student in the Urban Education Ph.D. Program at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project, entitled "Confronting Identity: Discourses of, About, and Without Filipino American Youth." This is a research study that explores Filipino American high school students and their experiences with various identity categories. The study is expected to provide an understanding of the experiences of Filipino Americans, who are the third largest immigrant group in the United States, and what it is like to attend high school in an urban school district. I would like permission to allow your child to participate in a focus group about his/her experiences.

I plan to have a total of 5-6 research participants per focus group, all of high school age. Participants will take part in drawing activities and discussions relating to their lives. I will recruit participants through student organizations, clubs, and/or extracurricular activities. The focus group will meet at the school, and each meeting will last approximately 45-90 minutes. Participants will receive compensation in the form of movie tickets, meals and snacks, and should any additional travel expenses arise, they will be covered. With your permission, I would like to audiotape the focus groups so I can record the details accurately. The tapes will only be heard by me and my advisor. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked file cabinet, to which only I, and my advisor, will have access. At any time your child can refuse to answer any questions. Within legal and ethical boundaries I will maintain the privacy of all information obtained.

The risks from participating in this study are no more than encountered in everyday life. The benefits of your child's participation are that they will contribute to generalizable knowledge about Filipinos in America, whose experiences are underrepresented in scholarly literature. Also, their participation may contribute to a better understanding of Filipino youth's educational experiences and social adaptation.

I may publish results of the study, but names of people, institutions, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (212) 729-8068 or echutuape@gc.cuny.edu, or my advisor, Jean Anyon, at (212) 817-8277 or janyon@aol.com. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7525, kpowell@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for your participation in the study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

I agree to have the focus group audio-taped [Please circle one]: Yes No

_____ _____
Participant's signature Date

_____ _____
Investigator's signature Date

_____
Child's name

_____ _____
Investigator's signature Date

_____
Child's name

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ASSENT FORM (Interview)

My name is Erica Chutuape and I am a student in the Urban Education Ph.D. Program at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY) and I am doing a research study about identity, identity categories, and being in high school. If you decide that you want to be part of this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview. In the interview you will be asked to share your thoughts about being a high school student in an urban school district. The interview will be about 30-45 minutes long and will take place at school. If you choose to participate in the research study you will receive a movie ticket, snacks and a meal if the interview is during mealtime. You will also receive reimbursement for travel expenses, if needed, in the form of a metro card. For example, if you have to travel to and from the interview you will receive a roundtrip metro card.

There are some things about this study you should know. All information about you and the other participants will be kept strictly confidential. I will not use real names of individuals, schools, or other institutions that are mentioned. Interviews will be conducted on-on-one. Also, you do not have to answer any question that you do not want to answer. With your permission, I would like to audiotape the interviews so I can record the details accurately. The tapes will only be heard by me and my advisor. Within legal and ethical boundaries I will maintain the privacy of all information obtained.

Your participation may contribute to a better understanding of Filipino American's educational experiences and social lives. When we are finished with this study I will write a report about what was learned. This report will not include your name or that you were in the study. Even though your parents have granted permission for you to participate, you do not have to be in this study if you do not want to be. If you decide to stop after we begin, that's okay too. Your parents know about the study too.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (212) 729-8068 or echutuape@gc.cuny.edu, or my advisor, Jean Anyon, at (212) 817-8277 or janyon@aol.com. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7525, kpowell@gc.cuny.edu.

If you decide you want to be in this study, please sign your name.

I, _____, want to be in this research study.

I agree to have the interview audio-taped [Please circle one]: Yes No

_____ _____
Sign your name here Date

_____ _____
Print your name here Date

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ASSENT FORM (Focus Group)

My name is Erica Chutuape and I am a student in the Urban Education Ph.D. Program at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY) and I am doing a research study about identity, identity categories, and being in high school. If you decide that you want to be part of this study, you will be asked to participate in a focus group of 5-6 students. In the focus group everyone will be asked to take part in a drawing activity and talk about living in their neighborhoods and being a high school student in an urban school district. The focus group will meet once at school and last 45-90 minutes. If you choose to participate in the research study you will receive a movie ticket, snacks and a meal if the group meets during mealtime. You will also receive reimbursement for travel expenses, if needed, in the form of a metro card. For example, if you have to travel to and from the focus group you will receive a roundtrip metro card.

There are some things about this study you should know. All information about you and the other participants will be kept strictly confidential. I will not use real names of individuals, schools, or other institutions that are mentioned. I will ask that anything discussed within the group not be shared outside the group, especially if it is of sensitive nature. Also, you do not have to answer any question that you do not want to answer. With your permission, I would like to audiotape the focus groups so I can record the details accurately. The tapes will only be heard by me and my advisor. Within legal and ethical boundaries I will maintain the privacy of all information obtained.

Your participation may contribute to a better understanding of Filipino American's educational experiences and social lives. When we are finished with this study I will write a report about what was learned. This report will not include your name or that you were in the study. Even though your parents have granted permission for you to participate, you do not have to be in this study if you do not want to be. If you decide to stop after we begin, that's okay too. Your parents know about the study too.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (212) 729-8068 or echutuape@gc.cuny.edu, or my advisor, Jean Anyon, at (212) 817-8277 or janyon@aol.com. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7525, kpowell@gc.cuny.edu.

If you decide you want to be in this study, please sign your name.

I, _____, want to be in this research study.

I agree to have the focus group audio-taped [Please circle one]: Yes No

_____ _____
Sign your name here Date

_____ _____
Print your name here Date

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INFORMED CONSENT FORM (Interview)

You are invited to participate in a study of Filipino American high school students and their experiences with various identity categories. We hope to learn about what it is like to be a Filipino American student growing up in an. You were selected as a participant in this study because you are a high school student of Filipino heritage in an urban school district.

Ten to twelve research participants will be interviewed on a volunteer basis. Other criteria considered when choosing interview participants will include potential willingness, and a need for more in-depth questioning on topics mentioned during focus groups. In the interview you will be asked to share your thoughts about being a high school student in an urban school district. The interview will be about 30-45 minutes long and will take place at school. You will receive a movie ticket, snacks and/or meals, and should any additional travel expenses arise, they will be covered. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice, and you can refuse to answer any questions at any time.

With your permission, I would like to audiotape the interview so I can record the details accurately. The tapes will only be heard by me and my advisor. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked file cabinet, to which only I, and my advisor, will have access. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Within legal and ethical boundaries we will maintain the confidentiality of all information obtained.

The risks from participating in this study are no more than encountered in everyday life. The benefits of your participation are that you will contribute to generalizable knowledge about Filipinos in America, whose experiences are underrepresented in scholarly literature. Also, you may voice your opinions and concerns as a Filipino American high school student in a forum not typically available, and your participation may contribute to a better understanding of other young Filipinos' educational experiences and social adaptation.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (212) 729-8068 or echutuape@gc.cuny.edu, or my advisor, Jean Anyon, at (212) 817-8277 or janyon@aol.com. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7525, kpowell@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for your participation in the study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may be entitled after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

I agree to have the interview audio-taped [Please circle one]: Yes No

_____ _____
Participant's signature Date

_____
Print your name here

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INFORMED CONSENT FORM (Focus Group)

You are invited to participate in a study of Filipino American high school students and their experiences with various identity categories. We hope to learn about what it is like to be a Filipino American student growing up in an. You were selected as a participant in this study because you are a high school student of Filipino heritage in an urban school district.

If you decide that you want to be part of this study, you will be asked to participate in a focus group of 5-6 students. In the focus group everyone will take part in drawing activities and discussions relating to their lives. All information about you and the other participants will be kept strictly confidential. I will not use real names of individuals, schools, or other institutions that are mentioned. I will ask that anything discussed within the group not be shared outside the group, especially if it is of sensitive nature. The focus group will meet once on school grounds and will be about 45-90 minutes long. You will receive a free movie ticket, meals and snacks, and should any additional travel expenses arise, they will be covered.

With your permission, I would like to audiotape the focus groups so I can record the details accurately. The tapes will only be heard by me and my advisor. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked file cabinet, to which only I, and my advisor, will have access. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you
will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Within legal and ethical boundaries we will maintain the confidentiality of all information obtained.

The risks from participating in this study are no more than encountered in everyday life. The benefits of your participation are that you will contribute to generalizable knowledge about Filipinos in America, whose experiences are underrepresented in scholarly literature. Also, you may voice your opinions and concerns as a Filipino American high school student in a forum not typically available, and your participation may contribute to a better understanding of other young Filipinos' educational experiences and social adaptation.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (212) 729-8068 or echutuape@gc.cuny.edu, or my advisor, Jean Anyon, at (212) 817-8277 or janyon@aol.com. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7525, kpowell@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for your participation in the study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may be entitled after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

I agree to have the focus group audio-taped [Please circle one]: Yes No

_____ _____
Participant's signature Date

_____
Print your name here

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