

How Does Religion Shape Filipino Immigrants' Connection to the  
Public Sphere?: Imagining a Different Self-Understanding of Modernity

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## ABSTRACT

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Scholarly studies of immigration, religion, and race and ethnicity debate the role of religion in modern society, highlighting the salience of religion among post-1965 immigrants. In this dissertation, I explored the following question: How does religion shape Filipino immigrants' connection to the public sphere? To that end, I investigated: 1) How does religion shape immigrants' understanding of American citizenship? 2) How do immigrants constitute a sense of empowered citizenship via the civic and religious institutions they navigate? 3) Does religion act as a preserving force of traditional Filipino culture within American society? 4) To what extent does religion foster unique transnational ties to the homeland?

Focusing on Filipino-Americans' stories and utilizing a humanistically-oriented sociological approach, I immersed myself in “lived religion” (McRoberts, 2004), engaged in participant observation, and conducted 60 in-depth interviews of Filipino-American adults in Virginia Beach, Virginia—one of the most highly populated Filipino areas on the East coast. I attended events at St. Gregory Catholic Church, the largest Filipino Catholic parish in the city, and the Filipino-American Community Action Group, the only local Filipino political organization. I also interviewed key leaders, including former Philippine president Fidel Ramos.

Although religion encourages civic engagement, Filipino-Americans' political engagement is largely limited due to regionalism and the community associations that Filipino-Americans craft in the U.S. Catholicism reinforces regionalism via ethnic-specific Catholic practices like the celebration of patron saints who represent hometowns in the Philippines. Regionalism limits the ability of Filipino-Americans to collectively perceive themselves as “Filipino-American,” unify, and politically mobilize. However, civic organizations such as the

Filipino American Community Action Group attempt to transcend regional differences, foster inter-ethnic pluralism, and establish a strong coalition of Filipino-Americans rather than organizing based on regional identities. The overwhelming majority of Filipino-Americans in this community immigrated and gained citizenship by way of the U.S. Navy. Because of this historical-American tie, most interviewees reported a strong sense of American nationalism and a sense of *utang ng loob* or ‘indebtedness’ to the U.S. for their American citizenship. I hope to unravel the crucial role of religion and its relationship with immigrant integration, pluralism, race/ethnicity, and transnationalism through the lens of the religious and nonreligious experiences of post-1965 immigrants.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Dr. Rekha Mirchandani, my beloved adviser, mentor, and friend.

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of engaging in scholarly discussions or spending time in the academic community. Thank you mom and dad, I hope to make you proud one day. My brothers Paul and Artemio Jr. Manalang have also played a role. Kuya, my oldest brother, has been highly generous throughout the years, and Paul, my youngest brother, has continued to be proud of his older sister.

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## INTRODUCTION

How does religion<sup>1</sup> shape Filipino immigrants' connection to the public sphere? Through exploring this research question in the U.S., the “most religiously diverse nation on earth,” my goal is to understand how immigrants negotiate their religious community and secular organizations (Eck, 2002): 1) How does religion shape immigrants' understanding of American citizenship? 2) How do immigrants constitute a sense of empowered citizenship via the civic and religious institutions they navigate? 3) Does religion act as a preserving force of traditional Filipino culture within American society? 4) To what extent does religion foster unique transnational ties to the homeland? I have studied the dynamics of the religious lives and civic participation of Filipino immigrants because I wanted to find out how religious and nonreligious experiences shape assimilation into modern society in order to help scholars clarify the complex relationship between religious pluralism, assimilation, and culture so that we might theorize on how these processes create a “different self-understanding of modernity” (Habermas, 2006). Moreover, “even humanists, even secularists, even atheists have to rethink their worldviews in the context of a more complex religious reality” (Eck, 2002). This study aims to contribute to the scholarly discussion of how religious and civic experiences shape how immigrants interact with and connect to the public sphere, so that we may reconfigure a more nuanced scholarly framework of modernity.

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<sup>1</sup>Before we can understand Filipino religiosity, I must first explain how I operationalized **religion**. I identified religion based on three main criteria: a) Religion brings people closer to the sacred, b) Religion serves as a way to understand oneself and one's communities, and c) Religion is organized and may have one of several elements: beliefs, practice, rituals, and symbols (Koenig et al., 2001). As Filipinos use religion as a way to understand oneself and one's communities, I will shed light on how religion may play a role on the extent that Filipinos preserve and transmit their culture in their respective religious community. For the purpose of this dissertation, I used the aforementioned definition of religion, in determining and finding religious Filipinos. As I interviewed religious Filipinos, I focused on understanding how, and in what capacity, their religiosity affects their “relationship and responsibility to others,” in this case, how Filipinos may maneuver outside their religious communities and a range of social spheres (Koenig et al., 2001).

In my dissertation, I show how religion promotes ethnic insularity through the reproduction and reinforcement of regional ties and celebration of localized patron saint holidays, which I will refer to hereafter as *regionalism*. I also discuss how the historical colonial relationship of the Philippines with the United States impacts Filipino-Americans' conceptions of U.S. citizenship and its implications for Modernity; in this case, Filipinos feel a sense of *utang ng loob* or indebtedness for their "blessing" of American citizenship and highly civically engage in order to fulfill their "debt" and 'prove' they are worthy and have contributed to the development of the nation-state. Finally, I show, in my chapter entitled Contested Attitudes of Citizenship, how immigrants mutually constitute a sense of empowered citizenship despite regional-ethnic differences. Therein a paradox of empowered citizenship persists within this immigrant community: While religion (Catholicism) tends to preserve Filipino culture and foster solidarity among Filipinos who share the same regional origin, at the same time, it also leads to social fragmentation and hinders the formation of a pan "Filipino-American identity." Due to this socially fragmented identity, Filipino-Americans struggle to craft a fully cohesive identity that would enhance the community's political mobilization, organization, and connections to the public sphere. Even in the absence of a more cohesive community identity, however, some Filipino-Americans empower themselves and attempt to transcend regional differences in order to politically engage in the United States and the homeland.

Despite burgeoning research on the structure of religious communities and the vital role that they serve for immigrants, few studies have comparatively examined the extent to which immigrants utilize, reinvent, and transform religious structures as contrasted to nonreligious structures. As a result, scholars cannot definitively gauge whether religious social networks that immigrants develop via religious involvement contribute to their overall well-being, help them

preserve their culture, or whether religion uniquely connects them to the public sphere in ways not possible through secular social networks. These studies

...focus on general social networks and modes of support without making a distinction between religious and secular social resources. This assumes that social resources found in religious organizations are no different from those found in secular communities. However, if social resources offered by religious organizations possess qualities that secular social networks do not provide, measures of general social resources employed by these studies would not demonstrate religious social networks' influence. In fact, some studies do suggest that religious social resources have distinctive qualities (Lim and Putnam, 2010, p. 916).

Utilizing a comparative approach, my dissertation investigates post-1965 immigrants (i.e., those who have arrived after the Immigration and Naturalization Services Act of 1965) and analyzes Filipino religious communities and nonreligious<sup>2</sup> Filipino civic organizations. Juxtaposing the two groups allows me to “make a distinction between religious and secular social resources [and] determine whether religious social structures have independent effects that are not captured by measures of general social resources” (Lim & Putnam, 2010, p. 917). My dissertation clarifies whether “religious social resources have distinctive qualities” or whether simply being civically engaged contributes to the integration of immigrants (Lim & Putnam, 2010, p. 917). It is possible, albeit unlikely, that civically engaged immigrants may benefit similarly when compared to religiously involved immigrants with respect to navigating the public sphere and integrating into American society so long as they both actively participate in their respective groups and meet regularly.

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<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this dissertation, I operationalize **nonreligious** based on the organizational level of engagement. In other words, nonreligious refers to civic and political organizations that are not officially affiliated with a church or religious community. I also consider Filipinos' self-reported levels of religiosity from interview guides. Since most statistics and ethnography report that religion is highly important to Filipinos, I expect a full range of religious behavior and civic engagement.

I immersed myself in “lived religion”<sup>3</sup> and engaged in participant observation in Filipino religious communities and secular organizations in Virginia Beach, Virginia, one of the most highly populated Filipino areas on the East coast. I conducted 60 in-depth adult interviews that ranged from 1-3 hours, and focused on their stories and experiences—both in respect to their religious community, but also outside their religious communities in regard to other social spheres of their lives like family, culture, and civic engagement. I focused on St. Gregory Catholic Church, the largest Filipino parish in the area, and Filipino-American Community Action group, the only political organization in the area. I also attended a wide array of community events and interviewed key Filipino leaders, along with a wide range of informal interviews during my fieldwork. Interview guides explored the following themes: Personal Background; History of Involvement; A Typical Day at Church or Civic Organization; Culture and Church or Civic Organization; Transnationalism; Civic Engagement; Personal Thoughts on Religious Involvement or Civic Engagement.

In my research, I draw from Jurgen Habermas because I want to see how his important insights on religion and modernity are applicable to post-1965 immigrants in the American context. Essentially, Habermas argues the following:

On the one hand, those who are neither willing nor able to separate their moral convictions and vocabulary into profane and religious strands must be permitted to participate in political will formation even if they use religious language. On the other, the polyphonic complexity of the range of public voices, for it cannot be sure whether in doing so it would not cut society off from scarce resources for generating meanings and shaping identities. Especially regarding vulnerable domains of social life, religious traditions have the power to provide convincing articulations of moral sensitivities and solidaristic intuitions (Habermas, 2009).

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<sup>3</sup> **Lived Religion-** This aesthetics-oriented approach seeks to expand our understanding of religious experience through immersing in lived religiosity, where the ethnographer engages in religious experiences that are precognitive but not necessarily spiritual. In other words, the ethnographer seriously considers the diverse religious experiences of individuals with an open mind, even though the ethnographer is not directly concerned with “transcendent realms to which those religious expressions ultimately refer” (McRoberts, 2004, 190 & 199).

Religious pluralism plays a vital role with respect to democratic society. My study takes into account the “polyphonic complexity of the range of public voices” and specifically considers the religious and civic experiences of post-1965 Filipino-American immigrants. Since religion plays a key role in “generating meanings and shaping identities,” through my in-depth interviews, participant observation of, and connections with religiously and civically engaged Filipino-Americans, we will gain a clearer idea of the crucial role that religion plays with respect to immigrants’ perceptions of and interactions with the public sphere. Moreover, since Filipinos are a highly transnational, diasporic immigrant group, we will also clarify whether religion may help or hinder their ability to cope with the “vulnerable domains of social life,” that is, the structural challenges they may face as they integrate into American society.

Like sociologist Robert Wuthnow, I assume that “interpretations of religious diversity have been, and continue to be, a profound aspect of our national identity” (Wuthnow, 2010, p. xii). While scholars such as Wuthnow have argued for this relationship, more research is needed to unpack the complexities of this relationship. To that end, I conceptualized myself as a “humanistically oriented social scientist” and sought to more deeply explore the relationship between religious pluralism and culture in order to theorize its implications for modernity (Wuthnow, 2010, p. xvi). If we delineate how immigrants perceive, interpret, and construct their religious and civic relationships where they foster and develop social resources, scholars will advance analysis on the multiple modernities in the American religious landscape and subsequently help to foster the construction of a more religiously pluralistic society:

Today all of us are challenged to claim for a new age the very principles of religious freedom that shaped our nation. We must find ways to articulate them anew, whether we are Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, or secular Americans. We must embrace the religious diversity that comes with our commitment to religious freedom, and as we move into the new millennium we must find ways to make the differences that have divided people the world over the very source of our strength here in the U.S. It will require

moving beyond laissez-faire inattention to religion to a vigorous attempt to understand the religions of our neighbors. And it will require the engagement of our religious traditions in the common tasks of our civil society. Today, right here in the U.S., we have an opportunity to create a vibrant and hopeful pluralism, in a world of increasing fragmentation where there are few models for a truly pluralistic, multireligious society (Eck, 2002).

Filipino religious communities can be used as an *insightful lens* to better understand the religious diversity of America, the shifting contours of American religious life, and the role of religion in modern society. In other words, “the complex relationships between religion, race, and ethnicity also need to be considered in thinking about religious pluralism” (Wuthnow, 2005, p. 308).

Overall, I conducted an analytic comparison between religious and nonreligious organizations, and delineated the multifaceted processes immigrants negotiate in religious and secular organizations in order to advance analysis on its theoretical implications for modernity. I also examined the extent that religious structures tend to act as a preserving force of culture while simultaneously considering whether civic organizations tend to act as an assimilative force in American society. Through exploring the role of religion among Filipino-Americans, I comparatively analyzed, delineated processes, and measured the extent that immigrants preserved and transmitted culture through religious and nonreligious organizational structures. Finally, despite their social significance, “Filipino Americans remain a remarkably understudied and overlooked group in both the U.S. culture and in academic research” (Espiritu & Wolf, 2001). Through exploring the role that religion plays among Filipino immigrants, I advanced research on the “inscription of Filipino identity in the American palimpsest” (San Juan Jr., 2000).

Religion holds deep salience among immigrants to the United States (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). For this dissertation, I have focused on the role that religion plays among Filipino immigrants in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and considered three themes that consistently emerge across religion and immigration research: Religious Lives and Civic Participation for

Immigrants; The Role of Structure versus Content in the Assimilation of Immigrants; Religion, Culture, and Transnationalism. Since Filipinos possess a post-colonial background, I also, to some extent, discuss the literature related to post-colonialism.

### **Literature Review**

#### *Religion and Immigration among Post-1965 Immigrants*

Over the course of the past 15 years, sociologists of religion, immigration, and race and ethnicity have begun to explore how religion impacts the experiences of post-1965 immigrants to the U.S., or those who arrived after the Immigration and Naturalization Services Act of 1965 (Cadge & Ecklund, 2007; Carnes & Yang, 2004; Diaz-Stevens, 2003; Stevens-Arroyo, 1998; Ebaugh, 2003; Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000; Haddad, 2003; Leonard, 2005; Levitt, 2005; Min & Kim, 2002; Warner 1998; Warner & Wittner, 1998; Yoo, 1996). Initially, this area of research developed slowly because social scientists were skeptical about religion as a vital component of analysis, and few scholars are themselves first or second generation immigrants (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000). To date, most research on religion, immigration, and race and ethnicity have been case studies of religious organizations and groups. These research studies are richly descriptive individual case studies, but generally lack analytic comparison (Cadge & Ecklund, 2007).

About 23% of the American population are immigrants or the children of immigrants (Alba & Nee, 2003; Lee & Bean, 2004; Malone, et al., 2003). According to the U.S. Census, Asian Americans have increased to 5.8% (or 18.2 million children and adults in 2011) from less than 1% of the total U.S. population (including children) in 1965.<sup>4</sup> Yet, very little research focuses on post-1965 immigrants, especially Asian-American immigrants:

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<sup>4</sup> In "Asian-Americans: A Mosaic of Faiths," Pew Research Center, p 8.

Many theoretical perspectives on America's complex racial and cultural issues take no note whatsoever of the profoundly religious dimensions of culture. Writers in Asian American studies, for example, too often work within constricted intellectual frameworks that elide religion from analysis, as if immigrants from Asia—old and new—had no religious roots and formed no religious communities as they settled in the United States (Eck, 1999).

Although burgeoning social scientific, ethnic, and cultural studies research explores Southeast Asian immigrants in the areas of race, ethnicity, class and gender, “we must also look carefully at religion as a category of analysis” (Eck, 1999). Through exploring the role that religion plays among Filipino immigrants, we clarify the “profoundly religious dimensions of culture” in respect to immigrant integration.

Current research on post-1965 immigrants focuses on first and second-generation immigrants. The demographic profile of these immigrants sharply contrasts to the European immigrants who arrived at the turn of the century (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Not only are these newer immigrants mostly Asian in their ethnic origins, they also bring their religious diversity to the United States. A plurality of Asian Americans are comprised of Christians (42%); including a small percentage who are Catholic (19%) and a slightly larger percentage who are Protestant (22%).<sup>5</sup> About one-fourth (26%) are unaffiliated (atheist, agnostic, or nothing in particular).<sup>6</sup> Roughly one in ten are Hindu (10%), followed by a larger percentage of Buddhists (14%, or one in seven Asian-Americans).<sup>7</sup> The remainder consists of Sikhs, Jains, Muslims, and adherents of numerous other faiths.<sup>8</sup> Sociologists Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou report that 77% of post-1960 immigrants are non-Europeans (1993). Overall, “how [non-European and post-1965] immigrants become incorporated into the American mosaic has not been clearly theorized” (Zhou, 1997).

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p 10.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid



### *Religious Lives and Civic Participation for Immigrants*

Scholars have recently explored the role of religion in civic life among post-1965 immigrants (Chen, 2005; Ecklund, 2006). Civic life refers to how immigrants and their families view their responsibility to participate in American society. For instance, while 38% of the American public self-report that they worked to fix a community problem in the past year, more than four in ten Asian Americans (44%) say they have done this.<sup>9</sup> Most of the work in this subarea focuses on churches' active role in helping immigrants politically participate in the United States by gaining citizenship and voting.

While scholars argue that religion motivates immigrants to civically engage in their communities, more research is needed to explore how specific religious contexts matter in respect to immigrant integration (Ecklund, 2005, p. 3). Moreover, few studies have examined the motivation of immigrants who participate in nonreligious organizations. Through my comparison between religiously involved and civically engaged Filipino immigrants, I will clarify how religious immigrants may view their responsibility to participate in American society. My research will also shed light on how civically engaged immigrants may differ vis-à-vis religiously involved immigrants in their perception and role of civic life in their host society.

### *The Role of Structure versus Content in the Assimilation of Immigrants*

Studies on pre-1965 immigrants posited straight-line assimilation theories in respect to their integration. The melting pot theory suggested that the intergenerational transmission of religion would retain its importance after the first generation, while culture (i.e., ethnic traditions, language) would diminish in its significance (Herberg, 1960). Based on this thesis, immigrants would gradually be subsumed by America's triple melting pot of Jews, Catholics, and Protestants (Herberg, 1960).

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p 101.

Prior to 1990, relatively few sociologists explored religious practices, beliefs, or organizations with respect to post-1965 immigrants (Cadge & Ecklund, 2007). In similar fashion to classic assimilation theories, studies that explored the relationship between religion and post-1965 immigrants focused on more functional aspects like the role of religion in assimilation and acculturation such as social services (Kashima, 1977; Mol & Batten, 1981; Barton, 1975; Janowitz, 1966; Kayal, 1973; Mol, 1971; Russo, 1969; Tomasi, 1970). Since 1990, scholars have challenged this idea and have argued that the relationship between ethnicity and religion is highly complex, both within and across immigrant generations (Gans, 1994; Hammond & Warner, 1993; Hirschman, 2004; Warner, 1993; Yang, 1999b).

Scholars refer to content as the texts, doctrines, and rituals of religious communities, and “what people believe, or say they believe, and the language in which they make sense of their beliefs and practices” (Wuthnow, 2005). For example, religiously involved Filipino immigrants may perceive, interpret, and construct their relationship to the homeland based on how the pastors or priests of their churches frame their relationship to the homeland within their sermons and liturgies; subsequently, they may forge distinct transnational ties compared with civically engaged Filipinos. If religious leaders explicitly make connections to the homeland through references in sermons, sending missionaries, or sending financial support, then content is highly relevant.

Other scholars have focused on the role of structure and examined the relationship between social change and congregational life. In her seminal work *Congregation and Community*, distinguished sociologist of religion Nancy T. Ammerman found that the organizational structure of congregations largely determined the lifespan of respective churches (1998). Regarding structure, Ammerman explains that:

every congregation has its own way of doing its local business, of making the decisions within its power to make. In every congregation there are governing bodies of some sort, although in some they are virtually inert, with the pastor effectively functioning as the sole decision maker. /And in the more participatory congregations, an extensive system of committees, intentional efforts at communication, and regular congregational meetings keep a broad range of members involved in the ongoing decisions that must be made. More important than the amount of control members exercise is the perception that decisions are being made in ways they see as appropriate and legitimate. Each congregation, shaped in part by its denominational heritage, has its own way of defining how decisions should be made (Ammerman, 1997).

With regard to church survival and structure, “congregations that do not try new programs and new forms of outreach when faced with environmental change are not likely to survive past the lifespan of their current members” (1998, p. 323).

Organizational structure may differ within and across religious communities (Ecklund 2005a, 2006). These logistical aspects help shape how immigrants may use religion to construct different categories of ethnicity and race, and how their understanding of race and ethnicity may impact their roles as American citizens (Ecklund, 2005b). Other immigrants may not necessarily connect their religion with their race and ethnicity. Instead, they might prioritize local community needs over the needs of their co-ethnic peers. Second generation Korean American evangelicals have focused their civic participation and responsibilities outside the Korean ethnic community and their church. While Korean Evangelical congregations may disaggregate the relationship between race/ethnicity and the preservation of cultural ties, their religious affiliation and membership to Evangelical congregations like Grace and Manna Church helps Korean Americans relate to people outside of their ethnic group in the local community, fosters a value of ethnic diversity, and strongly encourages civic engagement in the greater community, like youth shelter outreach (Ecklund, 2005, p. 6).

Overall, current research on the role of structure versus content in the assimilation of immigrants describes the increasing presence of immigrants and the cultural diversity they bring

to their churches. Churches must adapt their social structure to the needs of new constituencies like immigrants in order to ensure their long-term survival:

Exactly what sort of internal organizational change happens will vary from one situation to the next, but congregations that manage to incorporate new constituencies will also have to change how they do things. Some may be able to work in partnership with a denomination, gaining both resources and legitimation from that body. But changes can rarely be imposed from the outside. It is the internal structures of the congregation itself that the life and death decisions will be made (Ammerman, 1997).

Through this process, immigrants deeply shape the overall organizational structure of respective churches. Ammerman's powerful findings are strong intellectual agreement with current sociological research: Studies of individual congregations on the topic of immigration and religion in major cities like Chicago, Miami, New York City, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and Houston have revealed that the organizational structure of immigrant religious communities is vital to the adaptation of immigrants to the host country (Warner & Wittner, 1998; Miller et al, 2001; Chafetz, 2000; Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000). Structure, therefore, matters for immigrant assimilation. Both 'old' and 'new' immigrants adapt their religions to social conditions of the host country" through voluntary membership, lay leadership, and professionalized clergy, "rather than simply creating religious structures as they existed in their home countries. For example, immigrant religious communities influence the organizational structure by changing worship styles and rituals compared to traditions found in immigrants' nations of origin (Yang & Ebaugh 2001, p. 270).

While current research has provided a tremendous amount of descriptive knowledge on the functional role (in respect to structure and content as discussed above) that religion plays in immigrants' lives, it is still not clear how the increasing presence of immigrants and ethnic/cultural diversity impacts how religiously involved immigrants maneuver outside their religious community compared to civically engaged immigrants. If we investigate how

religiously involved immigrants maneuver contra civically engaged immigrants, then we will clarify how immigrants' connection to the public sphere impacts how they develop and shape the content and structure of their respective religious communities. My research compared religious and non-religious social resources that religious communities and civic organizations develop in order to shed light on how immigrants' relationship to the public sphere affects how immigrants impact the structure and content of religious communities. My dissertation also aims to describe religious social networks' influence so that scholars will learn whether they indeed have distinctive qualities from those found in secular communities.

*Religion, Culture, and Transnational Ties*

All of America's religious communities are also part of worldwide networks of coreligionists, and global interdependence is a reality of religious life in the twenty-first century. There are tiny Christian communities in Pakistan and Palestine, Muslim communities in Columbus, Ohio, and Cairo, and American Jewish communities whose life is inextricably involved with the well-being of the state of Israel. Awakening, as we have, to a new religious America, we face a world of understanding and relationships from which there is no retreat (Eck, 2002).

The preceding quote clearly illustrates how modernity has contributed to the increasingly salient role of transnationalism in the lives of immigrants. Moreover, among all Asian American groups, at least 61% of Filipino-Americans, Indian Americans (69%), Korean Americans (63%), Vietnamese Americans (65%) still have close family residing in their country of origin.<sup>10</sup> These statistics illustrate how powerfully transnationally connected immigrants are today.

Another burgeoning area of research investigates the role of religion as it shapes culture and the dynamic transnational ties of immigrants. Migrants link to coreligionists in their host and home countries, global religious movements, and other believers around the world (Marquardt, 2005; Bowen, 2004). Moreover, "the creation of translocal and transnational communities is part of the world's new pattern of immigration. E-mails, faxes, and phone calls have linked those here

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<sup>10</sup> "The Rise of Asian Americans" Pew Research Center, p 111.

today with homelands all over the world and communities all over the U.S.” (Eck, 2002).

For example, undocumented Mexican female immigrants who converted and joined *Nuestra Senora de las Americas*, a Charismatic Catholic community in Atlanta, Georgia, created and maintained transnational public spheres as they “simultaneously engaged in the public life of the host and home country” (Marquardt, 2005, p. 51). Mexican women struggled to carve out “transnational democratic spaces” as they attempted, albeit to a limited extent, to relevant issues in the public sphere like discrimination, public policy, and injustice (Marquardt, 2005, p. 52). Mexican women also established Charismatic prayer groups when they returned to their homeland (Marquardt, 2005, p. 48). Religious conversion played a key role toward fostering transnational ties for these respective immigrants.

Chinese Christian churches have developed highly transnational pan-ethnic, transpacific networks that connect Chinese Christian churches from Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, Canada, and the U.S. with people from other church organizations (Yang, 2002, p. 129). Since a great majority of Chinese immigrants are comprised of middle to upper-middle-class, well-educated professionals, they possess more cultural, economic, and social capital and sustain highly transnational networks (Yang, 2002, p. 147). Based on this ethnographic study, it appears that the social and economic resources that immigrants possess directly correlates with their ability to maintain transnational ties. These ties have been encouraged and solidified by key church leaders like Pope John Paul II, who was considered the “high priest of a new universal civil religion of humanity and the first citizen of a global civil society.” Pope John Paul II actively served as a spokesperson to Catholics scattered across the globe in political, social, and ethical affairs (Cassanova, 1994, p. 130). This transnational connection to the homeland enables immigrants to engage in homeland affairs, act as a counterpoint to extremist voices (in their home country), and

export their more moderate political views that have perhaps been forged in the context of their American congregations (Cassanova, 1994).

Most current research on Filipino-Americans focuses on the transnational domestic labor market in the global context since the Philippines is the second largest labor exporter in the world next only to Mexico (Carino, et al, 1990; Martin, 1993; Parrenas, 2001; Parrenas, 2002; Rodriguez, 2010). These overseas contract workers (OCWs), for instance, have been documented to strategically assert their rights and engage in transnational labor activism via organizations like Migrante International (Rodriguez, 2011). This transnational labor activism is especially of global concern in areas of the world (but not limited to) like the Middle East, specifically, Saudi Arabia (Rodriguez, 2011). Coined as the Philippine labor diaspora, almost 10% of the Filipino population live and work abroad (Parrenas, 2001).

In most highly industrialized countries, Filipinos serve as domestic helpers (Lutz, 2002). Within this subarea, sociologists have focused on the feminization of the transnational domestic labor market and its impact on the Filipino family (Parrenas, 2001; Parrenas, 2002; Root, 1997). Overall, because of the transnational labor market, Filipinos and Filipino-Americans cope with high amounts of emotional stress. Due to the extreme gender division of labor (women have high rates of labor participation in this transnational market) and accompanying structural challenges, Filipina mothers attempt to reproduce and sustain stable family lives across national borders. Nonetheless, Filipinos perceive their families as “broken” because they do not fit into the ideal nuclear family model (Parrenas, 2001, 2002).

Other research has begun to explore the relationship between transnationalism, religion, and integration. For instance, the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), which explored the adult children of immigrants in Miami, found that religion plays a key role in

respect to immigrant childrens' identity formation (Haller & Landolt, 2005, p. 1203).

Religiousness positively correlated with transnational involvement like traveling back to the homeland, sending remittances, and 'feeling equally at home' in both the host and the home country (Haller & Landolt, 2005, p. 1203).

Migration scholars have pointed to the need for a "multi-level analysis of transnational migration" (Haller & Landolt, 2005, p. 1205). Although it is well-documented among sociologists that immigrants bring their unique culture to religious communities, more research is needed to explore the transnational flows of religion and the dynamic ways that different aspects of culture (e.g., food, traditional dances, language) are incorporated, transformed, and embedded within the organizational structure of American religious congregations. When and why do immigrants preserve their culture and instead assimilate? Do religious values matter more than the ethnic composition of the religious community group in respect to preserving culture? Why do some religious communities foster co-ethnic community ties and others don't?

This research considers the relationship between transnational practices and immigrant incorporation into the host society. For example, with respect to feminization of the transnational domestic labor market and its impact on the Filipino family, more research is needed to explore the role of religion to restore these fragmented familial bonds. Will church members serve as a proxy familial support through this common diasporic experience away from families? More research is needed to explore how immigrants cope with such transnational struggles. In my study, I have paid particular attention to the content of sermons that addressed these unique transnational struggles. I also explicitly asked questions in my interview guide on the theme of Transnationalism: Does your church foster transnational ties to the homeland? Does your church send missionaries to the Philippines? Does your church send tithes to the Philippines?



Finally, “in order to see the whole picture or gain a comprehensive understanding of [transnational] networks, it would be necessary to trace transnationalism that emanates from other nodes such as parachurch organizations, seminaries, organizations, or influential individuals” (Yang, 2002, p. 120). Because my dissertation also considers nonreligious organizations like civic organizations, I more accurately trace transnational flows, and explore the role that social resources plays in sustaining these respective networks. I addressed my research questions and theorized on this complex relationship through my ethnographic fieldwork (e.g., attending church services and civic events, paying close attention to the content of sermons and civic organizational meetings, and in-depth interviews). To that end, I investigated whether religion helps immigrants transnationally link to the homeland more intensely and deliberately than nonreligious civic organizations. If we explore the relationship between religion, culture, and transnational ties, we will advance understanding of such questions and clarify the contexts that encourage cultural preservation within the church and/or civic organizational settings in order to understand these immigrants’ influence on the assimilation process.

### **The Filipino-American Community of Hampton Roads**

Overall, Filipino-Americans constitute the second largest Asian-American group (19.7% or 3,416,840) after Chinese-Americans.<sup>11</sup> In respect to geography, about two-thirds of Filipinos reside in the West (66%), compared with 16% in the South, 9% in the Midwest, and 10% in the Northeast.<sup>12</sup> “Hampton Roads” refers to several small cities<sup>13</sup> surrounding Virginia Beach that

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<sup>11</sup> Source: Pew Research Center analysis based on Elizabeth M. Hoeffel et al., *The Asian Population: 2010*, U.S. Census Bureau, March 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Pew Research Center analysis of 2010 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) files, Pew Research Center, p 34.

<sup>13</sup> Largest City: Virginia Beach. Other surrounding cities within close proximity include: Norfolk, Chesapeake, Newport News, Hampton, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Poquoson, and Williamsburg.

share a common identity and history. Hampton Roads is a hub for the largest naval base in the world, namely Norfolk Naval Base in Norfolk, Virginia.

Since 1903, the U.S. Navy recruited Filipinos as mess attendants and stewards, and this recruitment process expanded after the Philippines' political independence in 1946. Post-Philippine independence and after World War II, thousands of Filipinos enlisted as military servicemen for the United States.<sup>14</sup> In the early Cold War era, the U.S. Navy continued to recruit and admitted up to 2,000 Filipinos annually, though tens of thousands applied.<sup>15</sup>

For a large part of the twentieth century, a majority of post-1965 Filipino-American immigrants arrived at the Hampton Roads area via U.S. military recruitment or by marriage to a military serviceman. Filipino women largely immigrated to Hampton Roads as wives of Filipino and American servicemen. A majority of these women were medical professionals, and the landmark Immigration Act of 1965 that eliminated national-origin quotas ensured a smoothly paved path toward U.S. citizenship.<sup>16</sup> Notably, since the 1970s, the United States has largely recruited foreign-trained nurses from the Philippines and at least 25,000 arrived between 1966 and 1985. Filipino nurses are commonly employed in Hampton Roads hospitals. For Filipino enlistees, the U.S. Navy offered a stable income and steady path toward U.S. citizenship for themselves and their families. The U.S. Navy is primarily responsible for this distinctive pattern of immigration and subsequently large demographic presence of Filipino-Americans.<sup>17</sup>

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, nearly 45,000 (documented) Filipinos reside in Hampton Roads. Community leaders report that between 15,000-25,000 people were not accounted for in the U.S. Census Bureau, so it is highly likely that there are even more Filipinos

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<sup>14</sup> "The Filipino American Community" in *The State of the Region*, Regional Studies Institute, Old Dominion University, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

than officially documented.<sup>18</sup> Almost one-fourth of Hampton Roads' foreign population comes from the Philippines, far more than every other national group in this area. Filipino-Americans comprise more than the five next largest national groups combined.<sup>19</sup> Considered a relatively 'young' immigrant group, Filipino-Americans have also attained citizenship most recently: In 2005, more than 20% of naturalized citizens and legal permanent U.S. citizens came from the Philippines.<sup>20</sup>

Filipino-Americans in the Hampton Roads region are largely socio-economically stable. The Filipino American Economic Characteristics in Hampton Roads study indicates that Filipinos in this region are more likely to have graduated from high school and onward: 32% of Filipino-Americans attained a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 24% of the rest of the regional population.<sup>21</sup> Economically, in this region in 2000, Filipinos' median household income was 21% higher (\$51,509) than the overall region's average (\$42,533).<sup>22</sup>

Filipino-Americans in the Hampton Roads region are politically distinctive. According to Filipino-American scholar and regional expert Dr. Araceli Suzara, Filipinos in this region are overwhelmingly politically conservative due to the strong U.S. Navy influence.<sup>23</sup> This unique pattern is compelling in light of the fact that nationally, Filipino-American voters have tended to politically align with the Democratic Party: 43% of Filipino-Americans are Democrats or Independents who lean to the Democrats while four in ten (40%) are Republicans or Independents who lean to the Republican Party.<sup>24</sup> Filipinos are more likely to say they are

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> United Kingdom, Germany, Korea, Vietnam, and Canada.

<sup>20</sup> The Filipino American Community" in *The State of the Region*, Regional Studies Institute, Old Dominion University, 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> 2012 Asian-American Survey. IDEO. Responses of "Don't know/Refused" not shown. Registered includes those who say they are "absolutely certain" they are registered. Not registered includes responses of "Probably registered,

Republican, compared to 32% of registered Asian-American voters who identify or lean toward the GOP and about half (52%) of whom comprise of Democrats or lean toward the Democratic party.<sup>25</sup>

On the political level, it is also important to note that Filipino U.S. Navy veterans are among the most politically active members in the Filipino-American community. Given that Filipino-Americans tend to be conservative and that Filipino U.S. Navy veterans tend to be the most highly politically active in this community, investigating this group will shed light on how their contexts of reception, or their relationship with the U.S. Navy, will influence their political interests and agenda.

Overall, given this historical-demographic trend, it is precisely for these reasons that I focused on Filipino-Americans on the East Coast. Exploring Filipino-Americans in this region is largely representative of a broader phenomenon that I want to describe, that is, how Filipino-Americans constitute a sense of empowered citizenship via the social institutions they navigate.

### ***Religion and Filipino Americans***

With regard to Filipino-Americans at-large, research is still deeply underdeveloped, though important studies in the disciplines of Sociology and American Studies have emerged over the course of the past ten years. A few studies have explored the role of religion in Filipino-Americans' lives. Religious communities preserve, renew, and transmit cultural capital through rituals, traditions, family values, work ethics, and community activities (Gonzalez, 2009). For some Filipinos, religion is a "resource" that has helped them cope with the experience of being an immigrant, such as the sense of disconnectedness or uprootedness (Burgonio-Watson, 1997; Nakonz & Shik, 2009). In an ethnography of a Filipino Catholic parish in Philadelphia, religion

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but chance has lapsed," "Not registered," "Don't know/Refused" and those who are not citizens. General public results from February 2012 survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, p 146.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

enabled Filipinos to cope with their disjunctured lives by interacting with fellow Filipinos and connecting with their country of origin (Angeles, 1998). This finding supports other immigration research that argues that religion strengthens transnational ties. Religion also provides a pathway to cope with larger worldwide Filipino oppressions, such as trafficking in Filipino women, overseas contract work (like domestic labor) that disproportionately employs and abuses Filipina women, and poverty (Burgonio-Watson, 1997; Parrenas, 2000). Religion, most of all, provides a community that is missing or often missed, that gives a sense of belonging and ethnic identity (Nakonz & Shik, 2009). For instance, a recent work on Filipino migrant workers in Hong Kong demonstrated the connection between religion and coping. Religion was often defined in terms of its coping benefits (stressing the positive psychological effects of religion) for Filipino migrant workers as they emotionally adjusted to harsh and isolating work conditions, away from family with few off-work hours (Nakonz & Shik, 2009). Interestingly, more than one-fifth of the Filipino participants converted from Catholicism to more charismatic groups while residing in Hong Kong (Nakonz & Shik, 2009). Nakonz and Shik's work reinforces the idea that contexts of reception and the structure of organization within religious communities impact the nature of religious participation among Filipinos and other immigrants.

Other research on Filipino-Americans has examined the intersection of religious life and civic participation for Filipino-Americans. Religious communities help Filipinos deal with acculturative stress, politically assimilate, and ultimately serve as safe spaces for negotiating and challenging ethnicity, identity, and nationalism (Gonzalez, 2009). As seen in other ethnic groups, Filipinos have transformed religious communities as they express and voice Filipino-style Catholic, Protestant, Charismatic, Masonic, independent, and even indigenous (*baybaylan*) spiritual practices (Gonzalez, 2009). For example, Filipinos have incorporated dialects and

Tagalog hymns into their religious communities (Gonzalez, 2009). Religious communities also provide a space for Filipinos to preserve and transmit well-recognized Filipino values of *bayanihan* (community self-help attitude), *bisita* (kin visits), *panata* (vow), *pagkamagalang* (respectfulness), *bahala na* (leave it to God), *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), and *pakikisima* (getting along with others) (Gonzalez et al., 2009; Root, 1997).

Religious communities encourage Filipinos to participate in organized group activities and have facilitated their integration into American civil society and have fostered positive contributions to politics and business (Gonzalez, 2009). For instance, the Global Church of Christ in the San Francisco Bay Area regularly engages with the local government and organizations such as the Red Cross (Gonzalez, 2009). Examples include free cholesterol screenings, neighborhood cleanings, tree plantings, and blood and food drives (Gonzalez, 2009). San Patricio Church is another successful Bay area organization. Its members network with local organizations such as the Social Justice Committee and other advocacy groups (Gonzalez, 2009).

A number of scholars have argued that Filipino Christian/Catholic traditions, beliefs, and values are analogous or undifferentiated (Nadal, 2009; Root, 1997). This finding is consistent with other scholars who have argued that the distinction between culture and religion is, at best, overstated. More research is needed to more clearly delineate the role that religion plays in preserving and transmitting culture; religion may offer a unique social structure and community that facilitates and preserves culture in ways that contrast with Filipinos who are engaged in civic organizations. Civic organizations may also act as an assimilative force into American society rather than preserving Filipino culture per se. Although both religious communities and civic organizations provide social structures for Filipinos to meet and interact, the extent and ways that culture is preserved and transmitted in religious communities vis-à-vis civic organizations may

differ, depending on the structure and social organization of the religious community and civic organization.

According to the 2012 Asian American Survey, 89% of Filipino-Americans are Christian, mostly Catholic (65%), somewhat Protestant (21%), and account for about one in five of all Asian-American Christians.<sup>26</sup> This statistic is in contrast to Asian-Americans as whole, for whom: 19% are Catholic, 22% are Protestant, and 1% belong to other Christian groups such as Mormons and Orthodox Christians.<sup>27</sup> In other words, Filipino-Americans are more than three times likely to say they are Catholic compared with Asian-Americans at-large. Filipino-Americans also affiliate as Protestant (21%) in near parity with all Asian-Americans (22%). Filipinos in the homeland are more likely to report being Catholic (81%) compared to Filipino-Americans (65%).<sup>28</sup> Filipino Catholics from the homeland are also more likely to rate religion as “very” important (88%) compared to Filipino-American Catholics (66%).<sup>29</sup> Because of the current dearth of research and lack of disaggregated data on Filipinos in the United States, or Filipino-Americans, data on levels of Filipino-American religious participation, such as frequency of church attendance or levels of religious involvement, remains undermeasured.

In light of current Filipino research, my interview guide targeted questions around the theme of Transnationalism and unraveled the relationship between religion, culture, and transnational ties. For instance, I asked how religious leaders discussed the homeland (e.g., Does your pastor discuss the Philippines in his/her sermons?) and shed light on whether religion provided a sense of community or connectedness. I also inquired the extent that religion served as a coping mechanism to the Philippine labor diaspora, and the role that religion played in

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<sup>26</sup> “Asian-Americans: A Mosaic of Faiths,” Pew Research Center, p 11.

<sup>27</sup> 2012 Asian-American Survey, in “Asian-Americans,” Pew Research Center, p 111.

<sup>28</sup> Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2002 Philippines, in “Asian-Americans,” Pew Research Center, p 111.

<sup>29</sup> Pew Global Attitudes Project Philippines 2002 and 2012 Asian-American Survey, in “Asian-Americans,” Pew Research Center, p 111.

dealing with the accompanying disjunctured family structures as Filipinos immigrate to the United States.

### **The Post-colonial Legacy**

No serious discussion of Filipino-Americans is possible without an understanding of the United States and Philippines' shared history. The United States involvement began in the Philippines in the Spanish-American War in 1898. This 'unique' relationship dates back to the end of the Spanish-American War (December 10, 1898), when the Spanish ceded the country to the U.S., ending its rule which began in 1565.<sup>30</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, early Filipino nationalists, such as the national hero Jose Rizal, pressed for reforms from Spain and greater self-rule. Rizal helped usher in the Philippine Revolution (1896-1898) against Spanish colonial rule. In the Battle of the Manila Bay (May 1, 1898), the United States engaged in its first battle against Spain. The United States drew support from Filipino nationalists such as Emilio Aguinaldo in the effort to overthrow Spanish colonial rule. This collaboration proved successful, though after Spanish colonial rule, the United States reneged on its promises to support Philippine independence. On June 12, 1898, Aguinaldo declared Philippine Independence, triggering the Philippine-American War in 1899. Between 1899 and 1902 the Filipino revolutionaries waged war on American forces. The United States prevailed in its first colonial war but only after 3 years and 4,200 casualties later.<sup>31</sup> In this war, Filipinos attempted to break free from the American colonizers in order to claim their own independence, but despite some victories in battle were ultimately unsuccessful.

Another aspect of Philippine history in the U.S. is the Philippines' experience of colonialism, which fostered a legacy of exclusion from political power. During this period,

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<sup>30</sup> The Oxford Companion to United States History, 2001, New York: Oxford University Press, p 628.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, in "The Philippine-American War, 1899-1902":  
<<http://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/War>>



Spanish colonial authority prevented Filipinos from participating in the governing of their country. Filipinos first forged a national identity during their struggle for independence against Spain and the United States (Steinberg, 1990). American colonial authority was less authoritarian than Spanish rule, and allowed some limited opportunities for local self-government. However, anti-imperialist scholars argue that the U.S. colonial rule over the Philippines was in fact a process of “benevolent assimilation” that “transformed the Philippines into a quasi-American society...that bore the imprint of U.S. values, institutions, and outlook (Espiritu, 1996; Constantino, 1974, 52). As a result, Filipino national identity “receded as a result of the virus of subservience and dependence which was inculcated in the people’s minds” (Constantino, 1974). Pomeroy describes the origin and effect of the American value system upon its colonial subjects:

“The ties forced between the United States and the Philippines during ninety years and more of colonial and post-colonial rule have also contributed to this influx [of immigration to the United States]. Besides creating strong military and business connections between the two countries, this colonial heritage has produced a pervasive cultural Americanization of the population, exhorting Filipinos to regard the U.S. culture, society, and political system and way of life as superior to their own” (1974, 171).

This literature on the Filipino colonial mentality partly corroborates my research findings. Though, rather than attributing colonial mentality as a consequence of the United States and Spain’s colonization of the Philippines, some interviewees have argued that colonial mentality is a legacy of the Catholic Church, which limits political engagement. Nonetheless, it is important to note that Spain brought Catholicism to the Philippines as part of their colonizing efforts as a means by which to further control Filipinos.

Frantz Fanon famously explored this phenomenon of the colonial mentality, drawing upon his own experiences as an African-French citizen and his reflections upon colonialism’s impact on his identity, to write about colonialism’s legacy in Africa and the African diaspora at large (1965). Edward Said also explored this liminal colonial experience through literature in his

work *Orientalism* (1979). E. San Juan Jr., a prolific cultural studies scholar, has also written about the colonial mentality in the Philippine context, which results, in his view, from the U.S. capitalistic domination of the Philippines (San Juan, 2000). In *The Colonizer and Colonized*, Albert Memmi also explored colonial mentality through the lens of decolonization from France in North Africa, largely drawing from his experience when his native Tunisia gained independence from France in 1956. He described the colonizer-colonized relationship between France and North Africa as "portraits of the two protagonists of the colonial drama and the relationship that binds them" (Memmi, 1957, 145). Memmi was particularly suspicious of the colonizer's efforts to bring religion to the colonized: The French [Memmi's colonizers] "never seriously promoted religious conversion of the colonized" because it would have advanced "the disappearance of the colonial relationships" (1957, 172-73). In the social sciences, researchers have only recently begun use the lens of the historian to explore colonial mentality. Sociologists E.J.R. David and Sumie Okazaki have developed a Colonial Mentality Scale (CMS) in order to investigate how colonial mentality, or internalized colonialism, shapes the experiences of Filipino-Americans. They have defined Filipino colonial mentality as a "perception of ethnic or cultural inferiority that is believed to be a specific consequence of centuries of colonization under Spain and the United States." Overall, their results indicate that "colonial mentality is negatively associated with the psychological well-being and mental health of modern day Filipino Americans."<sup>32</sup>

Other scholars have explored identities and community formation in respect to postcolonial immigrants' experiences. In *Home Bound*, Yen le Espiritu builds on San Juan's historical premise and argues that U.S. hegemonic powers had a devastating impact on Filipinos'

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<sup>32</sup> E.J.R. David and Okazaki, Sumi. *The Colonial Mentality Scale (CMS) for Filipino Americans: Scale Construction and Psychological Implications*. Journal of Counseling Psychology, Vol. 53, No. 2, 2006. pp 241-252.

lives (1997). In similar fashion to San Juan, Espiritu argues that Filipinos have had to “spatially reconfigure themselves” in the global diaspora and cope with accompanying fragmented identities. She focuses on the Filipino-American immigrant experience and argues along similar fashion to Gramsci that hegemony extends itself across national borders through differential inclusion, or the

“process whereby a group of people is deemed integral to the nation’s economy, culture, identity, and power—but integral only or precisely because of their designated subordinate standing. [Differential] inclusion is coupled with exploitation of their bodies, land, and resources, the denial of equal socioeconomic opportunities, and the categorization of them as subpersons of a different and inferior moral status” (1997).

Yen le Espiritu utilizes the term “differential inclusion” as opposed to “exclusion” because she illuminates the complexity of the ‘American dream’ myth, or false narratives of inclusiveness. Specifically, racialized groups like Filipino-Americans have helped sustain and build this nation; in this sense Filipinos are included in the nation-building process. To state that Filipino-Americans were excluded denotes that they have not made significant contributions to the nation.

Filipino-Americans simultaneously have been legally subordinated, economically exploited, and culturally degraded, and thus treated as second-class citizens in the U.S. Specifically, racist and anti-immigrant discourse, violent physical encounters, unfair labor practices, discriminatory housing policies, and restrictive naturalization and immigration laws (like the 1934 Tydings McDuffie Act), illustrate the ways that Filipinos have been culturally, politically, economically, and historically excluded in America and thus treated as “subpersons” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). President William Howard Taft infamously infantilized Filipinos as “little brown brothers” who would need American “supervision” in order to “develop anything resembling Anglo-Saxon political principles and skills” (Miller, 1984). Thus, through this

paternal, condescending, Eurocentric political discourse, Espiritu implicitly draws from Edward Said (who in turn drew from Michel Foucault's notion of discourse in *The Archaeology of Knowledge and Discipline and Punish*) and applies his concept of Orientalism, or a

Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. Orientalism as a discourse [is an] enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period (1997).

Thus, Yen le Espiritu illustrates in similar vein to Said how American hegemonic powers produced knowledge to justify their colonizer relationship toward Filipinos (Said, 1978).

In the intellectual spirit of San Juan, Foucault, Said, and subaltern scholars like Guha and Spivak, Espiritu suspiciously examines the Philippine-U.S. historical relationship and incorporates cultural theory to problematize representations of the past. Based on this historical relationship, Espiritu highlights the ambivalent and complex nature of hegemony, and the limits of such historical narratives. Thus, through her concept of differential inclusion, Espiritu more clearly delineates the “complex field of interaction”—how hegemony operates and impacts Filipinos' lives.

Espiritu explores another form of counterhegemonic praxis that serves as a “new pattern of adjustment” to restore Filipino fragmented identities: home making, or “the processes by which diverse subjects imagine and make themselves at home in various geographic locations” (1997). Through home making, she focuses on how Filipino immigrants perceive, interpret, and construct narratives of their new lives in their adopted country based on their own experiences, while also re-linking them back to the memory of their homeland. Thus a sense of “home” is not literal, but rather a symbolic process to create solidarity, unify, and ultimately resist the hegemonic and dehumanized political constructed experiences of race, class, gender, and

nationality. Like San Juan, Espiritu stresses the importance of exploring the historical Philippine-U.S. relationship and its power relations, tensions, and exclusions in any construction of home. Thus, Filipinos engage in home making processes in order to develop and sustain a sense of “home,” as an actual and imagined geography across transnational borders (Espiritu, 1997).

In regard to identities and community formation, Steffi San Buenaventura reaches back into Filipino history and explores the “Filipino encounter with Americans during the first half of the 1900s” (1998). She argues that analysis of the “continuity of the Filipino-American experience from the Philippine landscape to the U.S.” is needed to reveal “the underside narrative of the American experience in the context of its interconnectedness with the American ethnic others” (1998).

Other scholars have explored the remaking and construction of identity and community formation among Filipino-Americans on the West Coast. Rick Bonus conducted an ethnographic study of two Filipino communities in Los Angeles and San Diego, focusing on commercial establishments (e.g., community centers, “Oriental” stores, social halls, and Filipino community newspapers). Through this ethnographic study, Bonus showed that Filipino-Americans utilized these sites to “publically construct their ethnic identities in relation to the historical and contemporary conditions they face as members of U.S. society” (1998). Bonus argued that “particular practices of community and ethnic identity among Filipino Americans in southern California reflect two things: a need to respond and resist historical and institutional renderings of invisibility, exploitation, silencing, and racial constructing, and a desire to claim a ‘space’ within the category of ‘American’ on their own terms. In light of these experiences, Bonus argues that Filipino-Americans build communities in alternative ways defined by their critical

stances against racism, homogenization, complete assimilation, and exclusionary citizenship, appropriating elements from their former homeland and from their new settlements” (1998).

Sociologist Anthony Ocampo, for instance, explores second-generation Filipino-Americans and how historical colonialism and culture influences how they perceive panethnicity. He conducted 50 interviews in two middle-class neighborhoods in Los Angeles (Eagle Rock and Carson) of second-generation Filipino-Americans and analyzed two large-scale surveys (Immigrant and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles (IIMMLA) and Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS)), of the immigrant second generation. Through his research, Ocampo found that second-generation Filipino-Americans tend to identify more social parity with Latinos due to the shared cultural legacies of Spanish and U.S. colonialism, rather than as ‘Asian-American,’ per se. By considering the unique historical-colonial relationship that the Philippines has with the U.S., Ocampo advances “understanding [of] racialization in an increasingly multiethnic society” (2013).

Each of these scholars recognize the ways in which Filipinos have been “diferentially excluded” as American citizens and how these historical experiences have shaped and crafted their identities within the respective communities they navigate. Given the extent of theoretical literature arguing that the experience of colonization leaves an indelible mental mark on the colonized psyche,<sup>33</sup> my dissertation seeks to advance analysis in this area and qualitatively illuminate effects of this colonial mentality in a post-colonial immigrant context.

### **Conceptual Framework**

America’s religious diversity is here to stay, and the most interesting and important phase of our nation’s history lies ahead. The very principles on which America was founded will be tested for their strength and vision in the new religious America. And the opportunity to create a positive multireligious society out of the fabric of democracy, without the chauvinism and religious triumphalism that has marred human history, is now

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

ours. Some would argue that our religious minorities are numerically small, at least compared to the full 281 million Americans. All told, they may account for less than 10 percent of the population. But the news of this new century is that they are here, and in numbers significant enough to make an imprint on every city in America. Numbers do not matter. Our founders did not bequeath to us a nation based on majority rule in matters of religion, but a nation based on free exercise of religion for all people (Eck, 2002).

Scholars of immigration, religion, and race and ethnicity have overwhelmingly found that religion is a highly vibrant facet of immigrants' lives—both in the public and private spheres. The majority of this vein of research focuses on rich description and thus fails to theoretically account for the persistent role of religion in the modern world among newer waves of immigrants despite America's increasing religious and cultural diversity. More recently, scholars, such as comparative religion scholar Diana Eck, have explored the relationship between religious pluralism and the increasing religious and cultural diversity of our society. In other words, the impact of increasing religious pluralism and cultural diversity has been of tremendous interest to scholars in recent years, and its theoretical implications toward national identity, social solidarity, and the national public sphere have come to the fore of public policy and academic debate. Most relevant, in light of 9/11, a tremendous amount of attention has been given to Muslim and Middle Eastern immigrants and the extent to which they will be able to integrate into American society. For instance, on the one hand, in *The Clash of Civilizations*, Samuel Huntington questions the very possibility of Muslims integrating into Western society due to what he believes are irreconcilable cultural and religious differences (1996). Riva Kastoryano, on the other hand, has argued that public policies must shift and accommodate the already highly present and increasingly religio-ethnic diversity present in the western world, especially in respect to Muslims in countries like France, Germany, and Great Britain (2004).

In regard to religion and immigration among post-1965 immigrants, I conceptualize my dissertation under the religious pluralism model, the most widely accepted theoretical model

among American sociologists of religion who have acknowledged and attempted to describe the sustained (and in some cases, the increasing relevance of) religion in the modern world and more specifically, in immigrants' lives.

*Religious Pluralism: Jurgen Habermas*

While Habermas has traditionally taken a classical liberal approach in suggesting a very limited role for religion in the modern world, his recent re-engagement with questions of modernity and religion has catalyzed new currents in liberal thought on the place of religion in the modern public sphere. Most recently, Habermas explores whether the public sphere should conceptualize itself as a “narrow secularist notion of a pluralist society,” or if we should theorize a “different self-understanding of Modernity” (Habermas, 2006).

Religious communities also serve vital roles in society. In particular, Habermas, in similar fashion to other religion, immigration, and race and ethnicity scholars, suggests that religion plays a key role with respect to immigrants and thus should be considered an integral part of the public sphere. Habermas develops three main arguments. First, religious traditions deeply articulate and inform morality, especially in vulnerable aspects of communal life (Habermas, 2006). Second, religion strongly contributes to the creation of meaning and identity. Specifically, religious communities help socially integrate immigrants (Habermas, 2006). Third, immigration adds complexity to pluralism, because immigrants bring their different religions along with their ways of life (Habermas, 2006). European societies still face the uneasy transition to post-colonial immigrant societies, so the major challenge to socially integrate cultures also means an endeavor toward a more peaceful coexistence of different religious communities (Habermas, 2006). Habermas suggests that religion is intertwined with culture, and that if we want to build consensus, however “thin” it may be, then we should consider the role that religion



plays for religious citizens and immigrant groups whose meanings and identities stem from religion.

Although some scholars may argue that a great majority of post-1965 immigrants have assimilated, we cannot assume that coexistence necessarily means we have achieved a successful, pluralistic society:

On the one hand, a great deal of assimilation is evident among new immigrant and other non-Western groups, and this assimilation makes pluralism easier by creating commonalities that transcend ethnic and religious subcultures. The great majority have adapted to the norms of American business and professional life, medicine, transportation, and education. On the other hand, it is at the religious level that pluralism, as opposed to mere diversity, appears to be weakest (Wuthnow, 2005, p. 73).

In other words, “we can be diverse without being truly pluralistic” (Wuthnow, 2005, p. 286). In our democratic society, we should consider civic participation within the political public sphere as a *shared* practice, and that without this more reciprocal relationship, the majority is at-risk of repressing the losing minority, whether of a different faith or even secular will formation (Habermas, 2005). If we do not seriously consider the role of religion in the public sphere and attempt to describe this dynamic relationship, we will risk increasing fragmentation and a continued loss of social solidarity. Specifically, “we have the unparalleled opportunity to build, intentionally and actively, a culture of pluralism among the people of many cultures and faiths in America. [However], we may find ourselves fragmented and divided with too much pluribus and not enough unum.” (Eck, 2002, p. 77). Thus, “creating and sustaining this civic oneness is a challenge for any nation and a new challenge of ours. Indeed, we have seen nations flounder and fracture in the face of such challenges throughout history. The past few decades are no exception and give us little evidence that a multireligious society is easily maintained” (Eck, 2002).

In exploring the Hampton Roads community of Filipino immigrants, I attempt to shed light on the multi-faceted processes that they negotiate as they civically engage in the public

sphere vis-à-vis their religious communities. Since pluralism is a dynamic, ongoing process, researchers should explore the shifting role that religion plays among Filipino immigrants and shed light on how immigrants navigate, transmit, and assimilate these religious, cultural, and ethnic differences into modern society. Overall, I argue that scholars should theorize a “different self-understanding of Modernity,” especially in regard to post-1965 immigrants. Through exploring the role that religion plays among Filipino immigrants, I intend to advance the current literature and help theorize a different self-understanding of modernity, or multiple modernities.

### **Research Questions and a General Overview**

In this study, I explore the following central research question: How does religion shape Filipino immigrants' connection to the public sphere? This research question has several relevant dimensions:

- 1) How does religion shape immigrants' understanding of American citizenship?
- 2) How do immigrants constitute a sense of empowered citizenship via the civic and religious institutions they navigate?
- 3) Does religion act as a preserving force of traditional Filipino culture within American society?
- 4) To what extent does religion foster unique transnational ties to the homeland?

My major research goal is to examine the role that religion plays in mediating how, and the extent to which, this community of Filipino immigrants successfully connect to the public sphere. Contrary to much immigration and religion research (as discussed in the Literature Review), that tends to simplistically depict a smooth and connected path to the public sphere,<sup>34</sup> I anticipate that religion will produce complex and ambiguous effects for these immigrants.

Religion may encourage immigrants to civically engage (e.g., volunteer) within and outside their

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<sup>34</sup> There are, of course, exceptions: For example, sociologist Omar McRoberts' ethnographic book “Streets of Glory” illustrates tensions among inner-city and suburban African-Americans in their relationships with local Boston churches, for instance.

co-ethnic community, but may not necessarily connect them to and politically engage them with the larger public sphere. It is also likely that religion will hinder Filipino-Americans' ability to mobilize since Catholicism in particular tends to reproduce regional-specific fragmented identities rather than a pan-Filipino-American political identity.

Another issue is to what extent religion influences immigrants' understandings of American citizenship. On the one hand, religious Filipinos may tend to feel patriotic toward the United States because they will see their U.S. citizenship as a "blessing." On the other hand, those who are more critical toward religion may be more likely to connect to the public sphere since they will not see their citizenship as a "blessing," per se, but as part of their rights as an American citizen. Since the vast majority of Filipinos affiliate as Catholic, I also anticipate that culturally specific religious holidays and practices will play a role in immigrants' connection to the public sphere.

Additionally, I expect that my research will support previous immigration and religion research indicating that religion tends to encourage civic engagement. Religiously involved Filipinos who maneuver outside their religious communities will be more likely to volunteer for causes that improve the lives and well-being of their ethnic and racial community compared to civically-engaged Filipinos, because civically-engaged Filipinos will be less intensely connected to their cultural and ethnic communities and therefore less likely to volunteer for specifically Filipino-related issues. However, the nature of the civic organization may matter in respect to Filipinos' ability to preserve their culture. In other words, if civically engaged Filipinos are active in a culturally-focused community center such as the Filipino American Center of Virginia, then they will be at least as likely to preserve their culture as religious Filipinos since such centers function *precisely* to preserve and maintain culture.

Third, I am interested in understanding the extent to which the immigrants in my community constitute a sense of empowered ethnic identity and citizenship through transcending their regional associations. My initial research suggests that Filipino-Americans will not identify with this hyphenated identity, *per se*, but will tend to identify based on their original hometowns from which they emigrated in the Philippines. Specifically, if a Filipino is from Visaya, he or she will identify as Visayan; if a Filipino is from Ilocos, he or she will identify as Ilocano, and so forth. This regional identity will be in contrast to their “Filipino-American” assigned identity as recent immigrants to the United States. Therefore, I anticipate that inevitably tensions will emerge as Filipinos negotiate and craft their pan-Filipino-American identity. Nonetheless, I anticipate that the members of this Filipino-American community will empower themselves in order to address common goals, like lobbying for military veterans rights. Since the majority of Filipinos in this area are military servicemen or retired, this issue transcends regionalism. Moreover, Filipinos will share a collective concern to better their homeland and subsequently empower themselves to transcend their regional identities. I anticipate that civic institutions will tend to more powerfully politically mobilize Filipino-Americans than religious institutions since religious institutions tend to reinforce regional ties through the celebration of hometown-specific patron saints and therefore weaken the formation of a strong Filipino ethnic political identity.

Numerous immigration and religion studies have shown that religious immigrants deeply transform the organizational structure and content of their respective religious communities. Moreover, very little research has shown comparable outcomes among immigrants who are active in nonreligious civic organizations. How religious immigrants view their responsibility to participate in American society, however, may play a major mediating factor in whether they preserve their culture: Depending on the extent to which these respective religious communities

explicitly focus on preserving culture, accompanying challenges may emerge as Filipinos attempt to preserve their culture while reconciling their participation in American public and civic life (discussed later in my preliminary fieldwork). In other words, the added doctrinal layer that religion brings may actually create *more* complicated obstacles to preserving culture that nonreligious civic organizations may not face. For example, Filipinos may be unsure as to *what* specific aspects of and the extent that culture should be incorporated into religious services and activities. Moreover, additional conflict may emerge as Filipinos decide *how, where, or when* to incorporate Filipino culture in the organizational structure and content of the religious community. Should the pastor deliver the sermon in Tagalog? Since most first-generation Filipinos speak Tagalog, and since most second-generation Filipinos do not, these simple questions unravel a more highly complicated dynamic among their religio-ethnic co-peers. As found in other ethnic religious communities, I anticipate an ambivalent rather than clearly bifurcated effect, *per se*; Filipino religious communities may face different challenges to preserving their culture than those faced by secular civic organizations.

Religiously involved Filipinos may more strongly preserve and transmit their culture compared to civically engaged Filipinos because religion offers unique social resources compared to civic organizations. I therefore concur with Habermas that religion will help Filipinos create a sense of cultural and ethnic identity and meaning in their lives and anticipate that Filipino religious communities will more freely practice their unique ways of life that may not be possible in civic organizations. Religious communities provide a social structure that allows Filipinos to preserve and transmit their culture via language, native holidays, native food, etc., though the extent to which this occurs will depend on the religious doctrine, and racial and ethnic composition of the church. In other words, if the respective church advocates an explicitly

multi-cultural (e.g., Pan-Asian or multi-racial) atmosphere, as in the case studies of Korean American Evangelicals and Taiwanese Buddhists from the Dharma Light Temple, then Filipino culture might not be prioritized or as strongly incorporated into Filipinos' religious community. Moreover, if religious communities are primarily ethnically and racially Filipino, it may be more comfortable and convenient for Filipinos to converse in their native Tagalog.

Finally, I suggest that religion may foster unique transnational ties to the homeland because religious communities tend to embody religious doctrine and organize activities (such as mission work, disaster relief, etc.) that encourage spiritual outreach (especially in the Evangelical Christian tradition). Churches tend to possess the social structure and organization to connect with other transnational churches and parachurch organizations. Religion may explicitly foster these ties, as found (in the literature review above) among the Chinese Christian and Mexican Charismatic Catholic congregants of Nuestra Senora de las Americas and immigrants. This expected outcome, however, is not without a caveat: The social resources that migrants bring to religious communities and civic organizations will directly impact their ability to foster transnational ties. Since social resources are positively correlated to social networks, I suggest that immigrants who possess more social resources are more likely to foster transnational ties because they may have a broader range of social networks available to them.

Thus, in a similar vein to Habermas, through considering religiously involved and civically engaged Filipinos, my dissertation intends to contribute to the ongoing debate on Habermas, religion, and multiple modernities, or the multiple and complex ways that religion shapes how immigrants navigate modern society. Overall, this study will make several key contributions: First, I investigate an understudied population. Second, I compare and contrast religiously involved immigrants and civically engaged immigrants from one country of origin in

the same city, in this case, Virginia Beach, Virginia. Based on this analysis, I expect to clarify the extent to which religiously involved Filipinos preserve and transmit their culture compared to civically engaged Filipinos. Third, my research delineates the role that religion plays in both preserving culture *and* integrating and assimilating disparate populations in the United States. My research intends to clarify the extent to which social structure impacts culture. Through comparative analysis between religious communities and civic organizations, I intend to demonstrate whether religion tends to act as more of a preserving force for culture compared to civic organizations. Finally, through exploring a highly transnational, diasporic immigrant group, I will be in a strong position to contribute to migration studies and more clearly articulate the relationship between transnational practices and immigrant incorporation in the host society. This dissertation intends to advance the study of religion, immigration, and race and ethnicity to that end.

### **Research Methods**

When current analyses address immigrant populations, Asian Americans are largely lumped together, as if their experiences are unique across ethnicity. I address this literature gap by employing a humanistically-oriented sociological approach and immersing myself in qualitative fieldwork focused on a specific community, The Hampton Roads Filipino-Americans.

#### *Recruitment*

I began by compiling a list of Filipino religious and civic organizations in the Virginia Beach/Hampton roads area. In respect to Filipino religious communities, from May to August 2011, I investigated St. Gregory Catholic Church located in the Virginia Beach/Hampton Roads area. I also returned to Virginia Beach in the summer of 2012 in order to conduct follow-up interviews. I deliberately chose a Filipino Catholic Church since an overwhelming majority of Filipinos religiously affiliate as Catholic.

With regard to civic organizations, I explored the Filipino-American Community Action Group (Filipino-American CAG), the only political action group in the Virginia Beach/Hampton Roads community. I also attended events and recruited Filipinos from the Philippine Cultural Center of Virginia or PCCV (Virginia Beach, VA), founded and cultivated largely by first-generation Filipinos. It is one of the most prominent and largest cultural centers on the East coast. Since the PCCV is mostly composed of first-generation Filipino immigrants, investigating this specific civic organization allowed me to shed light on how they conceptualized their relationship to their larger ethnic community and connected to the broader public sphere. Moreover, I attended a wide range of civic and religious events throughout my fieldwork time in Virginia Beach. These events included (but not limited too) Filipino-American CAG meetings, Catholic novena and patron-saint holidays, regional association-specific celebrations, welcome event for former President Fidel Ramos at Red Ribbon, a local Filipino bakery (where I had an opportunity to interview him for 15 minutes), PCCV events like Veteran's Day, Easter novena at PCCV, 4<sup>th</sup> of July Filipino-American Friendship Day (where I was interviewed about my dissertation on ABS-CBN, a Filipino international television news network), PCCV Council for United Filipinos of Tidewater (CUFOT) meetings, beauty pageant competitions, etc. At all these events I conducted formal and informal interviews. In these interviews, I addressed my main research questions and explored related issues as they emerged.

I contacted the ministers and civic organization leaders of respective religious and civic organizations by phone, introduced myself and research, and inquired whether it would be possible to attend church services and civic events and recruit interviewees afterward. I anticipated that ministers and civic organization leaders would recommend religiously involved and civically engaged Filipinos to contact and interview. I employed a snowball approach and



recruited participants among their social networks. This approach allowed me to more deeply explore religiously involved and civically engaged Filipinos' social networks in order shed light on the social resources that religious communities may offer compared to nonreligious communities. Since I am solely interested in religiously involved and/or civically engaged Filipinos, I interviewed participants actively engaged in respective churches and civic organizations.

I recorded sixty interviews and took copious notes, and after careful analysis of the transcribed interviews, I identified relevant and key themes (e.g., religious lives and civic participation; the role of structure versus content in the assimilation of immigrants; religion, culture, and transnationalism) that consistently emerged across the interviews. I utilized the one interview guide (see Appendix III) and asked the same questions of my civic association subjects and religiously involved subjects. For example, in the section Personal Thoughts on Religious Involvement or Civic Engagement, I asked interviewees about their personal thoughts on being part of the religious community or civic organization: Why are you involved? What do you think about being in the group? Using the same interview guide allowed me to more accurately compare and contrast how Filipinos perceive, interpret, and construct their religious and nonreligious involvement. I constructed my interview guide based on the Sloan Family Working Center's project (affiliated with the National Opinion Research Center, NORC), "Youth and Social Development." I adapted my interview guide to tailor to the Filipino-American community, and to specifically inquire about civic and religious involvement.

#### *Intensive Personal Interviews*

In-depth interviews provided immigrants' stories and experiences on their background, religious experiences, and civic engagement:

“Another popular approach to religion among social scientists is to deal with it as if it were purely an expression of something else, such as class, race, gender, and region, or to explain its trends and patterns with reference to demography, organizations, leadership styles, and theories about rational choice. These reductionistic approaches give social scientists an excuse to avoid the *content* of religion” (Wuthnow, 2005, p. xiv).

In-depth interviews considered the “*content* of religion” and addressed current gaps in the literature in respect to the role that religion plays among religious Filipino immigrants’ vis-à-vis nonreligious Filipinos. Not only did my interviews explore how religious Filipinos perceive, interpret, and construct their religiosity, but, more importantly, they illuminated how immigrants experienced and navigated their lives outside of their religious contexts and communities (Cadge & Ecklund, 2007).

In my semi-structured interviews, I explored the following themes: 1) Personal Background (family structure), 2) History of Involvement (Perceptions of involvement and Scope of involvement: time), 3) A Typical Day at Church or Civic Organization (Activities & Community Service), 4) Culture and Church or Civic Organization (Aspects of Filipino culture), 5) Transnationalism, 6) Civic Engagement (Civic Engagement outside church; Activities; & Culture and civic engagement), and 7) Personal Thoughts on Religious Involvement or Civic Engagement (Why involved? & Personal significance). This interview guide is reproduced in Appendix III.

Through exploring their personal background, I learned whether subjects were born in the homeland or when they immigrated to the United States (e.g., Were you born in the United States? If no, when did you immigrate here?) These questions helped me understand the strength of their relationship to the homeland: Filipinos who were born in the Philippines and immigrated at a later age may have already developed strong transnational ties regardless of religion or civic engagement, due to their longer socialization in the Philippines compared to U.S.-born Filipinos.

The History of Involvement theme helped reveal how much time Filipinos devoted to religious and/or civic engagement activities, and helped explain the role that religion played among Filipino immigrants (About how often you are involved in the religious community or civic organization? Are you involved in other civic activities? If so, how much time does it take compared with your religious group involvement?). In A Typical Day at Church or Civic Organization, this theme hopefully yielded rich results in respect to the nature of Filipinos' church or civic participation. For instance, I learned how and in what ways churches and civic organizations incorporate aspects of their culture. (Do your religious services or civic organization incorporate aspects of your culture?). In addition, this theme investigated the extent to which religious and civic organizations foster transnational ties to the homeland (Does your church or civic organization talk about events outside the United States?). Culture and Church or Civic Organizations also explored the extent that religious communities preserve Filipino culture compared to civic organizations (Does your church or civic organization incorporate aspects of Filipino culture?). In respect to civic engagement, these questions explored the types of activities that Filipinos engaged in, both within and outside church structures, and addressed how religiously involved Filipinos civically engaged outside their religious communities compared to nonreligious Filipinos (Are you involved in activities outside church? What kinds of activities? Do you feel that your civic engagement preserves your culture?). The Transnationalism theme investigated the extent that religion fosters unique transnational ties to the homeland (e.g., Does your pastor discuss the Philippines in his/her sermons? Does your church send missionaries to the Philippines? Does your church (or civic organization) send tithes (or financial support) to the Philippines? Does your pastor (or civic organization) share ongoing news/current events in the Philippines?) This theme also clarified the extent that religiously involved Filipino immigrants

preserved and transmitted their culture compared to nonreligious Filipinos since stronger transnational ties positively correlate with preserving culture. In other words, Filipinos who preserve and foster strong transnational ties to the homeland are most likely to preserve their Filipino culture. Finally, in respect to Personal Thoughts on Religious Involvement, I hoped to unravel the personal significance and motivation attached to their religious and civic engagement. This theme broadly addressed the role that religion plays among Filipino immigrants (Why are you involved? What does being involved in the group mean to you?).

Intensive personal interviews were intended to learn more about Filipino religious involvement; interviewees expressed themselves more so in an interview setting, rather than sharing personal information on a survey. Thank you letters were distributed in the latter part of the study for their participation. As a formal courtesy, in case several churches also requested a copy of my dissertation, I will mail the completed dissertation along with thank you letters. Overall, this methodological approach extends beyond current research on immigration, religion, race and ethnicity, and seriously considers “how the religious organizations in which immigrants participated in interact with broader social institutions and how religion influenced individual immigrants’ interactions with such institutions” (Cadge & Ecklund, 2007).

### *Ethnography*

In respect to my ethnographic fieldwork, I attended church services that encompassed a large Filipino presence in their congregations. Through my informal interviews of Filipino-Americans in Virginia Beach, Filipinos have consistently recommended that I attend St. Gregory Catholic Church both of which are located in Virginia Beach. Therefore, I attended this church for my fieldwork. In respect to civic organizations, I participated in cultural and civic events hosted by Filipino- Community Action Group (Filipino-American CAG), the Philippine Cultural Center of Virginia, one of the largest and prominent Filipino cultural centers on the east coast,

and the Young Filipino Professionals (YFP), a relatively young organization. These civic organizations are both located in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Ethnographic fieldwork allowed me to engage in “lived religiosity,” or immerse myself in the aesthetic experience of religion, and thus provided a more richly descriptive account of vital aspects like their religious behavior, civic engagement, and volunteerism (McRoberts, 2004). Moreover, through my fieldwork of these respective religious and civic communities, I contextualized and more strongly theorized in ways that I might not be able to otherwise. Ethnography also provided an avenue by which to holistically understand how Filipino-Americans navigate within the structures of their religious communities, but more broadly the range of ways religion influenced immigrants’ lives outside these religious centers (Cadge & Ecklund, 2007). My continued interaction and participation within these respective religious communities allowed me to develop rapport and build trust among my interviewees; thus, they felt more comfortable to confide and share their experiences and beliefs with me.

#### *Issues of Selection Bias*

It is likely that Filipinos who were willing to be interviewed in the context of a religious study were also more likely to perceive of themselves as religious. Therefore, these studies may have had a self-selection bias. As a result, it is also possible that introverted, religiously involved Filipinos were underrepresented in this study. Because I employed a snowball approach and garnered interviews through networking in Filipino religious communities and Filipino civic organizations in Virginia Beach, Virginia, it is highly likely that religious leaders, and/or Filipinos who were leading their religious groups, most likely asked their friends to participate in the study. Thus, another limitation in this study is sample size. Based on the limited amount of interviews I conducted and surveys I collected, the generalizability of the results is constrained.

### *Preliminary Fieldwork*

I presented my initial dissertation idea in a lecture to the Philippine Study Group Student Association (PSGSA) at the University of Michigan. After my presentation, an audience member, Mr. Reverend Capuno<sup>35</sup>, expressed his interest (via e-mail) in my work. He recommended that I attend the Philippine-American Ecumenical Church, USA United Church of Christ (PAECUSA-UCC) in Detroit, Michigan. Reverend Capuno leads a highly multi-ethnic UCC congregation in Ypsilanti, Michigan, a small town outside Ann Arbor.

I phone interviewed Reverend Capuno to learn about his religious involvement and the extent that he incorporated Filipino culture into his sermons. He recommended culturally-specific Filipino religious practices that I should consider as I interview future religious Filipinos. Finally, I inquired about the extent to which religion helped him preserve Filipino culture versus assimilation into American society.

Reverend Capuno reported that his UCC congregation did not strongly incorporate aspects of Filipino culture because they explicitly advocate a multi-cultural ecumenical approach. This inclusive religious approach may inherently discourage culturally exclusive practices that demarcate Filipino-Americans from other ethnic/racial religious adherents within their respective congregation. After our phone interview, Reverend Capuno recommended I contact and put me in touch with Mr. Capulong, pastor of PAECUSA. Reverend Capulong, on the other hand, leads PAECUSA, a religious congregation comprised of almost all Filipinos in Ferndale, Michigan. I should note that both Filipino pastors lead churches of the same religious denomination: United Church of Christ (UCC).

Shortly thereafter, I conducted a phone interview with Reverend Capulong to learn more about the religious, racial/ethnic, and cultural makeup of his church. On Easter morning 2010, I

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<sup>35</sup> All names (except public officials) hereafter are changed to protect anonymity.

attended PAECUSA. After the service and during lunch (held in the church narthex), I interviewed Reverend Capulong and the retired Ms. Reverend Caoilli, an African-American congregant. After lunch, I conducted a group interview of six second-generation Filipino-American youth, which lasted almost two hours.

In sharp contrast to the highly multiethnic UCC congregation in Ypsilanti—the extent that PAECUSA incorporated Filipino culture and fostered transnational ties was deeply striking. For example, a Filipino flag rested on the left-hand side of the American flag on the pulpit. Tagalog advertisements encouraged Filipinos to donate to missionary work in the Philippines. A Tagalog flyer with a vibrantly violet ube, or a native yam dessert, encouraged Filipinos to register to vote and fill out their U.S. Census Bureau forms. At cursory glance, it appears that PAECUSA-UCC Filipinos highly incorporated aspects of Filipino culture in their Detroit congregation. Moreover, almost all PAECUSA-UCC interviewees reported that they actively participated in the Philippine American Community Center (PACC), a Filipino civic organization outside of their religious community. Most compellingly, a majority of PAECUSA interviewees stated that this congregation is their “family,” and religiously aligned themselves as UCC; however, they attended Catholic mass in the morning for “religious structure.” I should note that PAECUSA members regularly attend Sunday morning Catholic mass in their respective neighborhoods and then commute as long as one hour to attend PAECUSA services.

Based on my interviews and initial fieldwork, it appears that in agreement with previous research on religion and the organizational structure—racial makeup and religious values impact the extent that Filipino culture is incorporated into the religious community. It appears that the content of churches (or religious values and doctrine) helps shape the organizational structure of religious communities and plays a role in respect to the extent that Filipinos preserve, maintain,

and embed culture. This curious finding—that PAECUSA members attend both Catholic mass and PAECUSA services—speaks to the highly creative and innovative ways that immigrants adapt and adjust to their host country. It also brings to mind several questions: Why do PAECUSA Filipinos continue to attend Catholic mass when they already have a co-ethnic, religious community? PAECUSA Filipino interviewees reported that their religious community lacks structure; I infer that that they would not seek out a highly structured religious community like Catholic Church if this shortcoming was not an issue. Therefore, why do PAECUSA Filipinos not organize their religious community to serve both the needs of “family” and “structure?”

I hypothesize that PAECUSA Filipinos are currently unable to reconcile this issue because of the intergenerational chasm between first and second-generation Filipinos: First-generation PAECUSA Filipino immigrants are primarily in charge of the structural organization and content of sermons, activities, etc. While the first-generation PAECUSA Filipino immigrants are aging and diminishing in size, the younger second generation increases in size. The second generation has voiced concern that until very recently, the services and activities of this church almost solely matched the needs of first-generation (i.e., older) Filipinos. Since intergenerational needs shift over time, the second-generation’s needs and concerns are distinctly different than the first. Second-generation PAECUSA Filipinos have expressed that they would prefer the content of sermons (or content) to match the needs of contemporary Filipinos, and would like the authority to organize more social activities like trips to the zoo. More research is needed to help explain the structural barriers and tensions that may inhibit religious communities from ethnic and religious solidarity.



Moreover, the organizational structure of religious communities also helps determine whether immigrants transnationally link to the homeland. Although of the same religious denomination, it is clear that PAECUSA deliberately fostered links to the homeland. I imagine that this connection is facilitated by the fact that PAECUSA Filipinos construct a sense of “family” with their religious co-ethnics in ways not possible in a multiethnic, religiously matching church. Put short, I argue that when PAECUSA Filipinos state they are involved because of “family” they are implicitly stating that this religious community is their main ethnic community where, as Filipinos, they are able to preserve and transmit their culture.

Finally, in respect to civic engagement, in what kinds of activities are PAECUSA members (as well as other Filipinos) engaged at the Philippine American Community Center (PACC)? What are the specific links between PAECUSA and PACC? These types of questions will help shed light on how immigrants maneuver outside their religious community, and whether civic organizations like PACC offers distinctly different social resources compared to religious communities. This initial fieldwork partly serves as the impetus for the development and direction of my dissertation proposal. Based on this initial fieldwork, I hope to clarify how immigrants negotiate their religious community and secular organizations. I also intend to advance analysis on the multiple modernities in our increasingly religious and ethnically pluralistic landscape. Overall, my research intends to help scholars develop a “*different* self-understanding of Modernity” in respect to religious pluralism through the lens of the religious and nonreligious experiences of post-1965 immigrants (Habermas, 2006).

### **Chapter Summary**

In the following pages, I delve into the main findings of my dissertation. In the first chapter, Regionalism, I define and describe this social phenomenon within the American context.

In *Utang ng Loob* or Indebtedness, I show how Filipino-Americans perceive their American citizenship as a “blessing” and therefore feel indebted to the American nation-state. I also show how Filipino-Americans feel an obligation to fulfill this perceived ‘debt’ through their highly civically engaged activity. Finally, in Contested Attitudes of Political Participation, I illustrate how Filipino-American CAG, the only political organization in Virginia Beach/Hampton Roads, attempts to transcend regionalism and empower Filipino-Americans to connect to the political public sphere both in the United States and the Philippines.

## **CHAPTER I: REGIONALISM**

Over the course of the past twenty years, research has flourished in the area of religion and immigration. Within this field of study, scholars have explored a wide range of topics, such as transnationalism (Yang, 2002); immigrant women's roles in shaping religion (Menjivar, 2003); and pan-Asian solidarity in respect to religion (Brettell, 2005). Most recently, scholars have also explored Arab-American immigration and the role Islam has played post-9/11 and its impact upon immigrants entering into the political and civic public sphere (Bakalian & Bozorgmehr, 2009). Other social scientists have explored inter-racial encounters among Catholic immigrants (Orsi, 1992 & 2002), and the expanding and ever-changing parish boundaries of the Catholic church to accommodate new immigrants (McGreevy, 1996), and community studies that shows inter-ethnic boundaries among African-Americans in the inner-city for instance (McRoberts, 2005). Other scholars have reexamined the central role that religion has played in African-American history (Evans, 2008) and contemporary life. For instance, Maria Frederick has explored religion and gratitude among African-American women in the south. Scholars have even explored, to a smaller extent, the role of religion in Filipino-American lives (Gonzalez, 2009). Across these studies, while we have a rich description of immigrant groups and their religious communities, we still know very little about how immigrants navigate outside their religious communities.

Craig Calhoun has specifically noted that religion is a part of the very genealogy of reason itself. In other words, religion helps inform one's epistemological worldview, and therefore Calhoun questions post-Enlightenment assumptions that religion can even be separated from one's reasoning, or how individuals come to make decisions within the public sphere (Calhoun, 2011; Habermas, 2006). Building upon their research, what is still missing is a more

nuanced understanding of how multiple modernities (Eisenstadt 2002, Habermas, 2006) might apply to various immigrant groups. Jose Cassanova, for instance, has noted that “the best of postcolonial analysis has shown how every master reform narrative and every genealogical account of Western secular modernity needs to take into account the colonial and intercivilizational encounters” (Cassanova, 2011, 62). Indeed, my research intends to unravel and consider new understandings of citizenship that have historically been excluded by dominant narratives and master categories, thus enabling scholars to develop “conceptual architectures” (Sassen, 2008).

Through investigating regionalism, I unravel a more complex and nuanced relationship that immigrants, specifically Filipino-Americans, may have to the public sphere, and demonstrate how religion may play a complicating and mediating role in connecting Filipino immigrants to public activity. In an extension of previous research, I shed light on how inter-ethnic dimensions of religiosity may sometimes actually complicate rather than facilitate understandings of and entry to the public sphere. Ultimately, regionalism connects to the greater theme of this dissertation by filling the literature gap between the postcolonial experience, religion, and the public sphere. Regionalism also provides a useful lens by which to advance a more nuanced understanding of how the concept of multiple modernities might apply to understudied immigrant groups like Filipino-Americans. Finally, regionalism contributes to the ongoing, developing analysis on conceptualizing political community, membership, and citizenship.

### **Roadmap**

In this chapter, I explore Filipino-Americans’ understandings of regionalism and how regional differences and identities carried over from the home nation of the Philippines can

complicate their assimilation into life in America. I also investigate several relevant themes that help to explain the impact of regionalism. For instance, I examine the history of regionalism and its meaning in the context of the Philippine homeland. Through analyzing the history of regionalism in the homeland, I clarify the origins of regional identity in Filipino daily life. Next, I examine how Filipino-Americans carry over and reproduce that regionalism/regional identity in the United States, and how Catholicism reinforces regionalism. Afterward, I investigate how Filipino regionalism contributes to social fragmentation in the United States. Next, I explore the implications of regionalism in the public sphere: What are the implications of regionalism in respect to Filipino-Americans' entry into the public sphere? What is at stake? I explore these questions and suggest several conclusions. First, regional associations reinforce *both* ethnic insularity and social division within the community. Second, regionalism powerfully influences Filipino-Americans' relationship to the public sphere: namely, through creating social fragmentation and division within the Filipino-American community, which negatively impacts that community's ability to unite and politically mobilize. Third, I show how regional ties can negatively influence Filipino-Americans' use of their time and money: Specifically, Filipinos who heavily invest their time and energy in their regional associations and celebrate Catholic patron-saint holidays leave little else for political involvement. Fourth, I shed light on intergenerational differences in respect to regionalism, and its potential political consequences. While regionalism is a heated issue amongst many Filipino-Americans, these concerns impact first and second generation Filipino-Americans in distinctly different ways: First-generation Filipino-Americans most strongly retain their regional ties, while second generation Filipino-Americans are far less likely to see regional identities brought over from the Philippines as relevant to their lives. Second-generation Filipino-Americans tend to self-affiliate themselves as

Filipino-Americans, rather than with their parents' region or hometown. Finally, I illustrate how Filipino-Americans' colonial history influences post-1965 immigrants and their connections to the public sphere.

### **Definition of Regionalism**

What is regionalism? Scholars have recently explored this transnational process across various immigrant groups. A number of immigrant groups, spanning different generations and racial/ethnic identities, have been noted by scholars as creating distinct associational separations and identities within their immigrant national groups; scholars have referred to such groups as hometown associations (HTAs): "The omnipresence of these hometowns or locality-based associations is so remarkable that at first glance it would seem to embody a universal law and primordial attachment to birthplace..." (Moya, 2005, 847). Immigrant groups include *kenjinkai* from Japan who immigrated to California and the Chinese *hui kuan* in Seattle (Moya, 2005, 847-848). Moreover, scholars have documented as many as 500 existing new or hometown associational groups by mid-1998 among Mexican immigrants to the United States (Smith, R.C. 2003). Even Karl Marx joined a regional association, or *landmanschaft*, based on his hometown, Trier, during his time at the University of Bonn (Weisser, 1985, 14).

Current research on hometown associations primarily has focused on Latin and Caribbean immigrants (e.g., Dominican, Guatemalan, Salvadorian, Haitian, Dominican Republican, Honduran, Mexican, etc.) and their transnational relationship to local politics in their hometowns. This research has explored Cuban refugees in Florida (Moya, 2005); documented and undocumented Mexicans in New York and Los Angeles (Galvez, 2010; Zabin & Escala, 2002); and Salvadoreans in Los Angeles (Waldinger, Popkin, & Magana, 2007; Ramakrishnan & Viramontes, 2010). Most scholars in this area agree that immigrants aim to contribute to

development in both their original hometowns and new host countries by engaging in philanthropy. Namely, hometown associations serve a number of functions, such as connecting immigrants to their homeland, providing assistance to newer immigrants in securing jobs and housing in their host countries (Okamura, 1983), organizing community events like dances, concerts, games, picnics, etc. (Moya, 2005), providing safe spaces for undocumented immigrants to socially engage and develop civic skills (Ramakishnan & Viamontes, 2010), and fundraising for homeland community projects in their towns and regions of origin (Orozoco & Garcia-Zanillo, 2009). Filipino-Americans, for instance, have frequently mobilized to raise funds for their home communities during natural disasters and other emergencies.

Despite these developments, very little research has explored how the involvement of immigrants in such hometown associations in the United States influences immigrants' civic and political participation here in their host nation, though some research has explored conflict between migrants in the hostland and the stay-behinds in the homeland (Waldinger et al, 2007). I argue that religion's role in promoting regionalism and hometown associations has been overlooked in the scholarly research on immigration and politics. Unlike other scholars who have examined the functional (political and civic roles of) hometown associations, I posit (as I discuss later in this chapter) that immigrants--in this case, Filipino-Americans--politically and civically orient themselves based on their regional and hometown ties, and that religion plays a strong mediating role in enforcing these regional bonds. Therefore, accounting for religion in our analysis of regionalism will provide a more comprehensive understanding of immigrants and their relationship to both the American and home countries' public spheres. Since "local elections constitute an important opportunity to foretell the future of American state and national politics" (Kaufmann & Rodriguez, 2011), and since racial group interests have been seriously

understudied (Kaufmann & Rodriguez, 2011), I also argue that we need to elaborate and identify the conditions that foster or hinder civic and political participation among racially-defined groups. Doing so will also give us a clearer answer to a persistent question among scholars: Who benefits from transnationalism?

In order to understand the meaning of regionalism in the lives of Filipino-Americans, we need to start with the topic of regionalism in the Philippine homeland. The geographic composition of the Philippines fosters regional consciousness (Phelan, 1959). This regional consciousness weakens a sense of national identity: Historians Agoncillo and Guerrero state that the Filipino “does not think in terms of national boundaries but in regional oneness...so strong is this regionalistic feeling that the Filipino of one region looks down upon his country men of another region” (1970, 12-13). Comprised of over 7,107 islands and geographically diverse, ranging from mountains, islets, and valleys, the Philippines has at least 200 dialects and 8 major linguistic groups (Pido, 1986). These islands are primarily divided into three major regions: 1) Luzon, the largest and most northern island; 2) the Visayan islands, located south of Luzon; and 3) the island of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago, the southernmost and most highly-populated Muslim part of the Philippines.

Within these main groups, there are seventeen formal legal regions (like states or counties in the United States, as opposed to more informal areas like New England, or Appalachia, for example).<sup>36</sup> Spanish colonial rule (from 1565 to 1898) also reinforced regionalism. Utilizing the ‘divide and conquer’ tactic, Spaniards often mobilized groups of Filipinos from one region in order to dismantle uprisings and revolts in another (Espiritu, 1996).

Filipinos tend to strongly identify with their region or, analogously, their hometown. Given that the Philippines is an overwhelmingly Catholic country—over 81% of Filipinos self-

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<sup>36</sup> See appendix for map of the Philippines.



identify as Catholic—religion also plays a role in respect to regionalism. Specifically, Filipinos from each region have designated specific Catholic patron saints that watch over their towns. Filipinos honor their patron saints of their respective towns through historically rich and culturally vibrant celebrations called fiestas. Put short, regionalism refers to not only geography but also religion. For the purposes of this dissertation, I define regionalism as the process by which Filipino-Americans, who have immigrated to the United States from their respective provinces and various regions, reproduce their social ties and communities from the homeland: Once in America, Filipino-Americans tend to reproduce their regional ties and strongly affiliate with their respective ethnic peers from their respective hometowns. Therefore, rather than thinking in terms of “Filipino-American” as an unified, hyphenated identity, Filipinos bring their regional sense of identity from the Philippines to the United States and continue to differentiate and align themselves based on these differences. This finding is also evidenced among other previous immigrants. For instance, scholars have documented that, even during the peak emigration and transnational politics of Italy between 1880 and 1930, immigrants from Italy to the U.S. did not identify as a unified hyphenated identity, as Italian-Americans (Smith, 2003). Instead, they perceived themselves as “villagers” from their respective hometowns and distrusted transnational religious organizations in the U.S. like the Scalabrini, who were actually part of a minority of Italians back home seeking to improve Vatican-Italian state relations (Smith, R.C., 2003).

Since very little has been published on regionalism at-large, it is unclear whether Filipino immigrant communities outside the United States form similar regional associations. In 1983, Jonathan Okamura published an early major study of regionalism in the Filipino immigrant community in the United States. In this article, Okamura explored the first wave of Filipino

migrants who arrived and worked as sugar plantation laborers in Hawaii between 1906-1946. Considered as a source of cheap labor, over 125,000 Filipinos had arrived by 1946 (Sharma, 1984). Recruitment of sugar plantation workers was concentrated in Manila and surrounding areas like the Ilocano and Visayan region. Two-thirds of Filipinos who migrated to Hawaii between 1919-1928 were from the Ilocano region (Espiritu, 1996). Visayans comprised the second-largest immigrant group. The historical-regional recruitment patterns of these sugar plantations is reflected in the Filipino demography in Hawaii today: 70-90% of Filipinos in Hawaii are Ilocano (Okamura and Agbayani, 1991).

In regard to this chapter, I will focus on regionalism. As Okamura originally explained, “Filipino regional organizations is [a] common locale of origin, either a town or a province in the Philippines. Associations also extend membership to the spouses of members if they are not from the community in question, and few local Filipinos join hometown associations or participate actively” (Okamura, 1983, 31). According to Okamura, Filipino-American HTAs in Hawaii are no longer especially active because they are less needed to provide the “mutual aid functions” they were originally established for during the plantation period of labor recruitment (Okamura, 1983). Okamura also argued that Filipinos are “too busy” with family, work, and other social obligations (Okamura, 1983), partly accounting for what he believed was their relative political inactivity as a community in the U.S.

Despite his findings, I have found quite the contrary from my fieldwork and interviews in the Hampton Roads community. In fact, the Filipino-Americans I have observed in my study are highly active in their hometown associations, which in turn connect them to other civic and religious organizations like the Catholic Church. Why are Hampton Roads Filipino-Americans especially active, even when they may possess higher socioeconomic status and resources than

the plantation cohort in Hawaii? What both the Filipinos in Hawaii that Okamura observed and the Filipinos in Virginia Beach share in common is that they were among the first wave of immigrants when they arrived. It is too soon to tell at this point whether second-generation Filipino-Americans will sustain these regional associations (because their parents identify with regional ties), or if these HTAs will become dormant like the HTAs in Hawaii. It is interesting to note that while one may argue by Okamura's logic that since Filipino-Americans in Virginia Beach possess higher socioeconomic status and resources, then HTAs should serve even less vital roles in the Virginia Beach community. Nonetheless, in my research I have found quite the opposite in respect to the role that these HTAs play in orienting Hampton Roads' Filipino-Americans' social and civic lives. Even though the Hampton Roads Filipino-Americans are highly active both civically and religiously, they are not "too busy" to engage in HTAs. In fact, for many Filipino-Americans, the HTA is among the first organizations they join when arriving to the United States. As Mr. Carunungan, an eye doctor, stated, regionalism can be summarized as "It's almost like you're a New Englander, and a New Yorker, and a Southerner. Same thing."

Geographic regionalism in the Hampton Roads Filipino community is expressed through membership in regional associations. There is no definitive count of the number of regional associations in the Tidewater/Hampton Roads, but the State of the Region report estimates that as many as one hundred different regional associations are active in this area. Regional associations in this community serve a variety of functions, like preservation of specific ethnic heritages, intergenerational transmission of culture, and socialization with ethnic co-peers. To provide an example, Mr. Casama, an elderly retired navy veteran, Filipino-American CAG member, and one of the founders of the Philippine Cultural Center, the largest Filipino center on

the east coast, shares his involvement with his regional association, the Ilocano Association of Tidewater:

We want this Ilocano Association. The goal is that we want the young people to study as hard as they can in kindergarten, elementary, middle, high school, and college so they can later be productive in their life. That's our goal in the Association. And also to learn the dialect of the Tagalog, if possible. Right now my daughter is going to the school and also the secretary is my daughter. They were born here but they did not know how to speak too much Tagalog.

Part of the Ilocano Association of Tidewater's goal is for the younger generations to succeed, and for the first generation to nurture and foster their positive development in order to be "productive in their life." It is also clear that a second goal is to teach Tagalog, or native Filipino language, to the succeeding generations. What we see here is an interesting interplay between regional and national/ethnic identities: It appears that Mr. Casama prioritizes teaching Tagalog, the Filipino national dialect, via the Ilocano Association of Tidewater, rather than Ilocano, their regional dialect, to the younger generations. Overall, while Filipinos largely speak their regional dialect at social gatherings, they also feel responsible to teach Tagalog, or the national Philippine language, as a way to more easily communicate with other Filipinos across the region. Ms. Catapang, a devout Catholic who is highly active at St. Gregory Catholic Church, is also involved in her regional association, the Wari Wari Association of Tidewater:

Wari Wari Association of Tidewater is the central region of the Philippines on the Visayan Islands. When [there are] disasters in the Philippines [we send] clothes [and] clothing. You know to the kindness of other travel agencies they will first mail for free for the disaster victims and help the needy people there.

It appears that the Hampton Roads regional associations also serve to connect Filipino-Americans to their respective hometowns in the homeland through civic projects like sending clothes and other supplies during natural disasters. Like Ms. Catapang, Ms. Caylao, who is highly civically engaged at St. Gregory Catholic Church, is involved in the Bicol Association. It appears that the Bicol Association serves a similar function as the Wari Wari Association:

Bicol Association gives money to the main association. Each state has its own Bicol Association. The mother organization, we sent the money in there. And then the mother organization that helps the Philippines. Like the water pump, and then some organization sends money to people.

Like the Wari Wari Association, the Bicol Association “helps the Philippines” like sending money or support the development of water pumps. Like other regional associations, the Bicol Association primarily organizes and funds Filipinos who originate from the Bicol region, along with other Filipinos who are invited to join due to family association (e.g., a wife who is not from Bicol but is invited to join since her spouse is a member of that association). Mainly operating as a voluntary civic organization, most events are sponsored through annual membership fees and various fundraisers, such as beauty pageant contests, special holiday-themed dinners (Christmas, Easter), dances, etc. It is interesting to note that “each state has its own Bicol Association,” and that other regional associations in the Tidewater connect nationally in order to send strong financial and material support to the Philippines. Another cultural function that regional associations serve includes the preservation of musical traditions from the Philippines. Ms. Cuyugan, founder of the nonprofit organization One Heart for Hope and St. Gregory parishioner, shares her past leadership experience with the Pampango Youth Club:

I organized the Pampango Youth club in 2003. Because now the kids have grown, most of them are already in college, so we kind of, like, [think that] kids are laying low and I kind of release the reins to them to decide that, okay, if you want to do it, go ahead and do it, some things that they want to do. Most kids are third-year college already, so they can decide the direction on the organization. I didn't want it to be just like a social organization, you know, like all the adult organizations we have, so what I did was I researched for over people who have skills that can pass on to the kids, and a friend of mine knows how to play the banduria. It's an instrument in the Philippines, the banduria octavena . So what we did we have some of the parents if they wanted to join with PYC and then put a rondalia it's a band together, so that's how we started the Pampango Youth club Rondalia.

My friend would teach them the rondalia, then they played in different venues, different organizations, and then Uncle Ludwig would teach them how to dance; so with that we came up with twice a year presentation at San Lorenzo. So we started with a big stage presentation at Glenwood middle with Uncle Ludwig. It's like a 2-hour

presentation, it's Christmas Around the World. At the very beginning, we had the Rondalia band and we even have a choir, PYC choir, with (name not sure Nee Davilion). She taught kids how to sing, arranges some music for them, so at that time, 3 to 4 years, we were so active of singing, dancing, and playing rondalia and so I kept them very busy, very vibrant, so doing too they get to know the music of the Philippines. They get to know the instruments you can only find in the Philippines and how to even play them. My hope is that when they become adults that they will pass these skills on to the younger generations... I wanted for them to keep that in their mind and so that the music will not die. Our beautiful music will not die with us with older people, so that was my mission in putting that altogether.

Ms. Cuyugan researched her region's native music, or banduria, and attempted to preserve this regional-specific music through the Pampango Youth Club Rondalia in hopes to "pass these skills on to the younger generations." As in the case with Mr. Casama, Ms. Cuyugan is highly active in the Hampton Roads community, involved in multiple organizations. First-generation Filipino-Americans tend to stress being highly civically engaged and religiously involved for the benefit of the second-generation youth. This sentiment is made clear when Ms. Cuyugan shares: "My hope is that when they become adults that they will pass these skills on to the younger generations...I wanted for them to keep that in their mind and so that the music will not die with us with older people, so that was my mission in putting that altogether." First-generation Filipino-Americans are not attempting to preserve their cultural, regional, or ethnic identities for themselves per se, but for the benefit of the second-generation.

Mr. Dakila, a retired Navy veteran who is highly active at St. Gregory Catholic Church, describes his sense of regionalism:

It is really something to think about because of the regional differences; for instance, I came from the Visayan region. I can integrate with the northern parts the Ilocanos, the Kampanpangan, or the Bicol, or the Visayans. Some of the Visayans integrate easily into Mindanao. So with that as a statement like that, it will more or less succeed in our dealing with these regional differences, which is the cause of the problem when it comes to socialization.

Mr. Dakila highlights a positive function of regionalism when he notes that he can easily

“integrate with the northern parts of the Ilocanos.” But he notes that regional differences are also “the cause of the problem when it comes to socialization,” in this case, socialization into U.S. citizenship as a sense of Filipino-American identity and belonging. Filipinos consistently expressed this concern throughout my interviews and fieldwork. I will explore how regionalism influences socialization more closely later on in this chapter.

But regionalism includes a religious component: Regionalism also refers to the process whereby Filipino-Americans celebrate their Catholic patron-saint holidays from their respective hometowns in the United States. When asked if he preserves his Filipino culture through the church, Mr. Dayap, a retired navy veteran who is a parishioner at St. Gregory, replied:

The only time I practice Filipino culture is during the Kawit fiesta. Because we do some karakoal. Karakoal we do that after the mass. Not all Filipinos are doing that because some of us from the Philippines never heard of karakoal. The karakoal is celebrating the patron saints. The karakoal is a short walk to the church to the parish hall. To the church from the parish. After the walk, we start eating, and after that another karakoal inside the parish hall, we do some games for the children and adult, and that's it. Because we do the karakoal so the children can see how we celebrate it in the Philippines. So the children can learn from that too. To tell you the truth, I've never seen any children get involved Very few. Because they have their own culture here, especially the children born here. Sometimes they do dance in the karakoal. Inside the church sometimes we sing some Tagalog songs. Celebration of Perpetual Help, they usually have that in Paclaran, that's in the Philippines. I never heard that here. That's the first time I heard that here. Have you heard about parol? That's during Christmas. You know the parol they put on Christmas on windows as decorations? Stars. They are doing the same thing in the states, they are putting [up] lights.

Dayap implies that karakoal is native to his region because “not all Filipinos are doing that because some of us from the Philippines never heard of karakoal.” Dayap celebrates Kawit fiesta, a native Filipino celebration, in the United States. He notes that part of the function of this celebration is for the children, so that they “can see how we celebrate it in the Philippines. So that the children can learn from that too.” Dayap laments that the children “have their own culture here,” which implies the limited extent to which the second and subsequent generations are

practicing Filipino religio-cultural celebrations. As is the case with Mr. Casama and Ms. Cuyugun, Mr. Dayap appears to be less invested in these practices for his own sake but rather justifies his involvement on behalf of posterity.

Ms. Danao, a highly religious parishioner at St. Gregory Catholic Church and the curriculum coordinator at the Philippine Cultural Center, shares more about the relationship between regionalism and religion:

It's different patron saints in each parish or in each community. In the Philippines, we have our own parish saint, and that's when we celebrated the saint day, or like the fiesta of the Virgin Mary Manoag, we usually do that, we started in August and celebrate the fiesta in October. Everyone is invited to the fiesta. And the novenas are sponsored by different members.

In other words, in the Philippines, within each region, various parishes appoint respective patron saints for their communities. In order to honor their patron saints, Filipinos celebrate the saint day or fiestas.

### **Filipino-American Regionalism in the U.S. Is Reinforced by Catholicism**

Earlier in this chapter I discussed the roots of Filipino regionalism. Father Dimaano, a local Filipino-American parish priest, discusses regionalism in greater detail. I inquired as to whether the legacy of Spanish colonialism influences Filipino-Americans in the United States, especially in regards to Catholicism. He replied:

Well, greatly so, especially those who directly came from the Philippines and lived here in the United States because all of us are products of our own history, as I'm sure you would agree. The Philippines was under the Spaniards 333 years. Of course, they came to the Philippines to spread Christianity and at the same time, historically, I think they came to look for sources for their whole country. Spain liked natural resources you know and we are rich in natural resources, so I think we were colonized by the Spaniards using the cross and the sword. That's in our history books in the Philippines. Again, fiestas originally came from Spain. It is a Spanish activity and it's our way of celebrating life. Our way of celebrating the support that we get and the support that we give to each other, and it's our way of coping with difficulties and hardships.



Father Dimaano's comments illustrate how Filipino-Americans bring their colonial history to the United States and how this history plays out in the religious context. Specifically, Dimaano notes that fiestas stem from the colonizing power of Spain's Catholicism, and that it is a "Spanish activity and it's our way of celebrating life." He proceeds to explain that those fiestas, or these Catholic celebrations, are a way that Filipinos receive "support that we give to each other and it's our way of coping with difficulties and hardships."

Patron saint holidays and celebrations are not at all unique to Filipinos. Italians and Mexicans, for instance, have deeply imbedded histories of and relationships with respective Catholic patron saints. In fact, all countries with a Catholic history also share this phenomenon. Filipinos and other Catholic ethnic/immigrant groups continue to celebrate and honor their patron saints in the United States. In Atlanta, Georgia, for instance, Mexicans, Salvadorians, Bolivians, Hondurans, and other various Latino Americans have erected images to honor Our Lady of Guadalupe and Our Lady of Juan de Los Lagos from Mexico, Our Lady of Peace from El Salvador, Our Lady of Suyapa from Honduras, Our Lady of Copabana from Bolivia, etc. (Odem, 2004). In the Bronx, Catholic Haitians celebrate the annual festa of the Madonna of 115<sup>th</sup> Street, a holiday that was more visibly previously celebrated by Italians in the early part of the twentieth century (Orsi, 1992). For the purpose of this chapter, I will focus on the impact of Catholicism on regionalism in the Filipino-American context.

Filipino-Americans reproduce regionalism in the United States and this process is reinforced by Catholicism. Father Dimaano describes the origins of fiestas from Spain as a "way of celebrating life. Our way of celebrating the support that we get and the support that we give to each other and it's our way of coping with difficulties and hardships." Part of the colonial legacy of Spain was its long-lasting Catholic influence on the Philippines. Filipinos cope with and

celebrate the hardships of life through fiestas. Thus, regionalism, as influenced by Catholicism, may actually help with the adaptation process in the United States and may subsequently be important for civic engagement. Mr. Gumabay, who is highly active at St. Gregory and is a Filipino choir member, elaborates on the various fiestas within the community:

Santo Niño Cebu is more cultural the way they do. It's more cultural awareness, if there [is] such a thing. I want[ed] [it] to be the same thing, not cofounder, but we brought it in. I was one of the instrumental people to bring the image and the awareness to San Lorenzo. Now the Santo Niño Cebu, the celebration, is the third Sunday of January every year, and also incorporate in Cebu and it [is] celebrated at the same time in Cebu, it is synchronized with them. That's more like the offerings of all the, you know, the good harvest, maybe something like that. Yearly, we just do the dress, his outfit. We change his clothes every year and the decoration during his fiesta.

Our Lady of Namagcapan is the month of October, where this lady is from La Union in the Philippines and this image. This town [is] the reason why they call it Namagcapan, because the name of the place is feed people. There was a plague and a place did not receive the plague because they were feeding the poor people. They were blessed.

San Lorenzo Celebration is in September. San Lorenzo was a deacon in the Philippines way back in 1800s and he was marked here in Japan. So they celebrate in San Lorenzo his being a saint. Then the San Lorenzo that is being held here in Philippine Cultural Center, it's in October during his canonization in Rome.

Flores Di Mayo means flowers so it's a celebration of spring, and also the celebration of Virgin Mary. That is one of her feast month feast day. So each parish has their own way of celebrating the feast of Blessed mother, incorporating with flowers. But then the Flores Di Mayo in Samahan Tagalog, that is more corporate with the Filipinos where they have the segales. It's just like when they had the tradition in the Philippines where they have the mighty Alena and the Constantino. Every year and every country I go I buy his clothing. His color is gold and red and so I try to buy something from that country and I'll bring it here and we make it and we decorated and we dressed him up. The reason why he's so close to me is because when I started this, and I ask because we used to do this house to house and it was a novena every day, we go house to house to do the novena for nine days. His celebration, his fiesta, and asked him one day and I said, how can I know what you're doing if I don't even know where you are, things like that, in prayer?

Santo Niño Cebu, Our Lady of Namagcapan, San Lorenzo Celebration, and Flores de Mayo are but a few of the fiestas that Filipino-Americans celebrate in Hampton Roads. Our Lady of Namagcapan fiesta celebrates not only resilience through the hardships of life, but the accompanying miracles that Filipinos experienced to endure these hardships, such as surviving

plagues, etc. These fiestas also tend to designate special patron saints that also do God's will and receive the Lord's favor for charitable and kind acts for humankind at-large. While some fiestas tend to be more nationalistic in nature, like the Flores de Mayo or the Flowers of May, it appears that there are also distinctively region-specific ways of celebrating this holiday. Moreover, it appears that certain ethnicities tend to especially value certain patron saint holidays more than others, or these holidays may take on a special significance, as Gumabay notes when he shares that "each parish has their own way of celebrating the feast of Blessed mother incorporating with flowers." It is clear that fiestas and novenas are a highly vibrant facet of their lives. Filipino-Americans clearly transnationally connect to the homeland since "Santo Niño Cebu, the celebration, is the third Sunday of January every year, and also incorporated in Cebu and it [is] celebrated at the same time in Cebu, it is synchronized with them." It is interesting to note that regionalism, in this case, need not be divisive, though it is a consistent issue that emerges across interviews. For instance, in the above quote, Mr. Gumabay recognizes and respects the diversity of regional holidays celebrated in the Hampton Roads community.

Ms. Halina, who is highly active at St. Gregory Catholic Church, adds more detail about fiestas and novenas:

Simbang Gabi is every year. Simbang Gabi with different churches. We do it with other churches; in some, a lot, we we're sponsoring the last day. Nine days' novena. Nine different churches and we sponsor the last day. We're working together, that's the Filipino community in turn, churches. Let's say the first night is the Holy Spirit. Then we go to Holy Spirit Catholic Church. We don't do a lot of fiesta because we're under the umbrella of St. Gregory's Catholic Church. [It is also] because the members of the ministry are members of different provinces. The members are from different provinces. Servers, fiestas, belonged, all them belonging to the same province and the celebrating this patron saint of the province. They belong to different from their hometown, especially the Cavite. The Cavite, they have a celebration tomorrow at St. Gregory, 12 noon, Thursday. The Filipino-American ministry will sing also. Lady of Manawag-Pangasinan. The Mayflower festival is the only Tagalog mass we do in St. Gregory each year. Even the songs are in Tagalog. This is our second year only.

Though Halina states that Filipino-Americans do not “do a lot of fiestas because we are under the umbrella of St. Gregory’s Catholic Church,” she proceeds then to list several fiestas and novenas at this church and at local and surrounding parishes. It is interesting to note that she specifies that different members of the ministries are “from different provinces” and that they belong to the “same province” and celebrate “this patron saint of the province.” Halina is clearly describing the effects of regionalism, and Simbang Gabi illustrates this phenomena. It is also compelling to note that while Filipino-Americans host regional-specific religious holidays, such as the fiestas and novenas, to some extent there appears to be collaboration among Filipinos across regional groups and parishes to celebrate festivals, as in the case of Simbang Gabi, as expressed by Halina: “We’re working together, that’s the Filipino community in turn, churches.” The Filipino community works together across nine parishes to host this nine-day Christmas event.

The Catholic Church is ambivalent regarding the extent to which Filipino-Americans reappropriate their fiestas and novenas into their religious practices because the Church would like to also serve other demographic groups and not favor one immigrant group’s culturally-specific celebrations over another’s. Moreover, the Catholic Church in this area would also like its Filipino parishioners to smoothly integrate into their specific neighborhood parishes at-large. Specifically, by the parish expressing reservations and not allowing Filipino-Americans to utilize its official parish spaces to celebrate novenas and fiestas, it acts to limit these cultural-religious expressions, as hinted by Halina, and as Ms. Dakila directly states. I asked Ms. Dakila whether fiestas are Filipino-specific, *per se*, and she explains that they stem from the

“...Catholic church. But in the Philippines, we add all the cultural trimmings. It’s not like the American parishes because the Philippines, being under the Spaniards for 300 years or so, our culture is very much the Catholic church in Spain. So when we have these fiestas, before we had San Lorenzo, we had to use the different parishes and sometimes

it's kind of difficult because we had American audience, not only the Filipinos. So it's a little bit where we kind of feel a little awkward doing what the cultural celebration calls for, so when we had San Lorenzo we got the sort of freedom to celebrate the culture."

Filipino-Americans like Ms. Dakila feel "a little awkward" to fully culturally express their religious novenas and fiestas because they realize that American Catholic parishes do not celebrate fiestas and novenas in the same way as Filipino-Americans. The issue of space is brought up here. Logistically, "different parishes" are utilized to host these celebrations, and this comment suggests that these fiestas and novenas are not necessarily seen as part of the organizational structure of the Richmond diocese, per se. Though the Richmond diocese originally endorsed the creation of the San Lorenzo Spiritual Center, a specific Filipino center where Filipino Catholics could celebrate their respective fiestas and novenas, this building has become a major source of contention between the Richmond diocese and Filipino-American community.

San Lorenzo Spiritual Center is under the leadership of St. Luke's Catholic Church. Father Salvador Anonuevo, who is the Catholic priest at St. Luke's Catholic Church, serves as the administrator for and is in charge of San Lorenzo. There is also a Leadership Board that helps supervise the activities at San Lorenzo. Pam Harris of the Cultural Diversity Initiative team (Office for Black Catholics/Asian Ministry), an umbrella organization under the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, explains that, in respect to San Lorenzo, it is "not a parish" and is intended to serve as a "center for different [Filipino] cultural festivities and any type of cultural celebration, gathering, or reception." According to the Cultural Diversity Initiative, San Lorenzo was "established to meet the spiritual needs of people from the different islands of the Philippines."<sup>37</sup> Harris states that Filipino-Americans from different parishes celebrate cultural-

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<sup>37</sup> <<http://www2.richmonddiocese.org/obc/diversity.htm>>

specific religious festivities at San Lorenzo. Both the administrator (Father Salvador Anonuevo) and Leadership Board oversee “anything that goes on in San Lorenzo,” says Harris.

Filipino-Americans have reproduced regional ties in the United States, and these regional ties are reinforced specifically by Catholicism, as opposed to religion in and of itself. The very structure and nature of Filipino Catholicism reinforce regionalism in ways that do not occur in other Christian denominations or other religions because it is the Catholic Church that has honored and dignified various patron saints throughout history, like the Virgin Mary, for instance. Other Christian denominations, like the Baptists, do not recognize or venerate patron saints because they are “people of the bible” and do not believe that such intermediaries will bring them ‘closer’ to God. In contrast, Protestant denominations tend to believe in a more direct connection between the individual believer and God, as opposed to Catholic Church’s more strictly hierarchical structure with its various intermediary positions (saints, priests, etc.). Therefore, regionalism tends to be much weaker among Protestant Filipinos than among Catholic Filipinos. In my interview with one Filipino Protestant pastor, he noted that Protestant Filipinos, specifically Evangelical Filipinos, are less likely to preserve their Filipino culture:

The Evangelicals are not celebrating. They will shy away. In a way, they are departing from the old culture, the old tradition. In any culture, even the Filipino culture, little by little over time changes tradition and culture. Newer things are coming up. They will gradually lose interest in the old culture and tradition. More and more, in fact. It will be more sudden change when the Catholic will open the Bible and be exposed to the Bible and through the worship of God. More united and their ties with Filipinos are stronger.

Pastor Habalo articulates two striking points: First, that because of modernity processes, “old traditions” will fade away with time because “newer things coming up.” Modernity, with its attendant processes of assimilation, inevitably will change old traditions and reconfigure Filipino culture. Second, he argues that it is through God that Filipino Catholics will experience a “sudden change.” Namely, Filipino Catholics will see the “truth” in the Bible, abandon their

Catholicism, convert to Evangelical Protestantism, and subsequently disregard the “old culture, old tradition” (e.g., patron saint holidays) that was previously tied to Catholicism. Habalo implies that being “exposed to the Bible” and “through the worship of God,” Filipinos will unite more “strongly” together due to the weakened regional ties that Catholicism had originally preserved. As a Protestant Minister, Pastor Habalo believes in and argues for a direct tie to God. We can infer from his comments that Habalo believes that regional-ethnic patron saint connections are not necessary in order to have a direct relationship with God—even more, these ties are an impediment to Catholics achieving a “true” tie to God and an authentic religious life. We can also infer from his comments that he believes that these historical-culturally based patron saint holidays are part of the “old culture” and “old tradition,” something that modern Filipinos in the U.S. should leave behind.

Habalo implies that Modernity and Filipino-ness is more compatible with Protestantism than with Catholicism. Since Filipino Catholics venerate patron saints through their region-specific fiestas or holidays, Habalo argues that Filipinos who leave the Catholic tradition will more quickly modernize “because there's a new life that they found in God sweeter than the old tradition. After this Catholic tradition, that's okay, but there is no value, it's not doing us any good, the newer culture triumphed.” Habalo argues that Western modernity is incompatible with old Filipino traditions like regional-patron saint holidays, and that a ‘true’ relationship with God actually sheds those traditions. Habalo further elaborated that Filipinos who leave the Catholic tradition and convert to Evangelical Protestantism will

...see the difference in the atmosphere. When they find out the true friendship and true pakikisama... They see the difference... With the believers...the lifestyle is different. You can see that's why there is a change and that's Biblical, that when people find the Lord, there is a change that people can see the difference.

Habalo clearly distinguishes between Filipino Catholics and Filipino Protestants.

Filipino Protestants possess a “different” lifestyle compared to Filipino Catholics, and in fact these perceptible differences between Catholics and Protestants are “Biblical,” because Protestants will “find the Lord.” Habalo appears to argue that Filipino Catholic-ness impedes a ‘true’ relationship with God and *pakikisama*, or getting along with others. We can infer that leaving the Catholic Church and embracing the Protestant denomination, according to Habalo, leads to a stronger relationship to God in tandem with more interethnic harmony among Filipinos. Habalo expresses this interethnic harmony as *pakikisama*, or getting along with others.

### **How Regionalism Contributes to Social Fragmentation**

Another point regarding the impact of regionalism on Filipino identity in the United States is that regionalism contributes to social fragmentation. As we have discussed, Filipinos tend to self-identify based on their region from which they migrated from in the Philippines. In brief, according to Mr. Huyla, a retired Navy veteran and highly active Filipino-American CAG member, “regionalism matters.”

Catholicism, and particularly the regionally-based patron-saint holidays, reinforces regional ties among Filipinos. Father Dimaano clarifies this point:

I see it for myself that sometimes people miss the whole point of celebrating the fiesta. They get so engrossed in this organization. Did it, you know, that organization did not do it, so eventually they did it, not the way they want to do it, the way we want to all do it, and so on and so forth. So look at the result is, one group is celebrating this fiesta and another group is celebrating the same fiesta. I've seen that for myself.

Yeah, like for example the fiesta of Santo Nino. In others, one group of Filipino Americans, Filipino immigrants celebrating the fiesta here and the other groups said no, we'll celebrate our own fiesta of the Santo Nino. Anyhow, that would have been okay if that was not caused by something within the Filipino American leadership. Because Filipinos, because of the influence of religion, Filipinos are very good followers. That's what I'm saying, you know, from the Filipino sense of patience, the Filipino sense of sacrifice, Filipino sense of respect. I'm not saying they are wrong or they are good, but sometimes they are being abused or misused and even in the name of religion sometimes. They're mainly used or misused or abused and misused in the name of religion or using religion.



In the above quote, Father Dimaano illustrates how regionalism can contribute to social fragmentation. This regionalism is also exacerbated by some of the leaders in the Filipino community who insist upon “celebrat[ing] our own fiesta of the Santo Nino.” This separatist behavior distresses Father Dimaano, because “people miss the whole point of celebrating the fiesta” since they are engrossed in regional differences, even on the level of celebrating religious fiestas.

Moreover, as opposed to the designated hyphenated identity of Filipino-American that is assigned to the racialized immigrants upon their arrival in the United States, Filipino-Americans tend to self-identify as being from their respective region; they are from Ilocos, or from Tarlac, or from Mindanao. Mr. Dimasuay, current president of Filipino-American CAG, shares his issue with regionalism:

All the organizations that I see...look at the Hispanic Americans. Japanese Americans. Chinese Americans. Filipino Americans. Why are we always putting where we came from first? ...Instead of using it as American-Filipino. And now you are forwarding yourself first—American first, and then Filipino second. And that’s the reason why we cannot...get into the more general mainstream...And there is always infighting because of the cultural differences and also the Philippines. [There are] so many cultures and so many ethnicities because of the various islands, because of their language, and even the big islands that have different tribes and everything. They are protective of their own little village.

Dimasuay disapproves of regionalism, because the resulting social fragmentation hinders Filipino-Americans from “forward[ing] yourself first” and assimilating into the “general mainstream.” He points out that other ethnic minorities appear to have a more unified identity, such as Hispanic Americans, Japanese Americans, and Chinese Americans, rather than a regionalistic one such as Filipino-Americans do, since they are “putting where we came from first,” or in other words, privileging their regional identities over their hyphenated national ethnic identity. Moreover, when Dimasuay refers to “many ethnicities because of the various islands,

and language” he is describing regionalism and how it leads Filipinos to feel “protective of their own village,” rather than developing a unified, hyphenated identity. This sense of protectiveness leads to “infighting,” which in turn prevents Filipino-Americans from integrating into the “general mainstream.”

Similarly, Mr. Casama, a retired U.S. Navy veteran, co-founder of the Philippine Cultural Center, and highly active member of Filipino-American CAG, laments,

We want them all together, but they do not want to mix with us now...they are so segregated. We are most racist people in the world, I believe, because of our ethnicity. They are Ilocano, Visayan...They are regional race, that's why...they want to go on themselves.

Casama is clearly highly distressed because of the persistence of Filipino regional ties in the United States, even going so far as saying that Filipino-Americans are the “most racist people in the world.” He believes that Filipino-Americans largely self-segregate themselves into regional enclaves and identities because they “want to go on themselves.” Their ethnic affiliations/identities thus are based on geography and reinforced by Catholic-designated patron saint holidays. One interviewee describes Filipino identity as the following:

It is more ethnic that I’m Tagalog, I’m Pampango, but there’s a religious tone on that. Like the Bicol, the way they celebrate the Pina Francia observance here, to some group, they don’t subscribe to that. Just like they don’t subscribe to incorporate that Ati-Atan observance of their patrons.

Therefore, even though Virginia Beach is among the most densely populated Filipino areas in the country, many Filipino-Americans lament that there is major social fragmentation within the community due to the persistence of these strong regional affiliations. Religion socially fragments Filipinos, because depending on the region they originate from, Filipinos may celebrate specific patron-saint holidays that are only honored by one ethnic group from a respective region, while another regional group may not “subscribe to” or recognize their

respective patron saint at all. Therefore, ethnic identity in the Filipino community takes on a “religious tone.” As noted earlier, Protestant Evangelical minister Habalo believes that only shedding the old Catholic traditions will result in “true pakikisama,” or ‘getting along with others,’ and that Protestant Filipinos will become “more united and their ties with Filipinos are stronger.”

The Catholic Church does not intend to foster social fragmentation within the Filipino-American community. In fact, the Catholic Church has been known in the area to encourage Filipino expressions of Catholic faith, specifically through the regional patron saint fiestas:

The diocese is very much supportive of it. But then again, with the caution they lead into the deepening of one's faith, and deepening one's conviction and commitment of a Catholic and a Christian is, you know, to love one another, give service to the community and, you know what I'm saying? Building community, to build community, not to build walls but to build bridges.

While Filipino Catholic Priest Father Dimaano noted that the diocese intended for these ethnic-specific Catholic celebrations to “build community” and “build bridges,” unwittingly, these practices have had ambiguous effects: On one hand, Filipinos are preserving their traditional culture and sustaining their deep ties to the homeland and specifically to their regions; on the other hand, due to the highly ethnically diverse nature of the Filipino-American community, these Catholic practices also reinforce social divisions and ethnic boundaries within the community. When I asked Father Dimaano whether fiestas reinforce division in the community, he elaborated on the dissonance between the Catholic Church’s intention to “build community” and “build bridges” and the idea that fiestas paradoxically reinforce division within the Filipino-American community:

Well, it all depends on the leaders of these organizations. Originally, that was not the intention of celebrating fiestas, so I guess it all depends on the leaders of these Filipino-American organizations. It should really, you know, unite Filipino Americans. That is supposed to be the foundation. The religion should make Filipino Americans live their

faith. I think now what I'm seeing is, I think, we are slowly going into that direction. In this way, it appears that, while the Catholic Church may intend to “unite Filipino-Americans” and “live their faith,” unwittingly, these ethnic-regional practices, to some extent, “build walls,” depending on the “leaders of these organizations.” Nonetheless, Father Dimaano is still optimistic that the Filipino-American community is “slowly going into that direction;” in this case, uniting Filipino-Americans.

In fact, Father Dimaano proceeds to state that he hopes that the Catholic Church contributes to Filipino-Americans’ sense of empowered citizenship in the U.S. Specifically, when asked whether he felt that the Catholic Church plays a role in Filipino-Americans’ empowered citizenship, he states:

Yes, and that's what it's supposed to be. That we believe that we are celebrating these fiestas like, for example, feasts of our Lord, and the feast of blessed mother, any feast of the saint. They have been victorious. They have struggled. It's a celebration of victory. I would not call it an activist approach; it's that [it is] what it is! I don't want to label [a] liberal and a conservative an activist, or pacifist, or whatever, passive or active. I would say this is what it's supposed to be. This is what the Catholic faith is all about, that my faith should lead me into action as a Catholic, as a Filipino. My faith should lead me to get involved and make this world a better place for all of us, not only for one group, not only for one class, not only for one particular group of people or class of people, but for everybody. We are serving the same people, we are serving one and the same person. We're not serving the soul of Pedro. The soul of one. We are serving Juan and Pedro. So it's the total person. Because we believe that we were created in God's image. So we have to treat each and every person in God's image with respect. And if their fundamental rights are being disrespected or trampled upon, then it is our responsibility and commitment to speak out and say, hey, respect their God-given right.

Clearly, Father Dimaano perceives that Catholicism should play a more active role in Filipino-Americans’ lives outside their respective religious communities. He argues that one’s “faith should lead me into action as a Catholic, as a Filipino.” This succinct comment illustrates his desire for Filipino-Americans to become more “involved and make this world a better place

for all of us, not only for one group, not only for one class, not only for one particular group or class of people, but for everybody.”

Social fragmentation due to regionalism is an overwhelming concern and issue for many Filipino-Americans. Throughout my fieldwork, Filipino-Americans voiced distress regarding the resulting social fragmentation of their community due to the effects of regionalism. For instance, Dimasuay shares this major concern:

There is always infighting, because of the cultural differences and also the Philippines, because of so many cultures and so many ethnicities, because of the various islands, because of their language, and even the big islands that have different tribes and everything. They are protective of their own little village. Yeah, because it's really hard. Our community is so complex, because it's a combination of various ethnicities in our community. We have a background of Hispanics with their own problems and we carry them. We have a background of Chinese that carry their own problems. We carry the problems that the Indonesians brought us, and then we apply all of them and mix them with our own natural Filipino ways. So now if you are adding them altogether, it is really hard to unravel the whole problems that we are facing. Because of all the problems of the various ethnicities that came to the Philippines, we improve all of them.

Evidently, regionalism leads to social fragmentation due to the “infighting because of the cultural differences.” Dimasuay illuminates how interethnic strife persists over time, due to the fact that regionalistic identities lead to Filipino immigrants being “protective of their own village.” This “complex” issue deeply hinders a sense of collective identity within the United States, the sense of being ‘Filipino-American.’ Among both the young (as in second generation Filipino-Americans) and the old (as in first-generation Filipinos), and in various civic and religious settings, the topic of Filipino unity was a theme that commonly emerged.

One of my oldest interviewees, Mr. Casama, a highly accomplished U.S. Navy veteran who is highly civically engaged and politically active in the community, noted that “we are most racist people in the world I believe because of our ethnicity. There are Ilocano, Visayan...,” referring to Filipinos from different regions. For him, Filipinos are “the most racist people in the

world” because of these interethnic tensions. Filipino-Americans bring their histories and regional ethnic affiliations to the United States, and these interethnic tensions develop and re-emerge as a result of the highly diverse and densely populated character of the Filipino community in the United States. Catholic patron saint fiestas also act to sustain these ethnic divisions. One interviewee noted that regionalism could also be attributed to human nature: “I think it’s part of the culture of the Filipinos [that], if you are not from the same province, that you shy away with that guy. I encourage them to become a part of...that we should be more friendlier.” It appears that Filipinos are less likely to trust another Filipino from a different region, which also reinforces social fragmentation. On the other hand, there is also a recognition among first-generation Filipino immigrants that, despite regionalism being an issue, Filipino-Americans should “be more friendlier,” which illustrates a desire for unity.

### **Implications of Regionalism in the Public Sphere**

While Filipinos are highly civically involved in the community, partly due to their *utang na loob*, or sense of indebtedness, another complicating factor that influences Filipinos’ relationship to the public sphere is regionalism. Since regionalism is a powerful phenomenon for Filipino-Americans, what are the implications of regionalism in respect to Filipinos’ entry into the public sphere? What is at stake? Mr. Galang, a retired Navy veteran who is highly active in Filipino-American CAG, sheds light on the implications of regionalism for Filipino-Americans’ participation in the public sphere:

In the mainstream America, people will get you from the distance to say they are Filipinos out there. They will never say, like, you’re Filipino from one part of the island or other. So they stereotype you as one. Now you have to go back in history, which most Americans do not know of. There are about how many islands in the Philippines? Seven thousand. How many languages or dialects? Seventy-six plus. And I happen to know six or seven of those at one time. But through lack of somebody to talk to, I missed it, but I’m still fluent in some. And because of them, there is a tendency for the Filipinos in general to say I’m from the South, and they will find somebody from the south to associate with

and they will say you're not part of our society.

Galang describes the disparity that Filipino-Americans feel as they immigrate to the United States. Namely, although officially the U.S. government broadly defines Filipinos as 'Filipino-Americans,' Galang notes that due to the geographically and ethnically diverse cultures in the Philippines, Filipinos who immigrate to the United States may not necessarily identify with the official hyphenated identity, per se. Instead, they will have a "tendency" to regionally affiliate, or as Pancho says, "in general to say I'm from the South, and they will find somebody from the south to associate with and they will say you're not part of our society." When Galang states "society," he refers to the regional sense of cultural belonging and identity among Filipinos. Yet again we see a nuanced understanding of regionalism. As a member of Fil-Am CAG, Galang also believes that Filipino-Americans should transcend regionalism and embodies this belief. As shown in the above quote, he demonstrates a broad knowledge of other Filipino regional languages, which illustrates that Galang is able to transcend regional boundaries in the United States.

Subsequently, due to these regional ties, it is clear that Filipino-Americans socially fragment themselves, which in turn negatively influences their collective ability to connect to the American public sphere. Mr. Halimaw, another retired navy serviceman and Filipino-American CAG member, in similar fashion to Galang, talks about regionalism and its implications in respect to the public sphere:

I see members of Pangasinan, Ilocano, Tagalog. They are members of organizations, but I feel like they are all Filipinos even though we are from different provinces, speak different dialects; we are here now in this country. Filipinos are regionalistic. So, if you're Tagalog, well I'm Tagalog, you're Ilocano so... Yeah, there's always that friction between organizations, different dialects; because of the different dialects, different provinces that still exists.

Similarly to Galang, Halimaw describes how, because of regionalism or ethnic insularity,

“friction between organizations” persists due to “different dialects,” and regional identities. Due to this powerful sense of regionalism, divisions persist among Filipino-Americans that prevent the formation of a sense of Filipino identity, and the cohesiveness and social solidarity necessary to more effectively participate in politics.

Filipinos who tended to be less closely affiliated with the Catholic Church were more likely to criticize the insularity of regional associations and to engage in political action in the U.S. Filipino-American Community Action Group members, (Filipino-American CAG), for instance, argued that strong regional associations and the performance of patron saint holidays limit political involvement because regional associations reinforce *both* ethnic insularity and social division within the community. This bifurcated effect, or ethnic insularity and social division, prevents Filipinos from developing a more hyphenated “Filipino-American” identity. Rather, Filipinos are more likely to regionally view themselves as ‘Visayan’ or ‘Tarlacan’ and consequently less likely to mobilize and cooperate across regional associations as a unified group. Instead, Filipinos who tended to be more politically engaged advocate for pan-ethnic-regional unity and greater political involvement *outside* their ethnic groups, as opposed to investing one’s time in regional associations and patron saint holidays. Mr. Kalaw clearly describes this behavior:

The problem with the regional association is that they concentrate too much on cultural issues, okay. What I would like for them [to do] is involve in civic organization or politics...get involved on say, register to vote. Not just culture, just dance, pandaw sa ilaw, why not go out there and in the community, register and vote.

This quote clearly illustrates how regional associations tend to divert energy and attention away from politics. While regional associations serve vital roles for the community to preserve Filipino culture, for example through regional Filipino dances like *pandaw sa ilaw*—to foster a sense of solidarity among townmates, and to preserve transnational ties to the homeland—it is



clear that regional associations may also draw Filipinos away from involvement in American politics (“register and vote”).

Social fragmentation and division within the Filipino-American community negatively impacts the ability of its members to create unity and politically mobilize, as noted earlier by Halimaw. Moreover, Ron Villanueva, the first Filipino-American Virginia State Delegate, noted that:

One thing, I didn't talk about it either, is that we've got such a diverse community regionally, socially, professionally; there are literally hundreds of (leaders) in our community. Different associations, and all of them are important, all of them want to be treated as important, and all of them want a say, so we've got that sheep mentality. ...We're strong and we're proud but a lot of times when we talk about a candidate...our community is fragmented in so many ways. And I've seen it. And I've seen it in Virginia Beach. For many years we've had competing cultural centers, right? Philippine Cultural Center, you have San Lorenzo, you have people with their own leadership, and each of them are competitive: You've got a doctor group, very strong leaders in that group, some of them get along, some of them don't get along. If you pick somebody's side, making somebody mad, you've got a political group there that say they are political, but you've got to question if they are political...so I've seen it all...

Having “literally hundreds of leaders” leads to social fragmentation within this small, densely populated community, since Filipino-Americans tend to self-identify only with other Filipinos from their respective region.

This rich diversity also illustrates how regional divisions are compounded by class divisions, as seen in Villanueva's comments regarding class and regional identity. This sense of affinity becomes even more complicated and nuanced across occupational status. In other words, in addition to regional associations, Filipinos may further organize themselves along occupational lines. Major occupational sectors include: Medicine (doctors and nurses); Military (primarily the Navy); and Business (small business owners who tend to cater largely to the local Filipino-American community). Ms. Dakila, another interviewee who is highly involved at St.

Gregory Catholic Church and to a lesser extent politically engaged, shared, in respect to regionalism and its impact on the public sphere:

The regional ties, and in the Philippines is really very strong, that I think is one of the problems that we have in terms of political engagement, because we give so much weight to our individuals from our own region, for example, and we tend to, kind of, we are biased most of the time...

Strong regional ties weaken solidarity and diminish Filipino representation within the public sphere because regional leaders compete amongst themselves, vying for power.

Moreover, “bias” and a lack of trust amongst leaders ensue because of these regional differences. Since Filipinos are still an ethnic/minority within the area, it is especially important that they foster a sense of solidarity in order to achieve any political representation and to elevate their entry into and increase their visibility in the public sphere. These intra-communal power struggles thus heighten ethnic insularity rather than promoting an outward-looking attitude that would promote organization around relevant Filipino-American issues (as opposed to regionalistic, identity-driven issues). Moreover, these regional divisions that are compounded by class divisions, make it more difficult to develop a “comprehensive group consciousness” (Espiritu, 1996).

Another point about regionalism’s influence on Filipinos and the public sphere involves time/money. For instance, Kalaw shared his frustration regarding regional associations and their veneration of their respective patron saints:

They are crazy; they don’t know what they are talking about! That’s wrong. Jesus Christ is grown up already to be a man. Why do you have a Santo Niño? Santo Niño here, Santo Niño there, and then you pray to Jesus Christ on the cross? And sometimes on those fiestas they bring their dolls to be blessed by the priest. I don’t believe in that. That’s crazy. They should wake up and realize the truth. I don’t participate in that craziness. I believe in Jesus Christ. That is wrong they are fooling themselves! They are doing what their religious leader told them to do.

There [are] some provinces, like the practices in Bulacan, the Obundo, most especially. The Obundo church, that kind of rights has been brought down from Spanish

time. In fact by Father Demonso the story is Father Demonso in Victoria that you have to go to Obundo that you can have a child of fertility like that, while other regions especially in some part of Bataan, they don't agree with that. They dislike that because they know for one thing it is not true. For one thing if you read Rizal's writings, Victoria went to Obundo to dance and that is just a cover-up for Father Demoso....and they had a child and some people believe it is Maria Clara...

Some regions in the Philippines when they celebrate their religious culture, I would say religious culture because different regions have their different ways of celebrating their religious activity. Like some people from Cebu religion...there are religious observances different than others. Because they bring up their cultural activities like when they celebrate their religious rites they have this dance like the Ati Ati-an. The Ati Atian is the cultural dance...they incorporate that in their religious observance.

In the above quote, Kalaw makes two striking points regarding regionalism and time/money. First, he sharply criticizes the relevant patron saint holidays associated with regionalism, implying that these antiquated, pre-modern practices are “crazy” and that Filipino-Americans should “wake up and realize the truth.” It appears that Kalaw believes that these practices are simply a subservient act that Filipinos engage in because “they are doing what their religious leader told them to do.” Second, Kalaw notes that, due to the cultural-religious fragmentary nature of regionalism, patron saint holidays are as diverse as the various regions in the Philippines, and that there are differences of “religious culture:” namely, some regions “don't agree” with patron saint holidays, which in turn reinforces social fragmentation.

Filipinos who invest their time and energy in their regional associations and celebrate Catholic patron-saint holidays leave little else for political involvement:

I think religious activities occupy 95% of your time and then 5% is just for your family. And you don't have much time now to spend for politics and that's what it is. Nothing left for you to do civic and political activities. Because the Catholic activities are almost 95% of your life. Their time is being consumed too much by religious activity and not much about politics, which to me is important because it will kind of bring up or uplift your social standing.

Kalaw, president of the National Federation of Filipino American Associations region II (NaFFAA<sup>38</sup>) and former president of Filipino-American CAG, argues that religion directly impedes political engagement by Filipino-American Catholics. Catholicism siphons away from political engagement because Filipinos have to coordinate, organize, and plan ethnic-Catholic events like fiestas and patron saint holidays. Kalaw reinforces this point by arguing that regional associations like Bataan are “purely just pandawan sa ilaw, and tinikling. Oh we will have the Bataan fiesta on June 4<sup>th</sup>...it is mostly cultural activities...I’m trying to kind of steer them to political activities.” When asked whether his hometown mates or regional co-ethnic peers are interested in political activities, she shares, “They are not. They said, ‘We are not engaged in politics. We are not engaging in political campaign.’”

Moreover, Filipinos invest their resources, like their scarce time, money, and food, on these respective fiestas. Specifically, not only do these respective fiestas demand time, but afterward, a costly and lavish dinner reception. Kalaw and Father Dimaano also noted the stagnant nature of Filipino fiestas:

Well, I think to a certain degree fiestas have remained, you know, I think on the level of or on one level, that is, just on the level celebrations. It is not taken root, meaning to say it has not affected or influenced our way of life, our way of trying to unite each other, our way of coming together and celebrating--not only celebrate life, but defend life. Not only celebrate our God-given rights, but defend these rights.

Catholic priest Father Dimaano has noted that while the original intention of patron saint holidays, like fiestas, was to “not only celebrate our God-given rights, but defend these rights,” he laments that Filipinos have not “affected or influenced our way of life” or created unity across regions. Entry into the public sphere appears largely curtailed by the immense energy that

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<sup>38</sup> Please see appendix for NaFFAA files. Region II refers to: Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia.

Filipinos invest in these respective regional religious celebrations. Kalaw goes on to note the financial toll that Catholicism bears on Filipinos, especially in the Philippines:

Especially on that, economically. Fiesta. The church. Okay, we will have fiesta on St. Labrador, or whatever it is. And you know, being a Catholic, especially in my town or anywhere for that matter, they will get a loan, money from somewhere else, either from the bank, Fifty-six [pesos] from Bombay Indians, you know? Just to have money to prepare for the fiesta, they will buy...because it has been passed down that you have to prepare something for the fiesta, even if it is beyond your means, so they indebt, there comes another fiesta again. The first money that they use for that fiesta has not been paid off. Then there's another fiesta. Now you're going to borrow money again...

As noted earlier, Filipinos not only invest their time but they also invest their money in fiestas. Kalaw notes that this practice originates from the homeland. Even when Filipinos do not necessarily possess the means to organize and celebrate fiestas, Filipinos take loans out in order to fund them and subsequently become in debt to that end. While none of my interviewees explicitly reported getting into debt into the U.S. or taking out loans to fund fiestas, it is clear that Filipinos expend a tremendous amount of time and energy in order to celebrate them. This religio-ethnic significance that Filipinos have placed on fiestas indicates not only a strong desire to connect to the homeland, but also the transnational connections that Filipinos feel they must preserve (at whatever cost) with their homeland. Kalaw's observation highlights yet again the sense that regionalism siphons away energy from gaining entry into the American public sphere, since regional-ethnic Catholic practices are focused on the homeland rather than the host-nation state, *per se*.

While regionalism is a heated issue for many Filipino-Americans, these concerns impact first and second generation Filipino-Americans in different ways. First-generation Filipino-Americans most strongly affiliate with their regional ties, while second-generation Filipino-Americans are far less likely to do so. For instance, Mr. Dakila shares how regionalism, or specifically inter-ethnic tension, fades with each preceding generation:

These differences can be more or less harnessed in a way to motivate some of the first or second generation. The main problem, I believe, is the first generation, because we have been very more or less, we cannot easily assimilate the cultural differences. But as we go to the second-generation, now I think it is more or less...their mind is ready to accept as who you are instead of accepting it only if you are from Ilocano or Bicol, Visaya, or other regional differences.

Dakila points out that the first generation “cannot easily assimilate the cultural differences,” largely because of the strong sense of regionalism that Filipinos bring when they immigrate to the United States, but that the second-generation Filipino-Americans who are born in the United States are less likely to regionally identify because “their mind is ready to accept” interethnic differences. It is also highly likely that the second-generation Filipinos are more likely to identify as ‘Filipino-American,’ as opposed to “Ilocano, or Bicol, Visaya or other regional differences.” Ms. Dajao, a second-generation Filipino-American, concurs with Dakila and says that regionalism “is more prevalent among the elders in the community,” though it is “the exclusivity [she] shies away from.” This comment corroborates Dakila’s idea that regionalism weakens among the second generation.

As noted earlier by Ms. Dajao, second-generation Filipino-Americans tend to self-identify themselves as Filipino-Americans, rather than with their parents’ region or hometown. Ron Villanueva, second-generation Filipino-American and the first Filipino-American Virginia State delegate, states:

I think regionalism is definitely a strength in the first generation but it’s also a hindrance. Second generation, we really don’t have too much regionalism because we’re born here in America. Other than...your parents’ regional association...that’s really your only affiliation.... You know it’s tough. It’s an interesting dynamic. I mean, for example, when Lyndon Remias was a school board member, or a candidate, he came out of nowhere. This guy had a good resume...very well-read, a professional guy, had kids, he was involved in soccer and involved in Key Club But his parents, they were involved in, I want to say not sure which group they were, but they were really involved. They were in Norfolk. They were, geographically, living nowhere near his family was, and a lot of Filipino leaders did not know who this guy was, because he was not involved in community organizations like me. Before I was elected, I was chairman of the Filipino-

American Friendship for 3 years, I ran that picnic, you know what I mean? So all the leadership...versus him, when he ran the first time, a lot of Filipino-Americans were like, "I don't know who this guy is," so he had to work doubly hard to get elected. He lost his first race. He lost first race by one hundred votes. And you can blame a lot of things...bottom line is another candidate won the race. The second time he ran, I was much more interested. By then I was in my second term. I helped him out a lot...everybody knew him...'you better support him'...so if the Filipino leadership does not buy into you first, it's a tough thing. There's an interesting dynamic.

Villanueva shares a compelling story that illustrates the direct impact of regionalism on politics. Villanueva noted that, even though Lyndon Remias possessed strong qualifications to represent Filipino-Americans in political office, because Filipino-Americans did not know or recognize him, they failed to rally and support him. We can infer that Remias most likely came from a lesser-represented region that many Filipinos in the Virginia Beach community felt unsure or skeptical about. Even though Remias is a second-generation Filipino-American, he still needed the socially influential first-generation Filipino-Americans to endorse him to be successful. Therefore, even if regionalism appears to be weakening among second-generation Filipino-Americans, regionalism still impacts their lives and the intergenerational possibilities for Filipino-American political representation in the public sphere. I should note; however, Filipinos have been able to transcend their regional boundaries in order to increase their political representation at times. After all, Ron Villanueva became the first Filipino-American Virginia Delegate largely because the Filipino community supported him. Nonetheless, this account regarding Remias indicates the critical negative impact that regionalism can have on Filipinos' entry into the political public sphere.

Second-generation Filipino-Americans are conscious of the regional tensions among the first generation, the generation of their parents. A second generation Filipino-American commented to me on the role of regionalism and its negative influence on the Filipino-American community:

I personally see a lot of segregation amongst each of the regional groups and I like to see unification, no matter which group you're with, rather than competition. It seems like to me that's a lot of competition amongst the groups, or trying to one up each other.

The above quote succinctly illustrates how regionalism often leads to social fragmentation, even if regionalism may appear to be weakening among the second-generation Filipinos. Rather than unifying as 'Filipino-Americans,' instead, Filipinos from different regions tend to compete against each other and try to "one up each other." Part of the process of increasing visibility and representation in the public sphere is to mobilize, and if regional differences lead to competition, this social division may actually defeat these respective regional associations' stated purposes. Therefore, even if second-generation Filipinos may not identify or agree with these inter-regional tensions of their parents' generation, they have to live with these tensions' negative impact on the Filipino-American community at large.

### **The Legacy of Colonialism**

Another aspect of Philippine history that contributes to the lack of political engagement in the U.S. among Filipinos is the Philippines' experience of colonialism, which fostered a legacy of detachment and exclusion from political life. Spanish colonial authority excluded Filipinos from governing their country. Filipinos first forged a national identity during their struggle for independence against Spain (from 1565 to 1898) and the United States (Steinberg, 2000). American colonial authority was less authoritarian than Spanish rule, and created some limited opportunities for local self-government. However, anti-imperialist scholars argue that the U.S. colonial rule over the Philippines, or the process of "benevolent assimilation," fundamentally "transformed the Philippines into a quasi-American society...that bore the imprint of U.S. values, institutions, and outlook (Espiritu 1996; Constantino; 1974, 52). As a result, Filipino national identity "receded as a result of the virus of subservience and dependence which



was inculcated in the people's minds" (Constantino, 1974). This colonizer-colonized relationship fostered a sense of colonial mentality:

The ties forced between the United States and the Philippines during ninety years and more of colonial and post-colonial rule have also contributed to this influx [of immigration to the United States]. Besides creating strong military and business connections between the two countries, this colonial heritage has produced a pervasive cultural Americanization of the population, exhorting Filipinos to regard the U.S. culture, society, and political system and way of life as superior to their own (Pomeroy, 1974, 171).

This literature on the Filipino colonial mentality partly corroborates my research findings, though rather than attributing colonial mentality as a consequence of the United States and Spains' colonization of the Philippines, in my interviews, some Filipinos like Galasinao have argued that colonial mentality is a legacy of the Catholic Church, which limits political engagement. Nonetheless, it is important to note that Spain brought Catholicism to the Philippines as part of their colonizing efforts as a means by which to further control Filipinos.

Frantz Fanon famously explored this phenomenon of the colonial mentality, drawing upon his own experiences as an African-French citizen and his reflections upon colonialism's impact on his identity, to write about colonialism's legacy in Africa and the African diaspora at large (Fanon, 1967 & 1963). Edward Said also explored this liminal colonial experience through literature in his work *Orientalism* (Said, 1979). E. San Juan Jr., a prolific cultural studies scholar, has also written about the colonial mentality in the Philippine context, which results, in his view, from the U.S. capitalistic domination of the Philippines (San Juan, 2000). In *The Colonizer and Colonized*, Albert Memmi also explored colonial mentality through the lens of decolonization from France in North Africa, largely drawing from his experience from when his home country Tunisia gained independence from France in 1956. He described the colonizer-colonized relationship between France and North Africa as "portraits of the two protagonists of the colonial

drama and the relationship that binds them" (Memmi, 1957, 145). Memmi, like Galasinao and other of my interviewees, was particularly suspicious of the colonizer's efforts to bring religion to the colonized: The French [Memmi's colonizers] "never seriously promoted religious conversion of the colonized" because it would have advanced "the disappearance of the colonial relationships" (Memmi, 1957, 172-73). In the social sciences, researchers have only recently begun to explore the colonial mentality. Sociologists E.J.R. David and Sumie Okazaki have developed a Colonial Mentality Scale (CMS) in order to investigate how colonial mentality, or internalized colonialism, shapes the experiences of Filipino-Americans (2006). Through exploring Filipino-Americans, they have defined Filipino colonial mentality as a "perception of ethnic or cultural inferiority that is believed to be a specific consequence of centuries of colonization under Spain and the United States." Overall, their results indicate that "colonial mentality is [negatively] associated with the psychological well-being and mental health of modern day Filipino Americans" (David, E.J.R. & Okazaki, Sumie, 2006). Furthermore, Emily Ignacio investigated how new technologies facilitate communication in transnational locations (like cyberspace), and how diasporic peoples articulate race, class, and gender through internet newsgroups like soc.culture.filipino (2005).<sup>39</sup> For example, George, a Filipino-American male college student, stated: "I am trying my damndest to get back to my roots and learn more about my parent's culture. I feel very whitewashed and sad" (Espiritu, 2005). George is culturally disconnected from his Filipino heritage and instead is "whitewashed," or deeply westernized into American culture. Higher rates of mental problems like depression among Filipinos may also be due to the long history of colonization by Western countries like the United States and as

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<sup>39</sup>As a participant-observer, Ignacio employed the "method of instances," where she repetitiously conducted the following internet-based activities: coding, writing memos, and discovering threads. Rather than analyzing people, her units of analysis were comprised of conversations. Over the course of twenty-one months, Ignacio analyzed over 2000 posts.

a specific consequence, Filipinos perceive themselves as culturally or ethnically inferior (David, E.J.R & Sumie Okazaki, 2006; Rimonte, 1997).<sup>40</sup> Based on qualitative interviews of Filipinos conducted by sociologist Leny Strobel, Marissa, an interviewee, highlights this linkage between colonialism, melancholia, and a sense of being culturally or ethnically inferior: “I was ‘white’ in every way except for the color of my skin, my nose and eyes. I too have been a victim because I have lost a lot” (1997).<sup>41</sup>

Given the extensive theoretical literature arguing that the experience of colonization leaves an indelible mental mark on the psychological well-being of its people,<sup>42</sup> my dissertation attempts to help illuminate through qualitative research the effects of the colonial mentality in the postcolonial immigrant context. My interviewee Galasinao traces the source of this colonial mentality:

Partly, I will blame the Catholic upbringing of the Filipinos because, if you will look at the history, our colonizers, they suppress our political activities. They don’t want us to, they discourage to be active in politics. If you remember the Philippines’ history, because they don’t want us to know the truth about government. And they want us to be, to condition our mind, just a Church where they can manipulate and control us. Use the church to control us. They don’t want us to be active in civic and politics. And when you go outside the Church, they will prosecute you. Just like what Jose Rizal did. They prosecute Jose Rizal because he tried to bring the minds of the Filipino people about bringing us to get involved in politics, you know, we have the government that we should separate from the church. Because back then the church and the government is almost the same, one entity. We have been colonized by [the] Spanish for three hundred years.

That’s why our mind has been conditioned to believe in such a way we are not. You know? We worship almost everything, anything that the Catholic Church told us to do. We worship these patron saints to bring good life. Why not just...it’s really passed down by our colonizers. I hate to say that, but the religion of the religious activity in the Philippines back then, it really mold[ed] our grandparents. They still want to pass that down to us, to worship the way they worship.

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<sup>40</sup> David, E. J. R. and Sumie Okazaki. 2006. "The Colonial Mentality Scale (CMS) for Filipino Americans: Scale Construction and Psychological Implications." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 53 (2): 241-252; Rimonte, N. "Colonialism’s Legacy" in *Filipino Americans*, (M.P.P., ed.), 1997, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

<sup>41</sup> Strobel conducted 8 structured, in-depth interviews over a period of a year (spring 1995-spring 1996) aged ranged from 19-48 years old. The following themes emerged: (1) affect and decolonization; 2) the power of name and telling, 3) the need for Filipino cultural and historical knowledge, 3) the role of language and memory, and 4) Filipino spirituality.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

In this pointed and eloquent statement, Galasinao argues that the Catholic Church is largely responsible for Filipinos' lack of engagement in the political public sphere, and he links this failure to the Spanish colonization of the Philippines. Spain brought Catholicism to the Philippines, and largely controlled Filipinos through the Catholic religion. On a practical level, Galasinao notes that the "colonizers...suppress[ed] our political activities." Moreover, Galasinao states that Spain consciously used the Catholic Church as a tool to "manipulate" and control" Filipinos. He refers to Jose Rizal, a Philippine national hero, and asserts that, because Rizal attempted to raise the consciousness of Filipinos, he was killed by the colonizers. Galasinao laments that the colonizers' religious legacy of Catholicism, celebration of patron saints, and the fact that this style of worship has been passed down across generations, continues to this day to condition and control the minds of Filipino-Americans. Ultimately, the lack of involvement in the public sphere stems, in large part, from distrust of the government and political leadership, due to these colonial experiences and colonialism's continuing legacy.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, I described regionalism and attempted to delineate its relationship to religion. I also explored the relationship between regionalism and the public sphere, tracing this connection back to the colonial history of the Philippines. . Regionalism plays a highly ambivalent role in Filipino-American culture. On the one hand, Filipino Catholics, for instance, celebrate their regional ties through ceremonies for region-specific Catholic patron saints. Regionalism also fosters solidarity through various cultural practices, such as preserving language. Filipinos within regional associations are able to speak their respective dialects with their native town-mates. They are also able to practice their specific cultural heritage through

region-specific dances and celebrations. Furthermore, they may connect to the Philippines through shared friendships that link to the homeland.

On the other hand, regionalism appears to weaken Filipinos' ties to the American political public sphere. Filipinos tend to distrust Filipinos from outside their region, and this distrust reinforces ethnic insularity while also fostering inter-ethnic social fragmentation. This contentious dynamic makes it difficult for Filipinos to mobilize under a pan-ethnic "Filipino-American" identity (as other immigrant groups do; e.g., Asian Indian-Americans) toward American political ends. On the individual level, engagement in regional associations and related religious activities like fiestas siphon energy, time, and resources away from engagement in the American public sphere. Because Filipinos invest a tremendous amount of time and money into patron saint holidays and fiestas, their time is occupied within the church and respective regional associations, rather than in the political public sphere.

The colonial history of the Philippines plays a role in respect to Filipinos' entry in the American public sphere. Negative experiences in the Philippines with politicians and the government have turned Filipinos away from participating in the public sphere. Moreover, some Filipinos argue that the legacy of a colonial mentality also limits political engagement in America. Much more research is needed to develop our understanding of this colonial mentality and its legacy, though I hope I have contributed to beginning this social scientific discussion.

What we are also seeing is how relations within racially-defined groups are shaped by religion and region. On the one hand, my findings about Filipino regionalism in the U.S. may help partly explain why some scholars have found hometown associations (HTAs) to be largely "apolitical;" on the other hand, my research also challenges and complicates current findings that there are few direct links between such clubs and civic or political leaders and

organizations (Zabin & Escala, 2002). In other words, in contrast to Zabin and Escala's findings, specifically regarding Latino HTAs, I find that while regionalism may limit political participation, HTAs also strongly connect Filipino-Americans with other civic and religious organizations. More research is needed to explore this complicated relationship and whether religion similarly influences other immigrant groups in respect to regionalism, political, and civic activism.

## CHAPTER II: *UTANG NG LOOB*/INDEBTEDNESS

In this chapter I explore the role of indebtedness in Filipino-American culture. The Oxford English Dictionary defines indebtedness as “under obligation to another for favours or services received; owing gratitude; beholden.” To summarize my argument in this chapter, in my interviews I found that my Filipino-American respondents feel a sense of *utang ng loob*, or indebtedness, to the U.S. for their American citizenship and largely believe that their faith in God brought them to the U.S., or played some role in their gaining U.S. citizenship. Put short, U.S. citizenship fosters indebtedness. Notions of indebtedness mean that not only were the Filipino-Americans in my study grateful for their U.S. citizenship, but feel that they have to repay this debt to their host nation. In other words, these Filipino-Americans felt that they have to “do something” in return for the blessing of their U.S. citizenship. Indebtedness is bound up by God—Filipino-Americans couch indebtedness in religious terms that connote metaphysical forces, often describing their U.S. citizenship as “fate” or “a blessing” from God.

I argue that indebtedness becomes a lens through which Filipino-Americans perceive and interpret their understandings of citizenship, and thus shapes how and the degree to which they navigate their respective religious and civic institutions. Moreover, I will advance a more nuanced understanding of modernity and citizenship because the concept of indebtedness helps us to unravel how Filipinos interpret what it means to be a ‘good citizen’ in the modern world—that there is not one understanding of ‘good citizenship,’ per se, but several contested notions that stem from Filipinos’ postcolonial history.

### **The Concept of Cultural Indebtedness: *Utang ng loob***

Across the scholarly literature, research on indebtedness remains largely undeveloped, though *utang ng loob* has been mentioned in other scholarly works on Filipino-Americans as a

specific cultural value that they possess (Gonzalez, 2009, & Root, 1998). For instance, *utang ng loob* has been described as “debt of gratitude” and a “well-recognized Filipino value,” among other traits (Gonzalez, 2009). Other scholars have described *utang ng loob* similarly, as an “internal debt of gratitude” that “has its roots in mutual support and interdependence that contains the element of reciprocity: If I do you a favor, you will owe me one in return. These terms may mean different things depending on the situation” (Berganio, Tacata Jr., and Jamero, 1997). Other scholars have suggested that Filipino cultural values like *utang ng loob* reinforce the inferior position of Filipinos in the United States (Lott, 1980; Revilla, 1997).

On a sociological level, *utang ng loob* is more recently explored in relation to social capital. Drawing from Putnam and Tocqueville, Joaquin Gonzalez, for instance, broadly asserts that this Filipino value allows “Filipino migrants to connect to mainstream U.S. society in both ‘bridging Filipinization’ and ‘bonding Filipinization.’ The church is not just a site that they Filipinize in bonding terms but a space they use to bridge themselves to Filipinize U.S. society” (Gonzalez, 2009, 272).

Psychologists who explore Filipino-Americans have also taken an interest in *utang ng loob*, for example, observing that “Filipinos are always generous with each other” (Nadal, 2011). Leading Filipino-American psychologist, Kevin Nadal describes *utang ng loob* as a “debt of reciprocity” which may lead to “more psychological distress” because Filipinos are expected to “conform, comply, or obey because they expect that others will return the favor or because they want to be socially accepted by others” (Nadal, 2011). Subsequently a Filipino may “isolate himself [or herself] altogether and continue to feel culturally conflicted” (Nadal, 2011). In this case, “debt of reciprocity” is conceptualized more on the micro-social level, where Filipinos are expected to place their families first and children should feel indebted to their parents for the



sacrifices they made for their success (Nadal, 2011). This finding suggests that familial bonds may be strained due to “debt of reciprocity.” Relatively little has been done, though, to explore the role of indebtedness in Filipino culture at the macro-level.

Scholars have studied immigrants and ethnic/minorities in the broad areas of civic engagement, volunteerism, and citizenship, as well as exploring how religion intersects with these sociological phenomena. Most of this work has focused on the active role played by churches in helping immigrants politically participate in the United States through gaining citizenship and voting. Ethnic religious communities like the Korean Church have been observed to contribute to these pro-citizenship processes by providing political resources to aid immigrants in navigating the citizenship application process, overcoming language barriers, or facilitating the attainment of U.S. citizenship (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000b; Lien, 2004). Asian Catholic immigrants who reside in the five largest immigrant-populated areas in the U.S. have obtained the highest rate of citizenship among American immigrant communities (Lien, 2004). Catholic and Evangelical churches have played a major role in the lives of Salvadorian immigrants (Menjivar, 2000, 40). Salvadorian immigrants have received a wide range of resources from financial support, spiritual comfort, and a sense of community to social infrastructures that help them cope with personal and community-level problems (Menjivar, 2000, 42).

These findings, however, are not universally and consistently true across religion and race. Civic participation also largely depends on the social resources that churches offer to immigrants and illustrates the highly complex role that religion plays in immigrants’ lives:

Different religious spaces may promote immigrants’ incorporation in different ways, but this is hardly a unilinear process where all groups begin and end in the same place—even if they belong to the same church. Immigrants “assimilate” only to the milieu that their resources—what they bring with them and what they encounter—allow them to and not all do so at the same rate. Thus, whereas different churches may guide immigrants along different paths, the end result remains conditioned by the structure of opportunities

available to the particular immigrant group in the context and time they arrive (Menjivar, 2003, 43).

In other words, religion may not necessarily facilitate full immigrant incorporation, or citizenship, as in the case of Asian Catholic immigrants. The 2000 National Council of Catholic Bishops/U.S. Catholic Conference found that despite high levels of Latino Catholicism, Catholic Churches generally failed to expose Latinos to and help them develop “skill-learning opportunities” (e.g., political skills), as compared to Latino Protestants (Levitt, 2002, 156). This shortcoming may partly explain why many Latinos have not become U.S. citizens, which subsequently negatively impacts their ability to civically engage in society (Levitt, 2002, 155).

In general, though, research has demonstrated that religious communities socialize first and second generation immigrants into American politics (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000; Menjivar, 2002b; Yang, 1999; Carnes & Yang, 2004; Freston, 2004; Menjivar, 2003; Wellmeier, 1998). Specifically, Asian Americans who are more religious are more likely to vote (Lien, 2004). This impact of religion on the civic behavior of Asian Americans is especially significant in light of the fact that over 40% of immigration between 1990 and 1999 was comprised of Asian immigrants to the United States (Lien, 2004).

Moreover, religious communities often overlap with ethnic and racial identities to mobilize new political challenges as well as coalitions (Kastoryano, 2010; Bakalian & Bozorgmehr, 2009). For instance, the events of 9/11 have caused post-9/11 backlash, or excessive societal and governmental responses, against Muslim American and Middle Eastern communities in the United States. In response, several Muslim American organizations have formed to mediate between their constituents and the greater society. Essentially, when targeted groups like Muslim immigrants experience backlash, they mobilize and engage in civil and

political community-based movements that ideally lead to greater integration of out-groups, or minorities (Bakalian & Bozorgmehr, 2009).

Many scholars argue that religious involvement helps people to civically participate in their ethnic communities in the United States (Klineberg, 2004; Yang 1999b). Asian Indian Hindus in the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) metroplex, for example, have noted that their involvement in the DFW Hindu Temple played a role in community building that helped bridge differences in Indian identity and subsequently fostered pan-Indian Hindu identity (Brettell, 2005, 860). Specifically, through the construction process of building the DFW Hindu temple, members of the Indian community came together to “bridge the differences across the Indian subcontinent based on regionally-based Hindu traditions” (Brettell, 2005, 861). Therefore, the religious lives and civic participation of Asian Indian Hindus not only physically fostered the construction of the DFW temple, but also forged a “common Hindu identity that transcends the regional religious diversity brought from India.” (Brettell, 2005, 864).

Religious communities encourage this civic engagement because they provide motives for volunteering and connections to local forms of both secular and religious community service (Wuthnow, 1999). Taiwanese Buddhist immigrants from the Dharma Light Temple in Southern California, for instance, have been found to be more publically engaged than Taiwanese Christians (Chen, 2005). Specifically, Taiwanese Buddhists have explicitly stated that they “want to be more involved in society,” which directly corresponds to Dharma Lights’ objective “to benefit society through charitable programs” (Chen, 2005, 14). Specifically, Taiwanese Buddhists from this religious community have civically engaged in a range of activities from organizing disaster relief, charitable fundraising, gang intervention, to local prison ministry (Chen, 2005, 14). This highly civically-engaged community is particularly interested in

connecting with others outside their ethnic and religious community because of its concern for interreligious cooperation and dialogue (Chen, 2005, 17).

A wide body of research is burgeoning in the area of civic engagement, volunteerism, and citizenship vis-a-vis religion. In *Between Sundays*, Marla Frederick explores notions of gratitude in her ethnography of black women in the south (2003). Gratitude, however, is not the same as indebtedness. A person can feel gratitude to God for instance, but not feel that he/she owes God, per se. Indebtedness, on the other hand, suggests that not only might a person feel gratitude for an act of kindness done to them, but they may also feel that they must repay the debt. Moreover, Filipinos feel that they fulfill their debt when the U.S. officially recognizes their contributions in some way. It is important to note that in nearly all interviewee references to “contributing,” what is really being discussed is local community involvement. For Filipino-Americans, it is through involvement in their local community—as good citizens, honest churchgoers, productive workers, etc—that a sense of *utang ng loob* is both demonstrated and ultimately repaid.

In the fields of philosophy and political science, other scholars have explored a more overtly political version of obligation and the relationship that citizens have to the nation-state in which they belong. The philosopher Immanuel Kant, for instance, conceptualized the social contract theory, in which he argues that citizens share an implicit rational agreement with the government to "give his laws in such a way that they could have arisen from the united will of a whole people and to regard each subject, insofar as he wants to be a citizen, as if he has joined in voting for such a will."<sup>43</sup> Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau are among other seminal thinkers who explored the concept of a social contract. For instance, for Hobbes, the social contract explains how rational, free citizens agree and justify political principles in order to submit to a sovereign

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<sup>43</sup> Rauscher, Frederick, "Kant's Social and Political Philosophy", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2012 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2012/entries/kant-social-political/>>.

authority and thus secure social order.<sup>44</sup> Alternatively, Locke proposed that people have a prior right to life, liberty, and property, but in order to preserve these rights, citizens must ‘give up’ some of their freedoms to the government in order to preserve these respective rights.<sup>45</sup> For yet other theorists of the social contract, there is also a scholarly interest in the disparity between freedom and authority among citizens.<sup>46</sup>

Political obligation and citizenship continues to be of interest to scholars. John Rawls, an American political philosopher, was also interested in citizenship and political obligation. His premise is that people are genuinely tolerant and respectful, reasonable citizens by human nature. He explored what it meant to be a reasonable citizen even though each person possesses a comprehensive doctrine or an epistemological view on what is ‘good’ and ‘bad’ and how to live one’s life.<sup>47</sup> Jurgen Habermas, among a wide array of contemporary scholars, in a similar intellectual vein, has explored how religion should be considered within the public sphere (Habermas, 2005; Cassanova, 2011; Calhoun, 2011; Eisenstadt, 2002). My research on indebtedness is intended to shed new light on social contract theory; namely, to illuminate how this cultural value may shape post-1965 immigrants’ understandings of political obligation and citizenship.

Most recently, scholarly attention has focused on political obligation and post-1965 immigrants like Asian Indian Americans’ patterns of civic and transnational activism (Kurien, 2008). In considering post-1965 immigrants, “immigrant diasporic politics will have a decisive

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<sup>44</sup> Lloyd, Sharon A. and Sreedhar, Susanne, "Hobbes's Moral and Political Philosophy", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/hobbes-moral/>>.

<sup>45</sup> Tuckness, Alex, "Locke's Political Philosophy", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/locke-political/>>.

<sup>46</sup> Bertram, Christopher, "Jean Jacques Rousseau", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/rousseau/>>.

<sup>47</sup> Wenar, Leif, "John Rawls", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/rawls/>>.

impact in shaping the political contours of the United States in the twenty-first century. Such politics challenge conventional understandings of nationhood and citizenship and create dilemmas for multicultural societies trying to institutionalize pluralism” (Kurien, 2008, 253).

Critical engagement with politics is not a priority for many Filipino-Americans because they actually feel that this kind of encounter suggests a sense of ingratitude for their U.S. citizenship, or the opposite of *utang ng loob*. While scholars argue that religion motivates immigrants to civically engage in their communities, more research is needed to explore how specific religious contexts matter in respect to immigrant integration (Ecklund, 2005, 3).

Overall, among Hampton Roads’ Filipino-Americans, the cultural trope of indebtedness motivates them to become civically engaged but not politically active in the United States. Specifically, Filipino-Americans believe that if they are politically critical of the government within the public sphere, they may appear to be ungrateful for their “blessing” of U.S. citizenship. Those who are more religiously Catholic tend to especially follow this pattern. There are also Filipinos who are politically engaged (as discussed below), but I should note that those Filipinos, while generally remaining religiously affiliated, are more critical of the Catholic Church (as will be discussed in chapter III). Since most Filipino-Americans in this study came from modest backgrounds in the Philippines, combined with success in a very competitive selection process to enlist in the U.S. Navy (discussed later in this chapter), these first generation Filipino-Americans feel particularly indebted to give back to the host nation that they were “adopted” into. They are especially grateful because if the U.S. had not recruited them into the Navy then it is less likely that they would have been able to find an alternative path to immigrate and attain U.S. citizenship, due to their modest backgrounds.

My fieldwork and interview findings lend themselves to the following questions: What does indebtedness mean for Filipino-Americans? How does U.S. citizenship foster indebtedness? What is the role of religion in Filipino-Americans' indebtedness? To that end, I intend to shed light on how Filipino-Americans perceive, interpret, and construct this sense of indebtedness. First, I define indebtedness through specific quotes that illuminate their understanding of this concept. Second, I attempt to explain why Filipino-Americans often feel indebted to the U.S.: In order to explain why they may feel this way, I show that Filipino-Americans feel a need to contribute to, or in this case civically engage with, the U.S. Contribution may take the form of economic participation (e.g., running successful small businesses or holding a respectable, well paying job), civic participation (e.g., community centers or Filipino Business clubs), or military service (i.e., the U.S. Navy). On a more nuanced level, I reveal the complexities of certain kinds of contribution; namely, that indebtedness for American citizenship leads to a sense among Filipino-Americans that they should be highly civically engaged, but not active, critical supporters of the government, because they interpret active, critical engagement with the government as being "ungrateful" for their citizenship. Essentially, Filipino-Americans feel that in order to fulfill their sense of indebtedness they must receive official recognition for their various contributions, as enumerated above. If this recognition does not come then it must mean they did not contribute and in fact are a "dead piece" dragging down the community and nation. Similarly, if Filipino-Americans are trying to contribute in a meaningful way to their community, state, and nation but not receiving recognition for these efforts, then the indebtedness remains unfulfilled as their contributions are therefore diminished and not valued. If their contributions are in fact advancing the nation-state, then they are honoring their blessing of U.S. citizenship and thus fulfilling the debt that they owe because of it.

I also show how Filipino-Americans' religiosity shapes their understandings of indebtedness, as terms like "fate" and "blessing" become inextricably tied to their conversations about U.S. citizenship. I will also illustrate how historical public policy discourse on Filipino citizenship shapes and complicates notions of indebtedness. Specifically, I argue that Filipino-Americans feel a strong need to establish their contributions to the U.S. precisely because official American public policies have historically questioned and continually revised their citizenship status. Thus, during the first-half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the U.S. government reinforced a transient, liminal citizenship status among Filipino-Americans that may help explain their anxiety regarding their legitimate citizenship status today. Given that Filipino-Americans desire that the U.S. recognize their contributions to the country, this third point is especially crucial since official state and national recognition of their contributions would presumably help solidify their sense of belonging to the nation-state. This cultural trope of indebtedness reaches back into Filipino history. Therefore, I also discuss the influence of Philippine politics on Post-1965 Filipino-American immigrants' connections to the American public sphere. Due to the complicated Filipino and Filipino-American history, a counter-historical narrative exists among some Filipino-Americans who feel that, since the country is not grateful for their contributions, then why should they feel indebted for their citizenship to the United States? This counter narrative is also shaped by the historical public policy discourse in the U.S. surrounding the Philippines.

### **The Meaning of Indebtedness**

What is indebtedness? Dr. Dimaporo, a highly respected surgeon in the Hampton Roads area, comments:

I could not be happier or luckier than to be a citizen because [in] America anything is possible. There is no such thing as impossible, the way I look at things here. So you dream, you realize, but you know the secret to all those realizations [as to] why sometimes it happens, you know there's really no secret. It's all hard work. They just



work hard, good things happen, then you help other people, good Lord give[s] you back something. So many great things happened to me and I wonder why. Every year during New Year's Eve when people start thinking about their resolutions, their New Year's resolution, I start thinking about, good Lord, what will happen to me this coming year. Incredible you know? You should see my house, in fact some of those things are still here, all these plaques here and at the house...and so did you know that, I'll tell you right now I was nominated in 1995 by our Congress, late Congressman, since then he has died, for one reason or another he saw something in me, he sent my name to the White House to be a Surgeon General—did you know that?

So again, what it is to be a citizen? Again, I cannot put the value on that. Because being an American, everybody tells you about America. If you evaluate why you have done so much for all these years, [it's] because of my love for this country. My life story can't compare with anyone. I can compete it with anyone. And for what this country has done for me, spoiled me...And all these things the good Lord had just I said again, I cannot again be any more thankful for all the graces and the goodness that I have received throughout all these years...

For Dimaporo, indebtedness is the expression of his gratitude for his American citizenship. Moreover, Dimaporo exuberantly describes his valuable U.S. citizenship in religious terms. It is impossible to disentangle his indebtedness of his American citizenship from his faith in God. Rather than a purely secular understanding of the American Dream, or the idea that if one works hard they can achieve their goals in this country, Dimaporo believes that his achievements are gifts from God, and that the United States, or namely his citizenship, has “spoiled” him. For instance, he implies that he attained his high achievements through the years, like his nomination for Surgeon General and his life story, due to the “graces and goodness” that the “good Lord” bestowed upon him. As a result, he is highly “thankful” for God’s priceless gift of citizenship that he “cannot put the value on.” Montero not only feels a sense of gratitude for his American citizenship and “for what this country has done for [him],” but he also feels indebted to America as a result. His indebtedness also involves “help[ing] other people.” Considered among the most highly civically engaged members of the community, this idea to “help other people” partly clarifies his sense of indebtedness and his corresponding interest to help others. Despite his impressive accomplishments and civic contributions to society, like

founding the Chesapeake Care Clinic, the first comprehensive all-volunteer medical center in the country, or being nominated for the position of U.S. surgeon general, it appears that what he is most enthusiastic about is the opportunity he had to become a U.S. citizen.

Father Dimaano, a Filipino priest who is often invited to local area churches (St. Gregory Catholic Church<sup>48</sup>), civic centers (Philippine Cultural Center), and spiritual centers (San Lorenzo Spiritual Center) to deliver the homily and give his blessing at Filipino-specific Catholic celebrations like fiestas and novenas, also sheds light on Filipinos' views on indebtedness:

But here I think it's influenced because we are indebted to the United States because of the military influence because that's the truth. The truth is some families were not, wouldn't have been able to come or migrate to the United States without the United States Navy. ...Dads or uncles or brothers joined the Navy way back in the Philippines even if they were not immigrants, or they were not green card holders, or they were not U.S. citizens. You know they were recruited by the United States Navy, the United States naval bases in the Philippines and join[ed] the Navy. Eventually they were made, you know, green cardholders; eventually they were made American citizens so they could bring their families here. They brought their families here.

Keenly sociological, Father Dimaano rightly indicates that almost all Filipino-Americans in this area acquired American citizenship through U.S. Navy recruitment; specifically, “dads or uncles joined the Navy way back in the Philippines.” Katindig, a retired navy serviceman, explains his sense of indebtedness to the United States: “As you mature and get older it becomes a calling. Because of your faith since you are fortunate enough to be here in America you should be able to help other people...Religion played a big part in my life. Born and raised Catholic. I believe in God and faith took us to here, from the Philippines to here (to the United States). It is...more than a blessing.” Katingding religiously frames his experience of citizenship as a “blessing” that compels him to feel that he is “fortunate” to be here in America.” Consequently, Katingding believes he should “help other people.” This feeling exemplifies indebtedness and

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<sup>48</sup> St. Gregory Church is considered one of the largest Filipino-American Catholic parishes in the Virginia Beach/Hampton Roads area.

how, for many Filipinos, U.S. military service can contribute to a feeling of gratitude to the nation-state. Ms. Dakila, who is married to a U.S. navy retired serviceman and is highly politically and civically engaged, shares similar feelings to Katingding:

I feel that I do have this kind of mentality that what God gave me; I have to use it for Him. If I don't do this, if we don't do this, nobody will. All what we're doing, everything. I feel that we had been given this opportunity, so many classmates are still back in the Philippines, they are not here. I came here at the time when they were just a few service from the beginning and I was kind of called to do the job that maybe someone else can do but they won't, so we were sort of thrust into the arena so to speak, so we just have to do it.

Like Katingding, Ms. Dakila feels that God gave her an “opportunity” to come to the United States through the U.S. military and that her classmates were ‘left behind.’ As a result, she feels obligated to give back to the community; if “[she] doesn’t do this, if we don’t do this, nobody will.” Mr. Dayap, an elderly retired military serviceman, also expresses similar feelings: “I came here to look for a better life. Because everybody is. So I want to give back some by serving the community. I think that’s it. Giving back to the community.” Because Dayap feels that he attained a “better life” in the United States, he feels indebted and, to show his gratitude, he “wants to give back some by serving the community.”

Since 1901 (following the establishment of the Philippine protectorate at the end of the Spanish-American War), the U.S. Navy has recruited Filipinos as mess attendants and stewards, and this recruitment process expanded after the Philippines gained political independence in 1946, with thousands of Filipinos enlisting as military servicemen for the U.S.<sup>49</sup> Following Philippine independence July 4, 1946, the United States retained the rights to maintain its large naval base at Clark Field, Subic Bay (south of Manila). During the early Cold War era, the U.S. Navy enrolled up to 2,000 Filipinos annually, out of tens of thousands who applied.<sup>50</sup> For a large

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<sup>49</sup> The State of the Region, “Filipino American Community of Hampton Roads,” Old Dominion University.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

part of the twentieth century, almost all post-1965 Filipino-American immigrants arrived in the Hampton Roads area via U.S. military recruitment or by way of marriage to a military officer. Filipino military enlistment has been almost entirely concentrated in the U.S. Navy.

Filipino women have largely immigrated to Hampton Roads as wives of Filipino and American servicemen. A majority of these women were medical professionals; as a result of their professional skills and due to the landmark Immigration Act of 1965 that eliminated national-origin quotas, their paths toward U.S. citizenship were made that much easier.<sup>51</sup> Notably, since the 1970s, as the U.S. has increasingly recruited foreign-trained nurses, often from the Philippines, at least 25,000 Filipino nurses arrived between 1966 and 1985. Filipino nurses are commonly employed in hospitals in the surrounding areas of Virginia Beach and Norfolk, as well as other medical institutions in Hampton Roads. For Filipino enlistees, the U.S. Navy offered a stable income and steady path toward U.S. citizenship for themselves and their families. The U.S. Navy, therefore, is primarily responsible for this distinctive pattern of immigration and the subsequently large demographic presence of Filipino-Americans in this region.<sup>52</sup>

Given that all my interviewees were all military veterans, married to one, or shared at least one family member (for example, a second-generation Filipino-American whose father served in the military), Father Dimaano accurately describes how the U.S. military influence on Filipino-Americans is tied into indebtedness: These Filipino-Americans express indebtedness because it is unlikely they would have gained American citizenship without the U.S. Navy recruitment, or that “the truth is some families were not, wouldn’t have been able to come to or migrate to the United States without the United States Navy.” Because the United States

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

historically recruited Filipino-Americans via the U.S. Navy, most Filipino-Americans believe they are particularly indebted to the nation-state because the nature of military service is in and of itself an agreement to honor and serve the United States. Moreover, given that tens of thousands of Filipinos applied for the U.S. Navy and only a minority of these applicants gained acceptance, the highly competitive nature of the application process for U.S. military service also partly illustrates what indebtedness means, why Filipino-Americans are particularly grateful for the opportunity to come to the United States (via the Navy), and how Filipino-Americans link their military service and citizenship status to indebtedness. As shared previously, Filipino-Americans feel a sense of indebtedness, and this feeling is partly tied to their historical background of U.S. military service. Building on this idea, in the next section, I will explore how indebtedness is tied to contribution and fulfillment of debt.

### **Why Filipino-Americans May Feel Indebted to the United States**

#### *How Indebtedness is Tied to Contribution or Fulfillment of Debt*

The idea of contribution is another key aspect of indebtedness. Because Filipino-Americans view their U.S. citizenship as a blessing from God, many feel they should “give back” to the nation-state’s advancement in some small way in order to show gratitude for this “blessing.” For example, Ms. Dajao, who is highly civically engaged in Gawad Kalinga<sup>53</sup> and partly involved in Filipino-American CAG, shares that she is involved in the community because it is important to “just give back, giving back to people who need the help, giving back to others in our own communities, supporting our own community.” In this case, part of indebtedness is a feeling of gratitude and another part is the fulfillment of that sense of gratitude through working to contribute some service to the community and to the American society.

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<sup>53</sup> Gawad Kalinga’s central mission is: “Building communities to end poverty.” Gawad Kalinga’s mission statement is “building a nation empowered by people with faith and patriotism; a nation made up of caring and sharing communities, dedicated to eradicate poverty and restore human dignity.”

In regard to contribution, to illustrate this point, another interviewee, Ms. Carunugan, a nurse and the President of the Philippine Nurses Association of Virginia (PNAVA), states a sense of indebtedness for her American citizenship as a blessing from God. She feels that she can fulfill her indebtedness through her civic engagement and political involvement in the public sphere. Specifically, when asked why she is involved in various organizations like the Filipino-American Community Action Group (Filipino-American CAG), a political organization that promotes increased Filipino-American political representation and visibility in the Hampton Roads area and the Philippines or the PNAVA, she responds:

Why not? We feel very blessed. We have a lot to contribute, not only in our education, profession but financially; we are blessed. So why should we not? That's one way of showing our kids that they are responsible citizens, that we are responsible citizens. We believe in role modeling for our children and for the youth that know us. Because to us, it's returning back favors, returning back blessings, it's giving back a legacy that we cannot carry when we die. It's the legacy we want to leave behind that we made a little bit of a difference; we made a little bit of contribution in whatever way we can. /To me it's sense of belonging and sense of contribution. When you belong, you have a sense of responsibility to contribute. If you don't want to contribute, you better not belong. And when I say contribute; it can be your knowledge, your skills, and your money, time, treasure, and talent. If you cannot contribute any of those, if not all, you better not belong. You're [a] dead piece.

Much like Dr. Dimaporo, Ms. Carungan perceives indebtedness in highly religious terms. Ms. Carungan feels indebted to the U.S. and her U.S. citizenship is seen as a blessing. Because Ms. Carunugan feels indebted to the host country, she wants to “return back favors, return back blessings” or contributes through being a “responsible citizen” and modeling this citizenship for her children. What does contribution mean, then? Ms. Carungan's explanation entails “knowledge, your skills, and your money. Time, treasure, and talent.” This sentiment also illustrates that contributions to the American nation-state can be made at both the individual and collective level, and to the capacity that each person is able to perform. In other words, if a person does not have money then they may have time to contribute, or perhaps knowledge or

skills. To reinforce this point, Ms. Carunugan notes that Filipino-Americans “have a lot to contribute” and it is contributing that is at the heart of being “responsible citizens.” Essentially, a sense of indebtedness for “belonging” goes hand-in-hand with contributing and, according to Ms. Carunugan, “if you don’t want to contribute, you better not belong” or else those who do not contribute are considered a “dead piece.” If one does not repay their debt through contributions in some small way, by means of “time, treasure, or talent,” then a person “better not belong” since they are not advancing this country in any proper or meaningful way.

This accountability that Ms. Carunugan vividly describes also suggests that every Filipino-American should, in some way, be able to contribute to the advancement of the American nation-state. Mr. Casama, who was the first Filipino-American to run for the Virginia Beach City Council and, although retired, is highly civically engaged and politically involved, also shares Ms. Carunugan’s sentiment about collective responsibility. Casama notes that it is important to “not all [help] in the Filipino community outside also.” In other words, Casama is explaining that Filipino-Americans should not only help their ethnic co-peers, but in the larger community as well. When asked why, he shared this metaphor:

It is so important because I have my other example, string on a broom. I will give my example by the string broom. If there only two string brooms that are cleaning the community it cannot clean too much. But if there are a bunch of string brooms bunched them together you can lot clean lots of things but if only one or two only cleaning you cannot do the work so good. The more the better.

This metaphor supports the idea that part of the repayment of debt is to contribute, and not simply on an individual level, but through a collective sense of responsibility that Filipino-Americans should feel to “clean lots of things” or contribute to the nation-state. Casama continues to elaborate on this metaphor, explaining that the importance of being involved means to “find out what needs to be done for the betterment of the community for the betterment of the

individual...To help them to help to suggest what they can do to preserve the life a little bit longer. That is part of my human sense, not only religion but human sense. The sense to help those people that need to be helped. That is not the problem of them.” Therefore, for Casama, as for almost all of my interviewees, indebtedness is inextricably tied to religion.

While Filipino-Americans like Ms. Carunugan and Dimaporo have strongly contributed to this country, overall, I should note that within this Hampton Roads community, there are distinctive ideas of what it means to contribute. This feeling is a somewhat nuanced and complicated belief. What contribution entails, for Filipino-Americans, is a strong desire to repay indebtedness, but the ways in which this repayment occurs needs further discussion. In the next section I will shed further light on how contribution plays out among Filipino-Americans in this community.

*Filipinos are Highly Civically Engaged but Not Active and Critical Political Supporters*

Throughout my interviews and fieldwork, I observed that while Filipino-Americans are enthusiastic to contribute their “time, treasure, or talent,” they tended to be highly civically involved but not active and critically engaged in politics. Filipino-Americans acknowledge indebtedness and believe that in order to fulfill this obligation they must contribute, as discussed earlier. But it appears that Filipino-Americans limit the extent to which they allow themselves to connect to the public sphere. I investigated why Filipino-Americans are highly civically engaged but not active in politics. Father Dimaano sheds light on this inquiry:

Yes, because some families, if not most families, were able to come over to the U.S. through the United States Navy. So it's our way, maybe, [of] respecting the manner in which we were able to come and bring our families here and not be involved. *Utang ng loob*, yes, that's another Filipino trait which, again, is influenced highly by one's faith by one's religion, especially, maybe I would say, the Christian religion that we are indebted, that we are indebted to God, and we are indebted to anyone who did us any good, any form, you know. So to be active in meaning to say [that] we are active in...supporting politics here but we are not so active in being critical supporters.



As noted earlier in this chapter, Dimaano explains that many Filipino-Americans in the Hampton Roads community feel indebtedness to the United States because it was precisely through the United States Navy these that Filipinos secured the path toward citizenship for themselves and their family members. Dimaano's comments illuminate why Filipino-Americans largely limit their involvement to civic engagement and religious activities: due to this *utang ng loob*, or indebtedness, being a good citizen means "respecting the manner in which we were able to come and bring our families here and not be involved." This implies that, while Filipino-Americans are highly civically engaged, it may appear to them to be ungracious and disrespectful to the nation-state that did them "good" by blessing them with U.S. citizenship if they are "active in being critical supporters." Therefore, Filipino-Americans are less likely to become actively connected to the political public sphere. Essentially, being a good citizen for Filipino-Americans means giving back civically but not being critical of the U.S. government or becoming actively engaged in American politics.

While politically active Filipino-Americans like Ms. Carunugan, the head nurse in the Philippine Nurses Association of Virginia (PNAVA) and Filipino-American Community Action Group (Filipino-American CAG) member, and Kalaw, head of the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA) and former Filipino-American CAG president, exist, it is clear that indebtedness limits many Filipino-Americans' political involvement. Pastor Habalo elaborates this point by explaining that the reluctance to become politically involved has a religious foundation. When asked whether Filipino-Americans' political activities are shaped by God, Pastor Habalo stated that "it's almost secondary. The Bible says or God says, our devotion first is to God, and then our next devotion is to our fellow man. And then government is part of a life. The Bible says obey the government. Obey the government." It appears that for

some Filipino-Americans, part and parcel of good citizenship means to “obey the government” since the bible says to, and since such obedience is also “respecting the manner” in which they were able to come to the United States. In this case, Pastor Habalo encouraged Filipino-Americans to get involved outside their respective churches and volunteer within the community:

Yes, I encouraged the Filipinos or even the Americans, encouraged them to go and be with the merchant seamen who come to Norfolk to help them, make them feel at home, and help them in any way to help buy their grocery, their food. Even now. Get involved with helping people who are having difficulties in the community, either young people’s problem or marriage problem, do what you can to help them with their problem, financial or spiritual need. When there’s a disaster to go volunteer like my son-in-law. He went to New Orleans after Katrina.

Compellingly, Habalo strongly encouraged civic activities such as helping merchant seamen, responding to natural disasters, or helping with “difficulties in the community,” but conspicuously did not mention political activity. To clarify, I asked whether he encouraged the Filipino community to become politically engaged outside their church, and he responded, “Maybe a little, but within the group they discussed politics. But going out, ‘no’ they are not strong in that, not that far.”

This point is supported and illuminated by Dr. Dimaporo. Dimaporo shared that people like and trust him and that people have approached him to run for political office. While highly civically engaged in the community, Dimaporo has declined these requests for political engagement. When asked why, Dimaporo shared that he simply felt lucky to be a citizen, and that, because of his first-generation U.S. citizenship status, he felt that there were limitations on the role he could play in the larger society:

I was just very fortunate. I always tell people, when people start: Oh I'm the luckiest man on earth. You better talk to me first: whose luckier, you or me? Because I will tell you why I'm so lucky: I've been so blessed...my work, my volunteerism, my humanitarianism, exigencies, are through mainstream America. That's what I always have on my mind because I am an immigrant ancestor my adopted country and I just you know have to blend...

In response to his sense of his indebtedness to the United States, Dimaporo primarily gives back to the community and country at-large through his internationally recognized humanitarian and civic contributions. Dimaporo suggests that it is his United States citizenship that empowers him to volunteer and to give back to the community, though he also believes that he has to “blend” in the country, or not rock the boat, so-to-speak. Dimaporo’s comment that he has to “blend” strongly overlaps with Father Dimaano’s point about *utang ng loob*; namely, because Dimaporo feels indebtedness for his U.S. citizenship, he does not feel it is appropriate for him to be critical of the U.S. government. By running for and attaining a political appointment, Dimaporo feels that he may be put in a position to act independently, even perhaps to criticize the U.S. government. Consequently, Dimaporo has deliberately limited his political engagement, even despite encouragement and requests from the community. On the other hand, Dimaporo optimistically states that his children, second-generation Filipino-Americans who were born in the United States, do not share these limitations and could transcend his achievements and contributions, and run for office. Dimaporo, who became naturalized as a U.S. citizenship via the military, believes that, since his children were born in the United States, they do not have any “limitations” or indebtedness to fulfill because the U.S. is their country of birth, or origin.

Essentially, Dimaporo distinguishes between civic and political engagement, and shies away from political engagement because he believes that due to his *utang ng loob*, he must “blend” and fulfill his indebtedness through civic engagement and humanitarian acts, but not political activism. While Filipino-American immigrants believe that it is important for them to contribute to America’s development and to civically engage rather than be politically active, in the next section, I explore how Filipino-Americans’ desire for the American nation-state to

officially recognize that they contribute to America's development is also part of the fulfillment of *utang ng loob*.

*Desire for Recognition as Fulfillment of Debt*

How do Filipino-Americans understand their desire for recognition? Their desire for recognition stems from their concern to fulfill their debt of American citizenship. In order to fulfill this debt, Filipino-Americans believe that it is important for the nation-state to recognize their contributions to the country, as Ms. Dakila explains: "We try to build the reputation of the community." To that end, on the local and national level, Filipino-American CAG and NaFFAA members like Ms. Dakila and Mr. Kalaw attempt to increase recognition from the nation-state for Filipinos' contributions. One specific way that these organizations attempt to secure official recognition from the nation-state is through key pieces of legislation that formally recognize the contributions and sacrifices Filipinos have indeed made for the positive development of the country. For instance, Mr. Dimasuay officially legislated the Bataan Day of Valor through the Virginia General Assembly:

On the other hand, on the state level, the Bataan Association, Bataan Memorial, so to speak, memorial celebration because you know the Bataan Death March, there is always some kind of Day of Valor, Bataan Day of Valor in the state of Virginia. So every year it has to be passed by the state assembly. So I told my friend [Kalaw], why don't we make it permanent? Let's talk to one of our state delegates and see if he can sponsor it to make it permanent. And that's what we did. We approached him. [He was not the governor at that time but] he was still a delegate. So what happens there is I called his office, "Bob we need your help...." ...by the time, you know, it, it was passed by the General Assembly as permanent...Bataan Day of Valor.

The Bataan Day of Valor holds historical significance for Filipino-American military war veterans because this holiday honors Filipinos' World War II involvement: After the Battle of Bataan in the Philippines from January 7<sup>th</sup> to April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1942, which ended with the surrender of the American garrison, the Japanese forced marched Filipino and American prisoners of war for

70 miles. Historically known as the Bataan Death March, Japanese soldiers starved and tortured both Filipino and American soldiers throughout this march, leading to the deaths of 18,000-20,000 prisoners of war. Dimasuay strongly values this officially designated holiday because, through legislating the Bataan Day of Valor, the United States officially recognizes the historical sacrifices that Filipino-American veterans have made to the nation-state.

Another form of official recognition that Filipinos have demanded from the United States involves military benefits. Alongside Dimasuay's desire for official recognition via state-appointed Filipino holidays like the Bataan Day of Valor (from the United States for historical military service), Kalaw also notes that he hopes that the United States someday will legislate equal benefits to Filipinos who served during World War II. Kalaw explained that Filipino veterans who reside in the Philippines are paid a lesser benefit than those whom reside in the United States. Kalaw hopes to gain financial parity for Filipino veterans who reside in the Philippines:

I was championing the issues of the Filipino veterans, especially in the Philippines, to be recognized equally with the Filipino veterans residing here in America. My multiple objectives [are since] the Filipino veterans residing in America will be receiving \$15,000, then the Filipino veterans that are residing in the Philippines are not American citizens but they should be given equal or same amounts. They fought during World War II, World War II veterans. Yeah, compensation could be a pension, a monthly pension, damages to be awarded to them for their service. Actually World War II in the Philippines is not a Filipino war; it is an American war because the Philippines at that time was a commonwealth. It was successful in some way because although the original idea that we fought for does not really materialize as we expected, there was some kind of award or reward that comes up to \$15,000 for the Filipino veterans residing here in America. For those Filipino veterans residing in the Philippines, they receive \$9,000...this is [the] kind of recognition, although it falls short in what we really wanted for them...at least there is something.

Although Kalaw was unable to secure the full \$15,000 benefits (for Filipinos in the Philippines) that Filipino-Americans received for their WWII service, he played a major role to pass the bill that secured \$9,000, which was better than “nothing.” Equally important for Kalaw

was the symbolic value of establishing some justice with this pension. Procuring the well-deserved military pension for WWII veterans symbolizes that the United States officially recognized Filipinos' contributions to America's WWII effort, as Kalaw emphasizes:

"Compensation could be a pension, a monthly pension, damages to be awarded to them for their service. Actually World War II in the Philippines is not a Filipino War, it is an American war. Because the Philippines at that time was a commonwealth." This attempt to gain official recognition from the United States is an aspect of the ambiguous and ever-changing historical experiences of Filipino military veterans in respect to citizenship, discussed further below.

Part of Filipinos being inscribed into the American imaginary has been a historically precarious and delicate dance between the partial and liminal recognition of Filipinos as U.S. citizens, and official recognition of their full citizenship status. As I will discuss further below, it is clear from U.S. historical national discourse on Filipino-Americans that, historically, U.S. policy-makers, the media, and the American public have condescendingly described them as "little brown bothers" and, as with other ethnic/minority groups, the U.S. only granted partial American citizenship rights to Filipino-Americans via various legislative processes during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (e.g., ending previous restrictions on property ownership, job discrimination, interracial marriage, access to various public bathrooms, etc). Therefore, many Filipinos have had to negotiate the disparity between their apparent discriminatory experiences as a result of partial citizenship rights with the official public discourse of full citizenship status.

In respect to Filipinos' military involvement, full citizenship status means not being excluded from public recognition for their historical contributions—Filipinos' involvement in World War II and the Bataan Death March, as well as their ongoing contributions to America's war efforts. Without clear recognition of Filipino veterans' contributions, Filipinos' indebtedness

remains unfulfilled and their sense of citizenship becomes diminished. Since part and parcel of fulfilling indebtedness as a U.S. citizen is not being a “dead piece” as Ms. Carunugan noted, then official legislative acts of recognition for Filipinos’ military and war service illustrate that Filipino-Americans, from their point of view, are repaying their debt to the United States, often repaying in blood. Thus, indebtedness also means receiving public recognition for the contributions made to the nation-state. Ultimately, Filipino-American CAG and NaFFAA’s commitment in restoring WWII benefits for Navy veterans and legislative recognition of the Bataan Day of Valor are all part of fulfilling *utang ng loob* since recognition for contributions to the nation-state is part of repaying one’s debt.

*The Role of Religion: How Filipino-Americans’ Religiosity Shapes their Understandings of Indebtedness*

In this section, I highlight how religion plays a central role in Filipino-Americans’ understandings of indebtedness. Gumabay, who is highly religiously involved at St. Gregory the Great Church, shares that without God “I don’t think I can function whatsoever...At the end of the day...what did you do to my brothers? That’s what I go by every day. It’s not the prefix or suffix of my name, actually I don’t want any of these things, it’s “what did you do to the least of my people?” Gumabay applies Bible verse<sup>54</sup> when he refers to “what did you do to my brothers” to his civic engagement in organizations like Operation Smile and in the greater community. Specifically, he applies God’s principles to help the least fortunate because helping the least fortunate is concomitant with helping God, or one of God’s children. In similar fashion to Gumabay, Mr. Kabaitan, who is highly involved at St. Gregory, also directly refers to God as part of the reason why she gives back to the community:

Once you have the Lord in your heart, the focus is not on yourself, it just changed me. I

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<sup>54</sup> Matthew 25:40: “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me,” NIV Bible.

want to do more for Him. Because these are your people, this is what the Lord wants you to do. God is in the poor people. When you serve the least of my brethren it is like serving me. If you love the lovable what good is that? So you love the difficult to love. His promises are good but His teachings are hard to follow, but because what He gave me grace to be able to get those words and I try to apply it.

Here, Kabaitan clearly states that she wants to “apply” God’s teachings and do “what the Lord wants you to do.” For Kabaitan, “God is in the poor people,” (an application of Bible verse Matthew 25:40 and a sentiment reflected in Gumabay’s corresponding question, “What did you do to my brothers?”). It appears that both believe that when they help others they also serve God. Ms. Catapang, who is also highly involved at St. Gregory and in the Wari-Wari Association, her hometown association from the Philippines, comments that, in respect to her civic engagement, she is involved for a

...sense of togetherness, sense of community. It's all voluntary. Being a part of the group, cohesiveness and the love that you feel. Religion and my relationship to God is foremost to me. It has a strong influence. Like the Perpetual Help here in the Station for Cross for God and also the Knights of from Columbus, is also for God. Helping people is for God. Whatever I do, God is in my mind and all my actions I'm trying.

Like Kabaitan and Gumabay, Ms. Catapang also comments that “helping people is for God” and that whatever she does is for God is “in [her] mind and all the...actions [she is] trying.” Mr.

Katindig, a choir singer at St. Gregory and Free Masonry member, feels similarly and states that

You always put God first. The first thing you would ask is who do you put your trust? Of course, God. It helps you out. You know when you're helping people it's a good feeling. And no matter how small your charity is, it is never forgotten no matter how small it is. All these things tied up together in the end. No matter will do whatever you do in masonry, on or in the Filipino-American ministry choir, your faith is always there being Catholic.

Kabaitan, Gumabay, and Ms. Catapang are all in strong agreement with Calma: all put God first and feel that when they help others they serve God, “no matter how small it is.” For them, God is a driving force that influences how they think about their civic engagement and thus how they behave outside their religious communities. Ms. Cuyugan, another St. Gregory member who is



also highly civically engaged in the community, stresses the central role that religion plays in respect to indebtedness:

I went to medical missions in the Philippines when it was still Arnel Pineda foundation, and there it kind of changed to me in a way. It made me realize that, although I lived in the Philippines for 21 years of my life, I never really had an idea of how poor people were. I mean, I've seen them, you know all that, but I mean God blessed me with a lifestyle or life; we are not so poor, we are not so rich, kind of like middle-class, so the interaction with the poor were not there. ...So I said I'm going to join the jewelry business. Whatever I earn, some of that profit will go to the foundation. So there is something in there, our friendship is bound by this calling to serve the very poor in the Philippines and it's kind of different. I believe that without my faith and my religion I probably would not be doing what I'm doing. Probably not at, cannot say, if and when all I can say is what is now. So I know that if my belief and my faith in God, then that's why I am able to continue. That's why I am doing what I'm doing. God said that what you do to the least of my people you do to me. Even the children, if you made a difference somehow, that's a way of being like, okay God, I am doing my job.

Ms. Cuyugan clearly feels a “calling” to serve God by helping those less fortunate because “God said that what you do to the least of my people you do to me,” a strikingly similar formulation that Kabaitan, Gumabay, Ms. Catapang, and Katingding all shared. She also states that she feels that God “blessed” her with a “lifestyle or life,” namely her American lifestyle, that would not be possible without her U.S. citizenship. By helping the “very very poor in the Philippines,” Ms. Cuyugan feels that she is “doing [her] job” to serve God and to make a “difference.” Ms. Carunugan best encapsulates how religion influences notions of indebtedness, and the ethos of how other Filipino-Americans describe the role of religion in their lives in respect to indebtedness:

Well, to me my religion, my faith, is the foundation of my well-being. Any success I have I give tribute to my creator. Because it's my upbringing that you give back, you do good. Those are the very reasons why [I] do the things that I do, be it giving money, be it giving service, be it, you know carrying the load of other people, I can be of help. That's the thing, the service. The service you give back to the community. Service you give back to other people is the same service that the Lord showed us we can do for each other.

Ultimately, religion shapes Filipino-Americans’ understanding of indebtedness. They interpret

their citizenship as a “blessing” and feel they have to do “service” and “give back to the community” as a way to repay their indebtedness and show gratitude, not only to the nation-state, but to also to show gratitude for the “same service that the Lord showed us we can do for each other.” I should also note that Filipino-Americans’ sense of indebtedness means not only civically engaging in the U.S., but also engaging in the Philippines, as shown in the above quotes. In other words, indebtedness is tied to transnational civic engagement among Filipinos, who feel a “calling” to help the “very very poor in the Philippines,” as evidenced by Ms. Cuyugan’s comments. Other examples discussed previously include medical missions, like Gawad Kalinga, for instance.

### **We Contribute Because of Our History**

The history of Filipino-American citizenship has been one of historically tenuous and ambivalent status. Notions of belonging to the nation-state have fluctuated with various pieces of U.S. legislation that changed Filipinos’ citizenship status, redefining what citizenship entailed. The 1940 Nationality Act defined Philippine “nationals as fully invested members of the American nation-state,” on one hand. On the other, Filipinos “occupied a second-tier status within the U.S. polity, and their claims on state resources and protections were bounded” (Baldoz, 2011, p 204). For example, pre-1965 Filipinos who arrived on the West coast in cities like Stockton, California were confronted with signs on doors that stated “Positively No Filipinos Allowed” (Kramer, 2006, p 404). Although the 1940 Nationality Act formally defined citizens as “fully invested members” of the United States, racist signs like the aforementioned illustrate the frequent incompatibility between American benevolent national discourse and anti-Filipino nativist perceptions.

In tandem with the official administrative U.S.-Philippines relationship, the U.S. military

also shaped discourses and understandings of Filipino-American citizenship, reinforcing Filipinos' nebulous citizenship status. During the World War I era, the 1914 Naturalization Act attempted to define Filipinos' citizenship status and rewarded "foreign enlistees with citizenship, but it remained unclear whether Filipinos were actually eligible under this provision, since they were technically classified as "aliens" (Baldoz, 2011, p 83). Subsequently, even though many Filipinos enlisted to serve in the U.S. military, Filipinos felt ambivalent about this service since "as a class of persons [they] remained racially ineligible for citizenship in the United States even though they were now subject to military conscription" (Baldoz, 2011, p 207). Ultimately, even though many Filipinos attempted to legitimate their loyalty to the United States through military service, their citizenship status remained insecure, both at the legislative level but also in respect to the barriers to inequality in the United States at that time (e.g., laws regarding landholding eligibility, racial intermarriage, and occupational segregation).

Filipino-Americans' desire for formal recognition by the American nation-state makes clearer sense in light of this ambivalent history. Contentions over citizenship and full recognition have marked Filipinos as holding an inferior status, not only racially, but also materially due to the discriminatory experiences of Filipinos who first migrated to the West coast. Moreover, given that American national discourse historically framed Filipinos as "little brown brothers" and that the U.S. saw its colonial relationship to the Philippines as a part of the "white man's burden," this postcolonial context also clarifies why interviewees like Kalaw stress the need for recognition within the nation-state, insisting that Filipinos are not indeed a "burden." The reader may ask that, if Filipinos recognize and resent their historically inferior status, why would they feel a sense of indebtedness to the nation-state, given this racialized history? I argue that part of Filipinos' indebtedness may be attributed to a sense of uncertainty and concern as a holdover

from their history, as implied by Kalaw:

But we are here in America. For us to accomplish our recognition, because we would like to be recognized here in America. We are not just in numbers here in America. We are a group of people that contributed so much economically here in America. Filipinos are not being recognized as part of the community. We are being overlooked by the community as if we didn't exist. And I would like that to change. I would like to change the mainstream in society, the way they treat us, they look upon us....

Kalaw laments that the United States does not recognize Filipino-Americans “as part of the community,” although they have “contributed so much economically here in America.” To date, Filipino-Americans remain “overlooked by the community as if [they didn't exist],” and he would like to change this dominant perception.

Historical discourses on citizenship shape understandings of Filipino-American-ness. Discussed earlier in this chapter, the scholarly literature on the historical national discourse on the Philippines and Filipino-Americans and the transient status of their citizenship have partly contributed to Filipino-Americans' sensitivity regarding citizenship. Moreover, because the public sphere and government administration rarely recognizes Filipino-Americans' historical and current contributions, Filipino-Americans are highly sensitive and express concern whether their contributions are worthy of recognition by the United States. It is precisely these paternalistic discourses about Filipinos and their questionable historical citizenship status that contribute to a felt need on the part of Filipino-Americans to repay indebtedness and to ‘prove’ that Filipinos are indeed a positive part of the United States' history and development. Filipinos' sense of their indebtedness and the need to repay this debt may also come from a desire to show that Filipinos are ‘worthy’ of U.S. citizenship and to demonstrate that citizenship was not a squandered blessing, so-to-speak. Subsequently, due to this lack of acknowledgement and public recognition for their contributions, Filipino-Americans feel anxious because this lack of

acknowledgement ultimately undermines their confidence as to whether their indebtedness is actually being appropriately repaid to the host country, or the United States.

To illustrate this point, Pastor Habalo, a retired Protestant minister, reports that it is important to be involved in the community, and that “anybody, or any culture, or any country that don’t get involved, that’s a ‘no no.’ You’re a part of the community; you might even be part of the problem. So you go there and see if you can solve the problem.” Both Ms. Carunugan and Pastor Habalo share a similar sense of indebtedness and general concern that *not* being involved could be interpreted as unacceptable behavior. Much like Ms. Carunugan and Pastor Habalo, Kalaw, the current president of the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA) and Filipino-American CAG member, shares a similar sentiment regarding the value of contributing to the host nation as part of repaying debt:

One thing I would like to see in our culture or our Filipino community [is to] earn that kind of recognition, due respect because, for one thing, we are helping this country in so many ways in economics, politics, in research, you know? Medical fields, engineering, what have you. And I would like those people to be recognized. And I want the mainstream America [to know] that we are here unlike other countries who are becoming a burden of the society. We are a builder of the society. We are not a burden to them. I want to empower our community politically, socially, and economically. I would like to see that in my lifetime.

It is clear from this quote that Kalaw strongly desires some official American recognition that Filipino-Americans are “builder[s] of the society.” This anxiety may partly stem from the Filipino-American history discussed above. Given that American national historical discourse racialized and problematized Filipinos’ citizenship status (through key pieces of legislation, as noted above), these debates in and of themselves questioned whether Filipinos could be worthy of full citizenship rights and status. This quote illuminates how Filipinos appear to be sensitive to whether the United States “respects” their contributions and whether they are seen as worthy citizens who do not “burden” the U.S., but instead are seen as “helping this country in so many

ways in economics, politics, in research,” thus legitimizing that Filipino-Americans are indeed worthy of full citizenship status:

Our goal is to empower our community politically, socially, and of course socially, but the most important thing is [to] empower ourselves to bring recognition of what our contributions [are] to the mainstream because I know we've got a lot of contribution[s] in this community, socially, politically, economically. Those are the major empowerments that we would like to accomplish...economically, politically, socially. Our doctors, our personnel in [the] medical field—we got some also in the political field that are slowly and gradually being recognized. Some of our Filipinos [are] being elected in state and [at the] national level. Yeah, we have one in National level congressman in Ohio.

Thus, Filipino-Americans like Kalaw<sup>55</sup> wish for the United States to recognize their contributions in order to feel their indebtedness has been repaid to the host nation. Kalaw's concerned and impassioned tone is of poignant interest since, as I have discussed, Filipinos are largely absent from the public sphere and are rarely mentioned or underrepresented in other spheres of their lives (such as academia, education, or the media, etc.). In the above quote, Kalaw attempts to show that Filipinos are indeed represented in various spheres of life “economically, politically, [and] socially,” even pointing out that Filipinos are increasing their representation within the political public sphere through being “elected in the state and [at the] national level,” like one Filipino who is elected as a “national level congressmen in Ohio.”

It appears that Mr. Dimasuay resonates with Kalaw's thinking. He also appears sensitive to the lack of official historical recognition for the accomplishments of Filipino-Americans:

Because the way I look at it, is when we're in the navy, because we are stewards at that time, before I changed to administration, they always look down at us, because although you are a college graduate, they look down on you because of your job. I said, “We have to erase that standard of mindset from them to put ourselves on that same level. Even though we are stewards we have to talk to them eye to eye, see them eye to eye. Because when we see them eye to eye, and show them that we can handle the job much better than they are, then the respect starts coming in.” And that's what I've been telling everyone else. “Don't look down, look up, see them eye to eye. And discuss an issue with them eye

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<sup>55</sup> I should note that Kalaw is an example of a Filipino-American who is highly politically engaged, and while he affiliates as Catholic, is highly critical of the Catholic Church. He attributes the Catholic Church for perpetuating a “colonial mentality” among Filipino-Americans that “holds them back.”

to eye. And be serious.” And that’s what I’ve been telling the politicians. Whatever position they are in. If you come to us for assistance, or votes, and you promise us to help us on issue and you didn’t deliver, we’ll fight. They’ll act surprised that I am very frank with them. But their respect increases. I don’t go around the bushes.

Dimasuay shares from his experiences in the U.S. Navy that “they always look down at us” because, despite his college degree, Dimasuay was forced to serve as a navy steward. Like Kalaw, Dimasuay attempts to gain recognition from the U.S., so that the “respect starts coming in.”

While most Filipino-Americans share a cultural sense of indebtedness, not everyone subscribes or identifies with this feeling. Below I will discuss contested notions of indebtedness that stem from Filipino-American history. In other words, while the dominant narrative for the majority of Filipino-Americans is of indebtedness, a counternarrative that questions *utang ng loob* persists as an undercurrent in Filipino-American culture. This counternarrative emerges partly because some Filipino-Americans are highly skeptical of their history and role in the United States.

### **The Influence of Philippine Politics on Post-1965 Immigrants’ Connections to the American Public Sphere**

As with *utang ng loob*, it is important to note that immigrants’ personal political histories from the homeland also influence their entry into and participation in the political public sphere of the new nation-state into which they have immigrated. In short, the particularities of Philippine political history and immigrants’ personal experiences in Philippine politics influence their lack of political engagement in the U.S. The Philippines’ recent history has been troubled and turbulent, with major political strife and governmental corruption. Many of these post-1965 immigrants I have interviewed were young adults during the Fidel Marcos dictatorship, and most presidencies afterward, including the current administration under Gloria Maccapagal Arroyo,

have been involved in some form of major corruption. In 2007, for example, The Political and Economic Risk Consultancy (PERC) survey ranked the Philippines as the most corrupt among thirteen countries in Asia.<sup>56</sup> The survey was distributed to expatriate businessmen in the Philippines. PERC asked them the following: “How big is the problem of corruption in terms of being a feature influencing the overall business environment?” Respondents reported a rating of 9.40 out of 10. Other similar studies have attempted to measure perceptions of corruption in the Philippines, such as Pulse Asia, the Ibon Foundation, Transparency International, the Makati Business Club, and Social Weather Stations. These surveys consistently report major problems regarding graft and government corruption. Mr. Galasinao, a police officer who is active in Filipino-American CAG, highly civically engaged at the Philippine Cultural Center, and attends Catholic Church, notes how the Philippines’ political history influences Filipinos’ lack of political engagement in the United States:

I would probably say that, because it's the Filipinos or the Philippines, [they] never experienced any political, we never subjugated ourselves to politics in the Philippines. If you asked your father or anybody else that you know in the Philippines, you can buy votes. They never suppressed the ability for you to go out there and vote. They never stop you to go out there and vote. So there's no inclination to anyone to why we should be. We should aspire to get involved in politics. Politics in the Philippines, same as, because we've never been suppressed. We never get, other countries the right to vote was suppressed and being dictated. In the Philippines, it's not. We're encouraged to go out and vote along with an envelope. So when you approach your Filipino to register and vote, the first thing they are going ask is, where's my envelope?

Galasinao’s account of his experiences of politics in the homeland indicates the historically deep pattern of corruption among politicians. When Galasinao mentions the “envelope,” he gestures toward the rampant bribery that persists in the Philippines—the expectation among public officials that they will be offered bribes for their services. While

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<sup>56</sup>For more detail, please check the Asia Foundation and *New York Times*: < <http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2007/03/28/in-the-philippines-is-it-the-most-corrupt-country-in-asia/>> & <<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/13/business/worldbusiness/13iht-peso.4891792.html>>



Filipinos are encouraged to vote, the elections do not offer a truly democratic process, since it is possible to buy votes. Therefore, it seems that Filipinos' political experience in the Philippines shapes their perception of politics in the United States: 56% of Filipino-Americans report that the U.S. offers more political freedoms than their homeland, and 38% report that political freedoms are similar in the U.S. and the Philippines.<sup>57</sup> Since the Filipino constitution is modeled after the American constitution, it may also lead to more wariness of the American government and political activity or, if not, a simple detachment from American politics because of Filipinos' personal history of ineffective, nondemocratic political engagement in their homeland. Mr. Dimasuay strongly agrees with Galasinao on the prevalence of political corruption the Philippines. Dimasuay states:

You have to understand the cultural development we have in the Philippines. And that's what they are bringing back here. It is preventing them, [the] majority of our folks, and I don't blame them. Majority of our folks are coming from little barrios, small towns, from all over. So politics there is opposite. Totally opposite. The politicians are buying votes. They take the votes with them. So they only get involved when they get the money, and they vote for the person that's giving them the bigger money. Now that is the political side.

Like Galasinao, Dimasuay acknowledges the corruption that stems from bribery and "buying votes." Therefore, Filipinos' personal encounters and experiences with politics have not revealed a democratic process, but one that is highly corrupt. These historical political experiences have left Filipinos with a tendency to be turned 'off' from politics in the U.S. Dimasuay elaborates on this idea when he is asked why Filipinos were not as politically engaged in the U.S. as he would like them to be:

I don't know...the only logical answer that we come up [with] is that we are brought up by our elders in the Philippines. Our Filipino upbringing. You know most of the Filipinos that came here in America, I guess, they are almost kind of laid off people in the Philippines. In general, most likely when they are in the Philippines, they have not

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<sup>57</sup> 2012 Asian-American Survey. Q54f. Responses of "Don't know/Refused" not shown. Pew Research Center, in "The Rise of Asian Americans," p. 115.

involved in civic activities. They are not involved in politics. If they don't have that kind of background behind you, if you're a person that's not involved in the Philippines in the politics or civic organizations. So if they don't have that kind of involvement in the Philippines, they will most likely carry that here in the States. And they might say, why I will get involved? What's in it for me? They carry the regional ties and culture.

But we are here in America. For us to accomplish our recognition, because we would like to be recognized here in America. We are not just in numbers here in America. We are a group of people that contributed so much economically here in America. You know, our nurses, our doctors, our IT's, you know, like you, you know in fact...it's sad to say, cultural and social upbringing in the Philippines carry that very much weight when they come to the States. They don't want to get involved.

Dimasuay explains that, due to the lack of efficacy of politics in the Philippines, Filipinos do not feel that they will necessarily benefit or gain fulfillment by politically engaging in the U.S. Filipinos ask questions, like "why will I get involved" and "what's in it for me?" because of their skepticism and distrust for government at-large. Their contentious history with politics and government contributes to their lack of interest and to why "they don't want to get involved" in their adopted country. Moreover, due to *utang ng loob*, it is possible that, since Filipinos do not want to 'rock the boat,' they will be even less likely to engage in politics since past experiences in the Philippines have exposed them to pervasive illegal activities like bribery and corruption.

### **Counternarrative: Filipino-Americans Contest History and Citizenship**

Although my interviews have established that the majority of Filipino-Americans in the community that I studied clearly feel indebted, some Filipino-Americans do not possess this feeling, and in fact, call into question this sentiment. Personal history and immigrant geography play a role here. In general, it appears that Filipinos from the East coast see themselves as indebted more often to the United States than West coast Filipinos, due in part to their different experiences of immigration to the U.S.

Filipino immigration to the U.S. occurred largely in three main overlapping immigrant waves. Filipinos have emigrated from the Philippines to the United States since 1898, primarily

to the West coast and Hawaii. The first wave of Filipino immigration to the United States occurred primarily between 1889-1945, and this cohort is known as the *manong* generation, or “old-timers” who comprised of young Filipino men who hoped to immigrate to the United States for better job prospects and a college education. Due to the Great Depression (as noted by Bulosan in his writings), most of these Filipinos worked as itinerant farmers on sugar, tobacco, coffee, and abacá large-scale plantations on the West Coast and Hawaii (Takaki, 1998). Known as *sakadas*, these contract Filipino farm workers grew tremendously in population size over time: In 1915, Filipinos comprised of 19% of sugar plantation employees; by 1922, 41 percent; and in 1932, 69.9% (Takaki, 1998, 15). Most of these Filipinos had not intended to stay in the United States, but some did. Prior to the Tydings-McDuffie Act in 1934, Filipinos possessed legal status as U.S. nationals due to the colonial relationship with the United States.

These “old-timers” differed in many ways from immigrants whom arrived after the 1920’s. In the second wave of immigration, the United States Navy largely recruited Filipinos to serve from 1901 to 1976. President William McKinley first signed an executive order in 1901 that allowed 500 Filipinos to serve in the Navy<sup>58</sup>. Most Filipinos eagerly joined the U.S. Navy as a way to escape poverty and to gain U.S. citizenship. Under the Nationality Act of 1940, Filipinos who honorably served in the armed forces for three years or more could obtain U.S. citizenship. Filipinos who served in the U.S. Navy were recruited across regions in the Philippines and shared similar low socioeconomic status among their co-ethnics from the Philippines and achieved middle class status in the U.S. through their naval service. Even with a college education, Filipinos were largely confined to serve as stewards (menial chores like caring for officers’ living quarters, personal servants, cooking, cleaning, etc) (Lawcock, 1975, 473). Filipinos who migrated to the United States via the military usually resided either on the East or

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<sup>58</sup><http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/filipinos.htm>

West coast of the United States—primarily due to the fact that naval bases were (and continues to be) largely concentrated in San Diego, California and Norfolk, Virginia, homes to two of the largest naval bases in the world. In the case of my interviewees, East coast Filipinos in the Hampton Roads area are primarily here due to the Norfolk Naval base. Even after retirement, Filipinos tend to settle in the Hampton Roads area due to the bustling and vibrant Filipino-American community that developed as an outgrowth of the Filipino navy community, explaining the large Filipino-American presence in this area.

The third wave attracted educated and skilled Filipino immigrants (e.g., nurses). In 1965, the United States passed the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (INA). This legislation eliminated national origins quotas and attempted to achieve family reunification among immigrant families and fill gaps in occupational shortages in the U.S. This act dramatically increased the overall number of immigrants from Asia to the United States, including Filipinos. Within the first ten years after the INA's passage, over 230,000 Filipinos had immigrated to the United States, which more than doubled the Filipino-American population of 1960.<sup>59</sup> Based on the INA, many Filipino men came by way of the U.S. military; specifically, the Navy. Filipina women; on the other hand, came by and large by way of the health industry. Specifically, by 1970, 43% of foreign nursing graduates (FNGs) whom came to the United States were from the Philippines and comprised mostly of Filipina women. The number of Filipino nurses in the United States increased by 400% from 1965 to 1972.<sup>60</sup> As recently as 1995, 81.5% of the 6,512 registered nurses who had immigrated to the United States via the H1A visa were Filipinos. The post-1965 cohort immigrants are the most regionally and socio-economically diverse (Espiritu, 1996, 41). In the case of my research, the Hampton Roads Filipinos are primarily first-

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p 37.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p 38.

generation, post-1965 immigrants. Thus, they are part of the post-1965 wave of immigrants recruited into the U.S. Navy.

Throughout this immigrant history, Filipino-Americans experienced divergent immigrant experiences partly due to geographical and generational difference. The historical period in which Filipino-Americans immigrated shaped their immigrant experience because of the various public policies shaping the contexts of immigrant reception. These immigration policies subsequently influenced Filipinos' labor experiences and group formation in the United States. The largely pre-1965 Filipino population who immigrated to the West coast experienced a distinctly different reception into the U.S. as contrasted with the largely post-1965 Filipino population who immigrated to the East coast. West coast Filipinos who migrated pre-1965 often came from working class backgrounds and worked in fish canneries or as farm hands. As discussed above, they arrived in the U.S. during a colonial period in which the U.S.-Philippines relationship took on a more paternalistic role that in effect questioned the status of Filipino citizenship (e.g., regarding landholding, intermarriage, occupational segregation) in the U.S.

Consequently, these Filipino immigrants did not share the common military background that is such a prominent aspect of the immigrant experience of their later East coast counterparts. Often underemployed and undereducated, and subject to constant discrimination, the West coast Filipinos did not see their immigrant experience as a blessing, as the East coast Filipinos do. The Filipino-American National Historical Society (FANHS), founded by Dorothy and Fred Cordova in Seattle in 1982, is one of the largest, if not the largest pan-Filipino national society in the country. There are now twenty-four FANHS chapters in all, present in nearly every major city in the U.S. This organization developed as a response to the paucity of historical research on Filipino-Americans and general recognition in American school textbooks of their contributions,

challenges, and the discrimination they faced, as well as the positive contributions they Filipinos have made to American society. The organization's mission is to "promote understanding, education, enlightenment, appreciation, and enrichment through the gathering, preservation, and dissemination of the history and culture of Filipino Americans in the United States" (FAHNS, *In Our Uncle's Words*, 2006, 1). Moreover, within the field of Filipino-studies, the society serves a need to carve out a space to develop a space for specifically Filipino-American perspectives on their American experience.

The FANHS Virginia Beach Chapter was founded in 1990 by Mr. and Mrs. Kanlungan, a husband and wife third-generation pair who came from the West coast. This chapter is the fourth oldest of the twenty-four FANHS chapters. The Virginia Beach FANHS chapter has "played a major role on the east coast in increasing the contributions of Filipino Americans in the making and shaping of today's America on a local, regional, and national level." For instance, FANHS has recently published two books that highlighted the experiences and challenges of first-generation Filipino-Americans. In 2004, FANHS published *In Our Aunties' Words: The Filipino Spirit of Hampton Roads*. The authors of this book informally interviewed eighteen first-generation Filipina-Americans, revealing how "Filipina women coped with being independent and away from family in the Philippines, how they sacrificed and struggled for a better life for their children, and how they contributed to the making of today's Filipino American community in Hampton Roads" (FANHS, 2004, 7). In 2006, FANHS volunteers (who primarily comprised of second-generation Filipino-Americans) informally interviewed thirty-two first-generation Filipino-Americans and published *In Our Uncles Words: We Fought for Freedom*. In this book, FANHS "honor[s] the stories of Filipino Uncles, immigrant Filipino men who joined the military in search of a better life in America...this project added depth to our understandings of how

Filipino Uncles coped with the profound challenge of living in America as military men, as fathers, and as leaders of our Hampton Roads community in southern Virginia” (FANHS, 2006, viii). FANHS attempts to develop community awareness of the contributions of Filipinos in the U.S. among post-1965 Filipino immigrants through these projects. Mr. Kanlungan insists on the

belief we do exist...we do have a culture...we do have a history...as Americans of Filipino ancestry...We believe Filipino American history is more than the awareness of events, the remembrance of deaths, and the memorization of dates. As descendants of colorful and courageous pioneers, we believe their inspirational stories are worth studying and preserving. Why not learn and discover Filipino American history from the makers of history? Therefore, we choose to explore the lives of our pioneers by celebrating how they lived...how they survived...how they built families...how they endured...how they felt...in making America our home. We believe Filipino American history starts at home...with family history...the price our parents paid in the past for the freedoms, we, their children, enjoy today (Bergano, 2004, 9).

Overall, through these aforementioned projects (as well as others, like local and regional conferences), FANHS has promoted efforts to raise Filipino-American consciousness by illuminating the difficult historical experiences of West coast pre-1965 immigrants as well as chronicling their unique historical struggles and contributions. I should note that FANHS is not narrating an “objective” historical record, per se, but attempting to “learn and discover Filipino American history from the makers of history.” Put short, FANHS attempts to empower Filipino-Americans and present a counter-narrative, or a new interpretation of that history.

Thus, not all Filipinos feel indebted to the United States. Place, space, and history matter. As suggested earlier, for a minority of Filipino-Americans in my study, indebtedness is seen as a naïve and false sentiment. Unlike the overwhelming majority of Filipino-Americans in my area of study (Virginia Beach), the FAHNS founders did not share a common military background or demographic history since they were not only born in the United States, but are descended from a different immigrant generation---most of the participants in my study are comprised of first generation Filipino-Americans, while the couple that founded the FAHNS chapter in Virginia

Beach is third generation. In my in-depth interviews and interaction with FANHS chapter leaders, they did not express a sense of indebtedness toward the United States; in fact, the Virginia Beach FANHS Chapter leaders clearly took a much more critical tone when speaking about the Filipino immigrant experience in general. Specifically, they feel resentment and “disdain” for the difficult historical circumstances and paternalistic racist discourses that their ancestors were forced to deal with when they immigrated to the U.S.:

To set the record straight, there's a lot of misinformation as far as the historical experiences of Filipinos in America. It's to help fill the void because of the limited amount of literature, resources, written about Filipinos and not Filipino-Americans. See, you got to remember, my father came in the 1920's on the West coast. There's a huge diversity amongst Filipinos themselves, depending on when they came to this country. ...There was a misinformation. A lot of these people on the East coast, they looked down on these pioneers who came in the 1920's because all they saw was single, bachelor men living in Chinatown. And they were just menial labors, dishwashers, so forth and so on. But the reality is, I think I've told you this about immigration, is that when those people came in the 1920's, they were the best and brightest to come out of the provinces because they were led to believe that in order to better themselves they have to get an education, and the best education possible was in America. So therefore they came to America in search of a college education, but they didn't realize that it costs money and plus they had to deal with the Great Depression. And so what did you have to do? You take any type of job to survive. And so [if] that meant be a farm laborer, so be it. Does it mean being a dishwasher, bell hopper, whatever, they take any type of job to not only survive but to put themselves through college. And what a lot of the East coast, post-1965 generation Filipinos look at or determine success is the size of your house, the size of your car, anything materialistic, but they don't see the value of the struggle, the greatness to overcome obstacles, is looked down upon. Or they don't even value that, see. But that's how we take pride. And that's why [I] differentiate between being Filipino-American and being Filipino. We're from a different part of the country. That's why we're different.

In this quote, Mr. Kanlungan, one of the initial founders of FANHS chapter in Virginia Beach, refers to the painful history of West coast Filipino migrants in contrast to the very different experiences of post-1965 Filipino immigrants to the East coast. Mr. Kanlungan does not feel a sense of indebtedness to the United States in his own life because of the West coast, 1920's family history that he identifies with. Mr. Kanlungan notes that Filipino immigrants from this generation were falsely led to believe that they could attain an education and secure good



jobs, but instead were “looked down” upon and were forced to make considerable sacrifices simply to survive in the U.S. Mr. Kunlungan and his wife also lamented that Hampton Roads Filipinos are not aware of or lack empathy for West coast Filipino-Americans’ experiences because the East coast post-1965 generation Filipinos “don’t see the value of the struggle, the greatness to overcome obstacles, is looked down upon. Or they don’t even value that.” Mr. Kunlungan argues that, instead of acknowledging the “value of the struggle,” East coast Filipinos are only interested in fulfilling the ‘American Dream’ and valuing the “the size of [their] house, the size of [their] car, anything materialistic.” One could interpret this statement also as reflecting the idea that East coast Filipinos are more concerned with being seen as good citizens and “blending” in, as Montero has stated, than with taking on and voicing a more critical perspective on their American history.

West coast Filipinos like the FANHS founders argue that, if Filipino-Americans should feel indebtedness to anyone, it should be to the pre-1965 West coast Filipino immigrants who carved out a very difficult life by making the necessary sacrifices for the preceding generations. However, East coast post-1965 immigrants interpret this same early immigrant history strikingly differently than their West coast predecessors. East coast Filipinos persist in feeling a sense of indebtedness largely because of their own much more positive experiences of entry to the United States via the U.S. Navy. In other words, contrary to Mr. Kunlungan’s wishes, East coast Filipinos do not feel indebted to their West coast predecessors for their history of struggle. Instead, East coast Filipinos feel indebted to the U.S. for their citizenship, viewing the questionable past of the West coast immigrants with anxiety, as a holdover from history, rather than skepticism, as Mr. Kunlungan might hope. The Hampton Roads Filipinos do not share his

skepticism concerning the U.S. government, which in turn reinforces and fosters their sense of indebtedness.

Mr. Kunlungan is clearly disappointed about this dominant narrative that the East coast Filipino-Americans share, and he hopes to increase Filipino-American allegiance to his passionately felt counter-narrative (regarding Filipinos' West coast discriminatory historical experiences) because he feels that East coast Filipino-Americans do not adequately understand and identify with the totality of the Filipino American immigrant history. In sharp contrast, East coast Filipinos, due to their more recent immigration history and status, are more likely to remain strongly connected to the homeland and still feel 'Filipino' rather than solely 'Filipino-American,' per se. West coast Filipinos like Mr. Kunlungan are keenly aware of this subtle but distinct difference as he distinguishes between Filipino and Filipino-American: "But that's how we take pride. And that's why [I] differentiate between being Filipino-American and being Filipino. We're from a different part of the country. That's why we're different." In other words, although Mr. Kunlungan takes "pride" in the historical experiences of West coast Filipino-Americans, East coast Filipinos do not necessarily feel the same way because they are "from a different part of the country," and subsequently are less likely to identify with their Filipino-American West coast predecessors. Generation also matters: West coast Filipino-Americans comprise an earlier generation of immigrants that preceded East Coast Filipino-immigrants, such as the Hampton Roads Filipino-American community. While Mr. Kunlungan clearly articulates and appreciates the contributions of Filipino-Americans in both the pre-1965 and post-1965 generation (as evidenced in FANHS' publication of *In Our Auntie's Words* and *In Our Uncle's Words*), he is clearly frustrated that post-1965 Filipino immigrants are less likely to analyze their collective Filipino-American history through a more critical lens.

Based on this counter-narrative, it appears that indebtedness may be a distinctively regional feature among Hampton Roads Filipino-Americans, as opposed to what Filipino-Americans may feel in other parts of the country or to a universal nationalistic Filipino sense of indebtedness, *per se*. It is also likely that indebtedness is a distinctive regional feature among Hampton Roads Filipino-Americans because of immigrant generation and mode of incorporation: West Coast Filipino-Americans tended to immigrate at a period in history when their citizenship status was precarious and they were less socioeconomically advantaged than later waves of Filipino immigrants to the U.S. (e.g., Post-1965 Naturalization and Immigration Act). Moreover, later waves of Filipino immigrants, like the Hampton Roads Filipino-Americans, largely arrived by way of the U.S. Navy and at a later point in history (as discussed above), when formal immigration policies were more inclusive. Since this community study explores Filipino-Americans in the Virginia Beach/Hampton Roads area, the largest Filipino population on the East coast, it remains to be seen whether Filipino-Americans would report or feel a similar sense of indebtedness in other communities like San Diego, home to the largest Filipino population on the West coast, in cities in the Midwest, or in other parts of the country.

### **Conclusion**

Through exploring indebtedness, in this chapter I clarified how Filipino immigrants constitute a sense of empowered citizenship via the religious and civic institutions navigate. It is apparent that multiple modernities applies to the context of this postcolonial community: Rather than generalizing Filipino-Americans as a monolithic, static racialized category, I shed light on the complicated and contested notions of Filipino-American-ness that stems from their postcolonial history and ambivalent citizenship status. I demonstrated how intercivilizational encounters shape and help craft multiple understandings of citizenship. While both East and

West coast Filipinos share a sense of “pride,” their understandings attached to that pride are distinctly different, partly because interpretations of history are somewhat of a bricolage, rather than a linear narrative, *per se*.

Ultimately, indebtedness leads to a paradox: On one hand Filipino-Americans like Kalaw would like to increase Filipino democratic political participation in the United States and the Philippines, and would like to illuminate the economic, historical, civic, and social contributions that this ethnic group has made. On the other hand, due to the indebtedness that Filipino-Americans feel to the United States for their citizenship and their religious belief that God brought them to the United States, Filipino-Americans feel that increasing political representation is fraught with the sense of being perceived as ungrateful—if Filipino-Americans attempt to increase political representation in the United States, they are concerned that if they are not passively supportive of the government, then otherwise they may appear ungrateful for their citizenship. Filipinos do not want to bite the hand that feeds them, so to speak.

Indebtedness matters because how people feel about their relationship to the host country they immigrated to influences patterns of immigration and integration. As we can see in this chapter, East coast Filipinos’ powerful sense of indebtedness strongly shapes their understandings of what it means to be a good citizen in America and the limits of their citizenship. Indebtedness also matters because how immigrants feel about their relationship to the host nation will also inevitably influence their self-efficacy and entry into the political public sphere. Filipino’s sense of indebtedness is intensified by religion, since citizenship is seen as a blessing from God. In the next chapter, I will discuss regionalism and describe in greater detail the role of religion in respect to Filipino-Americans’ notions of citizenship.

Further investigation of other Filipino immigrant communities across the country is needed to clarify understandings of indebtedness. Specifically, if I had interviewed Filipino immigrants in California, for instance, would they report similar understandings of indebtedness? Would they tie in their indebtedness to military service? Or would Filipinos who arrived under different occupational backgrounds perceive and interpret their citizenship differently? In other words, are East coast Filipinos more likely to express indebtedness due to their military background, or does Catholicism produce feelings of indebtedness due to a sense of “blessing” as Katingding, one of my interviewees, had stated? Future research on other Filipino communities in the United States will shed light on these questions.

### **CHAPTER III: CONTESTED ATTITUDES OF CITIZENSHIP AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

In my previous chapters, I have explored how U.S. citizenship fosters *utang ng loob*, or a sense of indebtedness to the United States. I also explored regionalism and how Catholicism reinforces Filipinos' local/regional ties: Filipinos venerate their Catholic patron saints from their respective hometowns in the Philippines, which subsequently reinforces their local ties in the United States. Building on my previous chapters, I intend to investigate Filipino-Americans' contested attitudes of citizenship and political participation, or how they attempt to overcome regionalism and civic indebtedness.

In this chapter, I will analyze the Filipino-American Community Action Group (Filipino-American CAG) in order to explore contested attitudes of citizenship and political participation within the Filipino-American community of my study. I focus on Filipino-American CAG because it is the only active Filipino-American political organization (to my knowledge, as corroborated by my interviewees) in the Hampton Roads area. As noted in the previous chapters, nonreligious organizations like Filipino-American CAG, which is comprised of religiously affiliated (primarily Catholic) Filipino-Americans, are politically engaged in the United States and attempt to increase their political influence in the Philippines.

Filipino-American CAG attempts to increase Filipino-American political influence by promoting a national identity or a 'Filipino-American' hyphenated identity in the United States, as opposed to the local, fragmented, regional identities promoted by regional associations. Like other ethnic/community interest groups, Filipino-American CAG possesses a particular conception of politics: Filipino-American CAG encourages traditional interest-group politics in which they are attempting to "build bridges with politicians," as Filipino-American CAG

president Dimasuay states. Overall, Filipino-American CAG attempts to play a key intermediary role with community and political leaders in the Hampton Roads area, representing important Filipino community interests (as discussed below in the chapter) to the larger (non-Filipino) political public sphere. For instance, Filipino-American CAG strategically appeals to local and state politicians through getting patronage, favors done, and providing votes in return.

As Filipino-Americans contest attitudes of citizenship and political participation, on one hand, for a large part of the Filipino-American community, good citizenship does not necessarily mean being politically engaged, though it does mean becoming highly civically involved. On the other hand, there are also Filipino-Americans who define good citizenship to include political efforts to transcend regionalism (or co-ethnic hometown ties), foster solidarity, and increase political representation and participation both in the United States and the Philippines. The majority of Filipino-Americans who feel that good citizenship does not necessarily mean being politically engaged are likely to orient good citizenship in respect to civic engagement and volunteerism, both within the local community and in the homeland. They are also connected to Filipino organizations in other major cities in the United States through their religious and civic organizations. As I have discussed in chapter one, this civic-oriented understanding of good citizenship strongly relates to a sense of *utang ng loob* or indebtedness. Alternatively, Filipino-Americans who attempt to transcend regionalism, foster solidarity, and increase political representation are more likely to criticize the Catholic Church (although they may remain religiously affiliated), arguing that the Catholic Church, to some extent, limits Filipino-American political engagement.

This chapter connects to the overall theme of this dissertation of how immigrants constitute a sense of empowered citizenship via the religious and civic institutions they navigate.

Since “diaspora communities of different origins, backgrounds, and orientations will inevitably vary in their accommodative and innovative responses” (Tambiah, 2000), this chapter connects to the overall theme of the dissertation by illustrating multiple modernities in the postcolonial context as it plays out in the United States for a highly diasporic community like Filipinos. In respect to my contribution to the existing body of literature, most scholars concur that we are in an era of advanced globalization because we have reached unprecedented technological advances that allow for accelerated communication and travel. A large body of research explores how diverse diaspora populations experience this era of globalization, as they are engaged in richly complex interpersonal and intercultural relationships with both their host countries and countries of origin. For instance, scholars have shown that immigrants are actively involved in migrant and home country politics in many nations: India, Colombia, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Portugal, the Philippines (Graham, 1997; Guarnizo, 1998; Mangione, 1998; Perlmutter, 1998; Smith, 1997; Goldring, 1998a, b; Blanc-Szanton, 1998; Glick-Schiller, 1999). Scholars are keenly interested in how these complex interpersonal and intercultural relationships play out in our modern world. Anthropologist Stanley Tambiah argues that there are two orders of lateral networks: (1) “home communities” of immigrants, who attempt to maintain, reinforce, and extend relationships within their communities of origin and (2) transnational global networks, which transcend the borders of both countries of origin and resettlement (Tambiah, 2000). Several scholars have examined how various ethnic groups negotiate these respective relationships. For instance, some have suggested that some Asian Indian Americans embrace transnational nationalism in order to maintain and reinforce a Hindu-Indian hyphenated identity as diasporic Indians (Tambiah, 2000; Kurien, 1998), though how Hindu-Indian hyphenated identity is crafted and/or contested among various immigrant groups is



still under-analyzed. Other scholars have explored how Mexican/Latino immigrants to the United States maintain and intensify their relationships with their home communities in Mexico and South America (Galvez, 2010; Ramirez, 1999; Badillo, 2006; McGreevy, 1996; Orsi, 1992; Warner & Wittner, 1999). My research is intended to contribute to this literature and illustrate how hyphenated identity is crafted and contested among Filipino-Americans.

Another aspect of this issue is the rate of citizenship and political participation in immigrant communities, which tends in all immigrant communities to be lower than in the larger American polity. However, there is considerable variation among different immigrant communities in respect to both rates of citizenship and rates of political participation. Several scholars have explored Asian Pacific-American political participation (e.g., Nakanishi, 1986, 1991, 1998; Uhlander, Cain and Kiewiet, 1989; Lien, 1994, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001b; Tam, 1995; Ong and Nakanishi, 1996; Cho, 1999; Cho and Cain, 2001; Wong, 2001). This emerging research is largely demographic and draws from statistical analyses like the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Current Population Survey Voter Supplement Files, 1994-2000, and Comparative Immigrant Entrepreneurship Project (CIEP), the largest survey conducted to date to explicitly gather evidence on the transnational political, economic, and sociocultural activities of immigrant groups. This focus on Asian Pacific-Americans' political participation is a recent development since most research to date has focused on the political experiences of African and Hispanic Americans (Leighly, 2001). Scholars observe that to politically participate involves a three-step process: naturalization, registration, and turning out (Dalton and Wattenberg, 1993; Kelly and Mirer 1975).

In respect to citizenship, Asians have one of the lowest citizenship, voting registration, and turnout rates among voting-age Americans (Pei-te Lein, et al, 2001). Immigration and

naturalization rates are also closely tied to citizenship, since it is only possible to vote if one attains U.S. citizenship. With regard to Filipino-Americans, the U.S. Census Bureau indicates that Filipinos have the highest rate of political participation among Asian Americans who attained U.S. citizenship between 1994 and 1998; in contrast, Asian Indians scored the lowest rate of participation among Asian American communities in two out of three elections (Lein, et al, 2001).

In 1990, only 32 percent of Japanese, but 64 percent of Filipino and at least seven in ten Asian Americans of other ethnicities, were born outside the United States (Jiobu, 1996). Filipinos attained the highest rate of naturalization (54%), followed by Asian Indians (34%), and Japanese (26%). Among Filipino immigrants to the United States, seven out of ten were citizens in 1990 (had acquired U.S. citizenship as of 1990). Only about half of Asian Indian and Vietnamese acquired this status in 1990 (Shinagawa, 1990). Although there are reported statistical measures on rates of naturalization and citizenship among Asian-Americans, we still know very little about how Asian-Americans perceive their newly minted citizenship, and how their new status of American citizenship influences their political behavior.

“Thus, immigrants from the Philippines, because of its U.S. territorial past, may have an easier time becoming citizens and voters than those born in China, Vietnam, Korea, or Japan; persons from these countries may have a more difficult time because of the barrier in English proficiency” (Lien, 2004). While demographic patterns are important in order to provide a snapshot of Asian Pacific-American political participation, the dearth of ethnographic research that explains or unpacks these patterns remains largely absent in the literature. These demographic findings point to the need for more research that takes into account the “institutional, individual, and context factors to better assess and understand Asian American

political participation,” especially since this population consists of “multiple ethnic origins and backgrounds impacted in various ways by international migration” (Lein, 2004). In respect to my research, I intend to contribute to the literature by illustrating how Filipino-Americans’ understandings of citizenship also influence their U.S. political participation. Rather than simply positing a linear, three-step process for political participation, ethnographic research like my dissertation utilizes more complex and nuanced understandings of citizenship in an effort to broaden our understandings of immigrant experiences in our modern era. Since Asian Americans are “internally diverse, dispersed, and in flux” (Pei-te Lein et al, 2001), ethnographic research into each of these disparate communities is necessary to adequately account for these highly differentiated citizenship and political participation experiences. In the following sections, I will investigate these issues in the Filipino-American community in Hampton Roads, whose members have attained American citizenship largely via naturalization through the U.S. Navy or by marriage to a Filipino navy serviceman, and will use this analysis to advance a more contextualized and refined analysis of citizenship.

### **Filipino-American CAG and Community Political Involvement**

Filipino-American CAG members report that they want Filipino-Americans to be involved and they also have a specific agenda. In the following sections, I discuss how Filipino-American CAG attempts to transcend Filipino regionalism in order to overcome social fragmentation and subsequently craft a common Filipino-American hyphenated identity in the community. I also show how this organization empowers and fights for political representation for the Filipino-American community. Put short, Filipino-American CAG sees itself as neither Republican or Democrat, but attempts to influence both political parties and maximize Filipino-American interests. The political goals and aims of Filipino-American CAG are as follows: 1)

Defining Filipino Community Politics; 2) Transcending Regionalism; 3) Promoting Voting; 4) Empowering the Filipino Community; 5) Enacting State/Local Legislation; 6) Promoting Community Development; 7) Increasing Political Representation.

*Defining Filipino Community Politics*

Filipino-American CAG members want Filipino-Americans to become politically involved, but they also promote a particular conception of politics, or more precisely, what it means to be politically engaged. For instance, Mr. Kalaw, who was president of the Bataan Regional Association noted:

When I was president, I tried to bring my organization to get involved in political issues. When I say political issues, it doesn't mean go out there and campaign for certain candidates, no. To me, my definition of politics is something about a discussion wherein two sides, we will argue for the common goal...that's my definition of politics. Politics is not, I will put on my sign; your sign is in front of my yard. No it's not. Politics is I'll update you my issues, my concerns, you listen to me, and I listen to you. That is politics to me. That's how I would like to bring the issues to my community, to the city, if the city can handle that. If not, if my organization has an issue that has a national implication, then I will discuss it with the national leadership, you know. [I will also discuss these issues with my] Congressman, Senator, or maybe President, if I have too. That's how I define politics.

Kalaw defines politics as a “discussion where two sides will argue for the common goal.” Moreover, Kalaw, along the intellectual vein of Jurgen Habermas, emphasizes a deliberative aspect for Filipino-Americans’ political role within the public sphere: Filipino-Americans should be able to openly discuss concerns, but also share a mutually reciprocated relationship with the nation-state, so that these issues brought forth by the Filipino-American community are in turn seriously considered. Dimasuay elaborates on what politics entails:

What we are doing is me and my friends, what we are doing [is] building that kind of bridges with politicians. With those people who are leaders in government so that when there's a time when they need something, you know, we can easily ask this person, ‘Hey Congressman, can you make a political appointment or congressional appointment up in immigration office so April can have a passport in an hour?’ Of course that's their duties as office workers...they can take their time...but if we have the connections with the

politicians, they say ‘OK, no problem [Kalaw], I’ll call the immigration on 19<sup>th</sup> Street and tell April, just show up there’... And that is what is nice is when you build that bridge with all of them. You can go directly to them. And explain. And that’s what we did. We build all the bridges. Not only with the politicians, we built bridges with the mayor’s office, with all the city council, with the state delegates, state senators, and even the governor’s office. The judges are making the judicial ruling, with the superintendent; we build bridges with all of them. So whenever there is a case in our community, I know how to direct it. If it’s a case that concerns the mayor about the city, then I call the mayor’s office and I forewarn them: ‘Someone will be calling you about this issue going on. Please help as much as you can.’ That is how I do, a diplomatic way. I just don’t go and help them.

Dimasuay describes Filipino-American CAG’s political role as “building...bridges with politicians.” Also deliberate in this bridge-building approach, Dimasuay attempts to build rapport with politicians like the mayor, city council, state delegates, state senators, and the governor in order to facilitate and familiarize politicians with Filipino-Americans’ unique challenges they may face as they integrate into the United States. John Aspiras, another Filipino-American CAG member, describes his conception of the goals of Filipino-American CAG and elaborates on Filipino-American CAG’s role in the community:

The goals of Filipino-American CAG are to get involved in the community, politics, and gangs... We are concerned with...military benefits and taxes. We talk about that, yeah. Some of the members in there, some of the Filipinos deal with, you know, taxes and all that stuff. In politics, [Dimasuay] invites the elected officials and discusses with them, you know, what their plan is for the community and sometimes what we do is that. What we don’t do is endorse. We find out who this candidate is that meets the needs for the community and also we asked him, ‘What can you do for the Filipino community as a whole?’ So we are pushing for what they can do for the community, especially for minorities.

Because the Filipino-American community in the Hampton Roads area is almost completely comprised of military veterans, issues like military benefits are of deep relevance to them. Filipino-American CAG members like Dimasuay attempt to “build bridges” with politicians in order for Filipino-Americans to gain better access to the public sphere. Overall it appears that Filipino-American CAG is interested in “pushing for” what politicians “can do for

the community, especially for minorities.” It is interesting to note that on several occasions Filipino-American CAG members noted that “what we don’t do is endorse,” though in my individual interviews, due to what may be interpreted as individual, personal, intergenerational, or regional differences, certain candidates may be excluded from town hall meetings (as in the case with Ron Villanueva) that Filipino-American CAG hosts. Galang hints at this division when he shares that “elections are a big issue for Filipino-American CAG because we try to encourage people to come out and vote and that’s why we have Ron Villanueva up there. But he will not admit that. That’s why there are differences.” Therefore it seems that building bridges is a very tenuous process.

### *Transcending Regionalism*

As discussed previously in Chapter 1, strong co-ethnic hometown ties preserve ethnic identities but in turn prevent or hinder a hyphenated, pan-Filipino identity, or ‘Filipino-American’ identity. This issue in turn creates an additional obstacle to collectively unify, mobilize, and politically participate within the public sphere. Moreover, it impedes local and state politicians from taking Filipino-Americans seriously as an influential voting bloc, as noted by Mr. Galang who felt that regionalism limits or hurts Filipino-Americans’ political influence in the public sphere: “I talked to different politicians, sometimes I heard them say, ‘Because you are not unified; if you want somebody to listen to you, unify.’” Galang proceeds to share how Filipino-American CAG plays a role in transcending regionalism:

So this is where Filipino-American CAG thought about: The Americans don’t care what part of the Philippines you’re from, what kind dialectic you speak out there simply because one thinks you are a Filipino. So we don’t ask questions where you are from in our organization. We know where they are from because you can hear them conversing, but you don’t say that’s the only reason you join. No, it’s because [we have] the same goal—to get as many Filipinos united for a common purpose. And it’s more or less like a civic organization. [Dimasuay] can tell you more [about] the involvement with the local gangs, Filipino youth gangs. How the organization, through [Dimasuay], was able to

resolve the issues related to some immigration things, property issues like rentals and everything.

Filipino-American CAG attempts to transcend regionalism partly because of awareness that Americans are not interested or unable to differentiate between Filipino co-ethnics based on regional differences or dialectic differences. Subsequently, Filipino-American CAG does not “ask questions where you are from in our organization.” Ultimately, Filipino-American CAG’s goal is to “get as many Filipinos united for a common purpose” related to pan-Filipino-American issues like immigration or Filipino youth gangs (which is no longer a social issue due to Filipino-American CAG’s and community intervention). Nonetheless, Filipino-American CAG members note that it is somewhat difficult for Filipino-Americans to be politically engaged. When asked about why Filipino-Americans tend to be politically less involved, Kalaw states:

I don’t know...the only logical answer that we [can] come up [with] is that we were brought up by our elders in the Philippines. Our Filipino upbringing. You know most of the Filipinos that came here in America; I guess they are almost kind of laid-off people in the Philippines. In general most likely when they are in the Philippines they have not [been] involved in civic activities. They are not involved in politics. If they do not have that kind of background behind you. If you are a person that is not involved in the Philippines in politics or civic organizations...they will most likely carry that here in the states. And they might say ‘Why will I get involved? What’s in it for me?’ They carry the regional ties and culture.

In other words, Filipinos’ background helps explain the lack of political engagement. Filipino-Americans tend to be less politically engaged partly due to the Philippines’ politically challenged history, which in turn may help explain why “in general most likely when they are in the Philippines they have not [been] involved in civic politics....[or] in politics.” Specifically, Ferdinand Marcos’ totalitarian regime reigned during these post-1965 immigrants’ twenties and prior to their immigration to the United States. Therefore, their historical background of limited political participation, rampant corruption, and a closed public sphere so to speak, may also damper political participation in their host country and subsequently reinforce regionalism. For

instance, Kalaw states that “they carry the regional ties and culture.” This finding supports other research that suggests that “contexts of reception in the United States also bear significantly on immigrants’ economic and political adaptation” (Guarnizo, et. al 2003, p 1217); in this case, aspects like regionalism deeply influence immigrants’ modes of economic and political adaptation and incorporation.

Filipino-American CAG attempts to transcend these regional hometown ties in the Virginia Beach/Hampton Roads community. For instance, Ms. Dajao, a second-generation Filipina-American, shares:

I feel like I can see a lot of competition amongst each other—organizations representing those regions. That's what we really like about Filipino-American CAG. [It] is no kind of competition. [It] is just everybody coming together as one cohesive group regardless of where you are from, what region you are from, and working towards a common goal of helping the community and making the community better. And that is what is attractive to us about one group that comes together. They don't care which region you're from; it's just a coming together with a common cause. It is just unification no matter independent of where you are from and just acceptance and no bias to you either way.

Dajao states that regional associations are in “competition amongst each other” which strengthens Kalaw’s point of view that Filipino-Americans “carry the regional ties and culture” to the host country. She also states that Filipino-American CAG attempts to unify Filipinos across regions because “it is just unification no matter independent of where you are from and just acceptance and no bias to you either way.” Ron Villanueva, who is the first Filipino-American Virginia state delegate, concedes that politics in the Filipino community is very complicated and encompasses highly nuanced dynamics as a result of this “competition” that Dajao describes in the previous quote:

One thing I didn’t talk about it either is that we’ve got such a diverse community regionally, socially, and professionally. There are literally hundreds of leaders in our community. Different associations, and all of them are important, all of them wanted to be treated as important, and all of them want a say, so we’ve got that sheep mentality. There are not a lot of [Filipino-Americans]...who want to volunteer and do the work. I



mean everyone's a leader and I think a lot of that because we're resourceful, we're strong and we're proud but a lot of times when we talk about a candidate...our community is fragmented in so many ways. And I've seen it. And I've seen it in Virginia Beach. For many years we've had competing cultural centers, right? Philippine Cultural Center, you have San Lorenzo, you have people with their own leadership, and each of them is competitive. You've got a doctor group, very strong leaders in that group, some of them get along, and some of them don't get along. If you pick somebody's side, making somebody mad, you've got a political group there that says they are political, but you've got to question if they are political...so I've seen it all...

Villanueva illustrates how the vibrant diversity of the Filipino-American community not only involves regionalistic ties, but also cuts across them both socially and professionally. Moreover, because there are "literally hundreds of leaders" for all these various associations, which at times leads to "competition," as a result, the community "is fragmented in so many ways." Upon further inquiry regarding regionalism, Villanueva states:

I think regionalism is definitely a strength in the first generation but it's also a hindrance. Second generation we really don't have too much regionalism because we're born here in America. Other than...your parents' regional association...that's really your only affiliation...You know it's tough. It's an interesting dynamic...

Our Filipino community here is larger than 70,000 people here in Hampton Roads. When you...go outside of that, there's folks involved in the church, there's folks that work day-to-day, in neighborhood[s]...It's going to be tough unless the second generation who follows my model it's going to be tougher...They've got to be involved in the community. They've got to prove to the community that they've done something for the community....You've got to have good broad-based support from the Filipino community, but you have to appeal to other groups—other minority groups, other Caucasian groups, and other business groups. You have to learn how to build coalition. For instance, if you're an educator, and you want to run for office, you're going to want to work with the teacher's association, fellow educators, function, and believe that education is your issue. That is where you build your coalition. If you're a business guy, you're going to work with business groups, if you're a police officer; you've got to network with law enforcement. You've got to figure out your base and go with that. That formula works for other politicians as well.

Villanueva illustrates and stresses the ambivalence and importance of transcending regionalism within the ethnic community, but also in order to build coalition with other "minority groups, other Caucasian groups, other businesses." Since Filipino-Americans struggle within their own ethnic community to transcend regionalism, Ron is concerned with how

Filipinos “build coalition” overall. He also suggests that, since second-generation Filipino-Americans are born in the United States, they are less likely to possess strong regionalistic ties, but notes that “they’ve got to be involved in the community. They’ve got to prove to the community that they’ve done something for the community,” which in turn suggests that while it is more likely to craft solidarity among second-generation Filipino-Americans, they may be less civically engaged and politically involved than the first-generation.

### *Promoting Voting*

Another important goal that Filipino-American CAG would like to reach is to foster voting behavior among Filipino-Americans. Specifically, Kalaw shared one of their initiatives:

We are planning to have the campaign to register all Filipinos eligible to vote...we would like to be counted on because we have the numbers. We will not be that much recognized by the mainstream. You know there is power in numbers, you know. And you have to show that otherwise we will not be recognized as a group. If we can get everybody registered to vote regardless if you are a Democrat, Republican, or Independent, we would like you to go out there to register. Not only to register but to vote.

In other words, regardless of political affiliation, Filipino-American CAG encourages Filipinos “not only to register but to vote” because “there is power in numbers.” Dajao, who previously commented on transcending regionalism, shares similarly:

Even though most of the Filipino-American CAG members are predominantly Republican, when they do their activities it is more like get out and vote. I don't really see them taking a stance or trying to influence one way or the other, even though most of the members are Republican. I think the mere fact that they are getting people out to the polls and getting people to vote is all that matters. I really appreciate that as well. We try to stay politically involved, politically active, that's just how we are.

Due to Filipinos’ recent politically unstable and oppressive history, the very act of voting is a democratic step forward toward engagement with and to the public sphere, though this finding may only be applicable in certain contexts; specifically, generation, age, and the amount of time in the U.S. may also influence political behavior. Put short, engaging in political behaviors like

voting is a relatively new process for these recent immigrants, at least in this specific community.

*Empowering the Filipino Community*

Filipino-Americans' relationship with the United States revolves around their common military history. As noted earlier in this dissertation, since 1903 the U.S. Navy recruited Filipinos as mess attendants and stewards and this recruitment process expanded after Philippines' political independence in 1946. Post-Philippine independence and after World War II, thousands of Filipinos enlisted as military servicemen for the United States. Subsequently, an overwhelming majority of post-1965 immigrants in the Virginia Beach/Hampton Roads area comprise of U.S. Navy veterans. Almost all Filipino-Americans who enlisted in the U.S. Navy began as stewards. Dimasuay explains how this clear power disparity influenced his understanding of political engagement in the public sphere:

I came from the Navy. The reason why I had that kind of mindset to work with them was [because] when I was in the Navy I was working with admirals. Top level. I was an administrator...I was ready somewhat because of my experience and knowledge of dealing with them. Because the way I look at it, is when we were in the Navy, because we were stewards at that time. Before I changed to administration, they always looked down at us. Because although you are a college graduate, they looked down on you because of your job. I said, 'We have to erase that standard of mindset from them to put ourselves on that same level. Even though we were stewards we have to talk to them eye to eye, see them eye to eye. Because when we see them eye to eye, and show them that we can handle the job, much better than they are, then the respect starts coming in.' And that's what I've been telling everyone else: 'Don't look down, look up, and see them eye to eye. And discuss an issue with them eye to eye. And be serious.' And that is what I've been telling the politicians. Whatever position they are in, 'If you come to us for assistance, or votes and you promise us to help us on an issue and you didn't deliver, we'll fight.' They will act surprised that I am very frank with them. But their respect increases. I don't go around the bushes.

The researcher infers that it is important for Dimasuay to gain respect from his superiors and that "even though we were stewards we have to talk to them eye to them, see them eye to eye." He applies this similar thinking in regard to his approach toward politics. It is important for

Dimasuay to be able to “discuss an issue with them eye to eye” so that their “respect increases.”

This connotes that, for Dimasuay, part of empowerment is a sense of mutually symmetrically shared respect and the ability to articulate relevant issues in the political public sphere. When asked about the most meaningful part of Filipino-American CAG, Halimaw also discusses the most important aspect of his involvement with this organization. Specifically, in similar fashion to Dimasuay, Mr. Halimaw elaborates on the value of “respect:”

I experienced when I came to this country there's no organizations that I am a member of and I feel like I'm an outcast... So having a community like Filipino-American CAG, we can have a force that we can reckon with because politically being here with so many Filipinos in here and everybody votes. Filipino votes. And all politicians they court Filipinos, we vote, oh yeah. We're finally getting the respect that we didn't have in the 1970s.

Halimaw reports that when he first immigrated to the United States, he felt like an “outcast.” Based on the above quote, part of empowerment is “respect” that is fostered through a sense of “community.” He connects voting with “getting the respect” that he may have felt missing from being a post-1965 immigrant, or in the 1970’s. Like Halimaw, Mr. and Ms. Villanueva, whom are also Filipino-American CAG members, are also quite sensitive to the experience of newly arriving in the United States. When asked why they are involved in politics, they report:

I think that you can say it's only the individual, itself. So I like to help other people, especially Filipino[s]. There's a lot of Filipino[s] here that's newly arrived in this country and they don't know anybody. I would like to let these people know that there's somebody that they can go too if they need some help. If they have a problem, they can go to us. Just like what I told you what we did if somebody has a problem, just like immigration thing, like that, we can refer them to a congressman. There's a lot of incidents that we helped these people. Then we have a dialogue with the previous mayor, Meyera Oberndorf. Mayor Oberndorf was involved in the community. She talked to us about it and she scheduled a meeting. The first time we talked to her with the different chiefs of police in the area, like Norfolk, Chesapeake, Portsmouth, you know, we got together so we could have a dialogue. Then there's one thing too that Filipino-American CAG did. There's a complaint from the fire department and from the rescue squad that sometimes they get a call from an elderly Filipino that hardly talks English. So what we

did, we established a Tagalog class, to anybody, especially members of the police or rescue squad, that would like to attend. We [also] had the Tidewater Community Church opened a class and was funded too.

The Villanuevas explain that there are a lot of “newly arrived in this country that don’t know anybody.” They note that that they would like to help people who have problems with immigration and to have a “dialogue” with politicians like the previous mayor or congressmen. Even on the individual level, the Villanuevas help Filipinos like an elderly Filipino who is unable to speak English. Therefore, part of empowerment is connecting Filipinos who have issues in the host nation to politics and to help them deal with relevant Filipino-specific issues. This form of empowerment also helps Filipinos integrate into the United States by providing a sense of community so that they do not feel like an “outcast,” as Aspiras did in the 1970’s. Mr. Huyla, another Filipino-American CAG member, articulates that the goal of Filipino-American CAG is broad-sweeping (educational, political, and socioeconomic). In similar fashion to other interviewees, most importantly, he stresses that the role of Filipino-American CAG is to be the “voice of the community.”

Filipino-American CAG [is an] educational, political, and socioeconomic [organization] for the Filipino community. Since its inception I was a co-founder of the organization. This was established in 1986. We will make Filipino-American CAG an organization that will not discriminate other groups that join. Anybody can join...Filipinos and Filipino Americans, Americans who want to join; it is open. We like the idea because now we start interviewing candidates, then we endorse, and then we have power. So now July 2nd at Red Wing Park politicians will be there because they know we are so involved that we endorse candidates. We want to first educate and then you can decide for yourself. Filipino-American CAG is not a partisan organization. Filipino-American CAG is...the voice of the community. Without Filipino-American CAG, Filipinos did not have voice in the political arena. ...In 1982 the Minority grant was established to encourage blacks [to attend] college. So now blacks want to go to college and if they can make the income criteria they can qualify for that grant. Now if you’re a Filipino, a Chinese, Korean, or Native American, and they look at you, you don’t qualify.

It is important to note that Huyla reports that, “without Filipino-American CAG, Filipinos did not have voice in the political arena.” Therefore, Filipino-American CAG facilitates

collective political participation in the public sphere in ways not possible otherwise. He also notes that Filipino-American CAG attempts to bridge regional, professional, religious, and socioeconomic differences across Filipinos in the community, or that “anybody can join.” Huyla proceeds to share that, through educating local Filipino-American citizens and collectively mobilizing, they have “power,” which in turn empowers Filipino-Americans at-large.

### *Enacting State/Local Legislation*

Filipino-American CAG members are interested in state and local legislation. For instance, Dimasuay discusses his concern with Virginia state law financial aid:

The Virginia State law that was passed in 1982 and Filipino-American CAG was not yet in existence at that time. The state of Virginia passed a state law of financial aid. What it means [is] that the only people that can apply for financial aid are whites and blacks. The federal financial aid is open to everyone else. But the state of Virginia is restrictive [in that] if you are not black and if you are not white then you cannot qualify for the grants. The reason being was there were lots of universities here in Virginia that [had] predominantly black and predominantly white [enrollment]. They were trying to encourage blacks to attend the white universities. And the blacks, they wanted to encourage [whites] to attend [their schools] so they could apply for grants. But they excluded the rest of us. So that’s why we fought for that. Filipino-American CAG took that as an issue. And it was brought to our attention. We brought that out to the politicians who were running for office at that time—state delegates. And we pushed through it. We’ve got one state delegate. His name is Frank Wagner. He is now state senator. We started to work with him because we supported him. We campaigned for him. I can tell you this, the reason why we did that: Republican. But this is very hard to understand. Because at the time, the governor, the state senate was Democrat, house was Democrat. He’s Republican. What do you think his chances to win? Impossible...so that’s the reason why when I was looking at Filipino-American CAG, if we need [to flex] political muscle, I said, we need to work on both parties. Nonpartisan. That’s right. So we can pull Democrats, we can pull Republicans. It doesn’t matter who is sitting there. That’s right. The issue is nonpartisan. That’s the way I look at it. And also just because the politician is a Republican or a friend, it doesn’t matter. ...My party ends when the issue starts. That’s where we are leaning on Filipino-American CAG...even though Frank Wagner was very much interested to push for this, it was by law to be changed, and it has to be amended. So he called me, ‘[Dimasuay] I cannot...get this through, because they’ve been stopping me. I need your help.’ ...So I called them. Every single one of them. And you know what I’ve been telling them: ‘We have this issue that was passed in state law that discriminates.’ These are the things that I identified to them: ‘[This law] discriminates against all ethnics except blacks and whites.’ They were not aware about that law. They didn’t even know....These are Democrats now, and they came on board.

Because if you like to get the support, you better be careful where you stand, because if you are leaning more on one party and that other party is in power, you got nowhere to go. So that is the beauty of Filipino-American CAG. We push things on both sides. And whenever we visit General Assembly, both parties are calling us. They are embracing us...and this is what happened. There's a change on the amendment. That was the first time that I was really working politically. I had no experience.

Dimasuay is concerned with issues that affect Filipino-Americans like qualifying for state financial aid and applies a nonpartisan approach in order to "push things on both sides."

Dimasuay states that Filipino-American CAG is a nonpartisan organization "so we can pull Democrats, we can pull Republicans. It doesn't matter who is sitting there. That's right. The issue is nonpartisan. That's the way I look at it. And also just because the politician is a Republican or a friend, it doesn't matter. My party ends when the issue starts." On the other hand, they actively campaign for politicians who are willing to advance their issue, as in the case with Frank Wagner.

Filipino-American CAG also works with regional associations in order to pass state legislation. For instance, I observed that most Filipino-American CAG members were also members of their respective regional associations. Not only were they members, but oftentimes they served as presidents or key officers of their respective regional associations. When Filipino-American CAG would meet, individual Filipino-American CAG members also reported on specific events that their respective regional associations were planning or hosting. Alternatively, Filipino-American CAG members also attempted to connect their fellow ethnic regional-mates to state, national, and transnational political issues. This collaboration shows the complex ebb and flow of regionalism; paradoxically, Filipino-American CAG members use their regional ties to transcend regional issues to talk about state, national, and transnational political issues. For example, Dimasuay describes Mr. Kalaw, who was the former president of the Bataan

Association, Filipino-American CAG and NaFFAA member, and his involvement with the Bataan regional association:

On the other hand on the state level, the Bataan Association, Bataan Memorial so to speak, [commemorates a] memorial celebration because, you know, the Bataan Death March. There is always some kind of Day of Valor, Bataan Day of Valor in the state of Virginia. So every year it has to be passed by the state assembly. So I told my friend [Mr. Kalaw], ‘Why don’t we make it permanent? Let’s talk to one of our state delegates and see if he can sponsor it to make it permanent.’ And that’s what we did. We approached him [and at the time he was] not the governor and he was still a delegate. So what happens there is I called his office, ‘Bob we need your help....’ ...By the time you know it, it was passed by the General Assembly as permanent...Bataan Day of Valor. And those are the links that you prepare yourself for. That bridge was already built.

Filipino-American CAG members who are interconnected with a specific regional association, like the Bataan Regional Association, facilitated the state passage of the Bataan Day of Valor, which signifies the Bataan Death March in the Philippines. This piece of state legislation passed with relative ease because “that bridge was already built.” In other words, as noted earlier, Dimasuay actively “builds bridges” with politicians in order to “link” Filipinos to the political public sphere and achieve specific Filipino-American interests and goals.

Filipino-Americans also attempt to enact state/local legislation through their connections with other organizations. Specifically, as noted earlier in this chapter, almost all Filipino-American CAG members are also members of and hold officer positions (e.g., president, vice President, treasurer, etc) in their respective regional organizations. Therefore, Filipino-American CAG members attempt to increase awareness of and relay information between Filipino-American CAG and these respective regional organizations: Filipino-American CAG members announce or promote political activities and encourage Filipinos of respective regional associations to get involved. Moreover, Filipino-American CAG members are also members of other professional organizations in which Filipino-Americans are highly represented occupationally. For instance, Filipino-American CAG members Mr. and Mrs. Carunungan



(mentioned previously), who are also members of the Philippine Medical Association and the Philippine Nurses Association of Virginia, report that Filipino-American CAG supports their activities:

Oh yeah, it's kind of crossover. Oh yeah, there's definitely a relationship. There's definite collaboration on the community action because even the healthcare is community action. And a lot of the males that are in Filipino-American CAG, some of their wives are also nurses. Like Dimasuay's wife is a nurse. So those are all kind of related so you cannot really separate one from the other totally. Somehow, there will be some crossover.

Similarly to Dimasuay and his wife, Mr. Carunungan is a medical doctor and is married to Ms. Carunungan, who is a nurse. In respect to “crossover,” like Aspiras, Mr. and Mrs. Carunungan, Mr. and Mrs. Dakila, whom are husband and wife Filipino-American CAG members, elaborate:

We had the H-2 visas, the Philippine nurses being recruited from the Philippines and they have to pass the registered nurse test in the United States for them to stay. If they cannot pass it they were sent back to the Philippines. I believe that was amended, that it was worked out so that they can stay.

The Villanuevas indicate that Filipino-American CAG played a key role to pass an amendment that allowed Filipina nurses to stay in the United States and keep their H-2 visas regardless of whether they passed their registered nursing exam. This amendment eases pressures from nurses so that they may re-take the registered nursing exam as needed in order to pass, without worrying about being sent home to the Philippines. Halimaw indicates that another role that Filipino-American fulfills involves their “strong influence on elected officials” to appoint Filipinos into certain positions:

I don't know what you want to call it but, there are some positions that need to be filled... There's a nurse that they are looking for, somebody in the medical field, and [Dimasuay] introduced... and because of Filipino-American CAG that position was filled by a Filipino. Filipino-American CAG really has some clout. They have really strong influence on elected officials.

For instance, Filipino-American CAG recommended Ms. Carunugan to be the lead nurse for the Board of Nursing for the state of Virginia. In this position, Ms. Carunugan discusses her role in

working with the Philippine Nurses Association and Board of Nursing, in tandem with Filipino-American CAG:

One of the biggest things is regulation. There are so many regulatory actions that are now on the pipeline. This basically affects nursing practice in the state of Virginia. Because we have a lot of Filipino nurses, it definitely affects Filipinos. The reason being for example, one of the regulations...is the removal of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing exam (NCLEX). You don't have to take your board of nursing license if you're from the Philippines if you have already passed the American license. The name of that is NCLEX. If you pass the NCLEX, for you to be licensed, you do not need a license from the Philippines. So for example, I am educated in the Philippines, right now for me to get a license here in the state of Virginia; I have to show them my license in the Philippines... So that's now being eliminated. [Removing] actual layers just because you are minority, you're outside of the country; you are educated outside the United States. [We are] leveling the playing field for the nursing profession. There's more: Two to three years ago, we passed the removal of Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS), which is another board. If you are a foreign graduate you take that first, once you pass, [and] you are qualified to pass, [you have] to take this [exam]. Before you pass this [exam], that's the only time when you can get a license to practice in the United States, but they will also look for your license in the Philippines. So you can see there so many layers, it's like they're giving you a hard time to play the same game...

Ms. Carunugan explains her pivotal role in “regulatory actions” that facilitate the “leveling [of] the playing field for the nursing profession.” First, Ms. Carunugan discusses her intention to streamline the process for Filipinos to acquire American nursing licensure by passing legislation that allows nurses who pass the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCLEX) exam to qualify and practice as licensed nurses in the United States. Through this legislative act, Filipinos who pass this exam will not have to take an additional nursing exam in the Philippines, which in turn removes “actual layers” of career obstructions that Filipino nurses may face as compared to other American nurses. A second regulatory action that streamlined the immigration of Filipino nurses was the removal of the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS), or another board exam. This exam served as another obstacle that hindered the process for American nursing licensure. Through removing CGFNS, Filipinos can now simply take the NCLEX exam in order to obtain their nursing license. Ms. Carunugan

reports that these types of legislative acts ultimately “level the playing field,” since otherwise “they’re giving you a hard time to play the same game as [other nurses].” Ultimately, these regulatory actions also influence the homeland: These types of legislative acts not only influence Filipinos in the host nation, but increase the opportunity for Filipinos in the Philippines to obtain American nursing licensure, find jobs, and emigrate to the United States.

### *Promoting Community Development*

Another goal of Filipino-American CAG is to strive toward the betterment of the community at-large. For instance, Mr. and Mrs. Carunugan, who I mentioned above and are Filipino-American CAG members and affiliated with the Filipino medical community, report that Filipino-American CAG:

...is really community action. If there is anything that is problematic, culturally presented, like for example, the gangs, they educate on that. Like for example, some of the veterans, because a lot of them are veterans, then they organize an education on that. So they do have projects less related to those. They also support like for example if there is any kind of regulation, legislative action that needs to be to contribute[d] to, you know? That's how they do, like for example, again, the Medicare portability.

The Carunugans describe Filipino-American CAG’s role as a “community action” organization that addresses various social, cultural, professional, or political issues that arise. For instance, the Carunugans note that veterans’ issues are of importance “because a lot of them are veterans.” Moreover, since an overwhelming majority of Filipinos work in the medical field, Filipino-American CAG also works on “legislative action” like Medicare portability. Casama, who is the oldest Filipino-American CAG member and one of the co-founders of the Philippine Cultural Center, agrees on the role of Filipino-American CAG:

The goal is to help other people in the community. Whoever got a problem we will try to help as much possible. If they have an agenda, for example, those people who are in need, then we will help them. [We] find out what needs to be done for the betterment of the community [and] for the betterment of the individual.

Filipino-American CAG overall appears to be most concerned to “find out what needs to be done for the betterment of the community” and to “help....those people who are in need.”

Captain Juni, the first Filipino-American captain police officer appointed in Virginia

Beach/Hampton Roads, affirms the points made by Casama, but also observes the

interconnections that Filipino-American CAG establishes in order to advance the community’s needs:

I think the goal of Filipino-American CAG is to have the ability to read the pulse of the Filipino-American community and the needs of the community: What they want, what they need, what they desire from their leaders, and basically how they get things done, whether it be in a political forum, whatever could be done.

Like Casama, Juni reports that the goal of Filipino-American CAG is to “read the pulse of the Filipino-American community and the needs of the community” in order to “get things done” like in a “political forum” or “whatever could be done.” Betterment of the community means transcending regional ties or division, and interconnecting and working with various professional, intergenerational, and regional organizations, in an effort to advance the community and “get things done.” These interconnections are vital, as they help the Filipino-American community increase their overall representation in the public sphere, as will be explored in the next section.

### *Increasing Political Representation*

Another important goal of Filipino-American CAG is to increase Filipino representation in the political public sphere. For instance, Mila and Rudy Villanueva, Filipino-American CAG members, describe the goals of this active organization:

Filipino-American CAG is actually a political action group. We help the Filipinos in Tidewater. When we started [Filipino-American CAG] we went to the city and tried to find out how many minorities, especially Filipinos, [were] employed in the city... And then we found out through our study that they have a law [about] the minorities. ...If [Blacks] go to predominantly white schools they can apply for scholarships and if you're

white and you go to a predominantly black school they can also apply [also]. Then we questioned them saying, ‘Where's the other minority? Where's the Hispanic? Where is the Asian? The Filipino?’ So then oh, I forgot the year, the governor there was Walder, and they changed that. They made it instead of a black and white; they changed it to minority including everybody. And that's what we are. We went to the capitol in Richmond. Politically we were involved way back in the early 1990s late 1980s. There was gang violence in public schools so we talked to the kids in different schools. We got them together through dance. Then they sent in an expert on gang violence from Los Angeles and once in a while we got the juvenile judges, chief of police, to meet with us at the library with the kids. So we have done a lot of [work against] this violence and what we did [along with] the expert on gang violence is we wish[ed] we had people like you all over the United States because to help us to cut down on the gang violence.

Filipino-American CAG members describe the organization as a “political action group” and engage with issues that help increase awareness and representation of Filipino-Americans. For instance, the Villanuevas discuss how their organization “went to the capitol in Richmond” in order to include “the other minority,” in this case, Hispanics, Asians, and Filipinos. Moreover, the Villanuevas describe their political involvement when there was a brief period of gang violence among young Filipino-American youth in public schools. Across various accounts, through the intervention of Filipino-American CAG, which brought gang members, judges, the chief of police, and community members together, they successfully “cut down on the gang violence” and eliminated this social problem with relative ease. This type of deliberate dialogue and bringing together public officials and everyday citizens also shows the importance of transcending regionalism in the Filipino community, since Filipino-American CAG members successfully brought together parents of Filipino-American children across regions, rather than exacerbating potential issues of social fragmentation, suspicion, and distrust between interethnic co-peers.

Mr. Dimasuay elaborates on how and why Filipino-American CAG attempts to transcend regionalism involves increased representation:

How [we] can integrate them, is hold town meetings ...because we have several town meetings, either a social town meeting or political town meeting. So we invited the community...It is open to the public anyway, it's not just for Filipinos, but for anybody who likes to listen. Before we were doing monthly town meetings, and we integrated political town meetings, especially if it is close to the election, if it is local, state, or national election. So, if the election comes November, normally we have a political town meeting around September so that we have enough time to [research] facts about the candidate before we make our endorsement. Because the organization endorses candidates.

This idea of endorsing candidates is also discussed by Mr. Huyla:

We endorsed candidates after listening to them and their agenda [of] how they are going to tackle these problems. Then as an organization we decide who we want to vote [for], and if the majority said we will do this we will do it.

Mr. Dimasuay explains that he is concerned with how to integrate Filipino-Americans into the political public sphere by holding “town meetings” “especially if it is close to the election, if it is local, state, or national election.” The town meeting serves as a venue to discuss candidates, explore facts and to endorse candidates. Both Dimasuay and Mr. Huyla appear to organize town meetings in order to “decide who we want to vote” for and if the majority approves, they will collectively vote as a bloc. Dimasuay also attempts to increase representation through “political leveraging.”

Those are the areas that I'm dealing with. Now in the local front, in the political side, because remember now that Filipino-American CAG's primary issue is in the social issues that I identified with you, but in order for us to be more effective in getting it changed, is when there is a need for us to legislate...Whom do you contact? You have to contact legislatures who need to make a change. So this is the approach that I did to my group: When we have an issue and we don't know those politicians and they don't know us, the time comes when we have an issue that we need for them to act. Do you think that they will be warmly accepting of us if they don't know who we are and we are not working with them? I said, 'No, they are going to put our issue at the very bottom of the totem pole. They don't know who we are. We only go to them if we need help.' But that's not the way they operate. Remember now that in politics I scratch your back, you scratch my back. And we have a very strong base of voters in my community. And we use that as our leverage in getting them to know who we are. That's why that's not our primary activity, but using it to flex our muscles. Leveraging, political leveraging, that's what I call it. You don't have to be active in politics. But you have to have that leverage to use when the time comes. That's what we did. In every issue that we brought to the

city, or to the state, 100% was approved because when we flex our muscles, everybody is jumping in to sponsor it. Because the bridge that we built from the activities of Filipino-American CAG is already there in place. All we have to do is cross it now. And the beauty of that is other organizations in our community are already crossing those bridges that Filipino-American CAG built because before there was a break. They don't know who these people are. So they call me, and ask me, "[Dimasuay], who is the right person that I can call?" I said, "Call this person. If there's a problem let me know." Because I am able to iron it out if they have a problem. So sometimes, I follow that. When I identify myself as Mr. Dimasuay, chairman of Filipino-American CAG, the door opens up...

According to Dimasuay, political leveraging refers to utilizing a "very strong base of voters" in the community in order to "leverage in getting them to know who we are." Dimasuay states that, "in every issue that we brought to the city, or to the state, one hundred percent was approved because, when we flex our muscles, everybody is jumping in to sponsor it." As discussed earlier in this chapter, Filipino-American CAG attempts to build bridges; this political leveraging forces politicians to recognize Filipino-Americans as an influential voting bloc, allowing Filipino-Americans to cross those bridges so that "the door opens up."

In respect to endorsing candidates, Halimaw discusses the organization's role in facilitating the election of Ron Villanueva, the first Filipino-American Virginia state delegate:

In the past, [with regard to] Filipino-American CAG, the most that really stands out...is Ron Villanueva. At the time, they were looking for somebody Filipino who could represent the Filipino community and for city Council. So Filipino-American CAG recruited Ron Villanueva. So Filipino-American CAG did a search. Frank Wagner was the one that asked, 'Do you have anybody...who could run for city Council?' Because Frank Wagner was new. Frank Wagner was a delegate, I think. So after they met with Frank Wagner in Filipino-American CAG and started thinking and says who could we find? So I mean Ron Villanueva is a friend of ours, Ron Villanueva's dad, so they went to talk to Ron Villanueva, to talk to him if Ron would be willing to run for city Council. So yeah, that's how the whole thing started. Personally, we as members of Filipino-American CAG encourage every Filipino to partially or indirectly or directly [get] involved in politics because one way or another, our life involves politics. And then we are aware or not aware about it but it is there. A lot of Filipinos say 'I'm not really in politics.' I say, whether you like it or not, you are involved, your life involves it, the taxes you pay everyday in your life is a politics. This is true.

This “search” led to successful increased representation in the political public sphere; Villanueva, a second-generation Filipino-American, became the first Filipino-American council member in Virginia and thus achieved political representation. In this sense, Filipino-American CAG was successful in transcending regionalism in order to elect a second-generation Filipino-American who did not necessarily grow up with strong regionalistic ties, per se. In turn, Villanueva himself largely attributes his political success to the support of the Filipino-American community:

The majority of our community takes great pride in having a Filipino elected, and in many ways they were very significant in helping me get elected when I won my first local race. That was in 2002. At that time, (there were some openings) in City Council. I’ve been involved in the community. I had also been involved in politics, and I had a great coalition assembled not only of Filipinos, but restaurant owners at the beach support me because they felt like their voice wasn’t being heard. Republicans had some of that base help me out, so it [was] kind of quick. I’ve always talked about running for office. So I had an organization running in place and at that time we were really strategic. We had two open seats, I ran against seven people, three of the folks placed over 250,000 for 100 seats and I raised 60,000 in one... It was because our Filipino community propelled me further. I had a big coalition; a lot of them are strategic and learning for me. And then in 2006 I got re-elected. Not only did the Filipino community help out, but I became the top go-getter of all time at a City Council race. Not sure if you’ve been reading, but I [competed] in state politics, I ran against a Democrat incumbent. I ran in one of the toughest districts: It was not only Democrat, it was not only Republican, it was pretty much 50-50. But I [won] by 16 votes. You credit a lot, you credit organizations, Grand Old Party ticket, you can credit me, but you’ve also got to credit the Filipino community. Sixteen votes tells you now that grassroots and people in the area, there are sixteen more people there that ended up coming out to vote for me...

Villanueva reports that the Filipino community was “very significant [in] helping [him] get elected when [he] first won [his] first local race that was in 2002.” Moreover, in the 2006 election he won by only sixteen votes; Villanueva recognizes that he’s “got to credit the Filipino community” for his success. Overall, Villanueva reports that the “Filipino community propelled [him] further.”



### **Projecting Influence Back on the Homeland**

Filipino-American CAG also attempts to project its influence back onto the homeland. Specifically, Filipino-American CAG collaborates with the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA) on the following major issues: 1) Lobbying for Local and State-Level Issues; 2) Promoting Good Governance in the Philippines: Advancing the U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance Initiative (USP4GG); 3) Bolstering the Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) Between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States of America; 4) Promoting the Save Our Industries Act (SAVE ACT).

#### *Lobbying for Local and State-Level Issues*

Through this partnership, the two organizations deal with issues that transcend the local and state level. As Kalaw, who is the Board of Directors and Chairman of Capital Region II<sup>61</sup> explains:

Filipino-American CAG is almost like the NaFFAA. In fact Filipino-American CAG is a member of NaFFAA. The only difference is that Filipino-American CAG is local. Sometimes we have one-on-one political forums with the local and even state candidates to discuss issues, especially issues that are affecting our community. Whereas NaFFAA is...doing some action on a national level. NaFFAA is there to support any Filipino organization on the state and local levels to accomplish their missions.

While NaFFAA is nationally focused in its interests and operates primarily as an interest/lobbying group at the national level:

The National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA) is a private, non-profit, non-partisan tax-exempt organization established in 1997 to promote the active participation of Filipino Americans in civic and national affairs. NaFFAA is composed of 12 regions with a national office in Washington, D.C. that monitors legislation and public policy issues affecting Filipino Americans. NaFFAA partners with local affiliate organizations and national coalitions in advocating for issues of common concern.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> NaFFAA region II is called Capitol Region and consists of the following states: Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia

<sup>62</sup> <http://naffaaua.org/about-naffaa/>

The National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA) is recognized by Washington policy-makers, private industry and national advocacy groups as the Voice of Filipinos and Filipino Americans throughout the United States. It is a non-partisan, non-profit national affiliation of more than five hundred Filipino-American institutions and umbrella organizations. Its twelve regions cover the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, Guam and the Marianas.<sup>63</sup>

NaFFAA is a “private, nonprofit, non-partisan tax-exempt organization” that was established in 1997. Based in Washington, D.C., this organization comprises of 12 regions that “monitors legislation and public policy issues affecting Filipino-Americans.” Like Filipino-American CAG, NaFFAA is non-partisan and attempts to foster Filipino-Americans to participate in civic and national affairs. Lorna Dietz, Regional Chair of NaFFAA Region 8<sup>64</sup> elaborates:

In the simplest terms, NaFFAA is an advocacy organization. We are here in the United States where Filipinos live and work, thus we advocate for Filipinos who are being held back from being empowered OR are being disempowered. /Every NaFFAA region is autonomous while following the NaFFAA national guidelines. Please understand that NaFFAA is NOT a political organization. It is a 501 c 3 non-profit organization which, in my opinion, promotes political awareness ("knowing about it") so that Filipino Americans can empower themselves through political activism ("doing something about it").

Dietz stresses that NaFFAA attempts to “promote political awareness” or “knowing about it” in order to “empower” Filipino-Americans to engage in “political activism” or “doing something about it.” The 12 regions operate autonomously sharing the NaFAA guidelines. Thus, NaFAA operates as an umbrella organization that connects national and international key political issues with a goal to “empower” Filipino-Americans.

Filipino-American CAG “support[s] any Filipino organization on the state and local levels to accomplish their missions.” Filipino-American CAG tends to operate on the more local and community level, engaging in “one-on-one political forums with the local and even state

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<sup>63</sup> From the NaFFAA.org Evolutionary Files, 2006, <http://NaFFAAUSA.org>

<sup>64</sup> Region 8: VIII: Northern California Region (Counties of San Luis Obispo and Kern County)

candidates to discuss issues, especially issues that are affecting our community.” Dimasuay further describes NaFFAA’s role in similar fashion:

The goals of NaFFAA are similar to [those of] Filipino-American CAG. It’s just national scope. That’s why when we already had Filipino-American CAG in place, and then when I saw the goals of NaFFAA [were] similar to Filipino-American CAG, that’s why we joined in as an affiliate with NaFFAA. What we are doing is what they are doing nationally. So I said to the group, ‘Let’s join because we are the same [as] what they are doing now.’

Although Kalaw states that Filipino-American CAG is more “local,” Dimasuay reports that this organization works with NaFFAA because “what we are doing is what they are doing nationally. “Let’s join because we are the same [as] what they are doing now.” While we are aware of legislative acts like nursing regulation (e.g., NCLEX, removal of CGFNS, H-2 visas, etc.) that influence Filipinos’ occupational opportunities, Mr. and Mrs. Dakila also discuss other Filipino-American CAG projects that speak to broader political goals:

The... things that we lobbied at that time were the USAFFE guerrillas’ benefits and [attaining citizenship] which materialized very soon. Congress acted on that very soon so we had [a] mass swearing of the old guerrillas from the Philippines. They were allowed to become citizens. They got their benefits before it was not complete. Now the veterans organization at the Philippine Cultural Center is working on it. But we started that. And then another subject was the Navy people from the Philippines. The Navy recruits from the Philippines who were recruited because of the Laurel Langley agreement, the peace treaty. They were recruited and they [were enlisted in] the continental U.S. for U.S. positions. They were allowed to change their status to citizenship. After 1976 when the Laurel Langley agreement expired, the recruits from the Philippines were mercenaries. They were not allowed to change their status any longer. So that was one of the subjects that we lobbied [on]. I’m not sure if that was amended, but anyway, they do not recruit anymore from the Philippines. No more recruitment.

NaFFAA lobbied in Congress on behalf of the USAFFE guerillas so that they could obtain benefits and attain U.S. citizenship. NaFFAA also lobbied for Navy veterans who served under the Laurel Langley agreement. Since these respective veterans’ status was changed from navy servicemen to “mercenary,” NaFFAA successfully lobbied the U.S. Congress to amend this legislation, enabling these World War II soldiers to regain their veterans’ benefits.

*Promoting Good Governance in the Philippines: Advancing the U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance Initiative (USP4GG)*

Another way that Filipinos attempt to project their influence in their homeland is through promoting “good governance” in the Philippines. On August 7, 2011, U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance (USP4GG) released a statement that articulating their mission and vision:

**Mission**

- Educate the Filipino-American communities about the principles and values of good governance.
- In close alliance with NGOs and media groups, promote good governance principles in the Philippines and encourage vigilance to protect the welfare of the Filipino people, look after the interest of those with less in life, and inspire the public servant to keep his oath to serve the country honestly.
- Encourage Filipinos who are US citizens to apply for and obtain dual citizenship.
- Encourage Filipinos to register and vote in the Philippine elections, and be a partner in the efforts to make the election process be available to every Filipino.
- Seek amendments to the Philippine Overseas Absentee Voting Law to eliminate all provisions that discourage overseas Filipinos from registering to vote.
- To present, promote and participate in just, sustainable and transformational projects of the government and non-governmental agencies that promote good governance, benefit the common good of the Filipino people and provide opportunities for empowerment and civic engagement.

**Vision**

A Philippines where the values of good governance, i.e., Consensus Oriented, Participatory, Following the Rule of Law, Effective and Efficient, Accountable, Transparent, Responsive, Equitable and Inclusive, are widely known, accepted, advocated and practiced, resulting in peace and prosperity for the country.<sup>65</sup>

In the same spirit as NaFFAA, Filipino-American CAG supports U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance by increasing political representation in the Philippines. Filipino-American CAG believes similarly that they should “empower” Filipino-Americans and “promote good governance principles.” These organizations work together to encourage Filipino-Americans to “obtain dual citizenship,” amend the Philippine Overseas Absentee Voting Law in order to

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<sup>65</sup> <http://www.filamnation.com/2011/08/us-pinoys-for-good-governance/>

“eliminate” voting restrictions and subsequently increase political power, and to take an active role as a “partner” in Philippine elections. Overall, through these legislative initiatives, Filipino-Americans attempt to increase their political power and influence the Philippine government.

Below, Dimasuay describes USP4GG:

Loida Nicolas Lewis is the current President. This is an organization of Filipino Americans in the United States ONLY working, lobbying at the Philippine Congress and the Philippine President to pass legislations and enact new laws for the government's transparency and accountability including the elimination of graft and corruption throughout all branches of the government from the local, provincial and national levels. I believe that the USP4GG has a partnership with the President Benigno Aquino, Jr. as he has already enacted some Executive guidelines on the eradication of corruption started with the impeachment of the Philippine Supreme Court Justice.

In partnership with President Benigno Aquino, Jr., USP4GG organizes Filipino-Americans and lobbies the Philippine Congress and Philippine President to “pass legislations and enact laws for the government’s transparency and accountability including the elimination of graft and corruption throughout all branches of the government....” President Benigno Aquino implemented this initiative and eradicated corrupt political figures like impeached the Philippine Supreme Court Justice. Huyla, another Filipino-American CAG member, also discusses this initiative:

USP4GG is a non-profit organization that was organized during the election of current Philippine President Benigno Aquino Jr. The organization is composed of mostly professionals (lawyers, doctors, engineers, accountants, nurses, computer people, etc), academicians and businesspersons. [The general objectives of USP4GG] is...to continually seek better governance for the Philippines and a better life for all Filipinos - both those in the Philippines and those living in other countries.

USP4GG promotes legislative initiatives that advance Filipino-Americans’ political power as a means by which to “seek better governance for the Philippines and a better life for all Filipinos...” Loida Nicolas Lewis, national chair of U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance and former CEO of Beatrice International, has led the organization to take positions on several

specific political issues that impact Filipinos across the globe, fostering political activism on key issues. For instance, on May 11, 2012, Lewis encouraged Filipinos to protest China's aggressive encroachments on the Philippines' Scarborough Shoal. China erroneously claims this area is "inherent territory" even though it is 500 nautical miles from the nearest China port. Rodel Rodis, national president of the US Pinoys for Good Governance, responded similarly and led the Global Filipino Diaspora Council that represents 12 million Filipinos from 220 countries to protest, arguing that the Scarborough Shoal has appeared on Philippine maps since 1743. Rodis asserts that "strong support by Filipinos in the Diaspora will show China that it is not just confronting a small country that it can easily bully, but one that has citizens throughout the world who can mobilize public opinion."<sup>66</sup> Filipino-American CAG members assert their strong solidarity with transnational organizations like NaFFAA and the U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance for Good Governance initiative.

Politically aligned with Rodis and Lewis, Dimasuay shares USP4GG's role in transnational affairs like the United States, for example:

[USP4GG works]...with the Philippine embassy. In issues where there is no Philippine consulate or embassy, they give NaFFAA [the authority] to act as the representative of the government. That's why we attended the Bow Mariner...<sup>67</sup> Good governance. In fact our national chairman at that time he, I believe he should be in Congress.

NaFFAA serves as a direct "representative of the [Philippine] government." For instance, during the February 2004 Bow Mariner accident, a 570 foot tanker caught fire, exploded, and sank off the coast of Virginia. Several survivors who were recovered from this accident were Filipino, and NaFFAA stepped in, in lieu of the Philippine embassy, to rescue the sailors and showcase

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<sup>66</sup> "U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance" Call for Global Protest on May 11 over China Encroachment on Philippine Islands; Filipino Broadway Star Lea Salonga Joins Call; Filipino Groups in U.S. Hong Kong, Toronto, Sydney to Join; **Press Release:** U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance – Thu, Apr 26, 2012 2:29 PM EDT; <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/u-pinoys-good-governance-call-182900529.html>

<sup>67</sup> Mutual Defense Treaty Between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States of America

their recovery as a form of “good governance.” In similar fashion as Kalaw, Dimasuay indicates that he believes Filipino-Americans should be allowed to serve in political office in the Philippines. For instance, he believes the national chairman of NaFFAA “should be in [the Philippine] Congress.”

Through the USP4GG, NaFFAA serves as a direct “representative of the [Philippine] government.” For instance, during the February 2004 Bow Mariner accident, a 570 foot tanker caught fire, exploded, and sank off the coast of Virginia. Several survivors who were recovered from this accident were Filipino, and NaFFAA stepped in, in lieu of the Philippine embassy, to rescue the sailors and facilitate their recovery as a form of “good governance.” In similar fashion as Kalaw, Dimasuay indicates that he believes Filipino-Americans should be allowed to serve in political office in the Philippines.

As Kalaw demonstrates:

We are trying to influence the good governance in the Philippines. Some of the founders and officers in our organization are members of what you call... U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance for the betterment in the Philippines. In fact, there will be a conference in September in Manila for the U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance. I plan to [go.] This U.S. governance is kind of the brainchild of NaFFAA. One [goal] is to limit the graft and corruption in the Philippines. [Another goal is] to eliminate red tapes to conduct business in the Philippines. [Another] is to eliminate the restrictions on the rights of the dual citizenship of Filipinos like [remove restrictions on engaging in] business, [owning] residential, land, and especially holding office in the Philippines. Because if you are a dual citizenship you cannot accept an appointed position in the government in the Philippines. You cannot be elected in the office in the Philippines. You have to relinquish your citizenship...We would like to take away those restrictions. It is on the political there are some restrictions, but in business there are no restrictions. Like myself, I would like to do something in my hometown. I would like to run as mayor or governor for that matter. But I cannot do that because, for me to do that, I [would] have to relinquish my U.S. citizenship, I [would] have to give up. We have a lot of Filipino dual citizens who have more experience. They are talented, they’ve got a lot of ideas, who are visionaries, and we would like to build that to our country.

Through a collaborative effort with Filipino-American CAG and other organizations, NaFFAA attempts to lobby the U.S Congress and the Philippine Congress to enact the U.S.

Pinoys for Good Governance and to “limit the graft and corruption in the Philippines,” remove “red tapes to conduct business in the Philippines,” and “eliminate the restrictions on the rights of the dual citizenship of Filipinos” for businesses, residents, real estate, and, most compellingly, for elected office. Kalaw notes that dual citizens are not allowed to serve in electoral office in the Philippines. Subsequently, to date, it is not possible to preserve one’s dual citizenship status and serve in electoral office in the Philippines. Kalaw reports that he would like to run for mayor or governor in his hometown but he cannot because, if he were to run for elected office in the Philippines, he would have to “relinquish” his U.S. citizenship. In turning to his hometown, Kalaw shares his deep concern and compassion that “we have a lot of Filipinos [who] are dual citizens, who have more experience. They are talented, they’ve got a lot of ideas, who are visionaries, and we would like to build that to our country.”

Like Kalaw, Dimasuay believes the national chairman of NaFFAA “should be in [the Philippine] Congress:”

I am the chairman of U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance in Hampton Roads. So depending upon the way the issue goes, if it’s a local issue, then I keep it local. And then I normally give a copy to the embassy of the Philippines. I let them know what we are doing, so they know what we are doing here. Because they are always wondering why Filipinos, they like to get the Philippines [are] more united in the United States. In order to know what’s happening in certain communities. And I’ve been getting messages, sometimes from the consul general, from the ambassador, that they are very appreciative of me sending them news of what’s happening in the area. They wished that all the Filipino communities across the country gave them the update as well. And my certain responsibility is not only local, because I was the past chairman of NaFFAA, being a regional chairman...so my responsibility is not local, state, national, but international because of the influx of messages to educate people all over the country or all over the world. Because when I send that out, I have about five groups of distribution that I’m sending out because, depending on the issue, just like this one you received, it is not only a local issue, it is an international lesson learned, the investigation so to speak. What’s happening is we just don’t know what’s happening in the Philippines and we always disapprove or don’t understand, or hopeless because of what we are hearing there regarding corruption and inaction from the government officials or anybody else. So now that we have a committee, the U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance that pushed for the election of the president. Now the president appointed members of that group to hire



positions in the Philippine government, so we have insiders there...Filipino-American CAG is part of NaFFAA.

As part of this specific initiative, Dimasuay consults on a regular basis with the consul general and the ambassador in the Philippines. Dimasuay updates Filipinos in the Philippines via the Philippine embassy in order to “let them know what we are doing, so they know what we are doing here...in order to know what’s happening in [a] certain community.” Through this initiative, Dimasuay attempts to clarify what is happening in the Philippines and attempts to alleviate the “hopelessness because of what we are hearing there regarding corruption and inaction from the government officials or anybody else” and subsequently empowers Filipino-Americans to get involved. Through this initiative and through organizations like NaFFAA and Filipino-American CAG, Filipino-Americans attempt to influence politics in the Philippines like “push[ing] for the election of the president.” Moreover, based on NaFFAA and Filipino-American CAG’s endorsement, the President of the Philippines “appointed members of that group to hire positions in the Philippine government, so we have insiders there.” This type of connection increases the influence of the overseas Filipino community in the homeland, and empowers Filipino-American political organizations like NaFFAA and Filipino-American CAG to combat graft and corruption and ultimately influence the Filipino political public sphere. While Filipino-Americans attempt to influence Philippine politics from abroad, I am unsure how citizens in the Philippines respond to these initiatives.

*Bolstering the Mutual Defense Treaty Between the Republic of the Philippines and the U.S.*

Filipino-American CAG and NaFFAA also attempt to increase their influence and power in the Philippines through other quasi-official policies, such as the Mutual Defense Treaty Between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States of America. According to the Department of Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert F. del Rosario statement issued on May 9, 2012:

In view of inaccurate information on the subject of whether or not the US is prepared to respond to its commitment to the Philippines under the Philippines-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT), the Department of Foreign Affairs would like to establish as a matter of record that: 1. The Philippines and the United States entered into a Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) on August 30, 1951 in Washington, D.C. / US considers the South China Sea to be part of the Pacific Area.” On June 23, 2011, Secretary Hillary Clinton reaffirmed to Secretary Albert F. del Rosario during their meeting in Washington, D.C. that the US “will honor its treaty obligations to the Philippines.” During the question and answer session in the same media event, Secretary Clinton was asked by a correspondent from ABS-CBN this question: “What will America do if China attacks Filipino forces in the Spratly Islands? Secretary Clinton’s reply was: “Well, as to your first question, the United States honors our Mutual Defense Treaty and our strategic alliance with the Philippines. I’m not going to discuss hypothetical events, but I want to underscore our commitment to the defense of the Philippines.”<sup>68</sup> On November 16, 2011, Secretary Clinton and Secretary del Rosario signed the Manila Declaration which states: “The Republic of the Philippines and the United States today reaffirm our shared obligations under the Mutual Defense Treaty.”<sup>69</sup>

The Philippines and the United States signed the Mutual Defense Treaty on August 30, 1951 in Washington, D.C. In respect to the United States and Philippines’ ongoing relationship, on June 23, 2011, Secretary Hillary Clinton met with Secretary Albert F. del Rosario in Washington D.C. and stated that the U.S. will “honor its treaty obligations to the Philippines. The United States honors our Mutual Defense Treaty and our strategic alliance with the Philippines. I’m not going to discuss hypothetical events, but I want to underscore our commitment to the defense of the Philippines.”<sup>70</sup> This treaty reaffirmed what Clinton states as “our shared obligations.” Mr. Jabol, Filipino-American CAG member, notes that the “overall accord contained eight articles and dictated that both nations would support each other if either the Philippines or the United States were to be attacked by an external party.”

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<sup>68</sup> “Remarks with Philippines Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario After Their Meeting,” Washington, D.C., June 23, 2011

<sup>69</sup> “Manila Declaration on US-Philippine Alliance, 16 November 2011

<sup>70</sup> “Remarks with Philippines Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario After Their Meeting,” Washington, D.C., June 23, 2011

### *Promoting the SAVE ACT*

Another goal of Filipino-American CAG/NaFFAA is to advance the economic conditions in the homeland through legislative initiatives like the SAVE ACT:

Save Our Industries Act, a bill pending in U.S. Congress that will help save jobs in the U.S. textile and Philippine apparel industries. /The SAVE Act (S. 1244, H.R. 2387) will help save jobs in the U.S. textile and the Philippine apparel industries. Textiles produced in the U.S. will be exported to the Philippines, where they will be used to make finished apparel, which in turn will be exported to the U.S. /On the SAVE Act, Ambassador Cuisia remarked that the Philippines is the one former colony of the U.S. that does not have a special trading relationship with the U.S. If passed, the SAVE Act would represent the first major trade initiative in nearly forty years. The number of cosponsors in the House for SAVE Act has now reached 19 Representatives, and 3 more have committed themselves to sign up soon. In the Senate, Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii and Senator Roy Blunt of Missouri are principal sponsors, and they have continued to champion the bill.<sup>71</sup>

The Save Our Industries Act (S. 1244, H.R. 2387) is a bill pending in U.S. Congress that will “help save jobs in the U.S. textile and the Philippine apparel industries.” Its supporters argue that this bill will mutually benefit Americans and Filipinos: “Textiles produced in the U.S. will be exported to the Philippines, where they will be used to make finished apparel, which in turn will be exported to the U.S.” Interestingly, despite the fact that Philippines share a colonial history with the United States, Ambassador Cuisia reflected that the Philippines “is the one former colony of the U.S. that does not have a special trading relationship with the U.S.” Famous Filipino boxer Manny Pacquiao actively promotes this bill and is featured on the SAVE ACT website, with some signs of promise: 19 Representatives agree to cosponsor this bill in the U.S. House of Representatives and 3 more intend to sign up. Dimasuay shares his perspective:

SAVE ACT is a certain program they have in the Philippines. A majority of the clothes are being brought here in the U.S. is coming from China. Because of our special relationship between the U.S. and the Philippines, ...NaFFAA and Filipino-American CAG [would like] to help the Philippine government to get the U.S. government approve special consideration to give special treatment for our Philippine textile industries. So that’s what we are trying to accomplish. You know that the fabrics that they made here in

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<sup>71</sup> <<http://www.saveourindustriesact.com/>>

South Carolina are...to be made clothes in the Philippines, and bring back to the U.S. It is a business-type relationship to enhance the job employment in the U.S. and also enhance job employment in the Philippines...so that is the intent of that.

Through the SAVE ACT, NaFFAA and Filipino-American CAG attempt to help the Philippine government facilitate “special treatment to our Philippine textile industries.” Dayao shares similar sentiments as Dimasuay and reaffirms this collaborative push between various organizations like Filipino-American CAG and NaFFAA: “NaFFAA's role is to support lobbying for this resolution to become a law. The Philippine-U.S. Ambassador Cuisia is engaged with various politicians...to get their support.” Ultimately, through this legislative act, these organizations attempt to “enhance job employment in the Philippines.”

In respect to immigration, Dimasuay discusses illegal trafficking through *delagay* or bribery:

Eleven Filipinos [were] illegally trafficked and worked in Los Angeles. There were so many Filipinos. Some of them are in Texas, case still pending, ongoing, and these Filipino-based or Filipino-owned recruiting agencies with their contacts here in the U.S. did this trafficking. They are abusing the system because of *delagay*; what do you mean by *delagay*? Bribes to the Philippine government to slide down, grease the approval of, those are the problems. One thing that I was trying to encourage the Philippine embassy before, two ambassadors before, I made recommendations to the Philippine embassy that because of the corruption ongoing there, our *balikbayan* people are affected by this, even going through the airport. Going through the terminals. And they've already been hassled...asking them to give money before they let them go...so Filipino-American CAG by itself, because of my position because of the various hats I am wearing, it is not only the local that I am dealing with. I'm dealing with bigger...

*Delagay*, in this case, means a “bribe to the Philippine government to slide down [or] grease the approval of” Filipino-owned recruiting agencies to illegally traffic Filipinos globally. Moreover, Dimasuay proceeds to discuss his concerns in respect to corruption. Dimasuay states his concern with the corruption of Filipino-Americans (or known as *balikbayans*) that visits the homeland and are “hassled” by airport officials “to give money before they let them go.”

Overall, the efforts of organizations like Filipino-American CAG and NaFFAA to increase their influence in homeland are wide-ranging and varied.

### **Reflections on Filipino Transnationalism**

The findings in this study support recent research on transnationalism and migration concluding that the “transnational political field is not as extensively or evenly distributed among contemporary immigrants as proposed by previous accounts” (Guarnizo et al, 2003, p 1238). We need to move away from “nationalist assumptions” (Levitt, et al, 2003), largely practiced within social sciences, and advance further research on key questions like “who transnationalism benefits, under circumstances, and why” through these interdisciplinary inquiries. Based on this chapter, more research is also needed on whether transnational political activism leads to a “liberating” effect in immigrants’ respective homeland, or if it, intended or not, reproduces undemocratic power asymmetries.

Indeed, as we have seen in the case of Filipino-American CAG, “transnational practices are no longer about affirming identities to a specific place, but instead about their enduring membership in broader ethnic, religious or occupational groups that might have local, regional, and national levels of organization” (Levitt, et al, 2003, 570).

For instance, almost all Filipino-American CAG members are first-generation retired Filipino-American navy veterans who are married to nurses. Based on the fact that these Filipino-American CAG members tend to be retired and middle to upper-middle class, this finding supports other research that indicates that it is actually immigrants who possess higher levels of education, human, and social capital who engage in transnational political participation, which includes “both electoral and nonelectoral activities aimed at influencing conditions in the home country” (Guarnizo et al, 2003, 1223).

Some politically engaged Filipino-Americans prefer to focus and engage in transnational political action in their specific hometowns, while others prefer to attempt to influence the Philippines on a more national level, as in influencing national elections. Research shows that there is considerable variation in this regard across different immigrant populations or groups, for example, Salvadorians tend to focus on regional and hometown concerns, while Dominican immigrants are more likely to focus on party politics (Guarnizo et al, 2003; Landolt et al, 1999; Landolt, 2001; Menjivar, 2000). Overall, the “extent and forms of transnational activism vary with contexts of exit and reception” (Portes, 2003, 879). In this case, Filipino-Americans’ historically politically oppressed background influences their political engagement both in the United States and in the homeland. In other words, with regard to Filipino-Americans and their historically politically oppressed background vis-à-vis the democracy to which they have become exposed in the United States, this specific context of reception compels Filipino-American organizations like Filipino-American CAG and NaFFAA to participate in efforts to democratize the Philippine political public sphere through efforts to eliminate graft and corruption, and through legislative initiatives like the U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance. Although some scholars suggest that immigrants who come to the United States tend to seek rapid integration in the host society and generally avoid political involvement (Portes, 2003), it is clear that these post-1965 Filipino-Americans, who migrated to the U.S. at least in part to flee the totalitarian Ferdinand Marcos regime, are highly transnationally politically engaged, which in turn complicates our understanding of transnational political participation.

Contrary to other social scientific findings, why is it that Filipino-Americans are so politically engaged in their homeland? Does their sense of *utang ng loob* or civic indebtedness differentiate their orientation to the homeland as compared to other immigrants? It is also

possible that since transnational activities are “consistently associated with higher human capital resources: more education, more years of U.S. experience, higher occupational status” (Portes, 2003, 886), and that since Filipino-American CAG members tend to be retired and thus have more time spent or years in the U.S., leisure time, and money, they may subsequently have more human and social capital to invest in transnational activities, which supports other research that suggests “better networked immigrants are much more likely to become transnational activists” (Portes, 2003, 886). Overall, Filipino-Americans, like my Filipino-American CAG members, “rather than the recently arrived and the downwardly mobile, organize cross-border enterprises; support political parties and civic committees in their countries; and lead the cultural festivities, sports and religious events linking each migrant diaspora with its respective nation” (Portes, 2003, 886).

These findings lead to other questions. For example, if higher social, human capital, and years spent in the United States increase the likelihood of transnational activism, why are second-generation Filipino-Americans largely absent in politically active groups like Filipino-American CAG? Although we have some second-generation Filipino-American politicians like Ron Villanueva, how invested are they in political transnational activism? In respect to the interview with Villanueva, he does not report any specific transnational political activism on his part, though he acknowledges that other organizations are highly politically active. More research is needed to illuminate the varied and heterogeneous political involvement of immigrants.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have illustrated how contested attitudes of citizenship and political participation play a role in the Filipino-American community. Filipino-American CAG, the only

political organization in the Virginia Beach/Hampton Roads area, attempts to transcend regionalism among the Filipino community in order to craft solidarity (e.g., ‘Filipino-American’ hyphenated identity) and lobby for relevant political interests. As Smith argues and as found in my research, “reassessing migrant membership in the home country’s political community usually serves as a strategy for confronting home country crises in national identity and development, often related to changes in the relationship to the U.S. or world system, to former colonies (1998) or territorial possessions or (former Soviet ) republics (Tilly, 1998).”

Ultimately, Filipino-American CAGS officers, who share multiple affiliations within the nation-state, are not necessarily counterposed to transnational engagements. In other words, my research supports the ongoing scholarly argument that challenges the classical assimilation perspective. My findings corroborate with the argument that “establishing a new life in a destination country does not necessarily detract from immigrants’ economic, political, and social commitments to their country of origin” (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton, 1995; Foner, 2000; Levit, 2011). Instead, organizations like Filipino-American CAG are attempting to confront home country crises in national identity and development. This finding supports the idea of a “new class of immigrants” or “economic entrepreneurs or political activists who conduct cross-border activities on a regular basis” (Guarnizo, Pores, and Haller, 2003).

In the next chapter, I will explore how my research findings connect with the overall themes of this dissertation, illustrating how my findings theoretically intersect with the following main themes: The Postcolonial Mind v. Multiple Modernities as an Explanatory Framework; The Role of Religion in Assimilation; The Impact on Regionalism on Political Participation and Identity Formation; The Impact of Religion on Civil Society in Immigrant Communities; and Future Research Directions. I will elaborate on my dissertation findings and relate them to my



main theoretical framework, which largely draws from the recent writings of religion and public sphere of theorist Jurgen Habermas. Overall, my dissertation findings strengthen Habermas' key concept of multiple modernities, or the idea that immigrants bring their unique histories and religions with them as they relate to the public sphere. Social scientists should consider more seriously the historical, social, and religious contexts that each immigrant group brings to bear on its members' dynamic and, at times, ambivalent American citizenship.

## CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I will directly address my central research question: 1) How does religion shape Filipino immigrants' connection to the public sphere? I will also address the related questions: 2) How does religion shape immigrants' understanding of American citizenship? 3) How do immigrants constitute a sense of empowered citizenship via the civic and religious institutions they navigate? 4) Does religion act as a preserving force of traditional Filipino culture within American society? 5) To what extent does religion foster unique transnational ties to the homeland? Following this discussion, I will conclude this chapter and the dissertation by reflecting on my fieldwork and suggesting avenues for future research.

### Analysis of Research Questions

*How does religion shape Filipino immigrants' connection to the public sphere?*

Overall, my dissertation findings demonstrate that religion shapes Filipino immigrants' connection to the public sphere, albeit in ways more complicated and less linear than immigration and religion scholars have reported in previous research studies. What we find here are postcolonial immigrants, namely Filipino-Americans, whose wave and context of immigration are distinct from other Filipino-Americans from the West Coast. Habermas' concept of multiple modernities, or the idea that based on their varied histories and backgrounds, immigrants may have highly divergent experiences as they attempt to integrate in their host nation, applies because, while these findings are highly significant and generalizable for this specific Filipino-American community, it is quite clear that competing narratives persist among Filipino co-ethnics within the community that vary by generation and the contexts of reception (e.g., military background). Moreover, religion, as we have seen, plays a major mediating role in how Filipino-Americans perceive their American citizenship as a "blessing" and feel *utang ng*

*loob* to the nation-state in which they have received this blessing. Put short, this dissertation advances the multiple modernities framework by unraveling various routes to modernity based on specific cultural conditions, in this case, the Filipino-American experience.

This is among the first studies of its kind to examine postcolonial immigrants to the United States utilizing a social scientific, ethnographic approach. It would be fascinating to find out how Filipino-American communities, or since they are a highly diasporic community, how these dynamics may play out in respect to their citizenship, not only on the West Coast or in other major cities where Filipino communities are present, but transnationally where the public policies of immigration may be more or less inclusive. This dissertation also aims to illuminate why certain immigrant groups may be more or less politically represented, at least on the organizational level, within the public sphere. Even if immigrants may possess more economic resources, education, and capital, we see that this does not necessarily lead to successful political mobilization due to factors like *utang ng loob*. On the other hand, those who tend to be more critical of religion, while still remaining religiously affiliated, partly believe that distancing themselves from Catholicism in some way also helps free them from “colonial mentality” and empowers them to politically mobilize and also attempt to, in what they believe, lift up their respective home country.

*How does religion shape immigrants' understanding of American citizenship?*

Religion also tends to shape how Filipino-Americans perceive and interpret their American citizenship. As noted above and discussed in my indebtedness chapter, because Filipino-Americans see their citizenship as a “blessing” from God, their religiosity compels them to believe they have *utang ng loob*, or are “indebted” to the United States for this blessing of American citizenship. In order to fulfill this indebtedness, Filipino-Americans are highly

civically engaged in the United States, but limit the extent to which they connect to and participate in the American public sphere. Filipino-Americans largely narrate their immigration experience and history as a “blessing” from God for their American citizenship and feel they should “give back,” both on the national and transnational level. As my respondent surgeon Dr. Dimaporo shared, even though he was nominated as Surgeon General and had been asked by community members to run for political office, he did not since he felt it was not his “place” to as a first generation immigrant. In contrast, Dimaporo believes his children, who are second-generation immigrants, are qualified to run for political office. This sentiment suggests that since his children were born in the United States (as opposed to the Philippines), they are not “indebted” to the American nation-state like their father. Essentially, Filipino-Americans do not believe they should ‘bite the hand that feeds’ them because they feel indebted or *utang ng loob* for their American citizenship, and thus in order to show their gratitude, they must contribute back through their civic acts but not politically engage in the United States.

Filipino-Americans who tend to be critical of the Catholic Church are still proud to be Americans, but feel they should utilize their American citizenship to politically engage in the national and transnational political public sphere. Even more interesting, while they see their American citizenship as a “blessing,” since those who tend to be more critical of the Catholic Church distance themselves from regional associations and ethnic-specific ties, these Filipino-Americans feel that due to this blessing they should increase their political power and influence in the homeland and attempt to govern the Philippines from the United States since they were the ones who received the “blessing” (as opposed to the Filipinos who did not make it to America so to speak) of American citizenship.

Immigrants' personal histories and their experience of immigration also impact their understandings of American citizenship. The colonizer-colonized relationship that Filipino-Americans share, along with this community's extensive military history (that Filipinos in this area have been historically recruited, emigrated, and gained American citizenship via service in the U.S. Navy), partly contribute to Filipinos' sense of *utang ng loob* or indebtedness, which shapes their understandings of American citizenship.

Overall, I have attempted to show how religion directly shapes my community members' understandings of democracy and their American citizenship. I clarify how postcolonial immigrants such as Filipino immigrants configure their American citizenship within the larger frame of civil society. Past studies on the postcolonial experience largely explored the European colonial context (e.g., Britain, France). A growing number of studies have also explored the role of historical colonialism on immigrants like Filipino-Americans. Along this intellectual vein, this study sheds clearer light on how postcolonial people may view their citizenship in the modern world. Moreover, I also help advance ongoing, burgeoning critical analysis on colonialism in respect to Filipino-Americans which in turn intends to enrich and nuance scholarly discussions on the sociology of immigration, identity development, and ultimately help contribute to ongoing analyses on contemporary reformulations of assimilation.

*How do Filipino immigrants constitute a sense of empowered citizenship via the civic and religious institutions they navigate?*

Because Filipino-Americans are the only Asian-American group from a nation that the United States colonized, it is important to consider their 'unique' relationship in order to address the above question. To that end, I will briefly discuss postcolonial scholarship and then address this question regarding empowered citizenship.

In my research interviews, I find that postcolonial Filipino-Americans possess a richly complex and wide range of understanding toward their American citizenship. Therefore, how Filipino immigrants constitute a sense of empowered citizenship is still tied to, as other scholars have suggested, “how historical legacies in sending societies interact with new racial contexts to influence,” (Ocampo, 2013) in this case, ethnic identity development. It turns out that the Filipino-Americans in my study perceive themselves as holding more agency and ability to empower themselves. It also turns out that these immigrants feel ambivalent about the role of religion in their lives in respect to their citizenship. Assimilation models should therefore more seriously consider religion among newer waves of immigrants, like the post-1965 immigrants, since it is clear, in this case, that religion largely influences Filipino-Americans’ understandings of citizenship and subsequently their assimilation patterns. Thus, when we unravel how Filipino-Americans construct and interpret their American citizenship, we see that integration and assimilation are not simply a linear and static process, especially when the effects of religion are seriously considered. For example, in my discussion of regionalism, I unravel a paradox: Filipinos preserve their ethnic identities via religious, hometown holidays in the U.S. and socially organize themselves based on regional hometown ties from the Philippines. These hometown ties are reinforced by patron saint holidays native to their hometowns in the Philippines. Due to feelings that their American citizenship is a “blessing,” Filipino-Americans also highly civically engage as a way to repay their *utang ng loob* to their new nation-state, but limit their political engagement in the U.S. On the other hand, we also see evidence of transnational civic engagement in the Philippines among Filipino-Americans who work with global religious movements or humanitarian projects like Gawad Kalinga in which they come together as a community to donate money to the homeland for natural disasters. Moreover,

although these regional hometown ties are based on strong Catholic beliefs, Filipino-Americans also attempt to transcend regional hometown ties in certain circumstances, especially for the sake of the second-generation. This behavior is evidenced by Ron Villanueva's election as State Delegate (VA), which he largely attributes to the first-generation Filipinos' ability to collectively mobilize and vote on his behalf.

I attempt to expand ongoing analysis of postcolonialism and argue that Virginia Beach/Hampton Roads Filipino-Americans, at least in the context of the U.S. military (or specifically, U.S. Navy), largely report feelings of gratitude for their American citizenship and subsequently feel a sense of indebtedness to the U.S. (*utang ng loob*). Although Filipino-Americans feel *utang ng loob*, they also empower themselves by civically contributing back not only to the nation-state, but also to their homeland. Therefore, Filipino immigrants largely constitute a sense of empowered citizenship through fulfilling their *utang ng loob* by being highly civically engaged in their community but not necessarily politically engaged. Religious communities for Filipino immigrants in this area tend to foster strong civic engagement both within their respective religious community, but also within (via their regional associations) and outside their ethnic community. Religious communities also tend to reinforce regionalistic ties (through the celebration of localized patron saint holidays), which in turn strengthens hometown associational identities.

But not all Filipino-Americans feel this *utang ng loob* to the former colonial power, the American nation-state, and many feel that the Catholic Church hinders Filipino-American empowerment. Filipinos who tend to be more critical of the Catholic Church empower themselves by crafting a pan-Filipino-American identity and attempt to increase political representation and power in the United States and their homeland. Filipino-Americans within

their ethnic community contest what their American citizenship means, and are also critical of their postcolonial experience, thus lending support to notions of the postcolonial mind, or postcolonial scholarship. As they contest and critically engage their colonial history and citizenship, some Filipino-Americans feel “empowered” because they have “knowledge” of their “true” history, rather than the more overtly patriotic stance taken by the majority of Filipinos who feel *utang ng loob* for their American citizenship.

Particularly, the founders of the Filipino American National Historical Society (FANHS) Virginia Beach Chapter contest and criticize American public policies from the perspective of this history, noting that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the United States engaged in discriminatory and demeaning exclusionary practices that preserved and maintained Filipinos in a subservient and inferior sub-American status. These founders are of an older generation and from the West Coast. West Coast Filipino-American immigrants shared a highly divergent immigrant experience, often coming to the United States in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and worked as itinerant farm laborers or in various canneries in Hawaii. Since these newer, post-1965 immigrants to the East Coast had a fairly better reception (via the U.S. Navy) to the United States, Virginia Beach/Hampton Roads Filipino-Americans do not share this same level of skepticism toward the American nation-state as their West Coast counterparts do. Thus Filipino-Americans like the Kanlungan do not feel a sense of ‘*utang ng loob*’ like their East Coast counterparts do, and in fact are highly skeptical and critical of the American colonial history and relationship that this country shares with the Philippines.

These contested narratives of who Filipino-Americans are and what their citizenship entails, exemplifies the explanatory power of Habermas’ multiple modernities framework. I also argue that, even within ethnic groups, there is considerable variation in understandings of



citizenship and what it means to be “empowered.” Therefore, when we consider how Filipino immigrants constitute a sense of empowered citizenship, I argue that the multiple modernities framework more comprehensively explains the experience of post-1965 Filipino immigrants in the industrialized West. While Filipino-Americans on the East coast may feel *utang ng loob* and a sense of pride and gratitude for their American citizenship, these contested narratives that have emerged from my interviews and fieldwork show that understanding of American citizenship among co-ethnics may vary based on: generation (First versus second generation), wave of immigration (pre-1965 versus post-1965), occupational status (Farmers versus U.S. Navy and nursing), history (which is in turn tied to generation), and the overall context of reception (which encompasses all of the previously listed factors). The fact that American citizenship is contested in and of itself also illustrates the remarkable ways in which Filipino-Americans interpret their citizenship and empower themselves.

As I explored this question, I found myself in the midst of this contention: How Filipino immigrants constitute a sense of empowered citizenship is just as important as the notion of what ‘real’ or ‘valid’ research findings or ‘history’ entail. For instance, the director<sup>72</sup> for a local university affiliated Filipino center served as a consultant throughout my fieldwork during the summer 2011. The director quickly dismissed Virginia Beach FANHS founders’ critical postcolonial beliefs, noting that since most Filipinos in this area do not identify with this critical narrative, that it is simply not true and is inaccurate, and thus should be ‘tossed out’ or not taken as seriously as the dominant narrative of *utang ng loob*. A first-generation Filipino immigrant herself, the director clearly does not identify with FANHS, possibly because FANHS is largely comprised of second and third-generation members who tend to be more critical of their American citizenship than the first generation of immigrants (as in the case with Filipino-

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<sup>72</sup> Name and specific location are not stated to protect anonymity.

American CAG, which almost completely is comprised of first generation immigrants who possess a much more patriotic feeling regarding their American citizenship). It is interesting to note that, although there have been attempts by this Filipino university-affiliated center to collaborate with FANHS and vice versa, because there are inherent differences in how each organization views their Filipino-American history (and subsequently citizenship)—one organization is formally affiliated with an academic institution and one is not (FANHS)—these organizations are sharply contentious as to which one is more ‘credible’ in their reports of Filipino-American history. FANHS has noted that, even though they have published two books on the local oral history, neither of them is featured by this Filipino center. Therefore, multiple modernities also cut across understandings as to which organization has the power or credibility to tell the story of this community, and the extent to which competing narratives are incorporated in each organization’s representations, if at all. In this case, I want to seriously acknowledge and consider these frictions in order to illustrate that notions of citizenship in the modern world are more nuanced than some scholars may have originally considered. I also argue that these immigrants take their citizenship and their history very seriously, or else there would not be so much contention over how their story is told.

Finally in respect to what empowerment entails, it is also fascinating to note that, as I continued to interview FANHS leaders, it appeared that they attempted to control my research agenda and wished to utilize me as their representative for their future plans (e.g., planning conferences to discuss the postcolonial condition, forums to discuss Filipino-American identity). The director recommended that I maintain a social distance from them, stating that I needed to remain “objective.” Instead, I decided to report the multiple accounts of understandings of citizenship that emerged from my interviews. The key here is to show that even if scholars may

argue that post-1965 Filipino-American immigrants tend to be more economically integrated (as well as Asian-American immigrants at-large), there are still hotly contested debates among co-ethnics about *what it means to be integrated*. It also means that if we truly want to explore what empowerment means we also have to acknowledge these competing narratives as part of these overarching scholarly discussions on postcolonialism, religion, citizenship, immigration, and so forth.

*Does religion act as a preserving force of traditional Filipino culture within American society?*

Another question that I explored is whether religion acts as a preserving force of traditional Filipino culture within American society. The short answer is yes, but there are some costs. On the one hand, religion serves to preserve ethnic-specific Filipino traditions (regionalism) brought over from the homeland. As discussed in the Regionalism chapter, Filipino Catholics tend to venerate local patron saints from Filipinos' respective hometowns through fiestas and novenas. Religiously involved Filipinos celebrate region-specific holidays like Santo Nino Cebu, which according to one respondent Gumabay, "is the third Sunday of January every year. [We] incorporate [this holiday from] Cebu and celebrate at the same time in Cebu. It is synchronized with them." Specifically, regional organizations like the Cebuano Speaking Association of Tidewater reconnect with their respective hometowns through such religious holidays. As a result, Filipino-Americans celebrate patron saint holidays and foster social bonds among fellow hometown-mates. On the other, religion hinders the development of a cohesive immigrant national identity (as 'Filipino-American') that in turns inhibits effective collective political mobilization. Specifically, as they celebrate these religio-ethnic holidays, Filipinos nurture a fragmented identity based on regional hometown ties rather than a pan "Filipino-American" identity. These fragmented social ties tend to hinder Filipinos' ability to trust other

fellow Filipinos whom are outside their respective regional hometown group and subsequently weakens Filipino-Americans' ability to form a political identity, which in turns weakens their ability to organize, mobilize, and lobby for specific Filipino-American political causes.

We see how regionalism compels Virginia Beach/Hampton Roads Filipino-Americans (who are largely Catholic, due to the former colonial relationship to the Spain) to become highly civically engaged within the greater American society, on the one hand; on the other, we also see how conflicts emerge across regional hometown associations, weakening the sense of social solidarity among Filipino co-ethnics. This regionalism, then, has a paradoxical effect: On one hand, regionalism fosters Filipinos to preserve their native culture; on the other hand, regionalism hinders the emergence of a hyphenated, nationalistic pan-Filipino identity.

Therefore, in general, religious communities tend to foster traditional Filipino culture. Nonreligious organizations, like Filipino-American CAG, tend to encourage a more pan "Filipino-American" identity in order to craft social solidarity among all Filipinos in the United States in order to transcend regionalism and advance political interests. However, some venues tend to function *precisely* to preserve and maintain traditional Filipino-American culture, like the Philippine Cultural Center, which brings in local Filipino parish priests and hosts Filipino-specific religious masses.

Religion, at least Catholicism, does indeed create a sense of cultural and ethnic identity and meaning in members' lives, and offers unique social resources like a social setting (church space) and structure (traditional Filipino novenas and patron saint holidays), and a venue to reinforce hometown associational ties (such as also an opportunity to speak in one's dialect that is particular to their regional hometown) that is not fostered in nonreligious organizations like Filipino-American CAG. I should note, however, that regional associations do tend to reinforce

these Catholic-specific holidays, which in turn preserves traditional Filipino culture. Since Filipino-American CAG is a political organization, transcending regionalism is particularly important in order to increase influence and political representation in the American and transnational public sphere, and therefore this organization's focus is very different. While Filipino-American CAG may not preserve traditional Filipino culture, per se, this nonreligious organization provides a venue to discuss pan-Filipino-American issues.

Overall, few studies have explored how immigrants behave outside their religious communities. Moreover, even when researchers explore this social phenomenon, sociologists of religion tend to understate the complicating effects of religion in respect to immigrants' assimilation processes. Postcolonial scholarship largely fails to consider religion as a vital component of how immigrants understand themselves as citizens in the nation-state in which they formerly had colonizer-colonized status. My research addresses this gap in the literature and illustrates how religion creates complicated effects on how immigrants maneuver outside their religious communities and in turn conceptualize their American citizenship.

*To what extent does religion foster unique transnational ties to the homeland?*

Compellingly, while previous research has explored religion and transnationalism, and regionalism and transnationalism, no research (to my knowledge) to date connects both religion and regionalism to how immigrants craft transnational ties to the homeland. Moreover, scholars have only recently begun to consider regionalism and hometown associations as part of their analysis on political participation and identity formation among immigrants. A major question that political scientists and social scientists whose research interests are immigration and transnationalism consistently investigate is: Does being transnationally involved diminish political participation in the American nation-state? As these scholars have attempted to unpack

this important question, their research largely fails to consider that regionalism can play a major role in illuminating this question. Religion fosters unique transnational ties to the homeland, since religion, or in this case, Catholicism, reinforces and strengthens regionalism. According to my research findings, when we consider regionalism vis-à-vis transnationalism, the answer to this question is bifurcated: On the one hand, for my Filipino community, regional ties tend to *intensify* transnational ties to the homeland, with each respective regional association specifically connecting back to their respective hometown. On the other hand, as discussed in my previous chapters, this regionalism also *hinders* the formation of a hyphenated, pan-American Filipino identity and subsequently hinders the community's effective political participation in the United States. Overall, based on my research, since second and subsequent generation Filipino-Americans are not raised in their parents' hometowns and instead are born in the United States, they are less likely to identify with their parents' hometowns. As a result, I anticipate that a clearer hyphenated American identity will form or that these younger generations will conceptualize themselves as "Filipino-American" rather than Ilocano or Visayan per se, as is the case with West coast immigrants of the 1930's like the FANHS founders. It is interesting to note that, according to the 2012 Asian American Survey, 77% of foreign-born Filipino-Americans most often identify as Filipino-American, while only 51% of the native born identify accordingly.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, 19% of Filipino-Americans and 21% of Japanese Americans, among the U.S. Asian groups, are the most likely to describe themselves as American.<sup>74</sup> These puzzling statistics seem to contradict my dissertation findings: Why would 77% of foreign-born Filipino-Americans identify as 'Filipino-American' when I have found (in my research) that most Filipino immigrants (who are foreign-born) identify with their regional identity? And why are

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<sup>73</sup> 2012 Asian American Survey, in "The Rise of Asian Americans," Pew Research Center, p 80.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, p 79.

native born Filipino-Americans *less* likely to identify as Filipino-American? If these respective native borns are *less* likely to identify as Filipino-American, then what do they identify as? I suspect that the Asian American Survey may not have allowed Filipino-Americans to check mark or fill-in regional identities. Another reason could be that since the majority of Filipino-Americans are from the West Coast (66%)<sup>75</sup>, it is possible that their divergent history and contexts of reception may shape their identities differently. More research is needed to examine these questions and to explore second and subsequent generation of Filipino-Americans.

### **Reflections on Fieldwork**

I would like to briefly reflect on my fieldwork and share some of the advantages and disadvantages of conducting research in one's own co-ethnic community. In respect to advantages, as a 1.5 generation (meaning I was born in the Philippines and moved to the United States at a young age, specifically when I was 2 years old), Filipina-American, I examined my co-ethnic group. I believe that, due to this social positioning, I was seen as credible and an insider within my community and someone who could implicitly understand and empathize with issues and strengths of the community. In regard to disadvantages, people in this community are fairly familiar with each other and frequently attempted to identify me based on my family name/background/regional background. Since I come from a Southern Baptist background, and my parents converted from Catholicism in the early 1980's when my father emigrated to Charleston, South Carolina, via the U.S. Navy, I am not completely sure how people felt about my non-Catholic status. I grew up in a Protestant milieu, and my parents did not join any regional association and were highly engaged in their church instead. Being non-Catholic in some ways freed me to more deliberately map out Filipino-Americans' relationship to the

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<sup>75</sup> Pew Research Center analysis of 2010 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) files, in "The Rise of Asian Americans," Pew Research Center, p 34.

Catholic Church, how and why they celebrate their patron saint holidays, and how that is tied into regionalism.

Doing fieldwork in the Catholic Church, therefore, forced me to ask questions that other Filipino Catholics would have taken for granted as “common sense.” In that sense, I was culturally and religiously an outsider. On the other hand, I was able to observe the Filipino-American community with a social distance, so to speak, that would not have been possible if I had been Catholic and affiliated with a regional association as the majority of Filipinos are in this area. Finally, not being affiliated with a regional association, combined with my 1.5 generation status, may have led my respondents to more openly confide in me, I suspect, since I did not appear to have any strong regional associations and therefore any perceived bias against other Filipino-Americans from different regional associations. In that sense I was also an outsider.

On the other hand, for the overwhelming majority of Filipinos in this area, I shared a common history due to my father’s U.S. Navy background. More importantly, being part of a community means that I have some implicit stake in it—meaning to say that it was especially important for me to broker competing narratives since not only on a scholarly level it is important, but also on a cultural level, I wanted to respect and honor my community by allowing them for their voice to be heard. This is precisely why I chose to immerse myself in ethnography and conduct interviews so that I would not make assumptions about my respondents’ understandings of their postcolonial status and their American citizenship.

With regard to my fieldwork, another question comes to mind: What is the ‘truth’ in who Filipino-Americans are? With regard to brokering competing narratives, I sidestepped taking a position, and rather discussed this issue as a cultural process because I felt the debate was revealing of the psychology of the community at-large. Moreover, I felt that exposing and



sharing this contention with my readers was also more compelling and accurate rather than simply privileging or positing one narrative over another. In addition, these contested narratives largely depend upon how Filipino-Americans view themselves in relation to their collective historical experience as a colonized people and how they frame their relationship with the colonizing power, the United States and, to some extent, Spain (due to the Catholicism, including the patron saint holiday practices, that Spain brought to the Philippines). This colonial history vis-à-vis Filipinos' historical contentious and ambivalent citizenship status partly contributes to these ongoing debates over what Filipino-American citizenship entails. Ultimately, conceptions of citizenship directly shape how and to what extent Filipino-Americans connect to the national and transnational public sphere. It will be intriguing to see how these ongoing contested narratives unravel and shape the second generation Filipino-Americans who are less likely to have strong transnational ties to the homeland, since they were born and grew up in the U.S.

Another interesting aspect of this study that I would like to briefly consider is how the various organizations share their different understandings of 'true' history. It is interesting that FANHS portrays itself as showing the 'true' history of Filipinos, but as this history is primarily West coast in its origin, East coast Filipinos may not necessarily identify with it as part of *their* history per se since these immigrants are a fairly recent immigrant wave, with a very different experience than that of the earlier West coast immigrants. These different understandings of Filipino history may also be partly due to the regionalistic ties that shapes their understandings of national Filipino-American history. In other words, Filipino-Americans within the Hampton Roads community/East coast have trouble identifying with the '*manong*' generation among the first generation of Filipino-Americans who emigrated on the West coast, who are unlikely to share similar regional backgrounds and who emigrated under highly different socioeconomic

circumstances. FANHS seems to attract more of the second generation within the Hampton Roads community, which in turn strengthens my regionalism argument since second-generation Filipino-Americans are unlikely to possess strong regional ties because they grew up in the U.S. and subsequently can more easily identify with a historically-based national Filipino-American identity and the West coast '*manong*' generation's experiences.

Finally, I was most surprised that there was a strong community interest in the personal life of the researcher. I was taken aback by the fact that it mattered so much to community members how their story was told, how they would be represented, and how important it was to them that the American nation-state and the academy recognize that Filipino-Americans have strongly contributed to the American nation-state, showing they were worthy of citizenship.

### **Future Research Recommendations**

Research begets more research. In the case of this dissertation, my research has led me to suggest several recommendations for future research. First, while we have gained a glimpse of narratives and counter narratives that emerged between the general Filipino-American community (*utang ng loob* toward the American nation-state) vis-à-vis FANHS (critical lens of the colonizer and a feeling that East coast Filipino-Americans should feel *utang ng loob* to their West coast Filipino-American predecessors), more ethnographic research is necessary in order to clarify the extent that West coast Filipino-Americans may share some sense of the *utang ng loob* that their East coast counterparts feel. Specifically, do West coast Filipino-Americans feel that their American citizenship is a "blessing" and feel *utang ng loob* to the United States, or do they generally feel suspicious of the United States due to their specific immigrant history, that is, their geographic and historical proximity to earlier waves of Filipino immigrants who experienced major discrimination and the subsequent questionable public policies that subordinated their

citizenship status? Are there major differences in understandings of citizenship between East and West coast Filipino-Americans? If so, why?

Another area where more research is needed deals with religion. While the overwhelming majority of respondents captured in this study are Catholic, there is a growing presence of Filipino Protestants and Filipinos of other religious backgrounds (i.e., *Iglesias Ni Cristo*) in the U.S. We need to better understand the similarities as well as the differences between these different religious communities. Are Filipino Protestants, for example, just as likely to practice regionalism since they are less likely to celebrate their hometown patron saints? Since Protestants do not have patron saints, how does that affect how they socially organize and orient themselves outside their religious communities? Are Protestant Filipino-Americans more likely to politically engage in the public sphere since they may not be hindered by their regionalistic ties, or will their *utang ng loob* of their American citizenship also limit their political participation? How do Protestant Filipino-Americans' understandings of American citizenship compare and contrast compared to those of Catholic Filipino-Americans? Finally, do Protestant Filipino-Americans share any sense of resentment toward their colonial past, as some Filipino Catholics do? As noted in my study, some Filipino-American Catholics feel critical of their religion because they report that Catholicism in some ways has been used as a tool of oppression. Specifically, as the Spanish colonized the Philippines, they utilized Catholicism as a weapon to control Filipinos. Since Protestantism does not nearly share this long and intense colonial history with the Philippines, do Protestant Filipino-Americans feel any of the same criticism toward their religiosity, or perhaps they converted from Catholicism to Protestantism due in part to this colonial history?

Another area of research that deserves further examination is in respect to second-generation immigrants. While a growing body of social scientific studies has examined second-generation immigrants, such as sociologist Alejandro Portes' books *The New Second Generation* and *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*, for instance, we still know relatively little about this neophyte group. I find it interesting that, among my interviewees, they are largely absent in respect to both civically engaged and religiously involved activities. Several questions come to mind regarding the second generation: Do second-generation Filipino-Americans internalize *utang ng loob*? How might their understandings of citizenship compare and contrast to the first-generation, since they were born in the United States? Are they less likely to feel *utang ng loob* as a result of being born in the U.S.? Do they feel more or less obligation to carry on their parents' dreams to highly civically participate in the United States and improve the material and political conditions in the Philippines, which their parents would affectionately refer to as their homeland? What are their understandings of U.S. citizenship? Since it is possible that they are less likely to identify and socially organize according to region (because they did not grow up in respective Filipino hometowns), does that mean that Catholic practices of celebrating patron-saint holidays appear esoteric and irrelevant to them? Consequently, will it be easier for second-generation Filipino-Americans to achieve the solidarity that their parents desperately seek for the community? It appears that the Filipino-American community as a whole, especially among the first-generation, feels a sense of anxiety for what is to come for the next generation and hopes that the second-generation will be as motivated to give back as the first. Since second-generation Filipino-Americans, like Congressman Ron Villanueva, are deeply politically engaged, perhaps these anxieties will be

eased. Perhaps some of these questions cannot be entirely solved or answered through ethnography, but must unravel their own narratives in this modern context.

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## APPENDIX I.

### FILIPINO CHURCHES, CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS, & REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS IN VIRGINIA BEACH/HAMPTON ROADS AREA, VIRGINIA<sup>76</sup>

#### **Churches:**

Filipino Christian Church-Azalea Garden  
 Filipino Independent Baptist Church  
 Filipino-American Heritage Baptist Church  
 Catholic Church of St. Mark  
 St. Gregory the Great Catholic Church

#### Religious Organizations

- **7th Day Adventist:** Tony Aromin, Coordinator -(757)467-5048
- **Chesapeake Prayer Group:** Rose Punzalan, Coordinator -(757)547-8911
- **Filipino-American of Ascension Church:** Jessica Bello, Coordinator -(757)499-3053
- **Filipino-American of St.Pius Church:** Rosalie DeLumpa, President -(757)857-4293
- **Jesus of Nazareth:** Sylvia Sanchez, Coordinator -(757)479-2612
- **Our Lady of Lourdes:** Edgardo Roldan, Coordinator -(757)440-0527
- **Our Lady of Manaog:** Purita Agbuya, Coordinator -(757)467-2202
- **United Fellowships:** Dolores Edwards, Coordinator -(757)482-1351

#### Civic Organizations:

#### **Educational:**

- **Fiesta Sa Nayon:** Point of Contacts:
  1. Nony Abrajano (757)420-4181 E-mail to: [nonyabrajanol@.com](mailto:nonyabrajanol@.com)
  2. Willie Austria (757)583-5497
  3. Pepe Cabacoy (757)461-4494 E-mail to: [filamcagchair@.com](mailto:filamcagchair@.com)
  4. Nora Dorsey (757)486-6700
  5. Angelica George (757)471-4832 [georgea7577@bigplanet.com](mailto:georgea7577@bigplanet.com)

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<sup>76</sup> Special thanks to Ernie Pancho for working list of organizations.



6. Manding Salinas (757)420-3851 [anamila@juno.com](mailto:anamila@juno.com)

7. Ron Villanueva (757) 523-9393 [roncatvil@aol.com](mailto:roncatvil@aol.com)

• Filipino-American Hist.Nat'l Society: Dr.Allan Bergano, President - (757)000-0000

E-mail to: [da2rth@ix.netcom.com](mailto:da2rth@ix.netcom.com)

• Filipino-American Students Assn-(ODU): Neleh Barcarse, President - (757)548-2586

• Filipino-American Students Cultural Center - (ODU): Araceli S.Suzara (PhD), Director - (757)683-5099

E-mail to: [asuzara@odu.edu](mailto:asuzara@odu.edu)

Visit the Student Center at Old Dominion University(ODU) Norfolk,Virginia. [Click Here](#) Old Dominion Student Connection

• Filipino-American Literary, Sports & Arts Foundation (PALSAF): Marilyn Picardo Rivera, Exec.Director

- (757)523-0664

### Professional:

• MCU Alumni Association: Dr.Hubert I. Ramos, President -(757) 436-9121

• Phil-Am Medical Tech.Assn.: Ethel Austria, President -(757)548-3838

• Phil.Medical Assn.: Dr. Rose Hipol, President -(757)499-6395

• Phil. Nurses Assn.of Hampton Rds: Sol Aguinaldo, President -(757)479-3682

E-mail to: [paguin@aol.com](mailto:paguin@aol.com)

Visit their Home Page in Virginia Beach, VA., [Click Here](#) Philippine Nurses Assn. of Hampton Roads"!!

• Filipino American Postal Employees of Hampton Roads: Oscar Gador, President -(757)XXX-0000

E-mail to: [fapehr@hamptonroads.com](mailto:fapehr@hamptonroads.com)

Visit their Home Page in Virginia Beach, VA., [Click Here](#) Mr.Postman of Hampton Roads"!!

### Social:

• American & Filipino Club: Rolando Vedar, President -(757)366-9794

• Circulo Tarlaqueno: Angelino Mateo, President -(757)420-3361

- **CUFOT**: Venus Tomaneng, Exec.President -(757)479-4856
- **Filipino-American Bayanihan**: Max Espiritu Sr, President -(757)471-9251
- **Filipino-American Golf Assn**: Moises Mina, President -(757)467-8147
- **Filipino-American Seniors**: Ernesto Dano, President -(757)455-8831
- **Filipino-American Tennis Assn**: Rene Gabriel, President -(757)424-3483
- **Filipino-American Veterans**: Romy San Antonio, President -(757)366-9794 E-mail to: [romysan@juno.com](mailto:romysan@juno.com)
- **Filipiniana of Virginia**: Lily Vicente, President -(757)420-5816
- **Filipino Womens Club of Tidewater**: Merla Marcelo, President -(757)436-3724
- **Happy Couples Club**: Carl Apelizan, President -(757)588-5816
- **Hiram Club**: Roy Bautista, President -(757)467-2047
- **Miss Phil-USA Pageant**: Manny Hipol, President -(757)499-6395
- **Mrs.Philippine Court**: Dolly Alcantara, President -(757)486-8293
- **NABF**: Bong Guanlao, Commissioner -(757)853-7805
- **UIAT Youth Club**: Brandy Bello, President -(757)499-3053
- **UIAT Seniors**: Pedro Cabacoy, President -(757)853-4470



**By Region:**

- **Aklan Ati-Atihan of Virginia**: Rey Apolonio, President - Ph#(757)229-3733
- **Baguio Filipino-American**: Willie Austria, President - Ph#(757)583-5947
- **Bataan Association**: Gil P. Zulueta, President - Ph#(757)858-9283(O)
- **Batangas Association**: David Bagsit, President - Ph#(757)430-5479
- **Bicol Association**: Norma Rubio, President - Ph#(757)425-7963

- **Cavite Association:** Art Avila, President - Ph#(757)467-5834
- **Cavite City Fiesta Association:** Cora Magbanua, Hermana Mayor - Ph#(757)474-0310
- **Cebuano Speaking Association:** Jun Escario, President - Ph#(757)UNLISTED  
E-mail to: [escario@bellatlantic.net](mailto:escario@bellatlantic.net)
- **Council of United Filipino Organizations of Tidewater(CUFOT)**  
Visit their Home Page in Virginia Beach, VA., [Click Here](#) **on CUFOT!!**
- **General Trias Association:** Ineng Guzman, Hermana Mayor - Ph#(757)UNLISTED
- **Kahirup Foundation:** Sid Barrera, President - Ph#(757)467-7742
- **Kahirup Association:** Cora Pet, President - Ph#(757)495-7226
- **Kawit Association:** Romy Caldejon, Hermano Mayor - Ph#(757)485-1588
- **Las Pinas Association:** Lina Baltazar, President - Ph#(757)938-9828
- **Naic Association:** Jesse Del Rosario, Hermano Mayor - Ph#(757)486-0831
- **Olongapo City Assn.:** Ging Tala - President - Ph#(757)427-1974
- **Pampango Language Club Association:** Mila Salinas, President - Ph#(757)420-3851  
E-mail to: [President@juno.com](mailto:President@juno.com)
- **Pangasinan Association:** Joseph Campos, President - Ph#(757)474-3659
- **Paranaque Association:** Dan Alanique, President - Ph#(757)420-5636
- **Phil-Am Comm.of the Peninsula:** Romy Gracia, President - Ph#(757)827-8497
- **PhilAm Comm.of Tidewater:** Ron Villanueva, President - Ph#(757)523-9393  
E-mail to: [roncatvil@aol.com](mailto:roncatvil@aol.com)
- **Quezonian of Hampton Roads:** Richie Santander, President - Ph#(757)427-0277
- **Salinas Families of Tidewater:** Bert Convento, Hermano Mayor - Ph#(757)455-5690  
Visit their Home Page in Virginia Beach, VA., [Click Here](#) **on Salinas Association!!**
- **Subic Bay Association:** Al Carbonell, President - Ph#(757)485-1660
- **Tayuguenians of Tidewater:** Steve Suratos, President - Ph#(757)471-5726

- **United Ilocano Assn.of Tidewater: Rey Corsino, President - Ph#(757)479-2114**
- **Zambales Association: Angel Dajon, President - Ph#(757)495-9158**

### **3 Major Centers in Virginia Beach/Hampton Roads**

Filipino-American Center, Old Dominion University

The Filipino-American Center (FAC) was founded in 1998 and become the first academic-based Filipino center in the nation devoted to Filipino and Filipino-American studies. Spearheaded by Dr. Juan Montero, a recently retired Filipino-American surgeon, the FAC is headed by Dr. Araceli Suzara. Suzara states that the center's key mission is to collaborate with and bring together the richly diverse Filipino-American organizations within the community. The Center has sponsored a wide range of on and off-campus activities that cater to the Filipino-American community: including concerts, guest lecturers, film screenings and introductory Tagalog classes, Simbang Gabi masses at the San Lorenzo Spiritual Center and other Catholic parishes throughout Hampton Roads. Suzara has also created the curriculum for K-12 language and heritage classes taught at the Philippine Cultural Center of Virginia and Old Dominion's Virginia Beach Higher Education Center.

San Lorenzo Spiritual Center:

The first of these institutions to be completed was the San Lorenzo Spiritual Center, located on Indian River Road in Virginia Beach. The center, which opened in 1994, was established through the support of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond and the donations of local Filipino Americans. The majority of Filipinos are Roman Catholic, a religious affiliation dating back to Spain's colonization of the Philippines in the late 16th century. Upon settling in Hampton Roads, Filipino Americans became loyal adherents of Catholic parishes in our region, but they also sought an established means to observe the numerous celebrations and holy days that are unique to Philippine Catholics. The San Lorenzo Spiritual Center (named after the first Filipino saint) was an inspired solution to this demand – the first center of its kind in the United States. Intended to complement rather than to replace affiliation with existing Catholic parishes, the San Lorenzo Spiritual Center provides a site for special masses, fiestas, youth activities and other Filipino American gatherings. Amelia Aguirre, San Lorenzo's interim administrator, estimates that between 100 and 120 people attend the center's services each Wednesday evening – some traveling from as far away as Smithfield and Williamsburg. Highlights of the center's calendar include the annual Mayflower Festival and the Simbang Gabi, a nine-day series of evening (or early morning) masses held before Christmas Eve. The work of the San Lorenzo Spiritual Center suffered disruption in 2004-05, when a handful of its members accused the center's founding spiritual leader, the Rev. Pantaleon Manalo, of financial and other improprieties. Roman Catholic Church authorities did not find Rev. Manalo guilty of theft or other wrongdoing, but nonetheless relieved him from his post, in order to place the center more closely under the supervision of the Diocese of Richmond. The controversy received considerable media attention and represented a rare moment of public dissension in the regional Filipino American community. A minority of San Lorenzo members who were unhappy with the diocese ruling withdrew their support from the center, which now finds itself in a phase of

reorganization and renewal. The construction and landscaping of a new meditation garden on the center's grounds is currently under way.<sup>77</sup>

Philippine Cultural Center (PCC):

The Philippine Cultural Center of Virginia (PCC) opened its doors in 2000, although the earliest dreams and plans for its construction date back many years. In 1976, the Council of United Filipino Organizations of Tidewater (CUFOT) was established to link together six different Filipino American organizations in Hampton Roads (today there are 18 participating groups). CUFOT chairman Dr. Manuel Hipol emphasizes that the creation of a cultural center for all of the region's Filipino Americans was a primary goal of the council from its inception. The "Mrs. Philippines" pageant became an important early fundraiser for the project, and land was purchased along Baxter Road in Virginia Beach in the early 1980s. Donations for the center gradually accumulated, accompanied by some disagreements within the Filipino American community as to how the project and funds were being managed. A decisive milestone for the project was reached in 1999, when 32 families agreed to serve as guarantors of a \$988,500 loan that enabled the center's construction to begin. (As of January 2007, more than half of this loan had been repaid.) Today the PCC is a 14,000 square-foot facility that serves the entire Hampton Roads community. It can be arranged as a theater or a ballroom, and it is reserved regularly by Filipino American and numerous other groups for weddings, dances, religious services and other special events. The PCC hosts several annual pageants, and it provides a regular meeting place for the member organizations of CUFOT. On Saturday mornings, youth between the ages of 5-18 gather at the PCC to participate in the School for Creative and Performing Arts, a volunteer institution that promotes the music, dance, language and folklore of the Philippines among Hampton Roads' youngest Filipino Americans.<sup>78</sup>

The PCC formed the Council for United Filipinos of Tidewater (CUFOT), which comprises of the following member organizations that collectively work together:

5th Dimension/Zumba	Kahirup Foundation
American College of International Physicians	Mrs. Philippines and Court Society
Baguio Association of Tidewater	Our Lady of Namacpacan Association in America
Batangas Association of Hampton Roads	PCC Ballroom Dancers
Botolan Association	Pangasinan Association of Virginia
Filipino-American Bayanihan	Pilipino Nurses for Cultural Advancement of VA
Filipino-American National Historical Society	Samahang Tagalog
Filipino-American Postal Employees of Hampton Roads	United Illocano Association of Tidewater, Inc.
Filipino-American Veterans of Hampton Roads	United Illocano Association of Tidewater – Seniors
Filipino Women's Club of Tidewater, Inc.	Young Filipino-American Professionals of Hampton Roads
Holy Mary Mother of God Faith Community	Young Filipino American Modern Dancers

<sup>77</sup> This portion is directly taken from: The State of the Region, "Filipino American Community of Hampton Roads, "Old Dominion University.

<sup>78</sup> This portion is directly taken from: The State of the Region, "Filipino American Community of Hampton Roads, "Old Dominion University.

## APPENDIX II. INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Tentative Order of Themes and Questions- For Interviewee

#### ***I. Personal Background***

Family structure

#### ***II. History of Involvement***

Perceptions of involvement

Scope of involvement: Time

#### ***III. A Typical Day at Church (or Civic Organization)***

Activities

Community Service

Religious Study (or Goals of Civic Organization)

#### ***IV. Culture and Church (or Civic Organization)***

Aspects of Filipino Culture

#### ***V. Transnationalism***

Ties to the Homeland

#### ***VI. Civic Engagement***

Civic Engagement Outside Church

Activities

Culture and Civic Engagement

#### ***VII. Personal Thoughts on Religious Involvement (or Civic Engagement)***

Why involved?

Personal significance

*Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I appreciate your time in participating in this study. I just wanted to let you know that everything you share with me will be confidential: I will not share this information with anyone. Your name will never be attached to the information from this interview and will remain confidential. If it's alright, I would like to tape record this interview. Is that alright?*

[If the answer is no ask if it's okay to write notes]

## **I. Personal Background**

### **A. Family Structure**

*I would like to learn about a little bit about your personal background.*

- 1) How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- 2) Were you born in the United States?
- 3) If no, when did you immigrate here?

#### ***Probes:***

- Are your siblings involved in any religious community groups?
- Do you consider your parents religious?
- How old are you?

## **II. History of Involvement**

### **A) Perceptions of involvement**

*I would like to learn more about the history of your involvement in the religious community (or civic organization)*

- 1) Tell me about your first experience in the religious community (or civic organization) and how it made you feel.

***Probes:***

- When did you first get involved in the group?
- Have you been actively involved ever since?
- How involved do you consider yourself in the group?



**B) Scope of involvement: Time**

*Now I'd like to talk a little bit about your time with the religious group (or civic organization).*

- 1) Tell me about how often you are involved in the religious community group (or civic organization).

***Probes:***

- Do you think that it takes a lot of your time?
- Are you involved in other civic activities? If so, how much time does it take compared with your religious group involvement?
- What do you spend most of your time doing during off work hours?

### III. A Typical Day at Church (or Civic Organization)

*I would like to take the time now to learn more about a typical day in your religious community (or civic organization) .*

#### A) Activities

- 1) Can you tell me what types of activities that happen while at your religious community (or civic organization)?

***Probe:***

- Do you feel that the activities your involved in relates to your everyday life?
- Does your church (or civic organization talk about events outside the United States?
- What kinds of topics are discussed?
- Do your religious services (or civic organization) incorporate aspects of your culture?
- Howso?

**B) Community Service**

1) Is your religious group (or civic organization) involved in any community service?

***Probe:***

- If so, how often does your religious group (or civic organization) do community service?
- Do you personally get involved in a lot of the projects?
- What types of community service activities are you involved in?

#### **IV. Culture and Church (or Civic Organization)**

*I would like to learn more about the role of culture in your church (or civic organization).*

##### **A) Does your church (or civic organization) incorporate aspects of Filipino culture?**

1) If so, please elaborate.

***Probes:***

- Does anyone in the church or (civic organization) speak Tagalog?
- Who?
- Is Filipino food served?
- If so, when?

## **V. Transnationalism**

*I would like to take the time now to learn more about your ties to the homeland.*

**A) Does your church (or civic organization) foster transnational ties to the homeland?**

1) If so, please elaborate.

***Probes:***

- Does your pastor discuss the Philippines in his/her sermons?
- Does your church send missionaries to the Philippines?
- Does your church (or civic organization) send tithes (or financial support) to the Philippines?
- Does your pastor (or civic organization) share ongoing news/current events in the Philippines?

## **VI. Civic Engagement**

*I would like to take the time now to learn more about your civic engagement outside church.*

### **A) Are you involved in any activities outside church?**

1) What kinds of activities?

***Probes:***

- Do the activities involve your religious community?
- Do the activities involve the Filipino community?

## **B) Culture and Civic Engagement**

1) Do you feel that your civic engagement preserves your culture?

***Probes:***

- Howso?
- How do you think being involved in a civic organization(s) influences you?

## **VII. Personal Thoughts on Religious Involvement**

*I would like to take the time now to learn more about your personal thoughts on being part of the religious community (or civic organization).*

### **A) Why are you involved?**

- 1) What do think about being involved in the group?

***Probes:***

- How does being involved in the group make you feel?
- How do you think your involvement influences you?



## **B) Personal significance**

- 1) What does being involved in the group mean to you?

### ***Probes:***

- 1) How has your involvement shaped your life?
- 2) What do you think about your religion and your life?
- 3) What do you think is the most meaningful part of being involved in the group?

## **Closing**

We covered a lot today, and I was just wondering if there is anything else that you would like to share about your involvement in the youth group and why you are involved. Did we miss anything?

Thank you.

## APPENDIX III.

## MAP OF THE PHILIPPINES (REGIONS LISTED)



## APPENDIX IV.

## HSRB APPROVAL LETTER



Modernity in the Making: Religion as a Cultural System

**Informed Consent for Participants**  
**Consent To Participate in Research - ID# \_\_\_\_\_**

**Principal Investigator: April Manalang**  
 Project Description for Interviewees

**Introduction:** My name is April Manalang and I am a Ph.D. student in the American Culture Studies department at Bowling Green State University, Ohio. You have been asked to participate in this research study because I am interested in the experiences of Muslims.

**Nature of the Project and Duration of Procedures.**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences among Muslims. The general benefits are that through interviewing Muslims, I will map, or outline the religious patterns of Muslims and: 1) investigate an understudied population; 2) explore the religious diversity of America; and 3) I hope to learn more about the experiences among Muslims. There are few direct benefits to participating in this study. You may find that the study will add some insight into how your religious involvement affects you. Your participation will result in greater understanding of the Muslim community. As part of this project, I will request written consent. I ask these questions because your opinions and thoughts on Muslim experiences will help me understand more about America's religious diversity.

**Procedure:** I will conduct personal interviews with approximately 20-25 religiously involved Muslims in Ohio and Michigan, at least 18 years of age and above, for an hour. I plan to conduct a total of at least 20 interviews. Interviews will be tape-recorded upon your written consent. The interview will last one hour. The goal of this interview is to learn about your religious involvement. The goal of this interview is to learn about your religious involvement and whether it shapes your identity.

**Voluntary Nature:** Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. You may decide to skip questions or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. There are no risks associated with this study that are greater than what you experience in daily life. You may refuse to answer any questions or refuse to participate in any portion of this study. Deciding to participate or not will not affect your relationship with Bowling Green State University. A few of the questions during the interview may ask about your personal thoughts on your religious involvement.

**Risks:** It is unlikely, but still possible, that you may feel uncomfortable sharing personal views on religion. If you feel uncomfortable, please let me know if you would like to end the interview. If you feel uncomfortable, and would like to end the interview I will do so immediately. If at any time and for any reason, you would prefer not to answer any questions, please feel free not to do so. If at any time you would like to stop participating, please tell me. You can take a break, stop and continue at a later date, or stop altogether.

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