

## ABSTRACT

Virgilio V. Caruz, *KAPWA (SHARED IDENTITY): FILIPINO AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES AND RESPONSES TO EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP* (Under the direction of Dr. Matthew Militello). Department of Educational Leadership. May 2023

Representing the makeup of educational leaders and social structure, the understanding and practice of educational leadership in the United States have centered on Western leadership perspectives. Even with the changing demographics of its population, women and people of diverse backgrounds continue to be underrepresented in educational leadership's highest echelon. The purpose of this study is to enlist Filipino American educational leaders to identify, co-create, and apply their cultural assets to engage in alternative equitable leadership practices. In doing so, we hope to challenge and question the conventional approaches which have supported the ratification and marginalization of many indigenous children. This participatory action research (PAR) study aims to gain insight into the perspectives of Filipino Americans on how their cultural values, as assets, manifest in their personal and professional spaces to serve as an alternative way to lead in education. Examined were four central indigenous Filipino cultural values and the interconnectedness of these values to the Filipinos. Understanding these complex relationships of compromising values can give Filipinos validity of their ability to nurture relationships and provide those outside of the culture access to a model for establishing organizational unity. These findings contribute to empirical research and hold the potential to inform educational leadership practices and preparation, as well as processes designed for cultural development for Filipino Americans and others. These three findings include, first, the influence of family on the development of culture and career choices, how the effects of family and upbringing on Filipino American leaders' career choices, and the acquisition of cultural values form the foundation of their leadership styles. Second, the collectivist values of Filipinos have a profound effect on how Filipinos navigate professional spaces and how these values

manifest themselves in how they lead schools. Finally, in the spirit of *bayanihan* (communal spirit), it is essential for underrepresented individuals to have affinity spaces where they can feel authentic, supported, and vulnerably safe. This research study aims to offer new knowledge and leadership perspectives to challenge the traditional school paradigm by employing the voices and narratives unique to minoritized groups like Filipino Americans.



*KAPWA (SHARED IDENTITY): FILIPINO AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES AND RESPONSES  
TO EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP*

A Dissertation  
Presented to the Faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership  
East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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May, 2023

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My deepest gratitude to my wife, Janel, for allowing and supporting me to explore and experience the world. My children, Isabella, Alex, and Gabby, for inspiring me to become a better version of myself. My parents for their unending love, support, and encouragement to pursue my ambitions. Family members in the Philippines, maraming salamat sa inyong lahat, binigyan ninyo ako ng koneksyon sa aking pinagmulan at pinanggalingan. To my coaches and mentors, Dr. Chris Janson, Dr. Matt Militello, and Dr. Maenette Benham, for challenging me to think differently. To Lynda Tredway, thank you for giving me a chance and opening up a new reality of what I can become. To my ECU peers for the beautiful journey of learning, struggles, and reminders. Finally, to my co-practitioner researchers, thank you for your patience, friendship, and trust in representing you and our community.

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## CHAPTER 1: NAMING & FRAMING THE FOCUS OF PRACTICE

*The place of schools has become contested terrain, a place of conflict, struggle, and negotiation over ontology, epistemology, and pedagogy. In the end, the powerful influence of assimilation culture that values domination, hierarchy, competition, materialism and capital accumulation, and the individual over the community were reproduced in the minds of school administrators, teachers, students, and their families.*

Maenette K. P. Ah Nee-Benham

The contributions of the Filipinos in the United States are significant and have played a valuable role in American society. Among the first people of Asian descent to arrive in the United States and the third-largest ethnic group after foreign-born from Mexico and China (United States Census, 2020), Filipinos have fought side-by-side in wars with the Americans, initiated a labor movement that became the United Farm Workers (UFW), and have historically cared for the sick of America. In California, where 4.2% of the population identifies as Filipino and where most Filipinos in the United States reside (United States Census, 2020), one-fifth of its nursing workforce is of Filipino descent (Spetz et al., 2017). Less common are Filipinos in education and, therefore, educational leadership.

Representing the demographic makeup of educational leaders and the existing social structure, the understanding and practice of educational leadership in the United States has long been centered on Western leadership perspectives. Even with the changing demographics of its population, women and people of diverse backgrounds continue to be underrepresented in educational leadership's highest echelon (Skeete, 2017). With this lack of diversity comes the inability to access various forms of leadership and leadership ideologies. As schools have become places of conflict where ontology, epistemology, and pedagogy are negotiated, failure to diversify our schools submits us to the imposing influence of Western cultural values of individualism and competition over the collective, reproducing similar school leadership and



school community mindsets (Benham, 2002). According to Benham (2002), alternative views, particularly non-Westernized views regarding educational leadership, are missing from current ideology and discourse. For example, while Western leaders center on the individual leader's ability to influence others to make changes, an indigenous view regarding leadership is a process within their particular context of culture and community (Benham, 2002). This is notably true in the case of Filipinos and how they lead. This Participatory Action Research (PAR) aimed to enable Filipino American educational leaders to identify their cultural identity, co-create a plan, and apply and promote these cultural values in educational leadership spaces to provide an alternative form of leading the school systems.

This chapter discusses the rationale for this Participatory Action Research (PAR) study. The following sections include the purpose and significance of performing this study. Additionally, I present challenges and assets Filipino Americans experience that may affect their ability to acquire leadership positions. Finally, I provide information on this study's connection to equity and the emerging conceptual framework that will guide this study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

For many marginalized individuals in our society, education and hard work are often the only means to sustain a life with choices and self-sufficiency. As with many Filipinos and other underprivileged communities, in my family education is viewed as an instrument to socially and economically mobilize. Yet despite the billions of dollars infused into education, curricula innovations, and improved teaching and learning knowledge, students from marginalized backgrounds continue to underperform. The decisions that educational leaders make have dire consequences on our students' ability to provide for themselves and their families later in life. Perhaps the problem does not lie with what we prescribe to our students; instead, with how

leaders lead communities and how their leadership qualities represent the values of the communities they serve.

White males, with research predominantly conducted within White contexts, have long dominated the field of educational leadership. As student demographics in California schools become more varied, there are demands for more educational leadership research to come from indigenous sources and for the field to become more diverse (Hallinger, 2018). As an educational leader with foundations similar to our underperforming students, my cultural values remain under-represented and under-valued in leadership. True to its design and inherent to its authors, indigenous values and our ways of doing things are sparsely considered. In fact, leaders who best exhibit Western leadership values, regardless of ethnicity, are rewarded and promoted to the highest tiers of our systems. After generations of perpetuating injustices and oppressive ideologies, it would serve all students if we, as an institution, permit ourselves to value other perspectives and seek alternative ways of leading our school communities.

At the core of Filipino values and other collectivist cultures is *kapwa*, or shared humanness. Considering that education involves human relations, perhaps a collectivist approach centered on our shared humanness is needed to service our diverse population. Suppose we are authentic in developing equitable practices where all students can participate in all levels of our society. Conceivably, we should actively pursue other leadership forms rooted, aligned, and sourced from our students' indigenous origins. Thus, this study aims to improve the conditions affecting Filipino Americans in educational leadership and represent an alternative leadership mindset that others can replicate in their organizations. In doing so, we hope to challenge and question the conventional approaches which have supported the ratification and marginalization of many indigenous children.

## **Purpose Statement and PAR Research Questions**

As educational leaders, especially the superintendency position, lack diversity and representation of individuals with similar backgrounds to their students, opportunities to access various leadership ideologies and practices also fail to exist. This research study sought Filipino American educational leaders to challenge their internalized oppression to identify, validate, and apply their cultural values in their leadership practices. Engaging the participants as Co-Practitioner Researchers (CPR) serves two purposes. The first is to provide a support group for Filipino American school leaders. Dor-Haim and Oplatka (2021) discussed the issue of feelings of loneliness among school principals. As minorities, these feelings are exacerbated. Steele (2010) explained the importance of “critical mass,” which “refers to the point at which there are enough minorities in a setting, like a school or a workplace, that individual minorities no longer feel uncomfortable there” (p. 135). Establishing a coalition of Filipino Americans that meet regularly and not having to code-switch as they are used to in other spaces is beneficial for the well-being of the participants. The second reason is identifying their culturally based leadership assets and developing measures to promote these assets in their specific leadership spaces. Through this process, participants create a sense of agency, confidence, and contextual knowledge to challenge their colonial mentality. In the CPR group, I served as the lead researcher and examined how the indigenous values of Filipinos manifest in our work as educational leaders.

The overarching research question in this study was: How do Filipino American educators identify, co-create, and apply their cultural assets to engage in alternative equitable leadership practices? The sub-questions that were the focus of the data collection and analysis for this PAR included:

1. To what extent can a group of Filipino American educational leaders understand their individual and collective identity through stories of self, family, and cultural histories?
2. To what extent can a group of Filipino American educators co-create alternative equitable leadership practices promoting the cultural assets of the Filipinos?
3. To what extent can a group of Filipino American educators apply their identity and cultural assets to their roles as educational leaders?
4. How do I inform and transform my leadership as I work with educators to promote the cultural assets of Filipinos?

In the next section, I provide the focus of practice and the assets and challenges involved in our educational system. Additionally, I address the project's significance in practice, policy, research, and its connection to equity. Finally, I provide an emergent conceptual framework as I prepare to observe and deeply learn how culturally grounded Filipino leadership works.

### **Significance of the Problem**

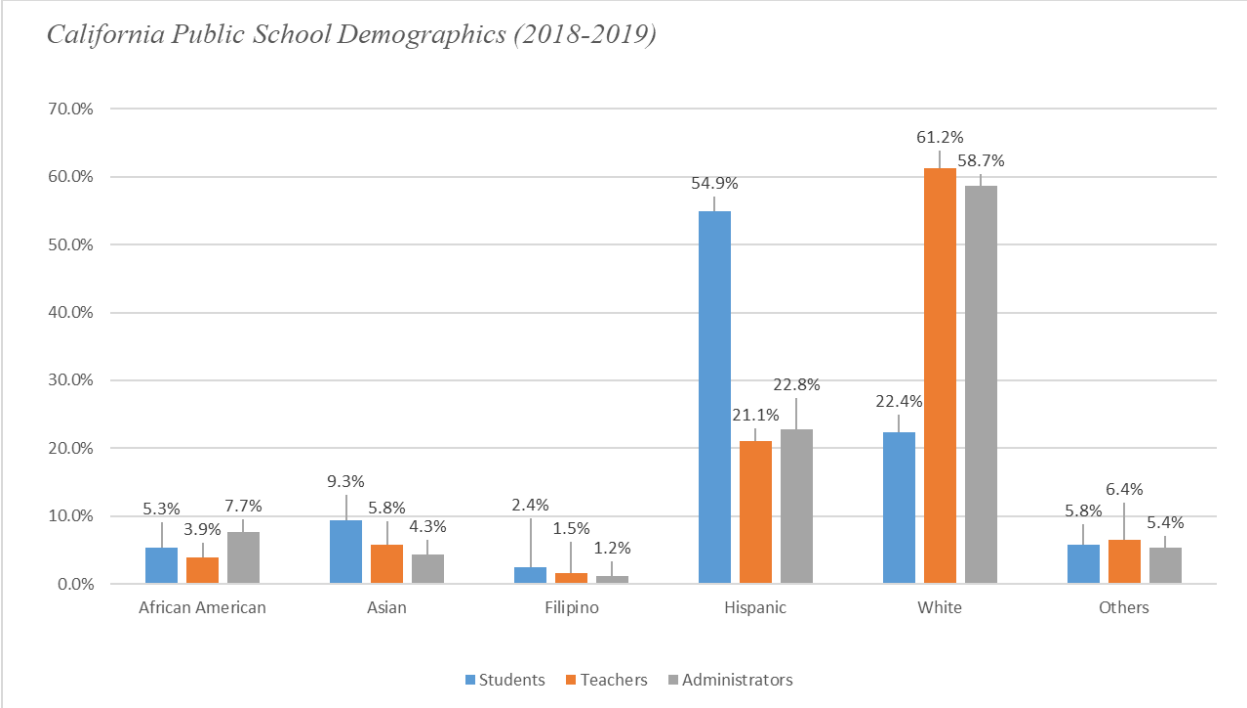
As California's student demographics become increasingly diverse, the diversity of educators charged to teach and lead educational institutions continues to lag behind. In California, where most Filipino Americans in the United States reside, Filipino Americans make up 4.2% of its population. According to the California Department of Education (CDE, 2020), during the 2019-20 school year, Filipino Americans made up 2.4% (146,501) of its student population. The CDE data also shows that 1.53% (4,708) of its teaching force identify as Filipino Americans. This is important, as this is typically the starting point for superintendents if they follow the traditional educational leadership route. While 1.17% (323) of administrators in California identified as Filipino Americans, fewer are site principals, and even scarcer is the

representation of Filipino Americans in executive-level positions. According to the 2020 Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), of the 1,035 school districts in California, only eleven Assistant Superintendents and seven Superintendents identified as Filipino Americans occupying these positions (M. Cuizon-Armelino, ACSA's Senior Director of Member Services, personal communication, November 18, 2020). The lack of Filipino American representation in the educational administration, more significantly in the executive level positions, lags behind all other ethnic groups represented in the data.

With White students only comprising 22.4% of California students in 2020, White administrators constitute 58.7% of administrative positions. EdSource (2007) reported that 84% of California's superintendents are White, with 71% being White males. This report also found that principals were twice as likely as superintendents to be racial or ethnic minorities, suggesting that many do not aspire to higher positions or cannot break the barriers that still exist for promotion to the top job in a district. As evident in California's representation of administrators and superintendents, racial disparities remain in effect. This disproportionality outcome mirrors the absence of different views in educational leadership desperately needed in a diverse educational environment.

### **The Focus of Practice (FoP)**

There is a need to diversify organizational leadership, especially top-level management in the United States. Even as the corporate industry has acknowledged the importance of diversity amongst its workforce, the educational field continues to fall behind. An analysis of the CDE demographic data (see Figure 1) has indicated that while the demographics of students in California are increasingly becoming more diverse, the leaders that govern these institutions have continued to be predominantly White. This phenomenon is more apparent at the highest



*Figure 1. California public school demographics (2018-2019).*

levels of management. As the second-largest Asian group in California, Filipinos lag disproportionately behind other ethnic groups in acquiring these top-level management positions. Filipinos are the least-represented ethnic group of educators compared to the student population indicated by the CDE (2020) data. This disproportionality of administrators, especially superintendents, represents a missed opportunity for educational institutions to diversify their mindsets and ways of conducting business.

Meanwhile, Filipinos possess leadership assets rooted in the indigenous spirit of collectivism and communal unity, which are leadership styles represented by the changing demographics of California communities, as many come from collectivist countries (Hammond, 2015). To address this disproportionality of representation in the highest level of the local public school system, my focus of practice centered on engaging a group of Filipino American principals to identify and develop approaches that promote our culturally based leadership assets in educational leadership. Collectively, we investigated the origins of our challenges and examined our assets to advocate our capacity as leaders.

Freire (2000) alluded to the resulting failure of systems by discounting the views and the realities of the people noting that:

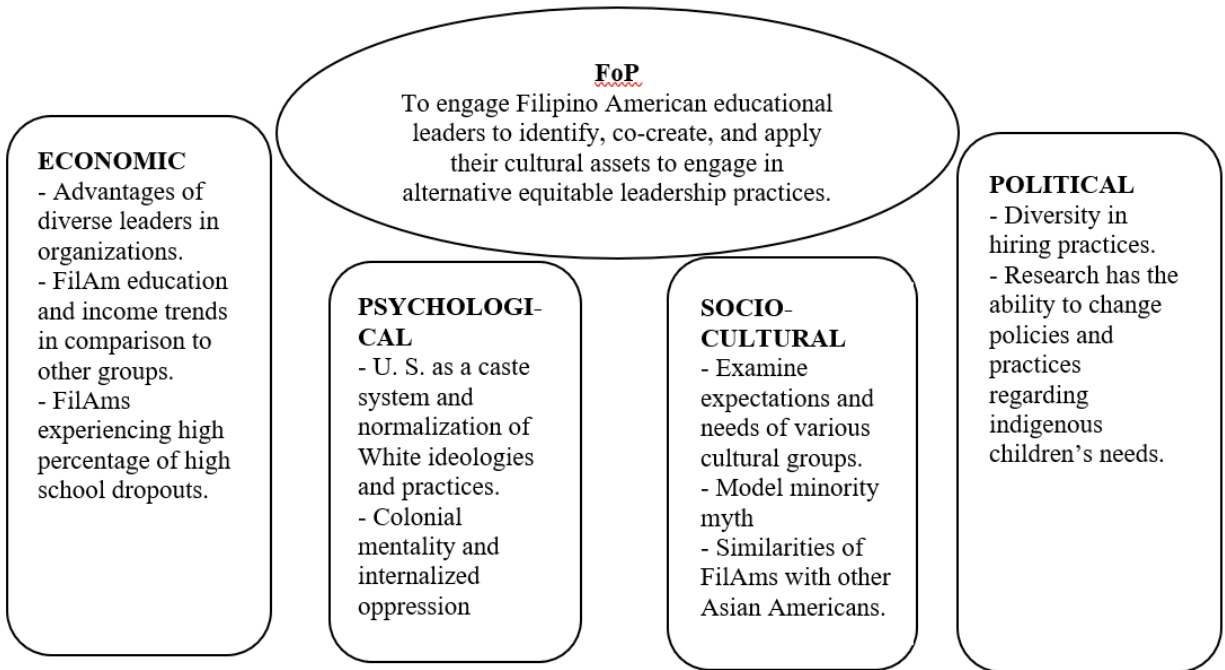
We simply cannot go to the laborers--urban or peasant--in the banking style, to give them 'knowledge' or to impose upon them the model of the 'good man' contained in a program whose content we have ourselves organized. Many political and educational plans have failed because their authors designed them according to their personal views of reality, never once taking into account (except as mere objects of their actions) the men in a situation to whom their program was ostensibly directed. (p. 67)

The inability of minorities, specifically Filipino Americans, to be represented in the higher echelon of leadership, where the organization's highest decisions are made, is a dilemma that perpetuates the generational impacts of colonization. As schools and school leadership practices continue to serve as sites of colonial oppression and coloniality, we must offer a leadership approach to mitigate this (Lopez, 2021). With our student community's changing population and cultures, we must have a more inclusive discussion of leadership thoughts and practices. Figure 2 outlines the various frames considered within this FoP.

In 1995, Ladson-Billings developed the term Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP). This now common teaching and learning approach brings appreciation to the students' assets and the effects of understanding culture, both their own and others, in education (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Less discussed is the relationship between culture and leadership and the consideration of this relationship's unfamiliar visions. There are stark differences in leadership approaches and views between the pervasive western ideologies of leadership and minoritized leaders' traditional ways (Benham, 2002; Khalifa et al., 2016). Benham (2002) cited characteristics of traditional Native American values of cooperation, emphasis on the group, and modesty as it contrasts with western values of competition, individual emphasis, and self-attention. Khalifa et al. (2016) note that while we continue to introduce and grasp a better understanding of school leadership that centers on communities rather than the school's interest, district-level administrators are equally responsible for understanding additional ways of working.

Many factors influence the space we navigate and operate in the educational system. For our students, the inability to see themselves represented in leadership positions may affect them to achieve their aspirations. For example, Gershenson et al. (2022) demonstrated that same-race teachers have positive long-term effects on students' high school graduation rates,





*Figure 2. Frames for the focus of practice.*

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potentially due to the "role model effect" that same-race teachers have on their students. The "role model effect" posits that same-race teachers allow students to reflect on their beliefs about the gains of their efforts (i.e., educational outcomes are possible). The benefits presented by the role model effect affirm the need for Filipino Americans to be proportionally represented in the educational field. In addition, with minimal leadership representation may come the inability of our leaders to determine and specifically address the needs of our marginalized students. The following section investigates the assets and challenges involved in how Filipinos navigate the educational system in the United States.

### **Analysis of Assets and Challenges**

To understand the context of this problem of practice, I used a fishbone diagram to explain the assets and challenges related to this FoP. This fishbone aims to examine the root causes of a particular problem (Bryk et al., 2015). The fishbone was modified to include assets and to unpack an issue on three levels: micro, meso, and macro (Bryk et al., 2015). We completed the fishbone with the Co-Practitioner Research (CPR) group in a pre-cycle meeting. In this participatory action research project, the CPR group relied on the assets we identified to develop a cultural affinity group to better understand our cultural identity and promote our cultural values in educational leadership spaces.

Figure 3 illustrates the assets and challenges related to this FoP at the micro, meso, and macro levels. At the macro level, assets included collectivism's emphasis on community and the valued traits of unity, selflessness, and altruism. In 2021, an executive order made it a policy for federal workforce to reflect the diversity of the American people as "evidence demonstrated that diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible workplaces yield higher performing organizations" (The White House, 2021, para. 3). There has also been a change of discourse happening in

# Assets and Challenges of FoP

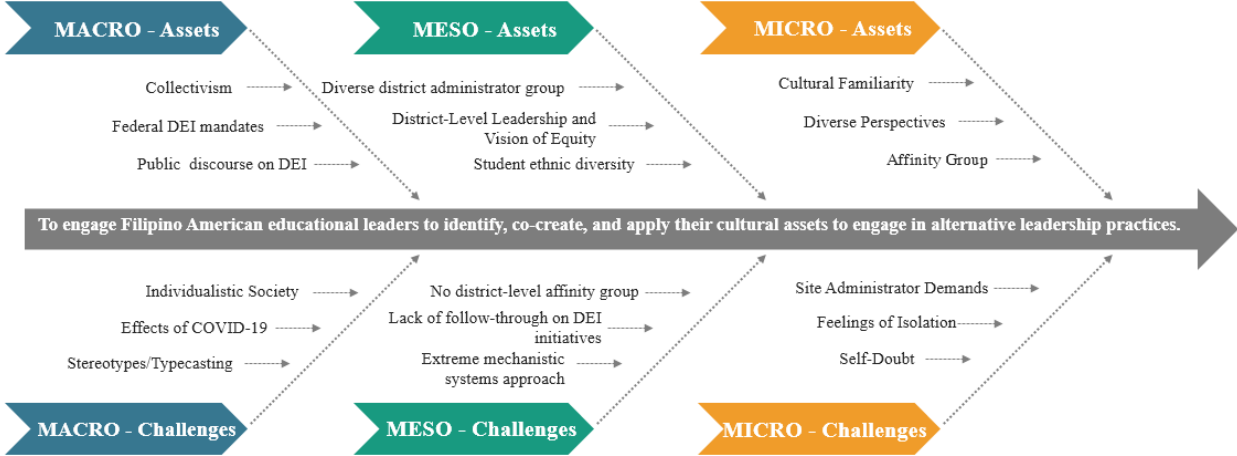


Figure 3. Fishbone identifying assets and challenges of FoP.

school reforms. Discourse II is predicated on conversations about the ineffective, unequal, and prejudicial conditions and relationships in schools (Eubanks et al., 1997). At the meso level, a diverse group of managers and administrators led the district. We also had Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI), and Ethnic Studies committees to represent and address the needs of our ethnically diverse student body. An affinity group of educational leaders was involved in this research study at the micro level. Having similar Filipino cultural upbringings, the participants shared cultural familiarity and offered an alternative perspective on educational leadership.

Despite the many assets available to address the focus of practice, significant challenges remained. In Figure 2, we named significant challenges associated with this FoP. At the macro level is American individualism, which values autonomy, self-expression, and the pursuit of personal goals instead of emphasizing the group's interests (Hofstede & Bond, 1984). For this study, the detrimental global effects of COVID-19 in schools and our society were significant. With the inability to interact in person, COVID-19 and its effects on global health also impacted how we interacted with each other and how our students learned. Another macro challenge is our society's propensity to stereotype groups based on skin color and cultural background. While certain groups thrive in this environment, many others are marginalized at the expense of this skin color preference. While there is a vision centered on equity, at the meso level is our district's inability to follow through on DEI-related initiatives. This includes its inability to recognize the need for an Asian American affinity group. While other minoritized groups have spaces to affirm their identity, Asian Americans, let alone Filipino Americans, did not have the intentional capacity to meet and organize. As mechanistic systems and process approaches are essential in organizational efficiency, consistency, and accuracy, in a world of complexity, extreme orientation to this systems approach has negative implications on an organization's

culture, relationships, and productivity (Han et al., 2020). At the micro-level, site administrators have extreme professional demands. Feelings of isolation can exacerbate this, and in the case of our participants, they experienced self-doubt.

In light of the student's need to see themselves in leadership and have their ways of thinking represented in decision-making, this study is significant in how Filipinos perceive themselves as leaders. This study also challenges the Westernized approach to leadership practices and ideologies. As this study relates to leadership and our perceptions of leadership, the relevance of this study extends further than practices employed at a localized level. This study can influence policies regarding the diversification of the educational field and add to the much-needed body of knowledge in other forms of educational leadership structures. Understanding and applying indigenous cultural values as they pertain to leadership is a form of resistance. The following section investigates the importance of this study in connection to equity and leadership as it involves the economic and socio-cultural consequences of diversity.

### **Significance of this Study to Practice, Policy, Research, and Equity**

The significance of this study is to promote cultural assets in our communities through educational leadership. This PAR aims to provide alternative views in educational leadership rooted in the cultural narratives and values of indigenous Filipinos. In doing so, we can then challenge and question the conventional practices which have supported the ratification and marginalization of many indigenous children (Benham, 2002). A diverse perspective in educational leadership provides insight into the needs and motivations of all our students rather than just a small part of them. While the main characters of this focus of practice center on the Filipino American experience, the processes learned in this PAR project transcend the

boundaries of race and ethnicity. It highlights the need for our educational institutions' values to mirror the community they serve.

### ***Significance to Practice***

There is a lack of diverse literature on educational leadership, with dominant materials coming from the perspective of Western culture (Mendoza, 1997). Additionally, Benham (2002) postulates that "alternative views - particularly non-Western thought and practice - regarding educational leadership are missing from current ideology and discourse" (p. 134). Given the diverse student population in California, an unconventional view of educational leadership practice can benefit the diverse cultural communities of our schools. In native indigenous communities, fundamental to leading and learning are the ability to lead with compassion, interdependence, humility, and giving thanks (Benham, 2002). In practice, Cohhis (as cited in Benham, 2002, p. 136) suggests that while the Western leadership style is primarily established with the individuals wrestling for power and control, leadership in native systems is about cooperation, human beings, patience, and sharing. This position includes sharing a common vision as a team of interdependent learners and working collaboratively to make decisions and problem-solve. This research study aims to promote these non-Westernized views of educational leadership to be considered in practice by school organizations. Non-Western and collaborative types of leadership values depict the leadership styles of Filipinos. Promoting and implementing these leadership forms in our educational system can be valuable in serving all students.

For readers outside the culture, it is imperative to understand the values affecting how and why people from different cultures sometimes tend to decide differently. By acknowledging these differences, leaders improve their ability to function in various contexts and with diverse types of people. For Filipinos, understanding the complex dynamics and nuances of these values

might enable them to feel validated and better emotionally process the sources and mechanisms of their actions and feelings.

### ***Significance to Policy***

In 2021, an executive order made it a policy for the federal workforce to reflect the diversity of the American people, as the evidence suggests that diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible workplaces yield higher-performing organizations. The executive order states that “the Federal Government is at its best when drawing upon all parts of society; our greatest accomplishments are achieved when diverse perspectives are brought to bear to overcome our greatest challenges” (The White House, 2021, p. 4). As it stands, Filipino Americans and other ethnic groups are disproportionately underrepresented not just in the teacher workforce but significantly more in executive-level management positions. An equal representation of ethnicities and cultural backgrounds in top-level district administrative functions can potentially promote the values and recognize the diversity of our school communities. A diverse and unconventional view in educational leadership, where the highest levels of decisions are made, ensures that equity is at the forefront and considers the needs of all constituents.

Corporate America recognizes the need to diversify its workforce. Many Fortune 500 companies have in their policies the commitment to change through diversity hiring, consideration of equity, and inclusion managers. While diversifying the workforce and top-level management has been slow, there has been a 113% increase in executive positions, specifically with diversity and inclusion titles, since 2015 (Ward, 2020). Unfortunately, the educational system has lagged behind these efforts. The recent board resolution creating Ethnic Studies and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committees in our district has sparked a wave of other school boards in Santa Clara County to adopt similar initiatives. While these initiatives are in their

infancy, not much has occurred within the Human Resources departments of school districts to develop policies and practices to ensure diversity in hiring and promotion in its workforce. With conflicting demands and variations of values among school district managements, there needs to be more alignment and progress among school districts across the nation to diversify. Not only is it imperative for school districts to acknowledge the cultural value of a diverse workforce in servicing their students, but it is also necessary to establish and measure diversity goals and milestones and communicate their performance against these measures to the school community.

### ***Significance to Research***

It is important to note that data regarding Asian Americans are often clustered into one ethno-racial group. In contrast to Chinese Americans, Filipino Americans are rarely targeted for specific studies, yet they are the second-largest Asian American group (Eng et al., 2008). The FoP is significant and utilizes resources from several fields of study. This PAR study investigates the historical context of Filipino Americans and its influences on their culture and identity. The PAR is an intellectual exchange charged with questions of identity, power, and justice sourced from the experiences of Filipino American educational leaders. The research findings add to the knowledge based on organizational development, as we understand the attributes of cultures such as the Filipinos. This study's implications affect how we understand the importance of being inclusive and developing opportunities to ensure the diversification of our workplaces and leadership approaches.

### ***Connection to Equity***

Mainstream America has clustered and treated all persons of Asian ancestry alike. The label Asian American has minimized the heterogeneity of Asian communities and the varied experiences and differences of each Asian group. It is essential to examine the unique



experiences of specific racial/ethnic groups to understand the factors that may contribute to their successes and failures. As one of the largest immigrant groups and the second-largest Asian American/Pacific Islander ethnic group, there is little research focusing on the unique experiences of Filipinos, particularly in leadership or higher education. Thus, Filipino Americans are often invisible within the Asian American group and the larger society.

The myth of the model minority is racist and based on stereotypes. It is based on the narrative that Asian Americans are "well assimilated, upwardly mobile, politically non-threatening, and *definitely not-black*" (Wu, 2013, p. 2). The myth of the model minority erases the differences among individuals; it ignores the diversity of Asian American cultures and perpetuates racism against Asian Americans. This model minority myth pits people of color against one another and creates a hierarchy in which Asian people are often represented at the top.

Our perception of self and others profoundly affects our sense of agency. While we humans come in different shapes, sizes, and colors, societal values invoke more importance on individuals with a particular phenotypic characteristic over others. Particularly in the United States, Wilkerson (2020) posited that what people look like or the race one has been assigned are the visible cues of how they are to be treated by the public. Wilkerson (2020) suggested that these visible cues determine "what kinds of decisions they are expected to hold ... or whether they should be expected to speak with authority on this or that subject" (p. 18). In the United States, where White is the somatic norm, we willingly consent to this idea by "going along" and accepting without question the privileges of Whiteness in our society (Mills, 1997). A Filipino American colleague echoed this sentiment as she conceded with the idea of White males as "belonging in these chairs as true leaders, the ones that are supposed to be making the decisions."

Our societal conditioning obliges us to submit to these false leadership narratives, even to our detriment. Therefore, there is a tremendous need to transform the mindset that prevents Filipinos from seeing themselves as capable leaders. A constructive goal of this research is to provide Filipinos and other minorities agency in acquiring these influential seats. For many minorities, education is often the only pathway to free themselves from the clutch of generational poverty.

The Filipino's emphasis and value on education as a source of social mobility is apparent when reviewing data showing educational attainment and annual household income. According to the Pew Research Center (2012), Filipino Americans are among the highest earners of bachelor's degrees in the United States. Correspondingly, educational attainment translates to a higher median annual household income. However, while 37% of Filipino Americans earn at least a bachelor's degree (compared to 30% of Asian Americans and 19% of the U.S. population), Filipino Americans lag significantly in their attainment of advanced degrees (9% Filipino Americans, 21% Asian Americans, and 11% U.S. population), which are often a prerequisite for leadership positions. Further analysis shows that while Filipino Americans are attaining success in earning bachelor's degrees, Filipino Americans are experiencing low high school graduation rates (see Table 1), supporting the claim that the Filipino American community is afflicted with increased rates of high school dropouts (Eng et al., 2008). Eng et al. (2008) also found a negative relationship between higher acculturation and poorer academic performance among Filipino American adolescents.

In California, where White students comprise 22.4% of the population, there is abundant disproportionality in educational leadership, with 84% of superintendents identifying as White (EdSource, 2007). Diversifying leadership of educational organizations is critical in ensuring that

Table 1

*Educational Attainment of the Filipino Population in the US, 2015*

Category	High School or Less	Some Collee	Bachelor's Degree	Postgrad Degree
All	23%	31%	37%	9%
U.S. born	23%	37%	30%	11%
Foreign-born	23%	28%	40%	9%
All Asians	29%	20%	30%	21%
All Americans	41%	29%	19%	11%

*Note.* Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2013-2015 American Community Survey.

leaders reflect the backgrounds of our students. A study conducted for the Center for Talent Innovation study demonstrated the impact of a diverse leadership team in organizations (Hewlett et al., 2013). The study found that various leadership teams increase innovation and creativity and provide more relevant ideas due to the phenomenon that the industry calls "matching the market," a term used for selling products or services to diverse end-users. The study also shows stronger organizations due to higher employer satisfaction, improved performance, and higher retention rates. This study further supports the need for the educational field to develop processes that can take advantage of the potential benefits acquired from a diversified top-level management space.

These connections to equity and frameworks guide this project to ensure the fulfillment of its purpose. As the project is designed to be co-constructed by its participants, it is imperative to have a common understanding of the project's connections to equity and its research designs.

A consensus amongst Filipino Americans I consulted of various experiences supported the need to look further into this problem. In addition, they confirmed the challenges and assets they perceived as unique to the Filipino American experience affecting the focus of practice. This PAR study aspires to facilitate a better understanding of our indigenous origins and cultural practices to co-create alternative leadership practices that promote our leadership assets in the field of educational leadership.

### **Emergent Conceptual Framework**

In the changing demographics of California, where the presence of indigenous students from around the world is expected to progress, the education system has continued to underrepresent their perspectives in leadership. This change in population trend must be met with similar changes in how we lead schools that are much more aligned with the communities for

which we serve. Thus, other forms of leadership practices must be considered. Critical ethnography is "a qualitative research that explicitly sets out to critique hegemony, oppression, and asymmetrical power relations in order to foster social change" (Palmer & Caldas, 2015, p. 1). By working directly with community members and engaging in participatory action research with those being researched, this critical ethnography explored the indigenous ways of knowing and producing knowledge related to leadership. This research study seeks to provide insight into the role culture plays with Filipino American educational leaders and how these manifest at work as well as inform the work itself. The design of this research study is predicated on the following theory of practice: If a co-practitioner research group of Filipino American administrators provides one another collegial support to identify their strengths and cultural assets, then they can develop practices that promote an equitable leadership model rooted in their Filipino cultural assets.

To accomplish this objective, it is essential that this research study employed an action-oriented advocacy method of inquiry. Qualitative research methodologies were utilized, specifically the Participatory Action Research (PAR) design. This form of investigation is participatory, intended for individuals closest to the problem to participate in an action-oriented discovery, as they know best their setting and context to act on it and create change (Guajardo et al., 2016). Filipino American educators pursued to understand the relationship between their identity and leadership practices as a co-practitioner research group.

Cultural dynamics are an essential element of school leadership. Due to the lack of diversity in educational leadership and the underrepresentation of Filipino American educators and other marginalized people in this space, the lived experiences of our school communities and their perspectives cease to be represented. By activating individuals adept at indigenous

perspectives, we hope to provide schools with the ability to access and apply unconventional leadership practices to serve all students. This research study believes that a group of Filipino American educators with inheriting cultural values can model and promote a framework that supports this goal.

### **Conclusion**

As Filipinos have historically gravitated towards nursing, less can be said about Filipinos as educators. Upon analysis of CDE data, it was observed that there was significant disproportionality between the number of Filipino American students attending the state's public school system and its educators and administrators that provide care. This disproportionality is more evident in top-level management positions. To address this disparity, my focus of practice centered on engaging Filipino American educational leaders to identify and develop approaches that promote their culturally based leadership assets in educational leadership.

In this chapter, I introduced the PAR project by framing the focus of practice, which sought to address the macro-level issues of American individualism and the propensity of our society to use and prefer specific visible cues to determine societal roles. I also introduced the purpose and research questions that were the focus of this PAR study's data collection and analysis. The FoP highlighted the importance of mirroring values between our educational institutions and the community they serve.

Our schools represent our society's diversity, with students coming from varied cultural backgrounds, experiences, and ways of learning. Less can be said of the leaders responsible for their care. In practice and theory, educational leadership is grounded in Western traditions promoting "a more centralized decision-making structure that supports the values of efficiency and is enacted by a dominant individual who is influencing others to do something" (Benham,

2002, p. 137). In contrast, an alternative leadership paradigm rooted in the native/indigenous traditions, and in this study, the Filipino practice of *bayanihan*, is centered on the spirit of civic unity and cooperation. As Western leadership ideologies envision a singular leader responsible for a school system, Filipino leaders, with values rooted in their indigenous cultural practices, may take a distributed leadership approach.

The next chapter examines non-standard ideologies that challenge Westernized leadership practices to accommodate the changing demographics of the United States. Specifically, we investigate Filipino cultural values and their origins, indigenous frameworks of educational leadership, and decolonization of school leadership and research to promote the cultural assets of our indigenous leaders.

The subsequent chapters include a discussion of the methodology and the context in which this PAR project was conducted. In Chapters 5 and 6, I describe the implementation of PAR Cycles One and Two and present the findings and implications. Finally, in Chapter 7, I discuss the importance of the PAR, revisit the study's theory of action and literature review, offer recommendations, and reflect on my leadership development.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Despite the changing demographics of students in the United States, women and people of diverse backgrounds continue to be underrepresented in educational leadership's highest echelon. With this lack of diversity and equity comes the inability to access various forms and alternative leadership ideologies and practices that acknowledge, celebrate, and represent the broad range of cultural ways of knowing. This Participatory Action Research Project (PAR) aims to identify Filipino leadership practices, compare these historical and cultural practices to contemporary approaches to leadership, and begin conversations that promote, value, and give voice to these alternative and essential approaches to educational leadership.

This chapter examines the indigenous cultural values that remain central to modern Filipinos. Altered by the country's history of colonialism, these indigenous values remain prevalent in how Filipinos navigate their communities and workspaces, profoundly impacting their identity and ability to lead schools. Next, we consider a body of scholarly literature that examines alternative frames of school leaders, including indigenous ways of knowing and how they show up in educational leadership practices. Finally, we investigate the social mechanisms preventing the proliferation of indigenous values in educational leadership.

### **The Filipinos: Cultural Values and Origin**

Much is told about the Asian model minority myth in contemporary America. This label and categorization of all Asian people are destructive in that it devalues and renders the experiences of Asian American minorities invisible. Such is the case with Filipinos and Filipino Americans. Considering that Filipinos are the third largest ethnic group in the United States (United States Census, 2020), a simple database search on PsycInfo, as shown in Table 2, provides a reason why Filipinos are referred to as the "Forgotten Asian Americans" (David,



Table 2

*APA Psycinfo Database Search*

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Search phrase	Hits
Chinese	63,596
Japanese	28,198
Korean	14,856
South Asian	7,310
Vietnamese	2,672
Filipino	2,312

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2013). In our current knowledge base of Asian Psychology, the bulk of the data rests on Asian Americans of East Asian descent or an aggregate of multiethnic samples that combine the different ethnic groups of the Asian continent (David & Okazaki, 2006). Despite the model minority construct and geopolitical location of the Philippines in Asia, the experience of the Filipinos, with its colonial past and physical appearance, more closely resemble those of Latinos and African Americans than other “model minority” narratives (Nadal, 2020).

Western ideologies, theories, and knowledge have dominated educational leadership. According to Dimmock and Walker (2000), Western scholars have disproportionately exerted their influence on educational leadership theory, policy, and practice. Furthermore, Hallinger (2018) contends that white men who conducted much of their research within their predominantly white contexts have dominated the field of educational leadership. “The continued dominance of Western frameworks of educational leadership has ignored alternative epistemologies in the study and practice of educational leadership” (Lopez, 2021, p. 1). Consequently, there is an increasing need to examine the values of indigenous leaders and their influence on ethical leadership and develop leaders who utilize culturally responsive approaches to meet the needs of our diverse student makeup to ensure their academic success. This section explores Filipino psychology, its cultural tendencies, and the effects of foreign influences on the Filipino psyche.

### **Sikolohiyang Pilipino**

The understanding of Filipino psychology was written predominantly from colonialists’ perspectives and pejorative interpretations of Filipino behaviors by Western observers. In the 1960s, Filipino intellectuals and scholars launched an effort to spotlight the inadequacy and unfairness of Western-oriented approaches to Filipino psychology. For example, the Filipinos’

predisposition for shared identity or solidarity with others, *pakikisama*, was regarded by foreign researchers as “yielding to the will of the leader or group” (Saito, 2010, p. 46) to make matters easier. The inaccurate translation and imprecise contextual references observed with Western attempts to characterize Filipinos and their values require a need to rewrite psychology from the perspectives and experiences of the indigenous natives. There is also a need to capitalize on the importance of language and culture in the makeup of an individual’s psyche. While there have been several pieces of literature depicting Filipino personality and cultural values, many were written by foreign scholars utilizing interpreters and without immersing themselves in the culture of the Filipino people (Lynch, 1973; Saito, 2010). Influenced by Western ideas, many of these concepts and ideas have infiltrated the Philippine educational system, perpetuating a distorted and misleading depiction of the Filipinos for generations. It was not until the early 1970s, through the introduction of Virgilio Enriquez’ (1975) *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, that initiated a concerted effort to reject and correct these misleading depictions of the Filipino identity.

*Sikolohiyang Pilipino* is founded on the idea that the thoughts and experiences of Filipinos are best represented from the perspective of the Filipino and that cultural orientation and understanding of cultures are best identifiable in the culture’s own language. *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* implements “local languages as a tool for identifying and rediscovery of indigenous concepts” (Enriquez, 1992, as cited in Kim & Berry, 1993, p. 157). Indigenization from within advocates for examining the indigenous psychology from within its culture, examining beliefs and knowledge of people about themselves in their natural contexts instead of merely translating traditional concepts and modifying them to fit the local cultural narrative. Enriquez (1992) called for *cultural revalidation*, which is based on examining the Filipino’s psychological and socio-cultural existence and understanding the Filipino characteristics from the perspectives of the

native Filipino (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000). Intending to address the influences of colonial background on the Filipino's psychology, *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*'s primary emphasis is to promote national identity and consciousness, social awareness and involvement, and psychology of culture and language.

Established as a movement under the political and dictatorial conditions of the 1970s Philippines, *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* has three primary areas of protest, *sikolohiyang ng pagbabagong-isip* (psychology of re-awakening), *sikolohiyang malaya* (liberated psychology), and *sikolohiyang mapagpalaya* (liberating psychology). First, *sikolohiyang ng pagbabagong-isip* intends to combat the perpetuation of colonial mentality to decolonize the Filipino mind in developing a national consciousness. This idea is in accordance with Freire's (1970) analysis of colonialism's impact on the colonized inability to access their "cultural memories" as "victims become detribalized or inauthentic" (p. 50). Second, *sikolohiyang malaya* calls for the indigenization of studies to be more appropriate for indigenous use. It was designed to challenge the importation and imposition of psychology developed from a Western perspective that may not benefit or provide a false Filipino portrayal. Third, *sikolohiyang mapagpalaya* is a movement against psychology used to exploit the Filipino masses (Enriquez, 1975).

The *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* movement was founded on the idea that Filipino psychology is best represented from the perspectives of the indigenous natives of the Philippines. As there is an increasing need to examine the influences of indigenous psychology on ethical leadership, understanding the concepts advocated by the *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* movement is essential in developing the motives, purpose, and understanding of this study. Thus, this participatory action research led and participated in by Filipinos is an extension of this movement. Influenced by Western ideologies and colonial interpretations, foreign "experts," accompanied by their

language interpreters, have published distorted depictions of Filipino values transmitted from one generation to another (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000). The challenge of indirect translations is that it is difficult to compare and contrast the definition of values without contextual frames of reference. The following section attempts to look at Filipino values from the author's lived experience and indigenous perspectives using a Filipino orientation.

### **Filipino Contextual Values**

Although the Spanish and post-colonial attitudes have altered the indigenous values and beliefs of the Filipinos, many of these indigenous values have survived. These core values must be thoroughly analyzed to avoid perpetuating a deficit perception of Filipino culture, identity, and interactions. While these values can be observed and replicated in other cultures, without critical analysis of how they function in the Filipino culture, we may subject these concepts based on unintended Western interpretations and problematic understandings (Porcadas, 2019). Enriquez (1992) professed that Filipino beliefs are best described in their own indigenous language. *Sikolohiyang malaya* seeks to liberate the imprisoned mind from the evasive Western culture's grip and emphasize the rich truth of Filipino culture. The four core Filipino cultural values discussed in this research study have been attributed to influence the Filipino psyche; they are *kapwa* (fellow being), *utang ng loob* (debt of reciprocity), *hiya* (shame), and *pakikisama* (social acceptance) (Enriquez, 1975; Nadal, 2020; Reyes, 2015).

#### ***Kapwa (Fellow Human)***

Key to how Filipinos treat others is *kapwa*. *Kapwa* has been characterized by scholars as the unity of the self and others, self in the others, and shared identity with others (Enriquez, 1992; Reyes, 2015). It implies the moral obligation to treat others as equal fellow humans despite one's status. Such a viewpoint is contrary to the position of exploiting others for self-gain. The

term can be found in various Tagalog words emphasizing the collective unity with others. In our CPR conversations, there was a general consensus that sacrificing self for communal good on numerous occasions invoked a typical Filipino value of *pakikipagkapwa-tao*. Enriquez observed two categories of *kapwa*, the *ibang-tao* (outsider) and the *hindi-ibang -tao* (one of us). In Filipino social situations, the level of interaction one is shown is immediately recognized by their placement into one of these two categories. Upon recognizing an individual as *ibang-tao*, Filipino social interactions may range from *pakikilahok* (civil transaction) to *pakikibagay* (in accordance with) and to *pakikisama* (being along with). *Hindi-ibang-tao* garners a more intimate level of response from *pakikipagpalagayang loob* (being in similar understanding and acceptance of trust) to the highest level of *pakikiisa* or being one with the other individual or community. Enriquez places *kapwa* as the foundation of the Filipino value system. He argues that *kapwa* is the core Filipino value that “determines not only the person’s personality but his or her very personhood. Enriquez asserts that “without *kapwa*, one ceases to be a Filipino and human” (Enriquez, 1992, as cited in Kim & Berry, 1993. P 162). The following three concepts of *utang ng loob*, *hiya*, and *pakikisama* are a triad emanating from a single trunk of the actual core value of the Filipino personality, *kapwa*.

### ***Utang na loob (Debt of Gratitude)***

The demonstration of gratitude extends deeper for Filipinos than an offering of one’s appreciation; it is an act and an opportunity to strengthen bonds. *Utang ng loob*, in its literal translation, is debt from within. It is a self-imposed obligation to reciprocate acts of kindness. It is a natural reciprocal response to someone showing concern and being willing to help others. According to Reyes (2015), *utang ng loob* is a dynamic process, where if one shows *utang ng loob* with more than what is due, it becomes a circular process between the two individuals as the

other would now feel a sense of debt, and vice versa. This then allows the process to continue and strengthens the relationship between the two, where *kapwa* naturally develops into a mutually sacrificial friendship.

*Utang ng loob* is best demonstrated in Filipino families and profoundly affects Filipino society. Filipino children show immense obligation to their families as a sign of respect and to repay their parents for their existence. Through obedience, a child shows their *utang ng loob*. Filipinos have a deep consideration for education, and most Filipino parents put in their children's minds to study hard and get educated to get a good-paying job. For Filipinos, education is a primary determinant of a family's social and economic mobility. The Filipino parents' ultimate desire is for their children to graduate from university. This is also a point where Filipino parents may surrender their responsibilities and their children to establish the payment of their debt.

Due to high poverty and lack of social welfare in the Philippines, Filipino children are eternally obligated to assist their parents economically to demonstrate *utang ng loob*, a repayment for their parents' sacrifices. As a result of the Philippines' lack of economic opportunities, many Filipinos find employment abroad. According to the Philippines Statistics Authority (2018), the number of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) was estimated at 2.4 million in 2017. While some work as professionals (8.7%), a significant majority work in elementary occupations as domestic helpers, caretakers, and low-skilled workers (37.6%). The remittances sent by OFWs accounted for 11% of the country's total GDP in 2018. Sending remittances is an act of providing for their loved ones. In 2018, the World Bank (as cited in Compare Remit, 2018) estimated that \$625 billion traveled globally from one country to another through remittances. With the country's population of only over 108 million, the Philippines ranked third for

remittances received at \$34 billion USD, just behind China and India, respectively, the world's two most populous countries.

### ***Hiya (Shame)***

*Hiya*, translated as shame or embarrassment, does not represent its complete virtue. As Nadal (2020) posited, it is influenced by avoiding shaming oneself or family and representing self or family in the most honorable way in the community. To please the family and represent them well in the community, *hiya* or avoiding *hiya* is a source of motivation for one to succeed. Contrarily, the negative social stigma of bringing *hiya* to the family has detrimental effects on Filipinos.

According to Martinez et al. (2020), around 6 million Filipinos are estimated to live with depression and anxiety, making mental illness the third most common disability in the Philippines. Similar elevated mental health problems are found in Filipinos living abroad. In the United States, it is estimated that 12% of Filipinos suffer from some form of distress, which is higher than the rate of depression and anxiety in the US (Nicdao et al., 2015, as cited in Martinez et al., 2020). A critical barrier to receiving mental health support and achieving well-being among Filipinos is their tendency not to seek help. According to Martinez et al. (2020), the help-seeking rates among Filipinos are much lower than those found in the general U.S. population; they also experience lower help-seeking rates than other Asian minority groups. Martinez et al. (2020) discovered that while the most common barriers to seeking help were financial constraints and lack of health insurance in the Philippines, another significant barrier is the self and social stigma of “negative judgment, sense of shame, embarrassment and being a disgrace, fear of being labeled as ‘crazy,’ self-blame and concern for the loss of face... that puts the family’s reputation at stake or places one’s cultural group in a bad light” (p. 1,405). Martinez et



al. (2020) also cited that a critical coping strategy for Filipinos is their resilience and connection to their family.

To be called *walang hiya* (without shame) means that one is selfish, to think of satisfying only one's desires and impulses at the cost of violating the spirit of *kapwa*. A person deemed *walang hiya* violates the socially approved norms of conduct and insensitivity of feelings for others (Reyes, 2015). However, an individual with *hiya* can preserve dignity and be socially accepted in the community.

### ***Pakikisama (Social Acceptance)***

*Pakikisama* derives from the root word “*sama*,” which means to get along. It is the willingness to abandon individual interests in favor of others in the spirit of harmony, cooperation, and communal unity, or *bayanihan*. *Pakikisama* calls for a genuine intrinsic appreciation of togetherness. In addition, *pakikisama* facilitates positive human relations through communication. It is an act of tactful conversation and hesitancy for direct communication in consideration of the other person’s feelings.

*Pakikisama*, in the simplest form, is to get along with others to preserve smooth interpersonal relationships. Symbolically, “Filipinos are social weavers” (Acena, 2015, p. 4). Filipinos value becoming part of one another and cultivating socially in other peoples’ lives. As defined by foreign researchers in the study of Filipino culture (Lynch, 1973; Saito, 2010), *pakikisama* was described as going along with the group or the majority’s decision. Saito (2010) described *pakikisama* as a double-edged sword, which can invoke positive or negative implications depending on how the context is used. *Pakikisama* “makes matters easier for the group, as it eases an individual to yield to the will of the leader or the group to make the group’s decision unanimous” (Saito, 2010, p. 46). *Pakikisama* also closes the gap between subordinates

and their superiors. It functions as a bridge for shared understanding and group unity.

*Pakikisama* is a way of making allowances for an individual's faults and adjusting accordingly to preserve harmony.

Enriquez (1992) argued that *pakikisama* is not exclusively conformity or a smooth interpersonal relationship that the Filipinos are most concerned about, but *pakikipagkapwa-tao*, which is shared identity or solidarity with others. *Pakikipagkapwa-tao* is based on an individual's desire to be treated as an equal and live and move with co-equals. As implemented in social transactions, *pakikipagkapwa-tao* are acts of lending aid, sharing, and cooperating with others. Through *utang ng loob* (indebted gratitude), the Filipino would also expect the considerations shown to others would be reciprocated (Acena, 2015). This cyclical process of giving and receiving strengthens the relationship, cultivating *pakikisama* (getting along with others) between individuals or communities. In this manner, discussing *pakikisama*, *pakikipagkapwa-tao* should be considered to provide the context behind the definition.

### ***Bayanihan (Communal Unity)***

*Bayanihan*, the act of communal unity, has been observed to be valuable in effective organizations. In education, transformational leadership is the style researchers feel is the most effective for the current system of schooling (Anderson, 2017). According to Anderson (2017), transformational leadership is characterized by leaders and followers working together to advance goals and execute changes in unison with the group, *bayanihan*. Transformational leadership, with characteristics central to the indigenous Filipinos, is a leadership style that “transforms follower attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, to a higher realm of motivation where the leader inspires followers to be motivated to rise above and beyond current levels of achievement and performance to even higher levels of achievement and performance” (Anderson, 2017, p. 3).

While historic Anglo-western colonialism has impacted the Philippines in visible and invisible ways, Filipino contextual values are still core to everyday life. Despite these non-native influences that permeate the Filipino spirit, the Filipinos have retained indigenous cultural values that have become the attributes that Filipinos are known for. Coded within the Filipino's DNA, these personal attributes have profoundly impacted the occupations that appeal to the Filipinos and positions befitting their cultural values. The following section provides a brief history of the Philippines. From the origins of communal unity in pre-colonial times to the period of colonialism with its effects exhibited through colonial mentality, the history of the Philippines has had a profound impact on how Filipinos navigate their world.

### **Filipino Historical Context and Colonial Mentality**

*A person without the knowledge of the past history, origin, and culture is like a tree without roots.*

Marcus Garvey

The history of the Philippines is marred by the influences of colonialism and the subjugation of the Filipino people. From the early impact of Indian Sanskrit in the Tagalog language to the Arab traders that arrived in the Philippines' southern islands, the Spanish conquistadors and later the American "liberators" had the most profound impact on Filipino culture and psyche.

### ***Pre-Colonial Communities***

Situated between the Pacific Ocean to the west and the South China Sea to the east, the Philippines archipelago is at least 500 miles west of the Asian mainland. Consisting of 7,641 islands and 170 distinct native languages, the Philippines is one of the world's most linguistically diverse countries (Francia, 2010). According to Francia (2010), long-distance seafaring vessels known as *balangay* facilitated migrations and trading between islands and neighboring countries.

The basic structure of the pre-colonial and modern Filipino community was and is the *barangay*, after the outrigger boat *balangay*, which clans used to settle the islands. Influenced mainly by kinship, relations within the barangays were primarily based on blood ties and shared labor. The practice of *bayanihan* or communal unity can be traced from this shared work tradition. The spirit of *bayanihan* is a by-product of the indigenous collectivist values that have survived in contemporary Filipino society. *Bayanihan* is a collaborative tradition that remains central to how modern Filipinos think, believe, feel, and act.

### ***Spanish Colonization***

The colonialist history experienced by the Filipinos has continued to impact their self-identity, confidence, and ability to perceive themselves as equals to their former colonizers. The *Patronato Real* (Royal Patronage), a policy that appointed the clergy to become part of the government, brought control of the Filipinos between the church and the state. As with most colonized natives, colonized Filipinos were exploited, cheated, and treated brutally, cruelly, and tyrannically. “Civilizing” Filipinos consisted of replacing their native indigenous culture and beliefs with the Spanish culture and the Catholic religion (David & Okazaki, 2006). These forms of oppression continue to haunt the Filipinos, identified as challenges such as internalized oppression, self-doubt, and lack of confidence expressed by Filipinos today.

### ***Colonialism Under the United States***

The damages caused by the Mt. Pinatubo eruption in 1991 finalized the closure of the U.S. Naval Base in Subic Bay. This event also ended the American occupation of the Philippines. As the most recent foreign occupier, the United States, with its potent ability to influence global culture, continues to cast its mighty shadow on Filipino mentality.

A critical and long-standing change brought by the Americans to the Philippines was free education. Espiritu (2003) believed that the United States was convinced that education instead of military restraint was the more effective method of repressing the Filipinos. In addition to teaching Filipinos the English language, it was believed that by offering free education, the Americans were also indoctrinating the Filipinos with American values and shaping the Filipino worldview with American political ideas (Root, 1997). The Americans painted a grandiose picture of the United States as the land of endless opportunities and wealth. For poor Filipinos with a limited ability to socially mobilize, a consequential result of this distorted image is the preference for anything American over the “mediocre” attributes of anything Filipino (Root, 1997). Cross et al. (as cited in David & Okazaki, 2006, p. 3) claimed that “internalized oppression may lead oppressed individuals to highly value the dominant culture and simultaneously devalue their own, perceive their racial identity as a stigma or a curse.” This is consistent with Freire’s (1970) views of the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. When the colonizers imposed their values, expectations, and guidelines on the oppressed, the colonized Filipinos developed internalized oppression consistent with deficit thinking and self-doubt that have manifested as challenges for the advancement of Filipino American leaders.

### ***Colonial Mentality***

Influenced by their colonial past and centuries of abuse from their colonizers, colonial mentality is central to understanding Filipino identity. According to David and Okazaki (2006), colonial mentality refers to a “form of internalized oppression among Filipinos and Filipino Americans” (p. 1). Many Filipino American colleagues, both in the educational field and in the military, expressed feeling undeserving of their leadership positions, highlighted by their self-

doubt and sense of inferiority. David and Okazaki (2006) argue that the history of the Philippines and its colonial legacy has played a significant role in the psychological experiences of contemporary Filipinos and Filipino Americans.

The Filipino experience conforms classically as Fanon (1965), Memmi (1965), and Freire (1970) prescribed the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Fanon (1965) asserted four phases of the classical colonial model. Phase one is the forced entry of a foreign group into another land to exploit the native inhabitants. Phase two establishes a new society that centers on imposition, disintegration, and recreation of the native culture to create a contrast between the superior colonizer and the inferior indigenous population. The third phase involves portraying the colonized as wild and savage peoples, which the colonizer needed to tame and force into submission. The final phase is establishing a race-based societal system that is politically, socially, and economically beneficial to the colonizer. Fanon (1965) also asserted that the systemic denigration of the colonized people generally leads the colonized to self-doubt, feeling inferior, or confusion about one's identity. The colonized may eventually come to believe the colonizers' negative perceptions and develop a strong desire to distance themselves from their identity to become as much like the oppressors as possible (Freire, 1970; Memmi, 1965).

The obsession of Filipinos with lighter skin is influenced by how their subconscious mind was formed by colonial powers that degraded their native brown skin to lower-class citizens and promoted the white-skinned colonizers to nobility (Limos, 2019). Filipinos under Spanish rule developed a sense of "colonial debt," which is the idea of the Filipinos' preference for Western culture and Westerners and their tendency to brush off exploitation as the eventual cost of being civilized (David & Okazaki, 2006). The Spaniards' perceived the native Filipinos as uncivilized and savages. They proclaimed that for the Filipinos to become civilized, they must adapt to the

Spanish culture and promoted the idea that refusal to become “civilized” is equal to abandoning the Catholic’s path to righteousness (Rimonte, 1997, as cited in David & Okazaki, 2006). Today, skin whiteners have a significant market share in the Philippines. The Filipinos’ preference for a lighter complexion signifies their lineage to noble ancestry and high economic and social status. Conversely, the association of dark or brown skin with low economic status remains for many Filipino.

Scholars believe that the perception of American superiority, the idea of negative self-perception, and submission to American imposition may be passed intergenerationally by the continuous belief that anything American is better, thus, supporting the persistent Americanization of the Philippines (David & Okazaki, 2006; Espiritu, 2003). David and Okazaki (2006) believe that this identity crisis is a determining factor in the idea that there is no authentic Filipino identity and culture that Filipinos can be proud of and may continue to support the perception of inferiority with anything related to being Filipino.

David and Okazaki (2006) identified four ways colonial mentality manifests in the Filipino psyche. The first is the denigration of the Filipino self. A prominent effect of colonization is internalizing an inferior perception of self-imposed by the colonizer to the colonized individual (Fanon, 1965; Freire, 1970). The second is the denigration of Filipino culture and body. This involves the belief that anything Filipino is inferior and less desirable than anything White or American. David and Okazaki (2006) suggested that these judgments apply to, but are not limited to, “culture or lifestyles, physical characteristics, socioeconomic opportunities, language, material products, and leadership or government” (p. 9). The third form is discrimination against less Americanized Filipino Americans. Freire (1970) theorized that oppressed people might feel strong conformity to the values and beliefs of the dominant group,

including the group's discriminatory practices. This includes feelings of inferiority towards themselves and their heritage. The oppressed individuals may feel discomfort and distance themselves from what may remind them of their perceived inferiority—finally, tolerance and acceptance of their oppression. When the oppressed individual has accepted that the colonizers are superior, the colonized individuals might begin to perceive them positively. The result is the normalization of maltreatment, such as discrimination of the colonized individual by the dominant group, resulting in the submission to colonial debt (David & Okazaki, 2006).

With detrimental effects that influence their perception of self and social structure, colonization has significantly impacted the Filipinos. However, when examined, the core of the Filipino spirit is alive and forms the foundation of their relationship with others and their community.

### ***Filipino American Migration***

From the first waves of Filipino agriculture workers that produced Larry Itliong and the Delano Manongs and their development of organized farm labor unions to the surge of nurses that fuels the American healthcare system, Filipinos have long been productive contributors to the American diaspora. This legacy of Filipino immigrants continues as embodied by the educational leaders employed in this study. There have been several distinct waves of Filipino migration to the United States. Following its annexation, the first wave of Filipino immigrants arrived in the US in 1899. Recruited as cheap contract laborers, Filipinos worked in agriculture along the West Coast of the United States, canning factories in Alaska, and sugarcane plantations in Hawaii to feed the rapidly growing American industry of the early twentieth century (Batalova & Gallardo, 2020). The post-war era gave way to the second wave of Filipinos. Many enlisted in the U.S. Armed Forces, with the majority recruited in the U.S. Navy as serving stewards. These



Filipino recruits joined the Navy to escape the life of poverty and to become naturalized U.S. citizens. The tradition of Filipinos as a well of recruits for the military continues today. In 2012, among the 65,000 immigrants serving active U.S. military duty, 22.8% were from the Philippines, the highest of the immigrant groups, with Mexico coming in a distant second at 9.5% (Barry, 2013).

The current wave of Filipino immigrants came after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which permitted family reunification of service members and legal residencies to professionals and individuals with specialized skills. A shortage of medical professionals in the United States, particularly nurses in the inner cities and rural areas, saw an overrepresentation among Filipino immigrants (Espiritu, 2003). According to the National Nurses United, the country's largest nurses' union, 20% of nurses in California identify as Filipino Americans, with Filipino Americans comprising only 4.2% of the California population. As nursing is a favored occupation for Filipino Americans, less common are Filipino American educators. The current wave of Filipino immigrants has affected the demographic landscape of California. As the CDE (2020) indicates, the student population in California is becoming more diverse; thus, the need to find alternative forms of leadership to better serve this changing population. The cultural competencies demonstrated by Filipinos by the bedside embodying the Filipino persona are valuable in education, where caring for others is essential.

Reflective of its archipelagic geography, the Filipino culture is the sum of its historical influences. These cultural implications did not remain in their original form; they were not banked merely on top of each other. Obtrusive cultures not only did something to the Filipinos, but the Filipinos did something to them. True to the Filipino's adaptive and resourceful nature,

the Filipinos assimilated, and what had initially been foreign elements were turned into their own.

### **Alternative and Culturally Based Leadership**

In a recent professional academy I attended, organized by a state school administrators association, the lack of ethnic diversity at the executive level of school administration was evident. The academy was for site and district administrators pursuing certification as human resources managers and Assistant Superintendents. While the attendees may have represented an ethnically diverse group, with half of the participants being White, all twenty presenters, except one, were White. The presenters, composed of current and former Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents of Human Resources, profoundly influenced their respective district's academic achievement and hiring practices. The lack of variety in ethnicity by the presenters represented the makeup of executive leaders in education, which demonstrated the imbalance of power and lack of varied experiences and perspectives. This raised a query from me: is the lack of ethnic representation in the administrative ranks of school districts a significant contributor to the lack of academic progress experienced by many of our minoritized students? Learning environments that fail to reflect the widely diverse backgrounds, experiences, and cultural values of our students and community may not meet the goal of providing the best possible education for all students.

### **Indigenous Frameworks of Educational Leadership**

As a reflection and normalization of White, male, Western, and capitalist ideologies, traditional research on leadership theories and practices are grounded in Western traditions and sociocultural norms (Benham, 2002). However, emerging studies and particular places in the United States have offered an alternative leadership perspective and have challenged the

traditional paradigm. Leadership from the Western and Indigenous perspectives is extensively disparate. Leadership from Western cultures values meritocracy, efficiency, formal positions, and predictability. In contrast, tribal college values and other Indigenous groups are founded on cultural ideologies linked to their native values and commitment to community service (Badwound & Tierney, 1988, as cited in Benham, 2002). While indigenous groups value community leadership through an organizational structure bestowed by the community where generosity and service are honored, leadership in Western cultures is centralized and determined by a dominant individual affecting others (Benham, 2002).

According to Benham (2002), Western scholars have recognized the indigenous value of collective decision-making, stewardship and caring for the group, and passionate and spirited leadership. Eisenstat and Spector (1990, as cited in Fullan, 1995) found the ineffectiveness of attempting to change how people think through mission statements and training programs. Instead, it is through people's personal interactions with others and their ability to collaborate with others that produce the learning outcomes we desire. In situations like schools with dynamic complexity, Fullan (2003) observed that the value of differing points of view is that different perspectives can often lead to anticipation of new problems earlier than those with like-minded views. In addition, Fullan (2003) affirmed that the "freshest ideas come from diversity and those marginal to the group." (p. 35). The indigenous characteristics of leadership and learning hold a striking similarity with values associated with Filipinos. Fundamental to natives and indigenous communities are compassion (*kapwa* or unity of self in others), interdependence (*pakikisama*, abandoning individual interests), humility (*hiya*, the act of propriety), giving thanks (*utang ng loob*, gratitude), and connecting the heart and mind (*pakikipagkapwa tao*, solidarity) (Benham, 2002).

Though not pervasive, there are pockets of places and communities promoting, enacting, and developing policies founded on indigenous values. For school practitioners aspiring to realize educational leadership changes rooted in indigenous ways, Benham (2002) provides the Weavers of Change, a leadership model developed by Johnson (1996, as cited in Benham, 2002 p. 155). Founded on five principles, the model provides guidance for ways of living and leadership:

1. A commitment to serving the community.
2. The emergence and claiming of one's native voice.
3. Traveling across boundaries.
4. Seeing through the eyes of others and accepting the gifts of others.
5. Everything in the universe participates in a system of change.

The work of this research study is to provide an alternate leadership perspective that challenges the traditional paradigm. It honors the work of Benham in her recognition of indigenous leadership characteristics and values. Through this PAR project and by co-creating alternative leadership practices that promote the cultural assets of Filipinos, this work aimed to add to the body of research in deconstructing imperialism and colonialism in education.

### **Ethical Leadership**

The continued dominance of the Western approach to educational leadership has stifled alternative epistemologies in the study and practice of educational leadership, necessitating a better understanding of the role of ethical leadership in an equitable learning environment. While little research exists on the effects of indigenous Filipino values on contemporary leadership, indigenous leadership studies with Native Americans and Maori leaders are available (Benham, 2002; Haar et al., 2019; Smith, 2015) and can serve as models for comparison. Mutually, these

indigenous cultures share a considerable emphasis on collectivism and shared unity of the self and others (*kapwa*). Haar et al. (2019), in their study of indigenous Maori leaders, examined how indigenous values influenced ethical leadership and the connections between Maori and western leadership traits.

Ethical leadership, as defined by Brown et al. (2005, as cited in Haar et al., 2019), is the “demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making” (p. 624). Additionally, ethical leadership is “related to consideration behavior, honesty, trust in the leader, interactional fairness socialized charismatic leadership” (Brown et al., 2005, as cited in Haar et al., 2019, p. 625). Ethical leadership has been found to demonstrate the effectiveness of leaders and their followers’ job satisfaction (Haar et al., 2019). Ethical leaders think about long-term consequences and the effects of their decisions on the organization and their followers (Mihelic et al., 2010). As leaders model their behaviors to their followers ethically, their values may indirectly determine their efforts at modeling (Haar et al., 2019).

### **Decolonizing School Leadership**

As the business of education continues to support “new” instructional programs, curriculum, and educational mandates that claim to close the achievement gap, little development has yet to materialize, resulting in the perpetuation of the academic underperformance of our most underprivileged children. Considering the diversity of the students we serve, less diverse is the educational leadership space where initiatives are generated and directed. Perhaps, this is the source and the root of our societal dilemma. Difficult as it may seem to look at internal structures that we have promoted and passed on for generations, we must resist the comfort of sustaining

the status quo for actual change to happen. In a school system that experiences continuous change, Fullan (2003) suggested that the infusion of multiple cultures in education is essential for questioning the status quo. In a dynamic system like public education, we must encourage counter-cultures and perspectives to overcome our conservatist impulses and tendencies to conform. Perhaps the problem lies in the source, the educational research community, where the balance of power remains monoculture. As we continue to serve students from a collectivist background, are the values represented in our research methodologies and educational leaders aligned with the needs of our diverse students? As a system, what alternative leadership attributes should we be pursuing? How can we promote alternative approaches to leadership to enact structural change? How do we disrupt the colonial structures that operate our educational institutions? This section investigates the role education research plays in our society's continuance of imperialism and colonialism. We also examine the social mechanisms preventing the proliferation of indigenous values in educational leadership.

### **Decolonizing Research Methodologies**

While pockets of communities and schools are enacting change through alternative leadership policies that exist and continue to emerge, the value orientations of indigenous people, particularly the Filipino community, remain invisible. History has shaped our attitudes and feelings toward what we consider “normal.” We have continued to overprivilege Western ways of knowing while denying the validity of indigenous knowledge, language, and culture. This PAR project seeks to validate the knowledge and culture of indigenous people by connecting research and activism to lessen the divide between them.

As researchers, our indigenous thoughts and voices are infrequently heard. Often, research is done to us, but sparsely by us. Traditional research is limited by the legacies of

colonialism of preceding research studies and the parameters of both previous and current approaches. The Kaupapa Māori research and framework illustrate an alternative perspective on research methodologies that centers on the indigenous nature of the Māoris. As described by Smith (2015), in Kaupapa Māori, research and evaluation are done by Māori; it is for Māori, and with Māori. It is informed by the Māori ways of doing things. Central to the Kaupapa Māori is establishing strong and healthy relationships with participants as researchers gather and analyze evidence. The relationships in the Kaupapa Māori framework are built on respect, reciprocity, mutual trust, what the Māoris call *whanaungatanga* or kinship, and a sense of family created through shared experiences of working together provides people with a sense of belonging. Certain elements of Filipino values are familiar in the Kaupapa Māori framework. The significance of relationships by way of reciprocity (*utang ng loob*), mutual trust and respect (*pakikisama*), and shared experiences of work (*bayanihan*) are values shared by these neighboring cultures.

Smith (2012) provides recommendations to decolonize research. She asserts that decolonizing research methodologies means that researchers must learn, think, listen, and work in community-centered ways. Smith (2012) advocates for the fusion of research and activism in that they cannot and should not be separate endeavors. With co-practitioner researchers residing within the community, this PAR project connects research and activism together and, therefore, lessens the divide between the two worlds.

According to Smith (2012), Western research methodologies impose objectivity, neutrality, and a standardized approach to investigation. In comparison, the values and priorities guiding indigenous research and analysis are founded in the community and often draw on traditions involving one's relationship with others and how to be with others in the community.

These values relating to relationships observed by Tuhiwai Smith are representative of the Filipino spirit. An additional aspect of this PAR consistent with decolonizing research methodologies is that marginalized researchers need safe spaces to struggle and grapple with their understanding. Smith (2012) advocates that protected spaces ensure that ideas and knowledge are generated and not suppressed by the dominant group's perspectives or paradigms. In a Co-Practitioner Research (CPR) group consisting of Filipino Americans, this PAR validates Smith's suggestion of safe space and community-centered research methodologies.

Notably, as the source where initiatives are developed and supported, decolonizing school leadership spaces is imperative in creating just schools where all students can thrive. School leaders remain predominantly White, and considering leaders from indigenous backgrounds have internalized the Western ways of being, there is a desperate need to understand how to decolonize school leadership.

### **Decolonizing School Leadership**

As history dictates, schools have been a powerful mechanism for colonizers to acquire and retain power. Globally, schools have played a critical role in normalizing Western epistemologies and structures while dismissing indigenous natures as "others" (Khalifa et al., 2019). The consequence of "othering" is that indigenous ways are devalued and relegated as backward, barbaric, and primitive. As school leaders remain predominantly heteronormative, middle-class, White, and masculine, schools have remained and perpetually been the source of colonialism in our communities. This cycle permeates our educational environment, as the leaders who best exhibit these values are rewarded and promoted in the highest tiers of our systems. While there are advantages of valuing Western characteristics, as described to be based on "meritocracy, efficiency, formal positions, and predictability" (Benham, 2002, p. 586),



leadership, with systems that place much reliance on standardization, is also inadequate in their ability to empower communities and progress.

As evident with the education and wealth gap observed in societal structures worldwide, the clout of White imperialist influence is discernible. Among the “losers” are the people of low-income countries subjected to colonialism under European dominance. In his poem *The White Man’s Burden*, Rudyard Kipling justified the call for the imperial conquest of the Philippines as a mission of civilization and a gain for the conquered. In his characterization of Filipinos as “new-caught, sullen peoples, half-devil and half child” (Kipling, 1899), Kipling suggested that even if the conquered do not recognize the benefit, the Filipinos will be brought “(Ah slowly!) towards the light” (Kipling, 1899). Not only has colonial education created a desire to dissociate from indigenous heritage and a sense of inferiority and disempowerment, but education has also been the source of pervasive economic growth for the colonialists. According to Tikly (2004), modern forms of education rooted in western cultures have provided a common thread between European imperialism and colonialism. Tikly believed that schooling, through basic skills, dispositions, and attitudes, has prepared Indigenous people as workers in service of colonial powers. While a small minority progressed beyond basic education, colonial schooling served as disciplinary to impart a Western way of thinking based on Western forms of knowledge. This PAR aspired to empower Indigenous leaders to contend with their Western ways of thinking and conjure their inherited ways of leading.

White, male, Western, capitalist, and Christian hierarchy has often been normalized in educational leadership and practices. As colonial models inform the educational spaces of schooling, “schools have and continue to serve as sites of colonial oppression and control” (Khalifa et al., 2019, p. 572). Khalifa et al. (2019) asserted that educational leadership “has not

done enough to disentangle school leadership practices from this colonizing legacy” (p. 572). In his literature review on how an Indigenous, Decolonizing School Leadership (IDSL) framework decolonizes school leadership, Khalifa et al. found that Indigenous people experience school leadership practices that are imperial and colonizing. These practices had “negative impacts on the culture, epistemologies, knowledge, and self-determination of Indigenous people” (Khalifa et al., 2019, p. 582). Khalifa et al. (2019) proposed two findings that may inform leadership practices and serve as a framework for decolonizing schools. First, school leaders can either further marginalize the communities by reinforcing classic partnerships unresponsive to their students' challenges or help liberate them by engaging in authentic and meaningful partnerships. The second was the consideration of the five decolonizing Indigenous leadership practices common in Indigenous schools and communities worldwide. These leadership practices include:

- **Prioritizing Self-Knowledge and Self Reflection: Knowledge in Indigenous Leadership** is rooted in experience and the ancestral way of knowing. Through co-construction of knowledge, pedagogical decolonization or diversity in knowledge produces innovative learning contexts that are unfixed and created as stakeholders engage in schooling.
- **Enacting Self-Determination for Community Empowerment: Indigenous school leaders that enact changes are self-determinants.** Self-determination equips Indigenous schools and communities with a sense of destiny, thrusting them to act despite their oppressed environment. One way to accomplish this is to be inclusive of the community. Principals may involve the community in school decision-making by using a “non-bureaucratic communication strategy.”

- **Committing to Community Voices:** School leaders may create welcoming spaces for community and Indigenous knowledge. An essential role of a school leader is to broker and leverage community resources for the academic success of the students. Responsive leaders are knowledgeable and leverage their community's colonial history, personal language, ethnic backgrounds, and economic status but continue to progress student learning by honoring their ancestral teachings and values.
- **Serving through Altruism and Spirituality:** Indigenous Leadership is founded on a sense of altruism and servant-based leadership as they reflect on leadership traits compounded on spirituality, morality, and maternal values (Benham, 2002). Its altruism comes from building trust, well-being, and a sense of humility in working with others. Servant Leadership personifies values of “mutual assistance, collaboration, social responsibility, and community self-reliance” (Khalifa et al., 2019, p. 596).
- **Prioritizing Collectivism in Communication:** The way leaders communicate is connected to their cultural background and relationship with the community. Indigenous leaders emphasize the collective standard of relationships and interpersonal harmony. These leaders operate on values of “group think and group before self” (Khalifa et al., 2019, p. 597), emphasizing consensus and group discussions among stakeholders.

Educational leadership and methodologies have long been dominated by White males, with research predominantly within White contexts. With evolving demands to diversify how students are served, we must transform how we perceive how we lead as a community.

Alternative leadership models stemming from generations of indigenous knowledge can provide

us the possibility to make a systemic impact and sever the perpetuation of our colonized schools. The knowledge we gain from our indigenous ancestors, their shared vision for humanity, and respect for each other's capacities provide us with the framework for leading schools.

### **Conclusion**

As the U.S. population becomes more racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse, so does the student body inhabiting our schools. It is essential that the institute of education, with systems deeply rooted in traditions and procedural rituals, adjust expeditiously to the changing times. With new immigrants coming from collectivist countries such as Mexico, China, India, and the Philippines (Pew Research Center, 2017), so must our educational practices to better serve students. Unfortunately, racial disparities in educational leadership lag considerably behind our school's changing landscape. To address this disproportionality of cultural representation in the highest level of our school systems, this participatory action research focused on engaging Filipino American principals to identify and develop approaches that promote their culturally based leadership assets in educational leadership. To better understand the assets of collectivist cultures, as the Filipinos bring, we examined the four indigenous Filipino cultural values central to many Filipinos. The values of *kapwa*, *utang ng loob*, *hiya*, and *pakikisama* and the interconnectedness of these values play a significant role in how Filipinos operate in their environment. The history of colonialism and its impending effect of internalized oppression that continued to shape how Filipinos perceive themselves is an essential aspect of the Filipino psyche. Additionally, reviewed in this chapter is the *Sikolohiyang Filipino* movement, which advocated for the liberation of Filipino Psychology by finding their indigeneity from within.

Influenced by the changing demands of our transforming student community, there has been a strong interest in developing alternative and culturally based leadership approaches to challenge the traditional school paradigm. Western scholars have recognized that personal interactions and our ability to collaborate with others produce the learning outcomes we desire. To envision this indigenous way of operating schools, Benham (2002) suggested that school practitioners employ the Weavers of Change model to guide their way of living and leadership. Furthermore, this research study advocates for implementing ethical leadership in our school system. Ethical leadership, the demonstration of appropriate conduct through personal and interpersonal interactions, has demonstrated the effectiveness of leaders and their followers' job satisfaction.

Finally, we reviewed the literature on disrupting the grips of colonialism that continue to permeate our school environment. As educational research and leadership are predominantly White, the validity of indigenous knowledge and culture are consequently denied. Through the Kaupapa Māori research and framework, we have an indigenous-based perspective on research methodologies. In addition, Tuhiwai Smith asserted that decolonizing research methodologies requires researchers to learn, think, listen, and work in community-centered ways. To decolonize the school and school leadership, Khalifa et al. (2019) identified five decolonizing indigenous practices to serve as a framework for aspiring practitioners.

For Filipino American educational leaders to better understand their identity, develop, and apply their cultural assets to serve students better, this research study works directly with community members affected. We must comprehend the cultural values operating in our daily lives and the historical contexts that influence our identity. This critical ethnography explores indigenous ways of knowing and producing knowledge related to indigenous leadership. In a co-

practitioner research group, Filipino American administrators with inherited cultural values refamiliarized themselves with their cultural identity and modeled and promoted an indigenous framework to better the educational environment for all students.

### **CHAPTER 3: PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR) DESIGN**

In this Participatory Action Research (PAR) study, I examined a group of Filipino American educational leaders who engaged in identifying and developing practices that promote their strengths and cultural assets to re-envision educational leadership. The design of the PAR study is predicated on the following theory of action: *IF* a co-practitioner research group of Filipino American administrators provides one another collegial support to identify their strengths and cultural assets, *THEN* they can develop practices that promote an alternative leadership model rooted in their cultural assets.

In this chapter, I provide a detailed account of the research design to collect and analyze data to inform the study's research questions. I present information on the research design, research questions, the action research cycles, how data are collected and analyzed, and the potential limitations of this study. I begin by selecting a specific qualitative research design, participatory action research combined with critical ethnography. Next, I discuss participant samplings and how data were collected and analyzed. Finally, the study's limitations and ethical considerations were addressed.

#### **Qualitative Research Fit**

Qualitative research provides a robust and scientific approach to exploring and understanding a particular issue. Additionally, qualitative research accounts for the context of where a study is situated and with whom. Qualitative research methodology describes and understands rather than predicts and controls. Qualitative research blends methods and techniques of observing, documenting, analyzing, and interpreting characteristics, patterns, attributes, and meanings of the human condition being studied (Gillis & Jackson, 2002; Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). Qualitative research "honors an inductive style, a focus on individual

meaning, and the importance of reporting the complexity of a situation" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 4).

While the qualitative design serves as the overarching methodology, specific features of this research design inform this study. Next, I address each feature, including Participatory Action Research, critical ethnography (group and self), and the utility of collaborative improvement efforts (*vis-à-vis* improvement sciences and community learning exchanges).

### **Participatory Action Research**

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is an action-oriented advocacy method of inquiry. This form of investigation is participatory, which means that individuals conduct studies about themselves, requiring spirals of reflection and action (Creswell, 2013). The primary purpose of PAR is to "improve the quality of peoples, organizations, communities, and family lives" (Stringer, 2007, as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 592). PAR aims to create change within a specific setting by directly including those seeking change (Guajardo et al., 2016; Herr & Anderson, 2015). This approach is "collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical, and undertaken by the participants of the inquiry" (McCutcheon & Jung, 1990, as cited in Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 4).

In Participatory Action Research, researchers are expected to control or actively participate in the research design and development process. Guajardo et al. (2016), in one of their Community Learning Exchanges (CLE) axioms, suggest "the people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns" (p. 32). In this sense, CLE participants not only know issues within their community firsthand but may also provide collective and creative deviance to manifest within their residing communities. One idea is for CLE participants to



return to their home communities and enact “new change, approaches, strategies, and actions” (Gujardo et al., 2016, p. 33) to innovate and spread transformations from within.

In this study, I considered "how the knowledge generated can be utilized by those in the setting, as well as by those beyond the setting" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 6). While a successful collaboration of participants in an action research study may provide valuable information on the product of the collaboration, the process utilized in the study may also be of great value. Furthermore, the knowledge gained in the PAR study may be transferable as the information gained in a localized context may help address problems in other similar situations or contexts. I chose PAR because of the unique focus of Filipino American educational leaders. The collective process employed by this PAR puts the power back into the hands of the people most impacted by the study. Through action research, our CPR group generated knowledge utilized to progress in our educational leadership careers. Likewise, as the need for representation and diverse executive cabinets are not exclusive to the business of public education, this study hopes to develop new understanding and practices that can help transform leadership in other contexts.

Participatory Action Research is indeed an emancipatory methodology. PAR connects social research to social action by liberating historically marginalized groups (Herr & Anderson, 2015; hunter et al., 2013). As such, this approach holds great promise to elevate the very voices that are the unit of analysis for this study. This qualitative approach creates space for the "dynamic interaction between the researcher and the participants and context under investigation ...the researcher is able to develop a 'thick' description of participants, the context, and the dynamic processes that occur between and among them" (Gerdes & Conn, 2001, p. 186). Next, I unpack the critical ethnographic approach that further enhances the PAR design.

## **Critical Ethnography**

While traditional research methods draw out information from participants, activist researchers are active instigators of change. PAR researchers are insiders to the situation and engage with the community to find solutions to apply within the community. It is founded on the idea that inquiry is "done by or with insiders, but never to or on them" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 3). Guajardo et al. (2016) suggest that "people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns" (p. 32).

This study aimed to better collaborate with a group of Filipino American educators to understand the relationship between their identity and leadership. While the PAR design situates the research more closely with participants, this study also embedded elements of critical ethnography. As we understand these complex ideas that juxtapose Western and indigenous values, socio-political factors, and educational concerns, participants learn about themselves and the structures at play in their professional lives. Through these learnings, coupled with their professional experiences, the participants can change their practices to better their communities.

Ethnography studies people in their environments using specific methods to arrive at the objective research outcome. Ethnography documents cultural similarities and differences and social and cultural systems (Denzin, 1997; Sidky, 2004). This research provides a thick description of the social realities from the participants' perspectives in social groups (Geertz, 1973). This methodology helps examine the interpretation of social realities from the viewpoint of Filipino American participants involved in their work as educational leaders. As such, this approach is characterized as a critical ethnography to understating issues of power through a "study of shared patterns of a marginalized group with the aim of advocacy about issues of power and authority" (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 476). Van Maanen (1979) summarized

this approach as a method to "uncover and explicate the ways in which people in particular work settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situation" (p. 540).

Another important methodology embedded within critical ethnography is autoethnography. Autoethnography is one of many emancipatory postmodern theories that legitimize scientific methods outside the positivist realm (Wall, 2006). This methodology liberates the researcher to affirm their own inquiry about the issue as valid (Moustakas, 1990). Creswell and Guetterman (2019) state that the "critical ethnographer is self-conscious about his or her interpretation, recognizing that interpretations reflect our own history and culture" (p. 479). Autoethnography "acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist" (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 274). As a researcher/participant, my thoughts, identity, and voice contribute to the body of this work for the "purposes of extending sociological understanding" (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21). As a result, the methodological approach provides "insider" data from a particular culture and "insider" perspective and positionality from my stance as a researcher-practitioner. By engaging in critical reflection, we, the practitioner-researchers, have the potential to build our abilities as educational leaders to challenge conventional wisdom and thereby contribute to the production of knowledge about alternative educational leadership practices.

### **Co-Practitioner Research (CPR) Group**

Participant selection in PAR is critical to ensure that this research contributes to decolonizing the indigenous and changing our society. Participants were selected as consensual partners and engaged with social values supporting liberation and life-enhancing changes in our

communities. Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest that co-practitioner researchers desire to effectuate new visions for schools, community agencies, and ethnic groups within schools.

This research study considered both purposeful (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and intentional sampling (Guajardo et al., 2016) strategies to determine if participants were suitable for this study's context. In purposeful sampling, groups, individuals, and settings are considered for selection if they are "information rich" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). Purposeful sampling in this study required participants to identify as either first or second-generation Filipino Americans and currently serve as site administrators. The participant's particular identity and experience provide access to understanding the specific practice problem. The other sampling consideration used in this study is convenience sampling, which involves selecting individuals or groups available and willing to participate in the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additionally, this research study utilizes convenience sampling to recruit easily accessible and convenient participants to collaborate in person or online. The requirement of participants to be employed in Santa Clara County, California, served both purposive as participants served similar communities and approximately similar demographics of students and convenience sampling with geographical location determining accessibility for in-person meetings.

The decision to focus on a community of Filipino practitioners was born out of the focus of practice and subsequent research questions and the existent improvement literature. At the center of the improvement science work is Network Improvement Communities (NIC). According to Bryk et al. (2015), NICs unite the analytic component of improvement science with the power of network communities to learn and generate new ideas. The Community Learning Exchange (CLE) axioms add depth to the improvement sciences. Guajardo et al. (2016) submit that activating the people closest to the problem to participate in an action-oriented discovery as

they know their setting and context best so they may act on it to create change. As a result, through the NIC and CLE frameworks, Filipino American educational leader participants reclaimed their identity to authentically respond to situations in their communities.

For this study, I established a NIC of Filipino American educational leaders to serve as a CPR group to solve a shared problem using an iterative inquiry process. This study's NIC was formed under a shared culture and lived experience as educational leaders with roots from the Philippines residing in the United States. This research study was designed to provide insight into the role culture and values play with Filipino American educational leaders and how these values manifest at work and inform the work itself. This approach is similar to Theoharis's (2010) work, which studied a network of school leaders who had conversations about how they disrupted injustices.

### **Linking Reflection, Action, and Theory**

While PAR is an applicable method of research in various contexts, this research study aimed to follow Freire's (1970) and Enriquez's (1975) views that research is best done from the perspectives represented from within the community. Freire (1970) advocated for co-learning through participation alongside the oppressed. Connected to the Freirian ideals on social justice, PARs view research participants "as subjects, as actors with the potential to change their material and social experiences for the better" (Orlowski, 2019, p. 31). For Freire, meaningful research is about striving for social justice. Freire advocated for social researchers to investigate how people think within the community to change their circumstances collectively (Orlowski, 2019). Freire believed that working alongside the oppressed as co-learners and co-practitioners are essential and that knowledge is a social construct developed by all participants. Throughout our history,

Filipinos have experienced oppression at the hands of our colonialist intruders. This PAR project is an opportunity to liberate ourselves from our colonized mentality.

Another scholar with a similar belief that research should be conducted locally within its community is Virgilio Enriquez. Considered the father of Filipino psychology, Enriquez believed that the thoughts and experiences of the Filipino people are best represented from the perspective of the Filipino people. Cultural orientation and understanding of cultures are best identifiable in the culture's own language. Enriquez's (1975) objective of indigenization from within is to advocate for examining the indigenous psychology from within its culture, examining beliefs and knowledge of people about themselves in their natural contexts. Enriquez opposed the reliance on outside experts' translation or interpretation of traditional concepts to fit their local cultural narrative.

### **Creating the CPR Group**

The participants in this study were selected purposefully for their lived experiences as Filipino Americans in an educational leadership environment. Their particular identity and experiences provide access to understanding the particular problem. Equally important, the participants are personally invested in acquiring knowledge to improve the current educational experiences for Filipino Americans and others underrepresented in educational leadership.

Of the 1,030 administrators in Santa Clara County, only 19 identified as Filipino Americans (CDE, 2020). While the California Department of Education data identified the number of administrators, the data did not differentiate their administrative positions. As Filipino Americans in education are uncommon, I solicited the five I knew in the principalship positions. With limited exposure to Filipino Americans in education, Filipino Americans instantly gravitated toward each other and immediately formed a shared bond. While I have regular

communications with three of the five I solicited, I connected with the other two via their LinkedIn profile page. The individuals I requested to participate are current co-workers, people I have previously worked with or have gone to graduate school. All enthusiastically agreed to participate in this study.

Involved as CPR in this study are Filipino American principals. Filipino Americans reside within the Filipino community and are immersed in the experience of their culture, as it is part of their identity. In this study, participants engaged in activities that fostered agency and helped find their power and voice to respond to their community's needs. As a direct agent of change, the CPR group participated in action research to co-create and carry out solutions and create a liberatory change. The following section details the vectors to determine the CPR participants, the types of data collected, and the process of analyzing data to determine the next steps.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Diversity at all levels, especially in leadership positions, is necessary to sustain a democratic society where representation is present at all levels. In California, where Filipino Americans are disproportionately represented in educational leadership, there is an immediate need to close this gap and promote leadership assets indigenous to the Filipinos. Western scholars have recognized the advantages of indigenous values and perspectives. Fullan (2007) observed that diverse perspectives could anticipate new problems earlier than those with like-minded views.

The voices and ways of indigenous individuals are imperative in leadership spaces where the most influential decisions are made. Schools play a role in normalizing Western epistemologies and structures, and the inclusion of indigenous perspectives in educational

leadership is a form of protest and decolonization. Identifying and learning the Filipinos' cultural assets can liberate the internalized oppression familiar to many Filipinos. The research questions serve two purposes. As a guide to our inquiry and for the CPR group, by learning about ourselves, we can develop and enact practices that will improve the conditions of our communities. By participating in research, reflection, action, and collaboration, I plan to transform my leadership journey and find an agency to promote my identity and better serve the needs of my people. The overarching question guiding this study is: *How do Filipino American educators identify, co-create, and apply their cultural assets to engage in alternative equitable leadership practices?*

In this section, I described the sampling process utilized to ensure that we acquire suitable participants that are passionate and motivated to create societal changes. Next, the data collection process, type, and methods were outlined. This study utilized models developed by Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Saldaña (2016) to analyze the data and generate our subsequent plans to implement in our respective communities.

### **Qualitative Data Collection**

As this is a PAR study that focuses on the lived experience of Filipino Americans and corresponding research based-processes to help address the problem, a qualitative research methodology is used. According to Creswell (2013), data collection in a qualitative study requires "collecting information through structured or semi-structured observations and interviews, documents, and visual material, as well as establishing the protocol for recording information" (Creswell, 2013, p. 189). This PAR study used artifacts from CPR meetings, such as meeting notes, interviews, individual, and collective reflective memos, as qualitative instruments for analysis (see Table 3). Reflective memos or researcher field notes were utilized



Table 3

*Research Questions and Data Sources*

*How do Filipino American educational leaders identify, co-create, and apply their cultural assets to engage in alternative equitable leadership practices?*

Research Questions (sub-questions)	Data Sources (Metrics)	Time Period	Activities
To what extent can a group of Filipino American educational leaders understand their individual and collective identity through stories of self, family, and cultural histories?	Interviews CLE artifacts CPR meeting notes	Fall 2021	Understand their individual and collective identity through the storytelling of self, family, and cultural histories.
To what extent can a group of Filipino American educators co-create alternative equitable leadership practices promoting the cultural assets of the Filipinos?	Interviews CLE artifacts CPR meeting notes Observations	Spring 2022	Develop ideas on how to support each other and other FilAm educational leaders. Co-create practices promoting cultural assets.
To what extent can a group of Filipino American educators apply their identity and cultural assets to their roles as educational leaders?	Interviews CLE artifacts CPR meeting notes Observations	Spring 2022	Apply cultural assets in leadership practices and document reflections in inquiry journals.
How do I inform and transform my leadership as I work with educators to promote the cultural assets of Filipinos?	Interviews CLE artifacts CPR meeting notes Reflective memos	Fall 2022	Apply cultural assets in leadership practices and document reflections in inquiry journals.

to reflect and make sense of each CLE meeting. Collecting multiple data sources enables this study to triangulate information to confirm the validity of the acquired data.

### ***Community Learning Exchange Artifacts***

The lived experiences of each PAR participant and their ancestral legacies are critical in understanding ourselves and the shared values Filipino Americans contribute to this society. As insiders with shared cultural values, traditions, and beliefs, the Filipino American PAR participants formed a Community Learning Exchange (CLE) to address the specific problems discussed in this study. In the CLE, the selected participants performed action research to find solutions to address the research questions and develop approaches to incite change.

The word *bayanihan* carries great significance in Filipino culture. In its literal Tagalog form, *Bayanihan* is "communal unity." This word captures the lifestyle, consciousness, decision-making, and character of Filipino communities. Based on a collective and positive relationship, for Filipinos, *bayanihan* is understood as helping each other as a community to address personal and communal needs. This natural tendency of Filipinos for communal unity through shared work and cooperation is embodied in the purpose of the CLE. The CLE is predicated on the premise that through relationships, cognitive experiences and co-constructing of ideas occur (Guajardo et al., 2016). Participants are provided opportunities to grow through the collective process and deliberate conversations. This premise is aligned with PAR, which is to develop and empower participants in their leadership journeys systematically, authentically, and fosters the Filipinos' communal spirit. The CLE work is guided by the five CLE axioms suggested by Guajardo et al. (2016). These axioms include the following:

- empower and surface local perspectives,
- believe that learning and leadership are a dynamic social process,

- central to the pedagogical process are relationships fostered through conversations,
- promote crossing of boundaries, and
- understand that changes are built on assets and dreams.

These axioms are used to guide the work of CLE as we develop meeting agendas, discussion topics, facilitation, reflection, and action.

### ***Qualitative Interviews***

Key to this PAR study is the qualitative interviews. Qualitative interviews allow researchers to probe and ask follow-up research questions of the participants. The CPR group participated in meetings where prompts and discussion topics were provided (see Appendix E). The participants engaged in unstructured and open-ended questions intended to elicit views and opinions. The responses were recorded, transcribed, and coded later for analysis.

### ***Documents***

Other tools analyzed were meeting agendas, reflective memos, meeting transcripts, inquiry journals, artistic interpretations (written or drawn), journey lines, and work-related documents. The PAR participants discussed the various forms of documents as sources of new knowledge and tools to implement.

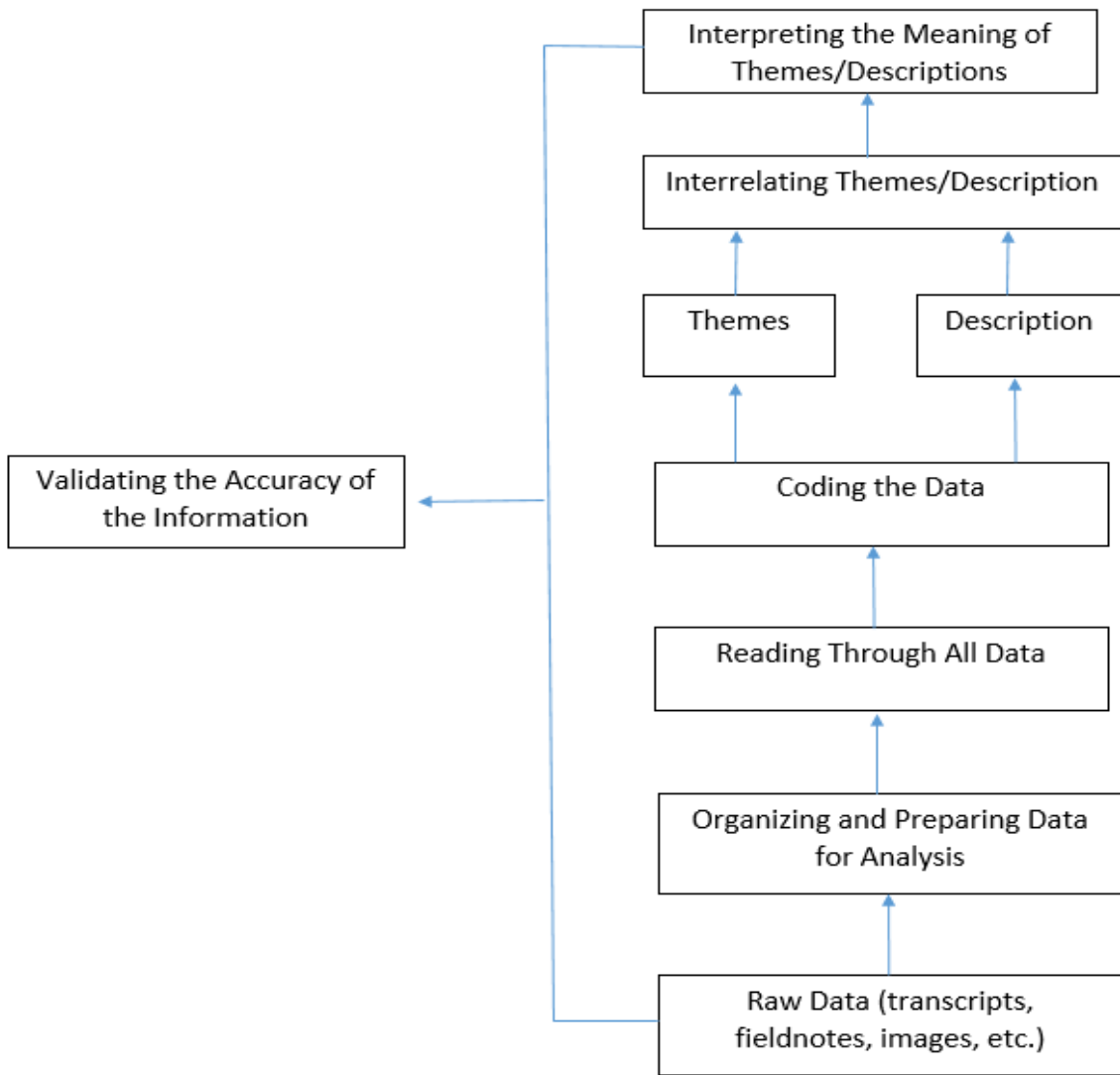
### ***Regular CPR Meetings***

In many cases, the PAR participants acquired additional resources and supporting materials from their network of professionals. This included art objects, and with the necessity to use online platforms to communicate, artifacts may come from social media messages and other forms of communication relevant to this study. The following section provides information on the Community Learning Exchange protocols that generated the analyzed artifacts (see Appendix E).

Data collection involved monthly meetings, community events notes, periodic check-ins, personal interviews, and inquiry journals. While the CPR met monthly, data collection was ongoing. The timeline below represents the frequency of data analysis, along with the activity topics for the trimester.

### **Data Analysis**

The data gathered and analyzed informed the CPR on their decisions in the iterative PAR process. Thereby, data collection and analysis occurred concurrently to inform the CPR of the next steps. Consisting of a multi-step iterative process, I used Creswell and Creswell's (2018) qualitative data analysis method (see Figure 4). The first steps were to organize and prepare the data for analysis, including acquiring transcriptions from virtual meetings, compiling meeting notes, and sorting the different data types according to their source. Second, I read the transcriptions and materials to understand the general ideas of what the participants were saying and the tone of the conversation, which allowed me to reflect and prepare for coding. The third step is coding, which organizes the data into chunks and assigns a word representing the category. I used the NVIVO 12 Pro, a qualitative data analysis software, to help organize, categorize, and move data around with ease. Fourth, I categorized the data by themes. These themes appeared as significant findings and were used as headings in the final section. I determined interconnecting themes with the CPR, reflected and discussed the results, and generated interpretations. This step allowed us the opportunity to disclose our interpretations, gain knowledge from the data, and develop action items for each participant to apply in their context. Finally, I developed findings by identifying relationships between overarching categories and codes from the PAR cycles to determine emergent themes and subsequently developed a narrative of key findings.



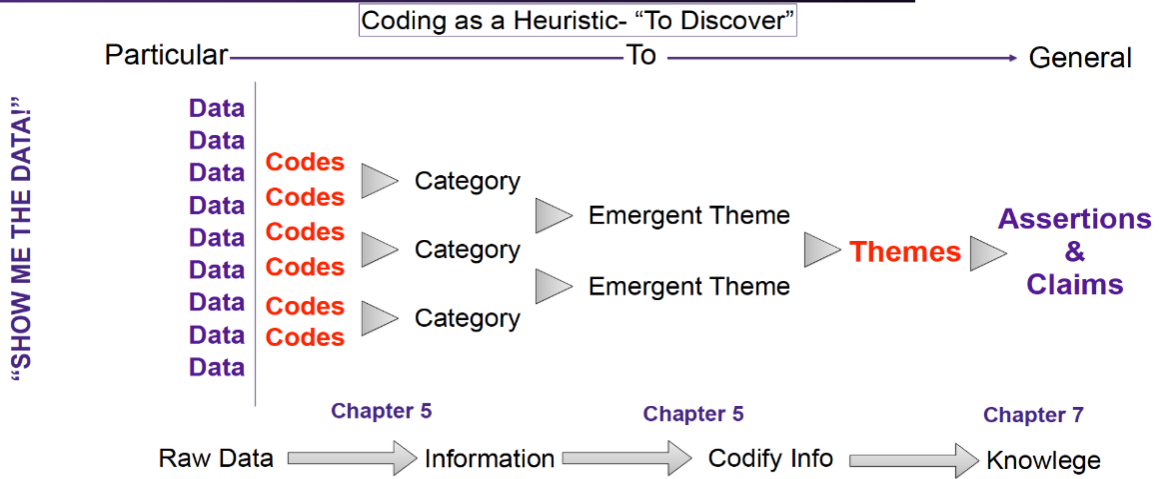
*Figure 4.* Creswell's data analysis in qualitative research.

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This study also employed Saldaña's (2016) codes to theme model (see Figure 5) for inquiry. I assigned codes based on their attributes to translate data from the collected data. Saldaña (2016) described codes and their intended use in qualitative data analysis as "a research-generated construct that symbolizes or translates data and thus attributes interpreted meaning to each datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, assertion, proposition development, theory building, and other analytic processes" (p. 4). These codes revealed repetitive occurrences or patterns that I discerned as trends. These trends assisted in making meanings of our observations. After codifying is categorizing, where codes were arranged in a systematic order or classification to make similarly coded data into categories. The process of synthesis, where data and trends were grouped, reorganized, and categorized to generate observable themes, allowed me to make meaning of the data and develop explanations of the data (Saldaña, 2016).

### **Study Limitations**

As the primary researcher, I observed the disproportionality of Filipino American educational leaders, more notably at the executive leadership level in California public school districts. As a Filipino American, I wanted to understand the dynamics at play and the values Filipino Americans bring to the educational field. Consistent with the *bayanihan* spirit, I formed a CPR team of Filipino American principals employed in Santa Clara County to plan and implement a CLE, and then collectively analyzed the data to address the problem. I consulted with the CPR team on the inquiry phases throughout the PAR phases and adjusted accordingly to enact change. We also discussed the conditions affecting the validity of this PAR study.



**Coding** for: *Patterns, Similarities, Differences, Sequences, Correspondence, Indications, Samples, Examples, Practices, Theories*

**Coding:** Open, Axial, a priori, ...      **Categories:** Families (Lincoln & Guba)

"Based on coding multiple sets of data of the same type, a researcher can then **develop categories or patterns of data** that seem to fit together to tell a larger story. Coding is organic in which coding, codes and data shape each other; they are interdependent and inseparable" (Locke, Feldman and Golden-Biddle, 2016, p. 6). Because coding is a "back and forth process" and the codes are meant to develop a larger meaning, the researcher often goes over the coding 2-4 times to see how the codes are shaping the story and interacting to develop larger concepts. The **example-to-idea and idea-to-example processes** of thinking are reciprocal and interactive.

*Figure 5. Saldaña's (2016) codes to themes model.*

I completed the Institutional Review Board Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (IRB CITI) certification (see Appendix B) in January 2021 to comply with the ethical requirements governing human research.

### **Internal Validity**

With the variety of experiences and perspectives represented in the CPR, validity was established through the strategies recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018). When coded, the multiple group and individual interviews and CLE meetings provided the data triangulation needed. Participants were presented with the study's progress, ongoing findings, and themes to check for accuracy and assist in data analysis. Detailed descriptions were employed to convey the findings to ensure accurately described results. As this research study heavily relied on the participant's background, this study and its qualitative nature were susceptible to bias. To reduce the effect of research bias, we actively engaged in critical self-reflection about our potential biases and predispositions. In addition, the CLE discussed contrary perspectives and considered contradictory evidence to improve validity, and examined our bias. A peer debriefer and colleagues other than the research participants reviewed the study to ensure that study accounts resonated with people other than the researchers. With similar cultural backgrounds and professional experiences, the CPRs can confirm and validate if individual experiences are consistent with the group's experiences. Additionally, a thorough coding process supported the claims made by the participants.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), internal validity ensurance requires research to process data through triangulation, member checks, and participatory modes. This research study performed triangulation by collecting and analyzing data sets from multiple interview sources and CLE meetings. Other triangulated activities included inquiry journals, administrator



meeting observations, and relevant CLE artifacts. CPR members performed member checks by engaging in data analysis to confirm or deny our interpretation of their reality. True to the nature of PAR, CPR members were involved in most phases of this study. CPR members closely collaborated as co-researchers. To engage in a participatory mode of research, CPR members discussed and identified cultural traits to be examined, developed a design of activities, interpreted results, and determined the study's concluding frameworks. As critical researchers, we controlled for validity by deliberately stating our biases and acknowledging our own views (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

### **External Validity**

This study involved a particular and selected set of participants; thus, this research study aimed to show what is unique about a particular group of people rather than generate broadly applicable findings (Johnson, 1997). The researchers acknowledge that while Filipinos have similar attributes, in general, as with other ethnic groups, differences can be found with varying degrees of complexity. However, as Stake (as cited in Johnson, 1997) argued, "the more similar people and circumstances in a particular research study are to the ones that you want to generalize to, the more defensible your generalization will be and the more readily you should make such a generalization" (p. 290). Thus, as recommended by Stake (as cited in Johnson, 1997), the CPR group of six selected Filipino American principals participating in this research study represented the population on which this study was centered. By bringing forward the very voices of participants at the center of the focus of practice, validity issues became more transparent (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

## **Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations**

The confidentiality of the participants and involved public institutions is of the utmost importance. Pseudonyms were used to ensure the confidentiality of the school district, the schools, and all the participants in the study. Transcribed interviews of meetings are kept secure and in a protected space. Finally, none of the material collected from district personnel is replicated or disseminated in any way.

For the researcher to conduct the study, a formal application was made and submitted to Eastern Carolina University's Internal Review Board (IRB) and such approval is presented in Appendix A. Institutional Review Board Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (IRB CITI) certification was completed in January 2021 to ensure compliance with the ethical requirements of human research (see Appendix B).

Issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and construct validity were addressed in this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The study's construct validity and credibility were addressed by the multiple sources of evidence collected, by a prolonged engagement in the field, the analysis of patterns in the data, and through the member checks of the findings. Such a design assured that the inquiries reflected the respondents' views and disengaged the research from bias. This PAR was rooted in the collectivist values and practices of indigenous people, promotes authenticity as a form of decolonizing school leadership, and stands on the shoulders of our ancestral leaders to create justice-based communities.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I provide the research design and methods that this PAR study used to answer the overarching question guiding this study: How do Filipino American educators discover, engage, and apply their cultural assets to develop alternative leadership practices re-

envisioned by the strength and cultural assets of the Filipinos? Participating in a CLE, the CPR team was guided by the five CLE axioms suggested by Guajardo et al. (2016). While the CPR participated in monthly meetings, data collection and analysis occurred concurrently. The collected and analyzed data informed the CPR on their decisions in the iterative PAR process. Data analysis utilized Creswell and Creswell's (2018) qualitative data analysis method and Saldaña's (2016) codes to themes model to extract meanings and develop explanations of the data. Finally, this chapter discussed the study's potential limitations and plans to limit factors affecting validity.

New epistemologies (such as autoethnography) from previously silenced groups remove the risks inherent in the representation of others, allow for the production of new knowledge by a unique and uniquely situated researcher, and offer small-scale knowledge that can inform specific problems. (Wall, 2006, p. 149)

By employing the voices and narratives unique to indigenous groups like Filipino Americans, this research study aimed to offer new knowledge and perspectives that benefit all students we serve. In the next chapter, I describe and analyze the co-practitioner researcher (CPR) structure and participants and the context in which this project took place.

## CHAPTER 4: CONTEXT

As the third-largest immigrant group in the United States (United States Census, 2020), Filipino Americans, with their cultural values, have been grossly underrepresented in high-level leadership positions in the United States (Tiburan, 2016). Hyun (2005) termed the *bamboo ceiling* as an implication of the challenges of Asian Americans in securing high-level management or leadership positions in the U.S. labor market. The educational field follows similar trends. In a state where students of color overwhelmingly outnumber White students by a ratio of almost 3:1, its leaders continue to be abundantly White (CDE, 2020). Based on the state's prescribed standardized tests, our students of color, particularly our Black and Brown students and English Learners, have historically underperformed behind White and Asian students (CDE, 2019). Perhaps it is worth considering how educational leaders lead schools and the educational climate they facilitate that may be a source of these inequities.

This Participatory Action Research (PAR) study examined how Filipino American educational leaders identify, co-create a plan, apply, and promote their cultural values to engage and develop alternative educational leadership practices. To provide the reader with a contextual understanding of the perspectives involved, in this chapter, I describe the regional landscape occupied by this study, an analysis of education and income gaps by race, the demographics of our schools by race, and achievement levels. Also included in this chapter are the biographies of the Co-Practitioner Research (CPR) participants and a narrative of our experiences as immigrants and, finally, as educators.

### PAR Context

While we differ in our experiences of coming to be in America, we are bonded by our familial stories and knowledge rooted in our traditional values of the pre-colonial past. As

minoritized individuals, each bears the burden imposed on us by the dominance of Western cultures and values. Through our exchanges of stories, perspectives, and relationships, participants in this research co-constructed knowledge to liberate themselves and others of oppressive practices internalized by our participation in this White dominant society.

### **Location**

Long before its current identity as Silicon Valley, home to companies such as Apple, Google, Netflix, and many other highly influential technology companies, Santa Clara County was known as the Valley Heart's Delight for its high concentration of orchards and at one point was the largest fruit-producing and packing region in the world (Valley of Heart's Delight, 2008). Its workforce is among the world's most ethnically diverse. Whereas foreign-born scientists and engineers are increasingly making their mark as entrepreneurs and in senior management, making Santa Clara County the 4<sup>th</sup> most affluent county in the United States (15 Richest Counties in the United States, 2020), observable still are inequities as to which groups are acquiring these highly desirable positions. For example, while 25% of its population are Hispanics and Spanish is the dominant non-English language spoken at 17.6% (Data USA, 2019), Latinos continue to be underrepresented in tech jobs comprising only 4.8% of its high-paying workforce (Levin, 2017). Even though Asians mostly make up roughly 57% of Silicon Valley's tech workforce, they are vastly underrepresented at the leadership levels. According to Sumagaysay (2021), the highest levels of leadership in three of the most valuable tech companies in the world are as follows: Apple's leadership is 59% White and 27% Asian, Google's is 65.9% White and 29.6% Asian, and Facebook is 63.2% White and 25.4% Asian.

While most data imply a high level of attainment for Asians, this is misleading, as within Asian groups in Santa Clara County, disparities can be observed when data is disaggregated

based on each group's levels of education, income, and unemployment rate. According to a Santa Clara County Public Health Department report, Filipino and Vietnamese groups lagged behind Asian Indians, Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans in educational attainment, income level, and poverty rate (Santa Clara County Public Health, 2017). In Table 4, the data suggest that these two Asian groups fared at or below the county's median levels. They exceeded only the levels of Latinos and African Americans, the most disregarded groups in our communities.

Underrepresentation in its teaching and administrative workforce has repeated detrimental effects on our students in public education. While Santa Clara County prides itself on its diverse communities, the field of education continues to be disproportionately White. Constituting 19.2% of Santa Clara County's student body, White teachers and administrators make up most of its teaching and administrative workforce. Filipinos are the least represented in the administrative positions of the groups represented in Figure 6 (CDE, 2020).

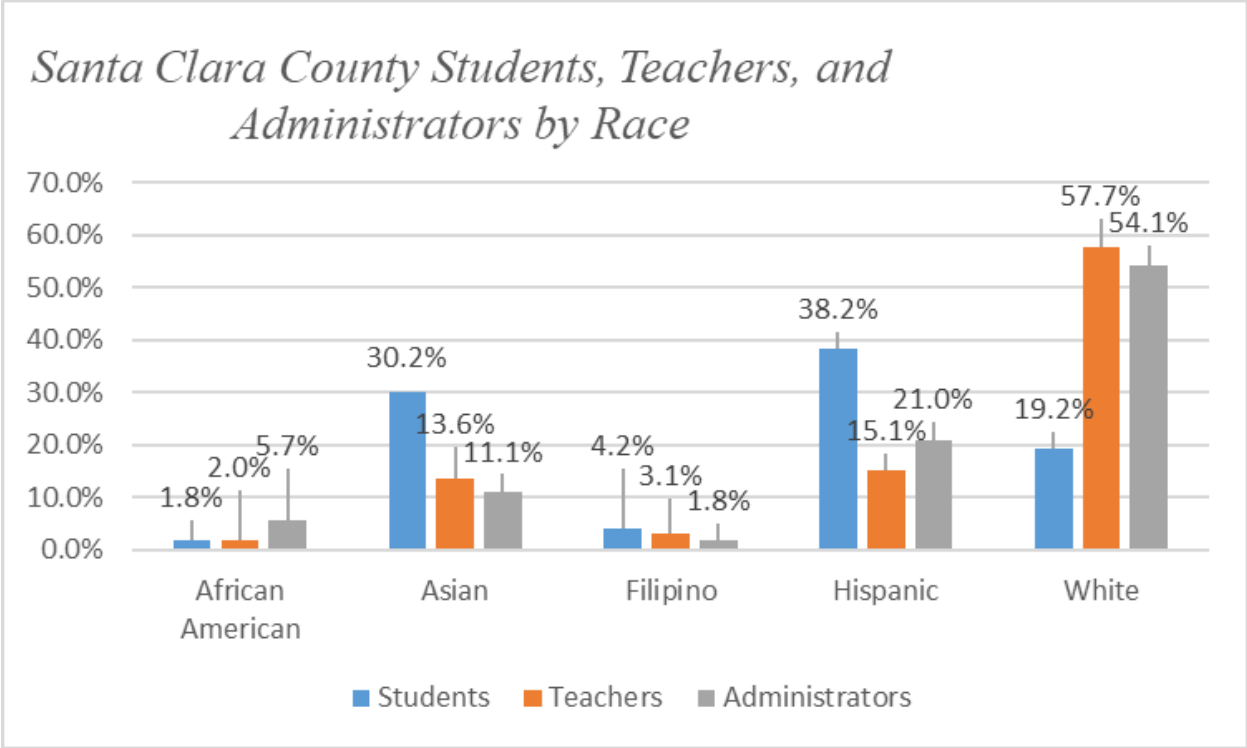
This disproportionality in personnel, especially in leadership, is a factor that can be attributed to the historical underperformance of our most vulnerable students. Based on a five-year analysis of the state's yearly standardized tests, Latino and Black students continue to underperform in Santa Clara County compared to other racial groups, followed by the Filipinos of the groups represented in Table 5 (CDE, 2020).

While participants varied in school districts, all were principals representing four school districts within the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) network in California. Working collaboratively with school and community partners, the SCCOE is a regional service agency that provides instructional, business, and technology services to the thirty-one school districts of Santa Clara County. Reflective of Silicon Valley's diverse demographics, each of the four school districts involved consisted of a diverse community of administrative staff. The

Table 4

*Education, Income, and Poverty Rate in Santa Clara County by Race*

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Bachelor's degree or higher</u>	<u>Per capita income</u>	<u>Unemployment rate</u>
County	48%	43,880	8%
Filipinos	45%	33,168	8%
Vietnamese	30%	26,659	10%
Asian Indians	88%	60,428	5%
Chinese	73%	55,615	4%
Koreans	70%	44,980	4%
White	62%	63,263	6%
Latino	21%	20,421	10%
African American	38%	31,532	13%



*Figure 6.* Santa Clara County students, teachers, and administrators by race.



Table 5

*Santa Clara County 2016-2019 Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments*

Race	ELA 2019	ELA 2018	ELA 2017	ELA 2016	Math 2019	Math 2018	Math 2017	Math 2016
African American	44.8%	46.0%	45.5%	45.0%	32.7%	33.0%	33.0%	31.0%
Asian	84.5%	83.9%	83.3%	84.0%	84%	83.8%	83.1%	83.0%
Filipino	68.4%	66.0%	65.6%	67.0%	55.0%	54.9%	52.6%	53.0%
Hispanic	38.6%	37.9%	37.0%	37.0%	27.7%	27.4%	26.5%	26.0%
White	76.5%	76.5%	76.2%	76.0%	70.0%	69.7%	69.3%	69.0%

diversity of administrative staffing provided them access to various cultures and leadership views represented in their administrative communities. Though there are opportunities to network via the California Association of Asian & Pacific Leaders in Education (CAAPLE) networking events, these opportunities are few and far between. Many Filipino Americans have expressed cultural isolation, even within Asian groups. In contrast, they have a high level of comfort and trust amongst other Filipino Americans, citing their capacity to bring their authentic selves.

## **People**

The ideal research group represents multiple voices, perspectives, ideas, and influences in our studied community (Guajardo et al., 2016). Seeing that a limited number of Filipino American participants meet the requirements for participation, I did not consider factors involving gender, years of educational leadership experience, and school level in recruiting participants. As the lead researcher, I relied on recommendations from colleagues and studied the public directories of the 32 school districts that comprise Santa Clara County in search of Filipino-sounding names. Despite the search and a limited number of candidates, I solicited the five principals I already knew to participate in this study. The Filipino American educational leaders who were interested, encouraged, and willing participants formed the CPR group that moved this research study onward.

## **Co-Practitioner Researchers**

The six principals involved in this PAR served diverse schools with significant immigrant families and high poverty rates. Our Co-Practitioner Researchers (CPR) group comprised of six Filipino American principals with schools in Santa Clara County, California. Two male and four female principals were involved in the study. Though similar in ethnicity, the six participants differed in grade-level experience and immigrant generational perspective. This Co-Practitioner

Research (CPR) team included two elementary principals, two middle school principals, one high school principal, and one who served as a county K-12 Special Education Department Principal. For this project, we will refer to second-generation Americans as U.S.-born children of immigrants, as defined by the Pew Research Center (2017). While two were born in the Philippines, with one emigrating as an adult teacher and myself relocating as an eleven-year-old, the remaining four participants are second-generation immigrants born in the United States. All participants understand the Tagalog language, the primary language spoken in the Philippines. However, only the two native-born are fluent in speaking and reading the language. The lack of referent meaning accessible only to native speakers or long-term transplants of the Philippines may challenge understanding the Tagalog phrases examined. This diversity of experiences presents both as an asset in that multiple perspectives exist within the group and as a challenge as they vary in their native understanding of the Filipino language and culture. The following is a detailed description of each participant's background and pathway to education.

***Principal Liezl Mendoza***

Principal Mendoza was born, raised, and educated in the Philippines. Her employment represents our system's inability to produce enough qualified Special Education teachers common in many districts in the United States. Having graduated from a highly desirable university in the Philippines, Principal Mendoza was recruited to teach high school for mid to severe students assigned to Special Day Class (SDC). After several years of teaching and acquiring permanent residency in the United States, she became our district's Coordinator in the Special Education department. After several years, she accepted a position in the Santa Clara County Office of Education as a principal for their mid to severe SDC program. She has been a principal for three years.

***Principal Lucy Villanueva***

In her fourth year as a middle school principal, Principal Villanueva has her roots firmly planted in her current school site. As a school graduate, Principal Villanueva was the school's counselor for twelve years. She replaced the lead researcher as the Assistant Principal upon his departure. After three years, Principal Villanueva assumed the position of the school's principal. As a Title 1 school, her school focuses on Small Learning Communities. As the youngest daughter of parents that emigrated from the Philippines with her older siblings, Principal Villanueva was born in the United States.

***Principal Quintina Ocoy***

In her fourth year as a middle school principal, Principal Ocoy first served as an elementary teacher and principal before her current tenure. As a Title 1 school, her school was a partnership between the local elementary and high school districts, community college, and San Jose State University. Her school has successfully sent under-represented and first-generation college students to college through their Early College High School pathway. Principal Ocoy is a second-generation immigrant.

***Principal Narcisa Sumbillo***

Principal Sumbillo is in her second year as a K-8 school principal. Before this tenure, for twenty years, she served as an elementary and middle school teacher and later as an English Language Teaching Partner serving her current school. Growing up, she attended schools in the same school district she serves. She is the founding principal of her school's Two-Way Bilingual Immersion program.

### ***Principal Francisco Enriquez***

With 3,300 students under his care, Principal Enriquez served as the principal of Santa Clara County's largest high school. He has various experiences with "mega" high schools, as he first served as a teacher and later as assistant principal at a school with 4,200 students. The city where Principal Enriquez's high school is located has a significant percentage of Asians, making up 52% of its population, with Filipino, the largest Asian group at 15%.

The bond constructed by cultural familiarity was immediately identified by the participants. The path to immigration motivated by social mobility was the common thread of their immigrant stories. As we discussed our assets and challenges in educational leadership, all principals agreed that the assets and challenges they face as Filipino Americans are similar to those they encountered in navigating the structural context of the American educational system. Table 6 summarizes the CPR group's grade level and contextual descriptors.

### **Educational Background of Participants and Leadership Pathways**

In the first PAR cycle, the CPR group, through personal narratives, examined their process of becoming educators and, ultimately, principals. The experiences and ways of working of educational leaders in this study may represent many Filipino Americans in the United States. Their stories and educational journeys are relevant and essential in understanding Filipino Americans' pathways to becoming educators. Accessing and learning from these stories will help us comprehend the effects of family influence and the disproportionality of Filipino Americans in education, and even more so in educational leadership. Gaining access to these stories allows others to comprehend the patterns and challenges common in the stories told by Filipino American immigrants. Understanding the participants' immigrant stories provides the context

Table 6

*CPR Group*


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Name	Grade Level	Description
Caruz	K-6	Lead Researcher, Emigrated to the US as a 12-year-old, native Tagalog speaker, 6 <sup>th</sup> year as a principal, STEAM School.
Mendoza	K-12	Emigrated to the US as an adult, native Tagalog speaker, 3 <sup>rd</sup> year as a principal, mid to severe SDC Schools
Villanueva	7-8	U.S. born, understands Tagalog, 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation, 4 <sup>th</sup> year as a principal, Middle School with emphasis on Small Learning Communities.
Ocoy	7-8	U.S. born, understands Tagalog, 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation, 4 <sup>th</sup> year as a principal, Middle School with emphasis on Early College High School.
Sumbillo	K-8	U.S. born, understands Tagalog, 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation, 2 <sup>nd</sup> year as a principal, Two-Way Bilingual School.
Enriquez	9-12	U.S. born, understands Tagalog, 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation, 4 <sup>th</sup> year as a principal, largest high school in the county.

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needed to comprehend their attitudes toward education and motivations in their work as educational leaders.

Consistent with the under-representation of Filipino Americans in the teaching profession as a career choice, five of six CPR participants began their higher education with career choices outside of education. Of their initially selected career fields, two expressed going to medicine, one in healthcare, one pre-law, and another in business. As these were pre-approved career choices by their families, the participants spoke of their family's discontent and disapproval upon switching to a career in education.

- Francisco Enriquez initially studied integrative biology focusing on neuroscience and human physiology. He changed his mind in his fourth year of undergrad. Describing this change in career plans stated, "In my last year, I felt like I was done with college. I didn't like where the medical field was going." What was certain was his desire to work with children. Seeking advice and having been influenced by his former teachers, he was encouraged to become a teacher. He acquired a teaching internship and, ultimately, a teaching position at his previously attended high school. He spent most of his career, including his appointment in educational leadership in the same high school and community where he was raised until his selection to lead the largest high school in Santa Clara County.
- Lucy Villanueva followed her parents' dream of pursuing her father's profession in the Philippines as a pharmacist. Unable to acquire the same position in the United States to provide for the family when they emigrated, her parents hoped she would continue this legacy. "Coming out of high school, I had really good grades, but I didn't know what I was going to do. I thought I should just do what my dad said I

should do, and I'm going to become a pharmacist." She mentioned that she "wasn't relating to the pharmacy studies" and "I'm like, I don't even like this subject."

Needing her family's approval, she came home and changed her major to Sociology upon her return. She was a school counselor for many years before becoming a principal.

- Narcisa Sumbillo was permitted only to leave for college under the condition that she would call home nightly to check in; this participant decided to attend her local university. "My dad made it clear; I was expected to call home and check-in. If that's the way it was, then why am I going to go far for college?" While she knew she had a strong desire to work with children, she was unsure of a degree to pursue. She began her college career as a psychology major and disliked it; she switched to business but found it undesirable too. She finally decided to follow her interest in being with children and graduated with a Child Development degree. She remembered her mother saying, "you know you shouldn't be a teacher; that's hard work." After receiving her teaching credential, she spent twenty years teaching at her current school, receiving the county's Teacher of the Year award, becoming a coach, and ultimately the principal.
- Quintana Ocoy was particular about becoming a career politician upon entering college. This participant started undergrad in Political Science with aspirations of attending graduate school. Searching for a part-time job that worked around her class schedule, she acquired a position in a local school district as an instructional aide in an elementary school. "I ended up liking and enjoying it. And that's how my career path changed at that point." Her passion for creating partnerships, community



outreach, and supporting school stakeholders led her to school administration.

Specifically, her leadership interests are established in connecting families and educating them on resources that create family opportunities.

- Liezl Mendoza was the exception in this group, and against her family's desire, this participant attended college initially to pursue a career in education. Her family hoped she would pursue law and become a politician in the Philippines, her family's "line of work." Educated in the Philippines, and while attending graduate school, she came across a poster advertising an opportunity to go to the United States as a Special Education teacher. In 2001, amid the United States' inability to fill Special Education positions, she was hired and brought by a California school district to teach. Unsupported by her family to emigrate, she had never experienced living apart from her family before this experience. Like many overseas contracts, she committed to staying for three years. Her initial plans included completing her master's degree in the United States and returning to the Philippines. Seeing other Asian American educational leaders inspired her to pursue principalship.

### **My Story and Role**

As with most immigrants, pursuing better conditions for their families is at the core of why people risk losing culture, identity, and for many, their lives. Similar to my account, there are untold stories of immigrants leaving their homes to materialize opportunities and further dreams. This section provides my story for context, where and how I came to be, and why this research study is pivotal for my personal and professional growth. While our bloodlines and leadership journeys may differ, access to the stories of underrepresented leaders is important in

understanding our roles in providing services for our students with similar upbringings. Our stories matter, and only when we listen can we learn from those often unheard in our society.

In 1985, my father's professional visa application for my family to immigrate to the United States was approved. Like many immigrants, the transition was not easy. In school, I longed to be with the Filipinos, first-generation Filipino Americans who looked like me but were foreign from the land I had recently departed. Sadly, these kids ridiculed me the most. For immigrant kids, it was a competition to separate ourselves from our identity. It was a petty battle of assimilation into how American one can become; it was the desired social currency. In middle and high school, I struggled with my academics and language. I directed my frustration with assimilation toward sports. With sports, I could express myself without having to speak.

Unsure of my plans after high school and in opposition to my family's expectation of me to attend college, I enlisted in the United State Marine Corps. The Marine Corps exposed me to many diverse characters, all of which contributed to my education in race relations and understanding cultural diversity. The Marine Corps gave me access to the qualities of a good leader, the importance of honor and commitment to duty, and provided me with the discipline I needed for college. According to Barry (2013), enlisting in the military is a popular option for Filipinos. In 2012, 22.8% of immigrants serving active U.S. military duty were from the Philippines.

Difficulties with language as an English Learner and lacking models that looked like me in leadership and academia prohibited me from perceiving myself as an academic. My heartfelt passion for impacting schools led me to apply for a graduate program in education. My first day was spent with doubts and worry that I would be exposed as someone who did not belong. This experience gave me a strong concept of educational truth and the confidence to lead and address

the challenges of disenfranchised students. After teaching Physical Education for ten years, I became an Academic Dean and later an Assistant Principal at the middle school level. I joined my current district as the sole Filipino American administrator in 2012. Having spent twenty years in education in Title 1 schools, I began this doctoral program in my fifth year as an elementary principal. At this juncture of many school administrators' careers, we take stock of our abilities and determine how to further contribute to lifting those marginalized by society. All these experiences have provided me with the opportunity to be able to lead this work today.

### **Pathways and Patterns of Immigration**

The path to immigration is an unthinkable path where families are uprooted from their countries, languages, and cultures, stripped from their identities, in search of a better future. It is a sacrifice many perform, sometimes paying with their lives to find opportunities unavailable in their home countries. The stories assembled in this study comprise of characteristics associated with the third and fourth waves of Filipino migration to the United States. With the passing of the Immigration and Nationality Act in 1965, reflected in the second-generation Filipino American participants are their parents' immigration experiences as military servicemen and professionals. As a first-generation Filipino American, Principal Mendoza is part of the trend of teacher migration to the US that surfaced in the late 1990s (Modesto, 2020). The immigrant stories the participants disclosed shared similarities familiar to many Filipino American immigrants. At the core of these stories were the notions of humility (*hiya*) and self-sacrifice (source of *utang na loob*) for the benefit of their families.

### ***Loss of Professional Identities***

For two participants, their families immigrated in the 1970s and 1980s with their fathers' acquisition of professional visas. Unlike immigrants from first-world countries, their professional

educations and experiences were deemed invalid and substandard once in the United States. Due to the requirements for acquiring professional licenses in the United States, both participants' fathers did not successfully obtain professional licenses and, instead, accepted other sources of employment. Like many recent immigrants with limited resources to acquire the appropriate credentials and meet the demands of immediately providing for their families, both settled for manual labor jobs upon their entry into the United States that they retained until their retirement. One participant's father was a trained and accomplished pharmacist in the Philippines. In the United States, he adjusted to his new life as a forklift driver, employed in a warehouse for the remainder of his work life. My father was trained and educated as an engineer. As a well-established engineer in the Philippines, he acquired jobs internationally, performing his trade. Upon our arrival in the United States, my father transformed himself into a facilities worker, repairing plastic injection molding machines for the duration of his work life. Another participant told stories of Filipino teachers on her staff with doctorates and high-level education positions in the Philippines. Unable to acquire similar jobs in the United States, they directed their efforts to teaching. These Filipino experiences are common to many in the nursing field, where Philippine-trained doctors retrained as nurses to go abroad to wealthy countries that lack skilled healthcare workers. According to Labarda (2011), 3,500 Filipino doctors have retrained as nurses to fill nursing positions abroad since 2000.

### ***Fulfilling Teacher Shortages***

A part of a more recent wave of Filipino immigration is the pathway represented by one participant. The shortage of skilled laborers in the technology industry and teaching profession necessitates recruiting talents from outside the United States. Throughout the US, there are reports of severe teacher shortages, especially for teachers who specialize in math, science, and

special education (Sutcher et al., 2016). According to Sutcher et al. (2016), an estimated 300,000 new teachers were needed per year in 2020 in the United States. With a history of colonialization by education, the Philippines' educational system was developed and patterned through the United States' educational system. Teaching is considered a highly competitive profession in the Philippines. Filipino teachers often come with master's or doctorate degrees and are highly experienced teachers. Currently, the Philippines and the United States have similar school calendars, curricula, standards, and grading systems. In theory, the similarities in educational systems should make for a comparatively simpler transition for Filipino teachers to teach in the United States.

For many, the lure of the responsibility to provide for their family back home means leaving their family behind. This transition for many is not without challenges. The cultural differences were obvious in the classroom. For example, how students perceive education in the Philippines compared to the United States affects how they function in the classroom. In the Philippines, "students are very disciplined in terms of their education because they look into education as how they are going to escape poverty," as cited by Principal Mendoza. Hence, the problem with discipline and behaviors among students in the Philippines is minimal.

### ***Military Careers and Immigration***

With a formidable and extended military presence in the Philippines, the United States military has influenced the Philippines colonially and assisted families in their emigration to the United States. Such was the case with the families of two participants, wherein joining the United States Navy as serving stewards echoed the immigration pathways for many Filipino American families. A participant told a story about his grandfather emigrating via this military pathway, granting his parents the ability to migrate and be educated in the United States. Another

told a story of a perpetual relocation due to her father's frequent changes in military assignments. Additionally, the long history of Filipinos in the United States military was embodied with two participants joining the Army and the Marine Corps, respectively, after high school.

One aspect common for all immigration stories detailed in the CLEs is their family's separation from home. Most participant families emigrated with no family support upon reaching the United States. For these families, the compounding pressures of providing for their family, learning the system, such as enrolling their children in school, and adapting to their new culture were some of the barriers mentioned. As English is widely spoken in the Philippines, language presented less of a challenge. Despite the hardships, only one participant viewed returning to the Philippines as a viable option for her in the future. The obligation to provide a better future for their children was the force that motivated all of them to stay.

### **Conclusion**

Santa Clara County, where this research study took place, has seen many transformations. From its fruitful agricultural economic origins to its current version known as Silicon Valley, the diversity of its people has been its most important resource. While we pride ourselves on our diverse communities, the field of education continues to be disproportionately White, with Filipinos being the least represented in the administrative positions of the groups examined. Six Filipino Americans employed as principals from varying experience levels in the county make up this research study's CPR group.

Their family's immigration stories mirror many that come from the Philippines. The participants told stories of military influence in Filipino migration and professional qualifications making Filipino immigrants desirable replacements for teacher shortages and credentials deemed unsatisfactory by the United States standards. Represented by the significant disproportion of

Filipino American teachers and even more so in educational administration, the CPR members did not initially pursue education as a career choice. Against their family's expectations and their need to altruistically serve their communities, our participants changed their career pathways to be educators. The stories of occupational pathways and immigration trends represented in this study mirror many Filipino Americans in our society. Understanding their educational background and family experiences provides us with the necessary information to understand our participants' identity, adherence to their cultural values, and deep sense to help others.

In Chapter 5, I present the first level of organizing the PAR with the school leaders and the first set of data in which I developed a coding system that led to a set of categories. In Chapter 6, I used the same process and analyzed data to determine the emergent themes and develop a narrative of key findings.

## CHAPTER 5: PAR CYCLE ONE

*The best arguments in the world won't change a person's mind. The only thing that can do that is a good story.*

Richard Powers, *The Overstory*

The first cycle of inquiry is exploratory. I was learning to facilitate a research process using Participatory Action Research (PAR) and learning to use coding to introduce evidence-based practices and have conversations with principals about their practices. Thus, in this chapter, I provide a detailed account of the first participatory action research cycle (PAR Cycle One) by describing the process, which includes research activities, timeline, evidence, and the data analysis process. Then, I describe the categories that emerged from the coding process, followed by implications for the focus of practice, my leadership, and the subsequent PAR Cycle Two.

### PAR Cycle One Process

On March 19, 2020, a mandatory stay-at-home order was issued where all non-essential businesses were ordered to close, and people were encouraged to stay home and avoid going out. This event had global implications for succeeding years, impacting all aspects of our society. After the many challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, I recognized that this is the time we need each other's support most. Whether to provide each other comedic relief or discuss technical elements of our jobs, social connection is an essential feature of the human experience. In response to these personal and professional needs and as situations settled in our schools, the Co-Practitioner Research (CPR) team engaged in our first cycle during the Fall of 2021. In this section, I described the process by which I enlisted the CPR members and participated in activities that generated data. The description of the activities includes a timeline for the activities, the research meetings, and the data analysis.



## **PAR Cycle One Activities**

Following an initial individual conversation with each participant to briefly explain the Focus of Practice (FoP) for this research process, I solicited their participation and obtained the administrator's consent to participate. The CPR group utilized the Doodle application to secure a date to meet virtually online. After the CLE, I conducted follow-up interviews with each participant to discuss their thoughts further individually in-depth and without time restraint. Table 7 outlines this cycle's activities, including scheduled meetings and individual and small group conversations.

### ***Individual Co-Practitioner Research Meetings***

During a global pandemic, when priorities have shifted and availability to meet is limited, I felt more obligated to consider the participant's time and prioritize connections over going through meeting agendas. I believe this is essential in re-establishing personal relationships. With these considerations, I first scheduled individual meetings with each CPR member in September 2021 before scheduling an all-member CPR meeting. The purposes of those individual meetings were to have one-on-one time with each participant, reacquaint, and re-establish personal relationships. Moreover, the goal was to utilize the time as an informational meeting and allow each member to authentically express their reactions to the study in an informal setting, absolved from group pressures. Following these individual meetings, group meetings were designed and planned to accommodate more dialogue between the participants.

For the initial individual meetings, I showed each CPR member the recorded presentation of my defense proposal, provided them time for affirmations, and asked clarifying questions about the research study. In addition, I solicited their input and reactions to the elements of our proposed study. Playing the recorded presentation saved time and provided each participant with

Table 7

*CPR Group Plan, Cycle One*


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Activities	Key Personnel	Timeline	Data Collection
Individual meetings with CPR members	Enriquez, Sumbillo, Villanueva, Ocoy, Mendoza	September 2021	Google Meet Recording and Transcripts
CPR Meeting #1:	Caruz. Ocoy, Villanueva, Sumbillo, Enriquez,	October 2021	Audio Recording and Transcripts
CPR Meeting #2:	Caruz, Ocoy Villanueva, Sumbillo, Mendoza	November 2021	Google Meet Recording and Transcripts
CPR Meeting #3:	Caruz, Villanueva, Sumbillo, Enriquez,	December 2021	Google Meet Recording and Transcripts

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a consistent explanation of the study. Another objective for these individual meetings is to build excitement and increase their chances of engagement during the all-member CPR meetings.

### ***Co-Practitioner Research Meetings***

The three CPR meetings occurred between October and December 2021. True to the spirit of a Filipino virtue called *bahala na*, a positive confrontation of uncertainty or courage to face uncertainty (Reyes, 2015), meetings were held informally, during which I facilitated conversations between group members. The intent was to have authentic discussions where the participants dictated the topic's flow and the direction of the conversation. In upholding the "bahala na" attitude, meeting agendas or activities were "loosely" followed. However, as the lead researcher, I had goals and research questions to discuss, prompting the meeting conversations. These goals centered on exploring the research question: how do Filipino American educators identify, co-create, and apply their cultural assets to engage in alternative equitable leadership practices? To begin exploring the research question, the CPR team started by reflecting on and discussing the questions: to what extent can a group of Filipino American educators understand their individual and collective identity? Having most of the CPR team educated and assimilated in Western values, exploring their familial origins and the source of their cultural values is critical in understanding their identity as Filipino Americans in the United States. Freire (1970) expressed, "when they discover within themselves the yearning to be free, they perceive that this yearning can be transformed into reality only when the same yearning is aroused in their comrades" (p. 47). Rediscovering our identity is an act of liberation; performing this act with others is a transformative process in making it a reality.

During the initial CPR meeting, the group centered on the individual member's origin story, family immigration, and their journeys in becoming an educator. Participants were prompted to answer the following questions:

- Where are you from in the Philippines, or where was your family from?
- How did you or your family settle in the United States?
- How did you get to the educational space and role that you currently occupy?

By responding to these questions, the desired outcome is for participants to reflect on their family origins and educational pathways to help access their identity. Additionally, subsequent meetings were dedicated to relationship-building and identifying Filipino cultural values. We unpacked the assets and challenges they perceived as unique to the Filipino American experience in the United States, specifically in education, as it pertains to our focus of practice. Through these discussions, the participants examined similarities in how they reacted to situations based on their shared cultural values, mutual upbringing, and familial influences. During the CLE, they also discussed how their culture manifested in their work and how their cultural values influenced their responses to situations. Most expressed their answers through storytelling and articulated their reflections as they responded to each other's comments.

Many factors influence the space we navigate and operate in the educational system. To this end, we considered three levels or ecologies while discussing our assets and challenges that affect our action space: micro (close in or within self), meso (middle, immediately outside the micro "zone," or district-level context), and macro (societal or structural level). As a researcher, I used a table to take notes of the group's perceived assets and challenges at the micro, meso, and macro levels (see Appendix D). At the micro-level were the six Filipino American Principal participants. They were willing and passionate leaders who varied in their experience level, types

of school and district, and generational immigration perspectives. The meso level was identified as the organizational level context of each participant's school or district. Four school districts were represented in the PAR, all belonging to California's Santa Clara County of Education school district network. The macro-level consists of the structural context and values of the educational system in the United States. This structural level is dictated by societal expectations, organizational policies, and bureaucratic procedures rooted in White-dominant policies and structural norms.

### **Data Collection and Analysis: Coding and Developing a Codebook**

I collected multiple forms of data to further my knowledge of Filipino cultural values and identity in the participants' workspaces. In this section, I first identify the various forms of data collected. Next, I describe and explain the process used to analyze the data. Following the description of my analysis process, I identify, describe, and explore the codes and categories that emerged.

#### ***Data Collection***

Throughout this cycle, ideas and thoughts about the study constantly emerged as I became more aware of my cultural tendencies and discovered possibilities in answering the research questions. When concepts relevant to the research surfaced in conversations or my daily activities, I used various methods to document these ideas. As our society increasingly relies on having smartphones readily available, I used multiple applications on my iPhone to document my thoughts throughout the day and during meetings about the research. Depending on the situation and location, I recorded my thoughts via an email sent to myself, audio voice recordings via the Voice Memos application, and reflective memos stored in a Google Doc. In

addition to the conversation transcripts, I collected artifacts such as the assets and challenges in the micro, meso, and macro levels table (see Appendix D).

To generate a transcript of the conversations, I downloaded a video or audio file on Microsoft Office 365. I then uploaded these document files of transcripts to NVivo 12, a qualitative data analysis software that I utilized to assist in organizing and coding to develop a codebook. For this cycle and as restricted by the COVID-19 pandemic mandates, all meetings during this cycle were virtual. These meetings were conducted using the Google Meet application. The Google Meet recording function was utilized to document the meetings for transcriptions. The recordings were then downloaded and transcribed via the Microsoft 365 online application, which was then uploaded to the NVIVO 12 qualitative data analysis software for examination. When transcription inaccuracies existed, I referred to the recording and manually transcribed it. I wrote reflective memos during coding to capture my thoughts and summations of what was being coded. Reflective memos allowed me to remember and easily access the discussion points and thoughts while transcripts were being read and coded.

### *Data Analysis*

I analyzed the transcriptions using the NVIVO 12 qualitative analysis software by assigning an evocative attribute to the salient parts of the conversation. I then initially coded data using an open coding method where data were disaggregated into discrete parts for which I created “codes” to label them. Saldaña (2016) described codes as “a short word or phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). I used an inductive method of coding for this research. Inductive coding attaches codes to units of data as they are analyzed. It is a ground-up approach where codes are derived from the analyzed dataset (Saldaña, 2016). In NVIVO 12, I

created a project to house the meeting conversations' transcripts and video and audio recordings. While I relied mainly on the transcripts for coding, the recordings allowed me to easily access the conversations to confirm transcription accuracy. Furthermore, the reflective memos, meeting artifacts, and other related documents, such as a podcast transcription and event flyers, were uploaded to NVIVO 12.

After collecting, gathering, and uploading the varied forms of data, I systematically coded the collected data, creating topical codes and subtopics within each code group. I activated the coding stripes function in every coding session, allowing me to see the codes already coded visibly and their location to help me navigate and track them. Upon review, I organized the codes by merging similar codes, reassigning them to new codes, or creating new codes to help make sense of the data. After organizing the codes, I re-read, re-coded, and re-categorized the transcripts at least two times to ensure the accuracy of the codes and consider codes missed during the first read. I then used the NVivo 12 software to generate a codebook to identify frequently used codes to determine emerging categories and themes.

As I completed the first round of open coding, I performed the second round using the deductive coding method. Starting with a set of predetermined codes I identified with open coding, deducting coding then finds excerpts that fit those already identified codes (Saldaña, 2016). This is where I looked at the emerging codes and considered them through the lens of my research questions. As I finished the second round of coding and sense-making, I identified themes related to the specific CLE topics discussed. These emerging themes are described in the next section, and portions of the resulting coding table are included in the relevant sub-sections.

## Emergent Themes: Becoming Filipino

As indigenous Filipinos raised and educated in the Westernized context of systems and education, there are limited spaces where we can openly discuss and reflect on our ways of being. By centering the CLE design and facilitating these meetings using the principles of the CLE axioms, we created an environment that allowed participants to confront our feelings about our identity and perceived status as Filipino Americans in the United States. Through storytelling and sharing our educational, familial, and personal journeys, we found similarities and considered elements of our identities.

With the differing cultures and values represented, even in Asian American spaces, the voices of Filipinos are often under-recognized. As a participant expressed his appreciation for the Filipino-American space we created, he mentioned that:

when I'm lumped into an Asian American group, I don't always feel that I identify with a lot of the things they say. A lot of times, I feel like an outsider because I feel that they come from a place of privilege when they talk about their family background and the accomplishments of those they associate themselves with. I know the family members you talk about here because I have one exactly like them. There's just a deeper connection that we have with each other because your stories are exactly like mine.

In these meetings, we discussed, reflected, and learned from each other about our thoughts and feelings on the relationship between our cultural identities, our inherent tendencies, and how these deep-rooted cultural impulses manifest for us at work.

Upon review of the data, I observed that the core cultural values of *hiya*, *pakikisama*, and *utang na loob* complicatedly intermingle and immensely influence the Filipinos' ability to interact in their changing environments and overall society. While these values can be perceived



separately and independently, collectively, they are interwoven and depend on each other to form a balanced system that characterizes Filipino principles. At the core is one's ability to accomplish *kapwa*. Figure 7 is a visual representation of this concept.

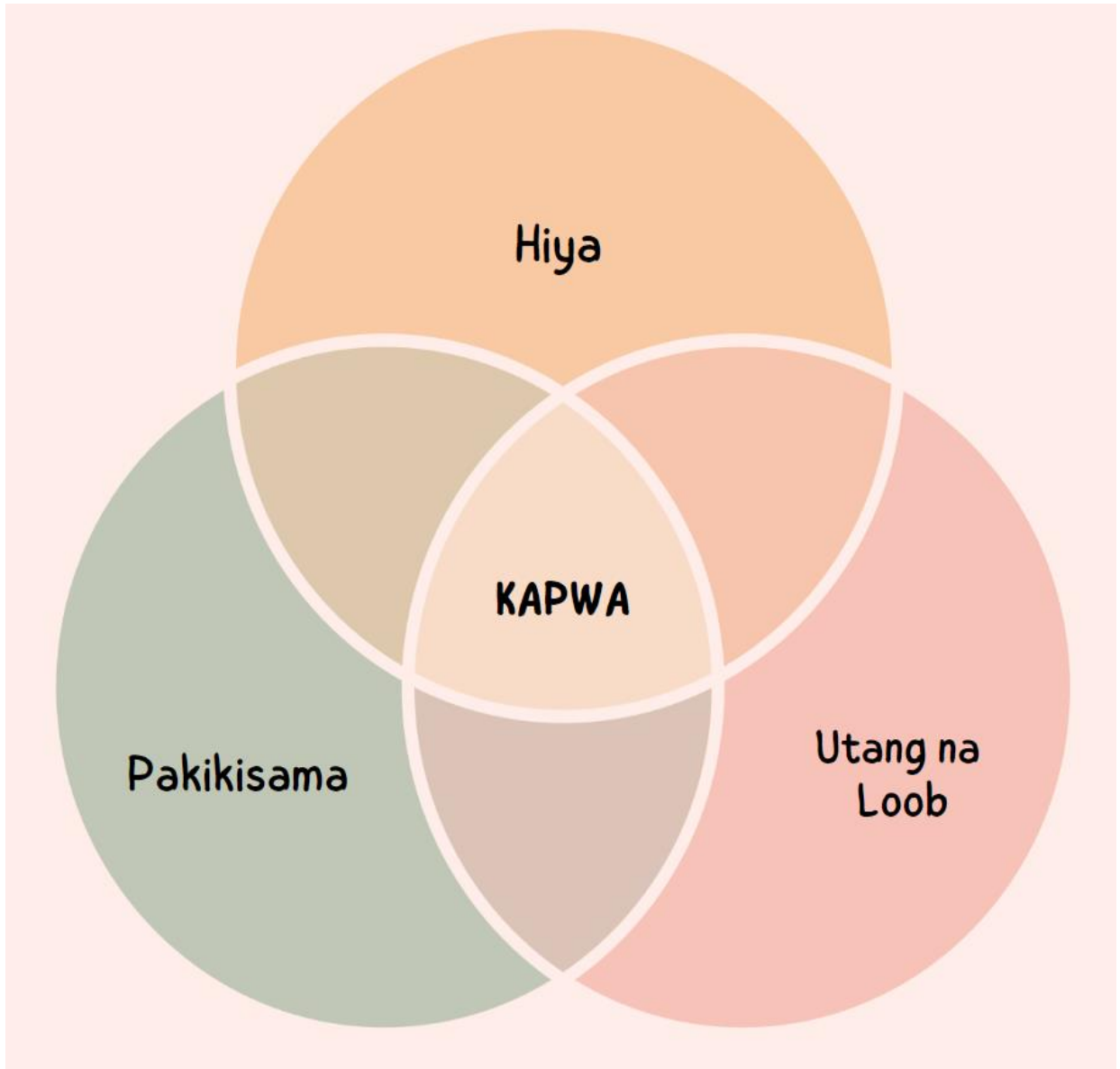
In their work as educational leaders, the participants described their experiences presented to them professionally and how they operated in these conditions. For this PAR cycle, our discussions centered on the cultural forces most commonly experienced by the participants at work, the assets we contribute in the educational field, and how we apply our cultural values in our respective work environment. Table 8 illustrates the most frequently coded data, organized in categories to determine emerging themes related to my research question: how do Filipino American educators identify, co-create, and apply their cultural assets to engage in alternative equitable leadership practices?

With our cultural values and research question as frames for my analysis, the data I acquired from multiple CLE artifacts netted three emerging themes:

- Identifying Filipino values in reclaiming identity
- Filipino American assets
- Application of values and assets in educational leadership

### **Identifying Filipino values in Reclaiming Identity**

As industries thrive in school reforms that look at school systems to better serve diverse student bodies, little effort is made in cultivating the cultural values already present within culturally diverse leadership spaces. While the school system functions by using White, Western, Christian values as its norm, it has continued to fail students deemed as others by White society. As a result, we develop adults and school leaders that perpetuate this norm. Influenced by the CLE principle that “the people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local



*Figure 7. Interdependence of Filipino values.*

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Table 8

*Codes and Emergent Themes for PAR Cycle One*

Themes	Category	Number of Referenced Files	Number of Instances in Data
Identifying Filipino Values	Hiya (Humility)	4	41
	Utang na Loob	4	20
Filipino-American Assets	Altruism	3	10
	Strong Work Ethic	3	12
	Kapwa	4	9
	Caring for Others	2	8
Applying Values and Assets in Educational Leadership	Challenges	6	15
	Discrimination from Others	4	18
	Self-Discrimination	4	28
	Mirrors: Seeing Filipino Leaders	7	47
	Bayanihan	5	18

concerns” (Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 32), this study provides an alternative model to doing business in school. This model is sourced from learning, knowing, and applying the collectivist values of the Filipinos in the CPR team. However, by being educated, raised, and cultured in Western society, we must first understand our origins and affirm our culturally authentic ways of doing. Through storytelling, reflections, and conversations, the CPR team engaged in a journey of self-discovery of reclaiming our indigenous identity. This autoethnography documents our path of self-discovery and promotion of our cultural values. Ellis et al. (2011) describe that writing and researching an autoethnography requires the author to “systematically analyze personal experiences in order to understand cultural experiences.” With White values as our default and norm, as school leaders, we have an obligation to change the color of our space. Regardless of the number of school reforms, strategic plans, new curricula, and mandated standards, failure to change the color of schools means that we continue to be in the business of assimilation, dismissing non-White children to the margins.

Two cultural values resonated and were referenced significantly during the CPR meetings and activities. They are *hiya* and *utang na loob*. The impact of *hiya* (humility) on navigating our workspaces and the influence of *utang na loob* (gratitude) in their families as a source of job performance and motivation for Filipinos to succeed were discussed and affirmed by CPR members to be influential in their behaviors as school leaders.

### ***Hiya: Demonstrating Humility***

*Hiya*, as often translated in English, is shame or embarrassment. It is a misunderstood Filipino concept with a negative connotation in its Western literal form. In the Westernized form, *hiya* happens to a person or something an individual has undergone or suffered. *Hiya*, as a Filipino virtue, is of conscious self-control or restraint. It implies an active effort in one’s

actions, such as performing desirable acts with the intention of limited recognition (Lasquety-Reyes, 2016). In this perspective, *hiya* is not shame but a sense of self, respect, and propriety. The analysis of the coded transcripts yielded *hiya* as the most referenced category by the participants. Aligned with the cultural values of *kapwa* (unity of self and others) and *pakikisama* (to get along with others), *hiya* not only demonstrates these Filipino values as interconnected but also illustrates the colonial mentality Filipinos continue to experience today.

Adhering to a collectivist value of servility, the participants expressed that their good work speaks for itself. This comes from the motivation to put the community first before the self. The idea was displayed when a participant said, “we are going to do everything for our community to make sure that they are taken care of, but we are not going to go show it off. Right?” They also asserted that “what we are doing is good, and we are good with that” and “our actions will speak for themselves.” Another participant projected these actions when she said, “we are doing it for our students, but we don’t go out there and, like, put everything that we are doing to be recognized.” Consistent with the primary Filipino value of *kapwa*, the participants valued the community and unity with others over self-gain.

The ability of Filipinos to be selfless as an asset was also perceived by the participants as a reason for their inability to be recognized, a factor considered in the CLE as a reason why Filipinos are overlooked in career advancement. Recognizing their efforts and making public their accomplishments is challenging and unnatural for Filipino participants. The participants conveyed that they would rather rely on others to recognize their work rather than draw attention to their work themselves, “I don’t have to put myself out there” and “they will recognize you if you are good enough.” Unfortunately, as one of the most individualistic societies in the world, “the United States places greater value on the informational function of communication, whereas

collectivistic cultures such as place a greater emphasis on the relational function” (Miyamoto & Schwarz, 2006, p. 541). Kim and Berry (1993) suggested that people with independent self-characterization tend to emphasize outcome-oriented aspects of communication, such as clarity and effectiveness. As interdependent communicators, this puts Filipino Americans at a disadvantage as their communication styles emphasize aspects such as avoiding hurting the listener’s feelings and minimizing impositions, characteristics of *pakikisama* as a value. Coupled with a sense of *hiya*, a term that refers to the Filipino value that restrains one’s selfish desires for the sake of another being (*kapwa*), the participants expressed discomfort with individual attention and inability to “self-advertise.” This group of Filipino principals cited that their inability to self-advertise their hard work may prevent them from acquiring higher-level positions.

Exhibiting Filipino humility by following or deferring to an elder or authority figure is a trait referred to as *mapagkumbaba*. Some, such as Mujtaba and Balboa (2009), contribute that this docile trait among Filipinos can be traced to their devotion to Christianity and their doctrine of obeying God’s will. The CLE acknowledged the Filipinos' commitment to being compliant. Often, participants refrained from disclosing their ideas for fear of “rocking the boat.” They referenced the Filipinos' ability to do work without question as it relates to the description of Filipinos as “good workers.” A participant said, “you were supposed to just listen and follow through with whatever directive without question.” A statement expressed by a participant further exemplified the group’s sense of hierarchical order and compliance: “your opinion does not matter right now because you haven’t earned that right because you’re not of a certain age or position.” It is seldom that a manager will hear negatively from a Filipino worker. Filipinos will

do the job to the best of their abilities without protest and need for recognition. Their quiet competence makes them silent and, therefore, non-existent.

Related to *hiya* as shame, the Filipino participants conveyed the inability to take compliments. Deflecting compliments by reciprocation focuses the attention on others, not the self. These acts can be perceived as encouraging *pakikisama* (getting along well with others), emphasizing the Filipinos' value of group harmony and unity rather than standing out. A participant said:

we're better at giving compliments to other people than we receive them. I'll usually deflect it when others give them to me. That's just how I was raised. It's how it has always been. It's a cultural thing; I really just thought that was me.

This was validated by another participant's upbringing when she commented that "watching my mom over the years when people give her compliments, my mom will hold on and dismiss it." She iterated, "that was part of me growing up; that was always what it was. Don't stand out, and just blend in."

The dichotomy the participants expressed during our CLEs highlighted the duality of their consciousness. Du Bois (2008) described double consciousness as "two-ness, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body" (p. 38), as experienced by African Americans in the United States. This concept accurately portrays the double lives Filipinos experience in the United States as they straddle opposing forces of Western individualized values that pull them apart from their indigenous values and consciousness. Naturally, as the participants reflected on their culturally based tendencies, they also identified characteristics of their identities that limit their potential.

## *Utang Na Loob*

Another value central to the Filipinos is *utang na loob*. *Utang na loob*, loosely translated as one's ability to reciprocate, is best demonstrated in Filipino families. This value's influence extends to how Filipinos behave in their work communities. With the parents' responsibilities completed after graduation from university, the burden of responsibility switches to their children as this is also a point where their children establish the repayment of their debt to their parents. This repayment may include supporting their parents financially, continued obedience to the parent's desires, and, especially for our participants, the ability to work hard and perform their jobs well without embarrassment (*hiya*) to make their parents proud.

In Philippine society, Filipinos associate their family as a vital part of their social world. In personal spaces, *utang na loob* is the mechanism that preserves Filipinos' loyalty to their families. For Filipino parents, the imposed debt on their children comes from childbirth and rearing, a debt their children are forever bonded with and can never be paid. A participant disclosed her expectations for her children when she stated, "we just need to make sure we care for them because we know if we take care of them, they're going to take care of us." This statement echoed the intergenerational contract of reciprocity between parents to children and vice versa. *Utang na loob* is also responsible for the participants need to make their parents proud. "They're always the first ones in my mind, to make them proud. I don't even think about myself, like being proud of myself. I think that's the least I can do for what they've done for me," as one referenced her need to repay her debt to her parents by making them proud. Even in the act of participating in this study, participants referenced *utang na loob* as a source of their participation, "we want to help you with your doctorate because we know that there's going to come a time and you're gonna help us with something or we know you'll be there." They also



discussed how misdeeds and their consequences are long-lasting. One participant observed, “if you do something wrong like twenty years ago, oh no, as if the gods are watching. You never want to be in that position; the following drama will be unbearable.”

The family’s tremendous influence on the participants was not limited to their upbringing but also their capacity to sustain a future living. Navigating away from the traditional career script, the participants disclosed their family’s concerns about becoming educators. In this study, the family’s expectations are critical to each participant’s decision to become an educator. For several, there were indications of disappointment from their family for not continuing the family’s “line of work.” Two confessed to their family’s disappointment in not becoming lawyers. Participants from a lineage of law practitioners reported that extended family members “counseled” them on their decision to go off the familial career template. One fled the Philippines to realize her aspiration of becoming an educator. Similar to his father and two older brothers, another participant mentioned his father’s desire for him to become an engineer. The participant informed the group of his father’s concerns about his ability to make a living and the difficulty of his father’s understanding of “unconventional occupations.” The participant stated, “it wasn’t until I became a principal that I felt my father fully understood what I was doing and that he could be proud of my work.” The ability to fulfill and obey their parents’ expectations expresses their gratitude (*utang na loob*) towards their parents. Departing from their family’s aspirations may feel like they’ve lost gratitude and may be interpreted as not having *utang na loob*, which may lead to guilt and shame (*hiya*).

The current California administrative data on Filipino Americans in the educational field suggests that these participants are exceptions. Opposing their cultural tendencies to submit to their family’s expectations, the participants demonstrated their persistence and intentions in

pursuing non-traditional career choices contrary to what their families intended. In traditional Filipino families, there is a large responsibility to follow the family's desires. The pressure to perform *utang na loob* (indebted gratitude) towards their parents drives many Filipinos to follow and put their family's wishes ahead of their individual pursuits. *Hiya* (guilt/shame) is also a component of this family dynamic. The shame and guilt an individual experiences and receives from their families may prevent Filipinos from deviating from family expectations. Perhaps our participants' American upbringing has allowed them to pursue their individual career trajectories.

### **Filipino-American Assets**

Overrepresented in the field of nursing are Filipinos. In fact, according to a report by the National Nurses United (2021), 26.4% of the nurses who died from COVID-19 and related complications in the United States were Filipinos. Because caring for others is emphasized and valued in Filipino culture, the cultural background of Filipino nurses may have a strong influence on choosing nursing as a profession. They ground themselves on their ability to serve their community, selfless concern for the well-being of others, and their innate capacity to work hard. Similar to the general values of Filipino nurses, as identified by Ordonez and Gandeza (2004), the CLE participants identified altruism, work ethic, and service to the community as assets particular to the Filipino American community. The following sections acknowledges the positive qualities that Filipino Americans possess to contribute to educational leadership. This research study aims to co-create opportunities to promote and normalize these cultural assets in education.

## *Altruism*

The transcript provided similarities of reasons for their pursuit of becoming educators. All participants indicated a form of altruism in their intentions of pursuing their career choices. This includes the desire for opportunities where they felt they could make the most impact, serving the underserved students of Santa Clara county. As the Greater Good Science Center at U.C. Berkeley defines it, altruism is the “act to promote someone else’s welfare, even at a risk or cost to ourselves.” This is evident with all but one participant dedicating their careers to serving Title I schools. According to the U.S. Department of Education, Title I schools receive supplementary federal funds for having high percentages of children from low-income families. The demands associated with running Title I schools are high due to the adverse effects of poverty on learning. However, most principals participating in this study have chosen to serve their entire careers primarily in Title I schools, demonstrating their ability to care for others despite the high risk of burnout in such an environment (Russell, 2019). The one exception, the participant not in Title I school, was a teacher and school leader at two high schools comprising the highest Filipino American student population in the San Francisco Bay Area. When asked why they decided to teach, speaking of their students and community, one participant said she “enjoyed helping them out and creating opportunities for them. I want to be there for them, to offer those types of opportunities for our students and families.” Speaking of their career change, another realized she “liked working with people” and became a counselor “to help support students and their mental health.” Another wish to return to the Philippines to fulfill her dreams of “paying back” and working with the Philippines’ Department of Education. She feels that Special Education in the Philippines is “lacking.” She remembered a conversation with me about how they both could help. She expressed guilt for leaving the Philippines as she was trained at

the University of the Philippines to be an “*iskolar ng bayan*” (the nation’s scholar); she paid no tuition to attend with the idea of ultimately becoming a “leader servant.”

### ***Strong Work Ethic***

Another attribute that the CLE participants expressed is our work ethic and “willingness to work hard.” We place a high value on responsibility and seldom complain. The stories of hard work shared of their father's ability to provide for their families are characteristics imprinted on them. A participant told a story about her father, a trained pharmacist in the Philippines, who became a warehouse worker driving forklifts for a drug company when he emigrated to the United States. “This became my father’s job all his life. He worked hard and never complained about it.” I had a similar story about my father putting himself through college in the Philippines to become an engineer. As they relocated to the United States, his father worked two jobs as a maintenance worker, leaving at seven in the morning and coming home at midnight. I seldom saw my father growing up. He provided for his immediate family in the United States, supported his siblings, and financed their children’s education in the Philippines. Because of his father’s hard work and dedication to family, a generation could mobilize economically both in the United States and the Philippines. As evidenced by the remittances (11% of the Philippines’ total GDP) generated by Filipinos working abroad, these stories of hard work, self-sacrifice, and commitment to family are prevalent in the Filipino community. With the CPR group, one echoed that Filipinos work hard, “we’re not looking to climb the ladder. I mean, we work hard, and we make it look effortless.”

### ***Kapwa***

At the core of the Filipino leaders’ actions towards their families, communities, and professionally at work is to realize *kapwa*. *Kapwa*, as Virgilio Enriquez (1992), founder of

Sikolohiyang Filipino of Indigenous Philippine Psychology, described it as a “recognition of a shared identity, an inner self, shared with others” (p. 43). *Kapwa*, as a noun, is the moral obligation we have towards others as equal fellow human beings. It is a concept of shared or collective identity constantly maintained to the commitment to one another and the collective. As a verb and act towards others, *kapwa* or *pakikipagkapwa*-tao is defined as connecting oneself with others; it considers other human beings as another self. It is an attitude and an ability to respect other humans as you respect yourself. *Kapwa*, naturally, is an anti-racist act, as it is rooted in one’s ability to have a shared identity with others, equality, and being one with others that recognizes our shared humanity. At work, participants described their empathy to care for the entire family, “we don’t stop at just supporting students, we often ask if there is anything else their family needs.” Their compassion toward others is the source of the energy they bring to work. One participant alluded that this research study is an act of *kapwa*. She called it our *pamana* (inheritance or legacy), “I hope that the next crop of Filipino administrators will read this study and have an easier time because it’s definitely not easy being the only one in an organization to promote this way of working with others.”

In its indigenous form and environment, a community with *kapwa* is so tight that words often need not be spoken, with members able to sense each other’s emotions and thoughts by feeling and reading each other’s non-verbal cues. *Kapwa*, in its fullest capacity, is a community so connected and committed to one another that they function as one (Desai, 2016).

### ***Caring for Others***

A frequent theme in CLE sessions is the willingness of Filipinos to serve others. Leveraging their ability to develop and foster strong interpersonal relationships, the Filipinos “bring so much compassion to the table, but not only that, Filipinos are very knowledgeable,

too.” Serving others may come from the strong family ties expressed by Filipinos. Principal Mendoza explained that “teaching the child is just as important as teaching parents and caregivers in the Philippines.” “We had extended programs for siblings because we always knew, culturally, that the siblings would be in charge of these children with special needs when the parents are gone.” She advocates for siblings to be included in transition plans. In the Philippines, it is assumed that “kids with special needs will never go to a group home.” She attributed the concept of *hiya* as a source of ensuring that the family stays together, despite the condition. For this reason, kids at a young age are “trained to support their siblings in adulthood.” She then compared this to the typical transition process in American education. In comparison, “when we talk about transitioning to adulthood, we always refer to what services can you receive from the state or from the federal government instead of how the family will be continuing to support them.”

### **Applying Values and Assets in Educational Leadership**

Racial affinity groups provide spaces for people with similar racial identities to meet, share experiences, and explore how their cultural identity manifests in their organizations. They are important spaces where people of shared identity can affirm each other's ideology and promote cultural authenticity. In educational leadership, where Filipino Americans are underrepresented, these spaces are nearly non-existent. The lack of support from confidants of similar backgrounds and contextual understanding may force minoritized leaders to conform and inhibit their abilities to lead authentically (Reno et al., 1993). As we serve a diverse student population with diverse needs, it is essential that diverse leaders lead schools with leadership styles and ideologies that match the changing landscape of education.

Cultural background heavily influences leadership style. Ardichvili and Jondle (2009) posit that ethnic minorities foster a nurturing, inclusive, engaging, and collective leadership style. For minoritized leaders, applying their values and assets as leaders must first begin by overcoming internal and external challenges in acquiring and sustaining leadership positions. This section conveys the CPR team's perspectives on their challenges in acquiring and promotion to leadership positions, the effects of Filipino leaders on other Filipinos, and promoting Filipino cultural values by incorporating the spirit of *bayanihan* in their organizations.

The challenges that Filipino participants disclosed were both external and internal by nature. Externally, they cited discrimination and “typecasting” as possible causes of missed opportunities. Equally relevant to this study is their ability to recognize self-discrimination, social tendencies rooted in generations of colonialism. Their internal struggles are important factors to discuss, as they may resort to assimilation in acquiring and sustaining leadership positions.

### ***Discrimination from Others***

Perceived by the CPR team, a challenge for Filipino American career advancement is the inability of hiring committees to see the need for change. As a society, we have been conditioned subconsciously about our roles in the community. We prescribe unknowingly to this sort of typecasting, where we repeatedly assign societal roles based on our own biases and stereotypes. Being conditioned to think of White males as leaders has resulted in a disproportionate number of White male superintendents. Considering that White is a standard for success and superiority, a CLE participant expressed frustration with his experiences with interviewing for higher-level positions. He complained that hiring practices are biased as “most interview panel members select those that best answer interview questions regardless of their authenticity to do the job.”

He added, "we keep hiring the same people, so we will get the same results." This participant is concerned that his alternative views and how he answers interview questions, often deemed by society as "off-script," are challenging to those advocating for authentic change.

### ***Internalized Oppression***

The most prevalent challenges that the CLE participants cited were internal and often done subconsciously, perhaps due to colonialism experienced by the Filipinos at the hands of the Spanish and the Americans. As Fanon (1965) asserted, the systemic denigration of the colonized people generally leads the colonized to self-doubt, feeling inferior, or confusion about one's identity. The participants cited challenges related to deficit thinking and self-doubt, demonstrating the meaning of colonial mentality. The colonial mentality among Filipinos was defined as "a form of internalized oppression, characterized by a feeling or sense of inferiority as a consequence of the colonization both from the Spaniards and the Americans" (David & Okazaki, 2006, p. 1). The participants asserted that "we put ourselves down, I think that's kind of a problem," "we don't feel worthy of being in this position," and "if we don't feel worthy even in being in these leadership positions, how do we even see comfort to know to even be able to move up?" The feelings of being undeserving of the positions they occupy highlighted their self-doubt. They disclosed feelings of being an imposter, "do you ever sit in those principal meetings and you're like what am I even doing here?" and bias, "like the people that belong in these chairs are white males, you know the ones that make decisions, the true leaders." As they continued to reflect, they pondered on the effects of colonialism on their persona, "I think it might have something to do with us being colonized" and "we've been conditioned to not be in these positions."



Another challenging factor many people of color experience is discrimination and favoring White attributes over their own. Memmi (1965) and Freire (1970) proposed that the colonized may eventually come to believe the colonizers' negative perceptions and develop a strong desire to distance themselves from their identity to become as much like the oppressors as possible. Not only have they encountered systemic discrimination from American society, but they also discussed disappointingly the discrimination they experienced from others within their community. Upon arrival in the United States, the lead researcher was bullied and ridiculed by other Filipinos that were U.S.-born. While he longed to be with the Filipinos, second-generation Filipino Americans made fun of his accent, distinct native appearance, and for being "too Filipino." He was automatically relegated to the bottom rung of their social hierarchy as an immigrant. For recent immigrants, it was determined that the more urgent we were of suppressing our identity, faking our accents, and dismissing our values, the more American we became and, thus, accepted in our social circles.

Conversely is the feeling of being "not Filipino enough." Growing up in a highly populated Filipino community in the Bay Area, a participant disclosed that he "actually faced the most discrimination from Filipinos" in his community. Due to his position as a school administrator, he was accused by other Filipinos of being manipulated by the "man" and a "sell-out." He attributed this type of discrimination to his inability to speak the Filipino language (although he can understand it fluently) and his ability to speak perfect English. Because of these negative experiences, he hoped to learn more about Filipino assets by joining the CPR group. He stated that his involvement "might actually make me feel more whole and advocate for most Filipinos in education because, so far, they have not been on my side." A native of the Philippines who emigrated as an adult, Principal Mendoza referred to the term "*isip talangka*" or

“crab mentality” as a way of thinking, commonly referred to in the Philippines to describe the idea of when people pull down those who get ahead. Crabs in a bucket is a metaphor derived from a pattern of behaviors observed in crabs when trapped in a bucket, undermining each other’s efforts to escape, resulting in the group’s collective demise. It is a way of thinking best described by the phrase, “if I can’t have it, neither can you.” Cited by CLE participants, this phenomenon affects the confidence and security of these Filipino leaders. “It’s like when you feel like you’re good enough, but at the same time, you have other Filipinos talking behind your back saying, ‘what makes you think you’re good enough to be the principal of me?’” Without the support of our community and our inability to unite and create alliances, the participants observed this as a challenge in the progression of Filipino American leaders.

### ***Mirrors: Seeing Others in Leadership Positions***

As mentioned by several participants, seeing other Filipino leaders was impactful in realizing their possibilities of becoming one. With a shared understanding of how other Filipinos lead, a Filipino Administrative Network can more accurately and culturally align their support with other Filipinos professionally. Through these shared groups, Filipino leaders can develop ways to establish communities in their respective spaces to nurture activism, reclaim their identity, and influence others in promoting their collectivist assets. Realizing the benefits of seeing other Filipino American principals regardless of their administrative experience, we wondered about the impact of seeing Filipino American leaders on aspiring administrators and students.

It is imperative for Filipino American educators aspiring to be principals or administrators to see themselves as what they aspire to be. The ability to see themselves in the principalship or administrative role is impactful in realizing the possibilities. CLE members told

stories of how they were influenced by seeing another Filipino American school administrator and opportunities to affect others. Several alluded to the impact of meeting the lead researcher as an administrator, “Vern inspired me because he was the first Filipino principal that I got to really know and worked with, so I thought maybe it was a good decision to leave the classroom.”

Reluctant and withholding information that she received an administrator credential from other colleagues, the lead researcher encouraged this participant to apply for the administrative position he was departing. Initially, she was apprehensive about applying, with thoughts of inadequacy to perform the job. She eventually applied and acquired her first administrative position. She credited seeing the lead researcher in the position that made her believe she could do a good job. Principal Villanueva stated:

only seeing you and other people like you as successful administrators made me believe I could do it. If you weren't successful or had I not seen you do it, there's no way I would have put myself out there. You were the first Filipino American principal I ever met. Do you know that?

Another talked of a similar experience of seeing a Filipino American principal that normalized the idea that Filipinos can be school site leaders in the United States. As the CLE participants shared stories of their pathways to principalship, the visual of seeing others with similar backgrounds are valuable to those unaccustomed to seeing themselves in these roles.

In another situation, two participants assisted each other in acquiring their first administrative positions. When doubts settled during their administrative search, they comforted and encouraged each other. They provided each other with job leads and reviewed interview questions. Together, the two accompanied each other on their administrative journey. They continue collaborating and offering each other advice they typically would not ask others.

After becoming administrators, the participants recognized their abilities to encourage and influence other Filipino Americans to become school leaders. For example, one participant described her program's moderate to severe Special Education program as staffed mostly by Filipinos, "in true Filipino fashion, the majority of the staff are Filipinos, but I am the only Filipino American principal with the county SPED program right now." This account aligns with Imamura et al.'s (2010) assertion that Filipinos make exceptional caregivers due to their skills and cultural attributes, such as having close family ties, respect for elders, flexibility, hard work, and *pakikisama* or getting along with others. The participant talked about her staff as excellent: "they bring so much compassion to the table, and not only that, they're very knowledgeable. Some of our teachers have doctorates from the Philippines." Upon her arrival in the program, staff assumed she was either the new teacher or para-educator for the classroom, but never the principal. This participant has since empowered, guided, and mentored other Filipinos to become school administrators.

The participants' narratives related to their administrative journeys and their potential to influence other Filipino Americans have effectuated others to seek administrative positions. Since my arrival to the district as the first Filipino American administrator ten years earlier, four other Filipino American principals have led schools in the Oak Grove School District.

### ***Bayanihan***

Consistent with the cultural value of *kapwa* (unity of self and others), another emerging concept is the focus of the Filipino's work on the community. Along with *kapwa*, this attribute is synonymous with the Filipino custom called *bayanihan*, which refers to the spirit of communal unity with work and cooperation as the means to achieve a particular goal. The joy of working with the community, giving back to the community, and purpose of doing their best for students

and the community, was a common sentiment among all participants. *Bayanihan* occurs when individuals unite to do an act for individuals and communities in need without the expectation of receiving anything in return. As Title I schools serve the most vulnerable students in the school system, it is unsurprising that our participants have chosen to spend their entire careers serving Title I communities, communities with a large Filipino American student population, or lead schools they previously attended. Principal Enriquez discussed his upbringing in the community where he currently lives and served as a church and community leader, teacher, and school administrator. In one of the CPR meetings, he said, “my leadership is in the community I grew up in, I was at this high school for 16 years; it’s where I graduated, came back to teach, and had my first administrator job.” He described the need to influence children by building on their education, hoping they will return and give back to the community. Like Principal Enriquez, Principal Villanueva became the middle school principal she attended decades earlier. Principal Mendoza serves the most severely handicapped students in the county, and both Principal Ocoy and Sumbillo are principals at Title I schools. For the past twenty years, I have spent my educational career serving socioeconomically disadvantaged and ethnically diverse communities. I have only served in Title I schools, which is similar to the community of my upbringing. Based on our chosen assignments, principals participating in this research study have a strong record of servicing underserved communities and promoting *bayanihan* in their daily functions.

*Bayanihan* is a distinguishing characteristic of being Filipino. As Menguin (2022) puts it, *Bayanihan* is “an antidote to indifference, division, mistrust, and mediocrity.” The most popular representation of *bayanihan* is *lipat-bahay* (moving a house), as pictured in Figure 8. Becoming less common in rural Philippines is moving a nipa hut house. This is a practice where community



*Figure 8. Lipat bahay (moving house).*

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members help a family relocate a house. *Bayanihan* is the belief that together, we can survive and thrive. The act of *bayanihan* is to unite together to help those in need. Filipino principals talked about “knowing the community well” and incorporating their community in education “because it is about giving back to our community.” Another stated that:

my leadership is really in the community, I try to incorporate myself in the community; and if you are part of the community, they trust you to make leadership decisions for them because they know that we are doing what we think is best for our kids and our community.

Considering that there is a limited number of Filipinos in our positions, we see the joy in Filipino families when they see us; the trust established in our culture is there. We often hear from them the following “Maam, kayo na ang bahala” (Mam, it’s up to you), disclosing complete trust that we will take care of their child. In response, we perceive the situation thinking “kawawa yung bata” (poor child), evoking empathy. As the tendency for Filipinos to put others before themselves (as in the act of *kapwa*), Filipinos embody the principles of the Community Learning Exchange that power lies within the localities and that people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns. The participants accomplish this by embedding themselves within the community they serve.

The analysis of our CPR meetings in this cycle has yielded three emerging concepts. First is the need for Filipino Americans to identify their cultural values to get reacquainted and reclaim these values to affirm how they manifest at work. The second is to perceive their culturally based tendencies as assets in building equitable educational practices. Finally, to recognize the challenges of discrimination of others and to self in acquiring leadership positions so they may apply their cultural values and assets. In addition, Filipino Americans need to see

themselves in leadership positions and incorporate their cultural values at work as it impacts other Filipinos to acquire leadership positions where they, too, can serve their communities.

### **Leadership Reflection and Action Steps for PAR Cycle Two**

Apparent in action research is the recognition of the capacities of the people in particular settings to participate in all aspects of the research process and to make improvements in practices and their settings by the participants themselves (Kemmis et al., 2014). As this research study progressed and we gained a better understanding of promoting our cultural values, this process has allowed us to develop better as leaders. This change has become evident through shifts in our attitudes and abilities as site leaders.

### **Leadership Reflection and Development as a Research-Practitioner**

As the lead researcher, I have gained more confidence and become unapologetically courageous about my inherent ways of leading. The practice of identifying the source of our cultural tendencies through storytelling and reflection has been validating. A sense of personal acceptance has transpired, where I used to see my actions as a deficit in my attempt to conform. The ability to bring along on this journey those with similar cultural and professional experiences to understand their identity as Filipino Americans and site leaders have been transformative for all. As the “connector” of the group with varying degrees of relationships that I have made with each participant before this study, the experience has strengthened our bonds with the shared goals of improving the conditions of marginalized students. It has created an unwritten pact that we have for each other and can rely on each other for support.

Attributes of participatory research include shared ownership of research projects, community-based analysis of social problems, and tendencies for community action (Kemmis et al., 2014). This PAR Cycle captured the essence of this description. True to the foundation of



two of our most influential values, *kapwa*, and *pakikisama*, it was important to deflect my Western tendencies of linear planning, where the meeting's agenda often trumps the actual purposes of the meetings. With a specific goal in mind that addresses a research question, we treated our meetings as conversations where our curiosity and interests determined our exchanges. As a naturally curious person known for asking many questions, facilitating and participating in these conversations came easily. While outsiders might perceive our dialogue as disorganized and lacking structure, our exclusive ability to comprehend, relate, and corroborate made me realize that there is no alternative way to document and analyze the information without having "insider" contextual information. Considering the limited availability of research concerning the Filipino experience in the educational leadership context, I have recognized my responsibility to inform and advocate for my culture and people. Advocacy from within is critical to preserving and promoting Filipino values for the next generation. Additionally, research centering on East Asians comprises the bulk of research concerning the Asian experience in America. There is significantly minimal literature on Southeast Asian existence and values. Experiencing Bangkok and its people collectively as a doctoral class cohort, we performed an activity where students of this doctoral program were asked about the location where they feel most accepted. Most of this doctoral program's students recognized Bangkok as the location. With little research and understanding of the Southeast Asian collectivist culture, how can we establish societies with foundations from these collectivist cultures with "limited" insider information? In line with indigenous methods of disseminating information through storytelling, I have come to rely on and understand this form of communication as a critical part of ethnographical research studies.

Recognizing these assets and reviewing the challenges formed the foundation of this study for participants to understand better the environment in which they reside. In doing so, the CLE members could then dialogue on their identity and how their indigenous values manifest in their work as site administrators. The hope was to develop strategies to promote and normalize Filipino values in their respective influences. A significant concept emerged upon the review of data. With the formation of the participants' cultural identity, the family's influence and values profoundly affected the CLE members. Their view of the world, their response to situations, and the decisions they make can be traced to their upbringing and family influence.

### **Planning for PAR Cycle Two**

The analysis described in this chapter provided the CPR group the opportunity to reclaim our identity by identifying and affirming our values as assets in our workspaces. In exploring our inherent tendencies in navigating both the American landscape and within our own community, the CPR group participated in discussions that focused on our first research question, which was: to what extent can a group of Filipino American educators understand their individual and collective identity through stories of self, family, and cultural histories?

For the meetings in Spring of 2022, which served as my second cycle, the CPR team examined the following questions:

- How do our Filipino values manifest in our personal and professional lives?
- How can we support other Filipino American educational leaders?
- How do we develop alternative leadership practices as we promote the cultural assets of the Filipinos?

The idea for the identity searching and rediscovering phase, as discussed in this chapter and as the goal of the second cycle, is to enable the CPR group to be able to address the subsequent

PAR objectives, which are to co-create alternative leadership practices, apply their identity and cultural assets to their roles as educational leaders, so they can ultimately promote their cultural assets with hopes that we can have a positive impact in education.

### **Conclusion**

Santa Clara County, where this research study took place, has seen many transformations. From its fruitful agricultural economic origins to its current version known as Silicon Valley, the diversity of its people has been its most important resource. Six Filipino American principals with varying experience levels in the county make up this research study's CPR group. In the Fall of 2021, the CPR group met as they participated in the first of two PAR cycles in this research study. For this cycle, we told each other our family's immigration stories and the processes we each followed in becoming an educational leader. Through storytelling and personal narratives, we reflected on the cultural values we inherited from our families, how these values influence our relationships with others, and how they manifest in our work as school leaders.

The transcripts of CPR meetings and reflective memos were uploaded to NVivo 12 Pro to assist in organizing and coding the qualitative data. Several themes emerged from performing an inductive coding method and then a deducting method during the second round. First surfaced in these meetings was the significant influence of *hiya* in the context of shame and guilt and *hiya* as in demonstrating humility or conscious self-control in how Filipinos navigate their personal and professional environments. An additional value was disclosed with *utang na loob* as a mechanism for preserving loyalty and communal spirit. These values are elements essential in the Filipino's pursuit to embody *kapwa*. Next, The CPR group identified four cultural assets they perceived as significant contributions of Filipino Americans in educational leadership. We

referenced a strong work ethic as an asset to show gratitude and motivation to work for our families and community. In pursuit of *kapwa*, as an act of recognizing of our common humanity with others, Filipinos have strong altruistic tendencies to help and serve others. Finally, we recognized the impact of affinity groups in affirming and supporting the application of our cultural values in our workspaces. In becoming school administrators, they cited the importance of seeing themselves in the position as the influential force in deciding to lead schools. To address the underrepresentation of Filipino Americans in educational leadership, we identified barriers resulting from discrimination from others and self as challenges we needed to overcome to acquire positions to lead. The mechanism for applying our values once in the position is the act of *bayanihan*, community servitude, as demonstrated by all participants by serving in Title I schools or returning to the schools they attended.

In this first PAR cycle, my leadership reflections centered on affirming our identity and cultural values as assets in educational leadership. With societal pressures to conform, we must see our authentic selves as culturally based leaders in our educational system. The findings from my initial analysis will build on rediscovering the participants' identity as Filipino Americans to co-create alternative equitable leadership practices to transform traditional leadership practices from within. Findings associated with community building and seeing ourselves in others have impacted the activities for our next cycle. As the CPR participants benefitted from our affinity group, we hoped to meet in person and have a bigger impact on our respective Filipino communities. By creating spaces for others to affirm their culture and identity, we hope to promote the idea that their authentic self is an asset to this society. For our youth to see themselves in leadership positions, we hope to spark leadership possibilities for those under our care. For the Spring of 2022, the CPR team planned to meet monthly, if possible, in Filipino

restaurants, not just as a dining preference but also to be in a supportive setting where we can be our authentic selves. As we recognize the impact of meeting as an affinity group, we arranged for Filipino parents and students in our respective schools to meet and start a CLE. We hope to put into scale the learnings we acquired from the first iterative cycle of this study.

## CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS

For this critical ethnographic Participatory Action Research (PAR) study, we used storytelling, conversations, and reflections among our Co-Practitioner Research (CPR) team to engage in a journey of self-discovery, reclaiming our indigenous identities and how they are expressed more fully through our leadership in schools. I used the autoethnographic approach as a research process to facilitate our Community Learning Exchange (CLE) gatherings to make meaning of our self-discovery and promote our cultural values. Ellis et al. (2011) described that writing and researching an autoethnography requires the author to “systematically analyze personal experiences in order to understand cultural experiences.” In a previous chapter, I revisited our respective families' immigration journeys. Like the immigrant pathways of countless Filipinos to the United States, ours were stories of service, perseverance, and fulfilling generational dreams through education. As Filipinos are underrepresented in education, especially in educational leadership, as a CPR team, we shared and discussed our career trajectories that led us to our current position as school principals to understand better the elements associated with Filipino representation.

In these CLE sessions, we also discussed family influences, the desire to serve communities, and the impact on other Filipino American educators and youth on seeing themselves in pursuing leadership positions. Finally, as a cultural affinity group, we identified how our cultural values of *hiya* and *utang na loob* manifest in our work. Collectively, we explored how these values could manifest as both assets and challenges as we co-developed alternative leadership styles rooted deeply in our cultural stories, histories, and identities rather than self-imposed discrimination fueled by colonial mentality and others' judgments of us. These explorations of our identity that transpired and described in the previous chapter addressed a

component of this research's essential question: *to what extent can a group of Filipino American educators understand their individual and collective identity?*

In this chapter, I describe how the cultural discovery helped us re-situate our leadership as principals to execute previously conceived ideas to build communities and develop our youth's cultural understanding from within. As such, in this chapter, I detail the research activities that transpired in the second Participatory Research Cycle (PAR) cycle, how data were collected and analyzed inclusive of PAR Cycle Two activities, and introduce the key findings that culminated from the emergent themes that had been consistent through the study.

### **PAR Cycle Two Process**

Subsequent to the PAR Cycle One, during which CPR members identified our family immigration, stories of becoming school administrators, and highlighted the assets and challenges of being Filipino American in educational leadership, the PAR Cycle Two centered on the fundamental values of being Filipino, what these values meant to the participants as Filipino Americans in the United States, and how their culture and values manifest in our work as educational leaders. This section provides a detailed account of the second PAR cycle in which we continued CPR meetings, discussions, and organized Filipino American community events. Specifically, I describe the process, including activities, timeline, evidence, and the coding process to determine themes. Next, the emerging themes generated from PAR Cycle Two data confirmed the categories from the previous cycle regarding Filipino cultural values, how they manifest at work, and the importance of a Filipino American administrator affinity network. Comprising two PAR cycles, Table 9 provides an overview of the data collection that transpired during the course of the study. This table details the time periods when the PAR cycles occurred

Table 9

*Participatory Action Research Cycles*

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Research Cycle	Time Period	Activities
PAR Cycle One (Emergent Themes)	September – December 2021	Three CPR Meetings Individual Interviews Reflective Memos Member Checks
PAR Cycle Two (Findings)	January – May 2022	Four CPR Meetings Two Community Events Individual Interviews Reflective Memos Member Checks

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and the activities the CPR members participated in, which generated the data I collected and analyzed.

### **PAR Cycle Two Activities/Data Collection**

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis led to opportunities we could not have imagined. After a significant time of what constituted a global lockdown, restrictions were lifted, and the path to regaining a semblance of pre-pandemic conditions ensued. The change of guidelines profoundly affected the course of this study. The lifting of distancing mandates meant the development and rebuilding of communities. For collectivists, human connection and interactions are requisites to our identity.

Meetings for this second PAR Cycle were a hybrid of online using the Google Meet application and in-person meetings. As principals, participants were involved in various functions in running their respective schools, which led to difficulty in scheduling meetings that all participants could attend. This was a real challenge, especially as schools were restoring schedules and processes to pre-COVID-19 operations. CLE meetings were scheduled bi-monthly, with specific dates determined using the Doodle meeting scheduler application. Selected meeting dates were based on the available dates for most participants. While the goal was to have all participants present for every CLE, these meetings were scheduled and conducted with as many CPR participants who could attend. As the year progressed, the CLEs were held in person over a meal on several occasions as COVID-19 restrictions softened.

As our CLE meetings progressed during this cycle, we reflected on, discussed our cultural values, assets, and challenges, and formulated opportunities to recognize each other better at work. As with the previous PAR cycle, conversations and exchanges during these CLEs were recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions and other data artifacts, such as meeting notes

and images generated during the meetings, were then coded and categorized to determine emergent themes. The research activities for the second PAR cycle included scheduled meetings and the individual and small group conversations that occurred during them. These research activities, key participants, meeting dates, and data artifacts are outlined in Table 10.

In traditional Filipino communities, conversations, fellowship, and community bonding are best made in the presence of food. The phrase “breaking bread” expresses that food sharing between groups or individuals fosters connections and strengthens community relationships and cooperation. As COVID-19 restrictions lifted and the world slowly resumed its previous routine, it also opened opportunities for our CPR team to interact and break bread with one another, enabling participants to deepen relationships. While their familiarity with one another was fostered through the virtual space, in-person meetings further strengthened these relationships.

Two meetings during this cycle took place in a Filipino restaurant, centrally located for participants to ease their commute. Several carpooled, which initiated not only conversation, serving as the evening’s warm-up, but also generated excitement to meet in person and dine after almost two years of social lockdown. After a brief orientation to our purpose and introductions, participants settled in by ordering traditional Filipino dishes, surrounded mostly, if not entirely, by other Filipino people in the restaurant. Despite the awkwardness of recording personal conversations in a loud restaurant, I asked participants for their permission to record. I used the Voice Memos app in my Apple iPhone X to record the conversation and placed it in the middle of the table with the screen down, so it was not visible that the session was being recorded. As the lead researcher, I was mindful of minimizing the attention directed to the recording to maximize the authenticity of the conversation.

Table 10

*PAR Plan, Cycle Two*

Activities	Participants	Timeline	Data Collection
CPR Meeting #1	Enriquez, Sumbillo, Villanueva, Ocoy, Caruz	January 2022	Google Meet Recording Transcripts Reflective Memo
CPR Meeting #2	Sumbillo, Villanueva, Mendoza, Caruz	February 2022	Audio Recording Transcripts Reflective Memo
CPR Meeting #3	Sumbillo, Villanueva, Ocoy, Caruz	April 2022	Google Meet Recording Transcripts Reflective Memo
FilAm Community Mixer	Sumbillo, Villanueva, Caruz	April 2022	Meeting Notes Audio Recording Pictures Reflective Memo
CPR Meeting #4 Dinner	Sumbillo, Ocoy, Enriquez, Caruz	May 2022	Audio Recording Transcripts Reflective Memo
FilAm Community & Activism	Caruz, Villanueva, Sumbillo, families, and students	May 2022	Audio Recording Transcripts Reflective Memo

The protocols and processes I used during our CPR meetings were designed to invite the study's principal participants to share and reflect on their leadership practices and actions involved in their daily functions. Importantly, while doing so, these meetings also yielded the development of a Filipino American community space in one of the involved districts. The trend of gathering around food as a community extended with the formation of the district's first Filipino American students and family social. The three schools, led by Filipino American principals who shared the same district, invited families identified in their database as Filipino Americans for a potluck. Aptly called a Filipino American Mixer, this community gathering served two purposes. The first is an activity generated by the CPR to develop a community where Filipino American students are supported in retaining their cultural identity. Secondly, I collected data from parents and students on cultural identity and how we can apply and promote our cultural values in education via audio recordings, transcripts, and pictures.

### **Data Analysis**

As I collected evidence in this cycle, this data set was then analyzed through an open coding analytic process. Open coding introduces the researcher to new theoretical possibilities as the researcher first engages with the qualitative data (Saldaña, 2016). I identified connections and condensed codes into broader categories as the data were coded. Qualitative content analysis allowed me to analyze a coding scheme that already exists systematically. Krippendorff asserted that content analysis "make replicable and valid inferences from data to their context, to provide knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts and a practical guide to action" (Krippendorff, 1980, as cited in Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 108). By conducting qualitative content analysis with the data sets from each cycle, I identified relationships between these overarching categories and

those codes from the previous cycle to determine emergent themes and develop a narrative of key findings.

In PAR Cycle two, I identified and developed emergent themes relating to my research questions from the codes list and then from the next level of analyses that produced codes (see Table 11). First, CPR members identified the effects of Filipino cultural values at work and how these values are influenced by their family and upbringing. The second emerging theme was the influence of an affinity group or a network of Filipino American administrators at work. Finally, there is a need to establish Filipino American community groups in schools to discuss, plan, and address the needs of Filipino American students to retain their Filipino values. Efforts were needed to promote the Filipino identity and the necessity for a Filipino American collective in educational leadership. This section illustrated these conditions as supported by the data acquired from the PAR Cycle Two activities.

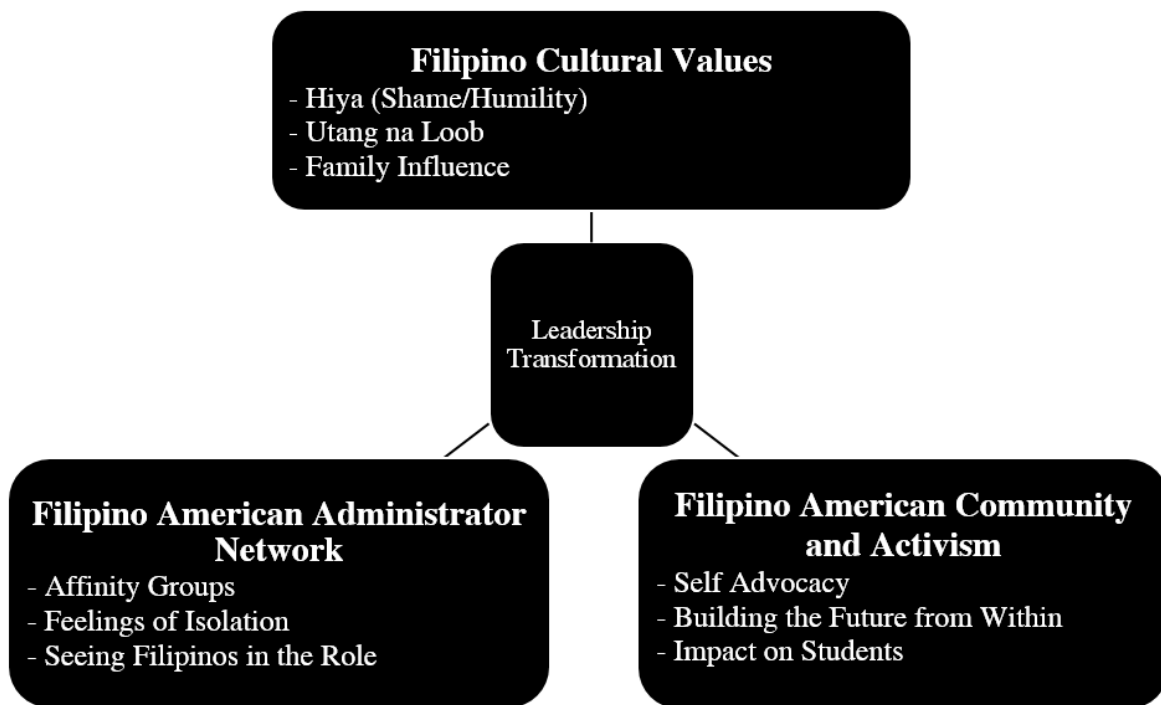
Illustrated in Figure 9 are the relationships of the emerging data from PAR cycle two. The figure illustrates how participants, through a network of Filipino American Administrators and as an affinity group, re-acquainted with their identity as Filipino Americans. Through this network of Filipino American administrators, the participants discussed their family's influences, expectations, and cultural values. As Filipino American principals re-familiarized themselves with their identity (an essential step in decolonizing self), they identified the need to establish a sustainable community of Filipino-Americans to build future Filipino American leaders, advocate their cultural needs, and promote their cultural values.

This PAR study consisted of two PAR cycles, which were intended to develop a community of practice in which we centered on the elements of our research questions that include identifying, applying, and promoting the cultural values of Filipino Americans. The data

Table 11

*Codes and Emergent Themes for PAR Cycle Two*

Themes	Category	Number of Referenced File	Number of Instances in Data
Filipino Cultural Values	Hiya	4	31
	Utang na loob	6	19
	Family Influence on Hiya and Utang na Loob	2	18
Filipino American Administrator Network	Affinity Groups	5	35
	Feelings of Isolation	5	14
	Seeing Filipinos in the Role	3	13
Filipino American Community and Activism	Self-advocacy	4	23
	Building the future from within	5	9
	Impact on Students	3	8



*Figure 9.* Relationship of emerging themes from PAR Cycle Two.

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set provided an example of the depth of qualitative evidence I had accumulated to confirm the findings in the next section. I analyzed from this data set in PAR Cycle Two as well as other data sets and intersected those with the emergent themes from PAR Cycle One to determine the findings. The final data set for each finding include codes from individual and group meetings, reflective memos, and community events transcripts and artifacts. As my coding evolved over the two cycles, I became more adept and specific about the coding for data, and it came to represent the three findings discussed in the next section. In the end, the CPR members sought opportunities to meet as an affinity group to learn more about and process the cultural values forming their identities. As we continued with the discovery of self, we viewed our CLEs as social justice and anti-racism in action.

### **Findings**

There is a need to diversify organizational leadership, especially top-level management in the United States. Filipinos possess leadership assets rooted in the indigenous spirit of collectivism and communal unity, which are leadership styles represented by the changing demographics of California communities, as many come from collectivist countries (Hammond, 2015). Through this critical ethnographic PAR study of the cultural attributes embodied by the Filipino American participants and how they are expressed through our leadership, key findings highlighted the need for our public school systems to similarly embody the values inherent among those in the community those school systems serve. These findings contribute to empirical research and hold the potential to inform educational leadership practices and preparation, as well as processes designed for cultural development for Filipino Americans and others. These three findings include the Influence of Family on the Development of Culture and Career Choices, how the influences of family and upbringing on Filipino American leaders'



career choices, and the acquisition of cultural values form the foundation of their leadership styles. Second, Filipino Cultural Values: Effects on Filipino American Leadership, the collectivist values of Filipinos have profound effects on how Filipinos navigate professional spaces and how these values manifest themselves in how they lead schools. Through storytelling and examining its origins, the participants connected their collectivist and familial values as critical in how they lead schools. Finally, Bayanihan (Communal Unity): Working Together - Affinity Space, in the spirit of *bayanihan*, Filipino leaders need to have spaces where they can experience communal unity. The affinity space provided by this research study allowed Filipino participants to have a supportive network and an authentically safe setting to be vulnerable.

### **Finding 1: Influence of Family on the Development of Culture and Career Choices**

When I was growing up in the Philippines, my father was physically absent from our lives during these formative years. Due to the challenging economic conditions in the Philippines in the 1980s, my father, like many Filipinos seeking a better life for their families, endured separation from his loved ones with hopes that by working abroad, his family could be saved from an unfavorable life trajectory back home. This is a story familiar to many Filipinos and others still today. My father's story exemplifies the findings relating to the families represented in this study. In our immigration stories, we found similarities in immigration pathways, the influence of the Filipino family in career choices, and the acquisition of core Filipino cultural values expressed for generations. Our CPR members throughout this study reported stories of immigration that embody self-sacrifice, career choices, and family loyalty. From career expectations to acquiring cultural values, the influence of their families on our research participants and leadership styles was profound.

### *Stories of Immigration Pathways*

As our first several CLEs were about relationship building, we disclosed our families' immigration stories. Our immigration patterns and pathways mirror those of other Filipinos seeking a better future for their families. These were stories of the Filipinos' inclination to serve in the United States military, loss of professional identities upon their arrival to the United States, and recruitment of foreign teachers due to our system's inability to hire and retain new teachers to serve our schools.

Several of our participants' parents' immigration path came from their father's or grandfather's service in the U.S. military. The tradition of serving in the military by Filipino Americans still exists today, with two of the six participants having served in the U.S. military before pursuing careers in education. For example, after high school and determined not to follow my father's and brothers' career choice of becoming an engineer, I enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. This decision was difficult for my family to accept, as the expected career trajectory for my family was to go to college and socially mobilize through education. While I was obligated to follow this parental expectation, the compromise was to enlist in the Reserves so I could continue to pursue my parents' desires to have all their children attend college.

Another common experience of Filipino immigrants is the loss of professional identity. Like two of the participants' parents, many Filipinos arrive in the United States with professional degrees and qualifications deemed invalid. Not having the legal professional credentials, they settled for manual labor jobs unrelated to their professional qualifications back home. One participant's father was a pharmacist, and my father was a trained engineer in the Philippines. With courage and loss of professional identity in the United States and desperate to provide for their families, the pharmacist became a forklift driver employed in a warehouse, while my father,

an engineer, settled as a facilities worker repairing plastic injection molding machines. Unable to fulfill their professional dreams, they encouraged their children to pursue these occupations unattainable to them personally in the United States. The third pathway to immigration represented in this study is recruiting foreign talent to subsidize the United States labor force. One participant was hired in the Philippines as a Special Education teacher to fulfill teacher shortages in the United States. Her pathway to immigration is a recent experience for Filipinos. Like many recent immigrants, she told stories of loneliness, her challenges of being in a new culture alone, and the desire to improve life not accessible to her at home.

### ***Influence of the Family on Career Choices***

The family's expectations represented by this study's participants is critical to each participant's decision to become an educator. Five of the six CPR members began college careers pursuing majors outside of education. As evidenced by the under-representation of Filipino American teachers and school administrators in California (CDE, 2020), education is not a popular career choice for many Filipinos.

Our CPR members disclosed that their parents significantly influenced their initial career choices. Their initial career choices were imposed on them by their parents to either continue their family's "line of work" or to choose financially lucrative career fields. The participants' commitment to family, loyalty, and cultural values made it difficult to depart from their family's aspirations. The shame and guilt an individual may experience and receive from their families may prevent Filipinos from deviating from their family's expectations. The pressure to uphold *utang na loob* (indebted gratitude) towards their parents drives many Filipinos to follow and put their family's desires ahead of their individual pursuits. To depart from their family's career aspirations may feel to the individual that they have lost gratitude, which may lead to guilt (*hiya*)

and shame (*hiya*). Our participants' ability to pursue their careers in education may be a consequence of their American upbringing and assimilation into American societal values.

### ***Acquiring Cultural Values from Our Families***

The CLE participants referenced the significance of their family's influences on their values and identity as leaders. Specifically, a considerable amount of acknowledgment was given to the indigenous Filipino values as the foundation of navigating our workspaces. The values and origins of their families and upbringing were relatively identical to each participant. Through storytelling and examining its origins, we connected our indigenous and familial values as critical in how we led schools.

For Filipinos, their families are catalysts to what they do, how hard they work, and the type of work they engage in. While the participants vary in how they became Americans, the way they experience the United States as Filipino Americans is parallel. The participants indicated similarities in their acquisition of Filipino cultural values and career expectations from their families. As one participant disclosed, "how I treat others, I learned from how I was treated in my family and within my Filipino community."

As the most influential social structure, their families provide the foundation for how participants navigate their social environments, including manifestations of their cultural values of how they lead schools. When describing their family's influences, the participants discussed the idea of imposed guilt (*hiya*) and reciprocity (*utang na loob*) as a source of motivation to excel at work. These values, along with *kapwa* (shared identity) and *pakikisama* (pakikisama), surfaced as family values that transcended into their workspaces. *Utang na loob* is the mechanism by which the Filipino's deep loyalty to their family is preserved. For the CLE participants, the values and interpersonal dynamics we learned in our families transformed us as

collectivist leaders. Modeled by our families is the importance of community and caring for others; that, as a collective, we are stronger than the individual. The following sections further describe how these values are deeply embedded in our family connections.

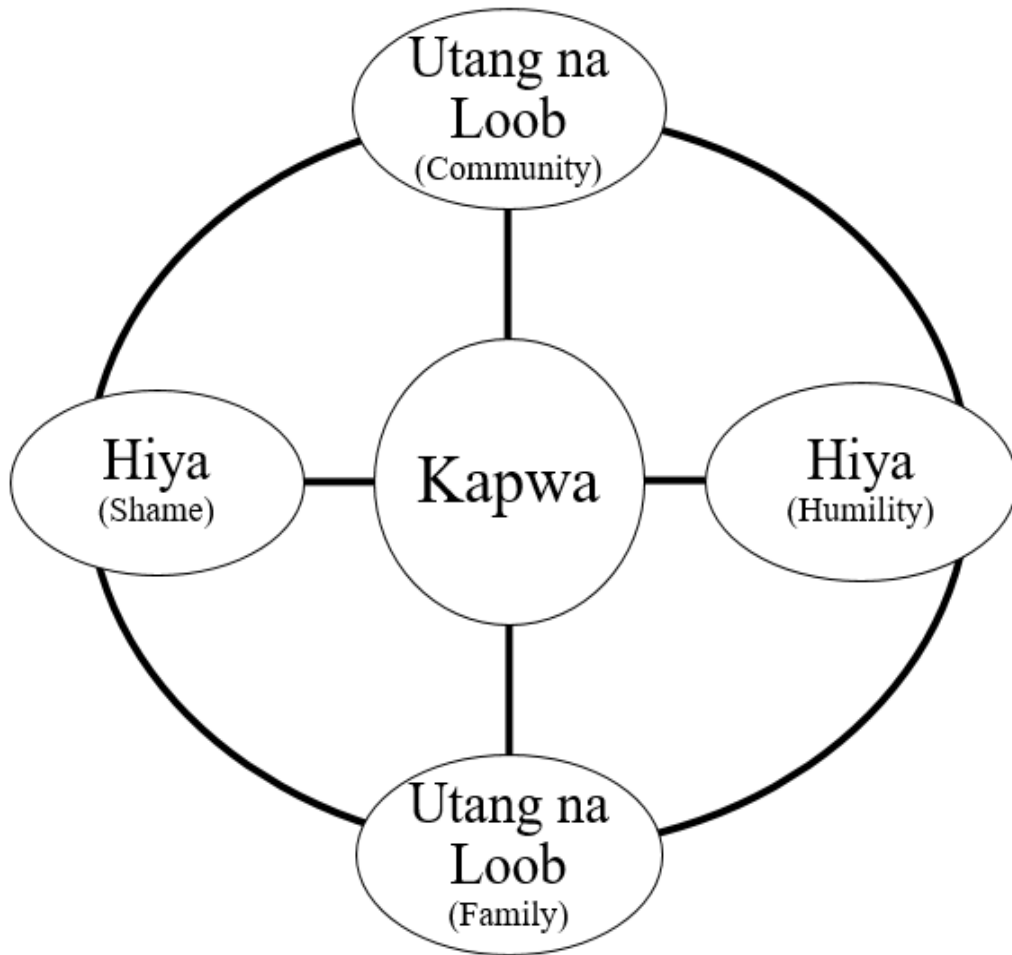
## **Finding 2: Filipino Cultural Values: Effects on Filipino American Leaders**

Expressed in this research study were the effects and the intersections of Filipino and Western cultural values on six Filipino-American principals. Through storytelling and personal narratives, it was observed that these values influenced career choices, including their altruistic need to serve and care for others. Two cultural values emerged notably at play that the participants referenced as the forces that delivered the Filipino's need to establish *kapwa*: *hiya* and *utang na loob*. Figure 12 demonstrates the relationship of *hiya* and *utang na loob*, with their variations, in fulfilling the essence of *kapwa*.

Commonly, an expression in one language may not be expressed in another. Quine (1969) referred to this concept as the indeterminacy of translation, referring to the inability to completely translate the full meaning of a word from one language to another. With the multiple meanings and essence of these Tagalog words, my attempt to translate these indigenous words into English is to provide non-Filipinos an understanding based on their realities. The use of Tagalog words depicts realities specific to Philippine culture; it is the most accurate way of depicting the lived experiences of Filipinos. The following section describes *hiya* and *utang na loob* as it is meant in multiple contexts and situations affecting Filipino leaders.

### ***Hiya (shame) and Hiya (humility)***

Filipino guilt, or what Nadal (2011) also referenced as Catholic guilt, can be defined as the “feeling of remorse, self-doubt, or personal responsibility that results when a Filipino or Catholic engages in sinful or inappropriate acts” (p. 126). The intensity with which an individual



*Figure 10.* Relationship of Hiya, Utang na Loob, Kapwa.

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conforms to the social structure of the family or community is controlled by the desire to avoid *hiya*. Sourced from their upbringing, CLE participants presented *hiya* in the form of guilt and shame as a factor in their identity as Filipino American administrators. Conversely, *hiya*, as represented by humility, is a collectivist attribute that restrains an individual to put the community before their individual needs.

**Hiya - Humility.** *Hiya*, as a virtue, demonstrates humility, a conscious self-control or restraint of the individual. Adhering to the collectivist value of *kapwa*, the participants believed in putting the community before their individual needs. Participant QO described this type of *hiya* by saying:

We're totally humble; it goes back to saying we're not boastful. We're better at giving compliments to other people than we receive them. I'll usually deflect it when others give them to me. That's just how I was raised. It's how it always has been. I really just thought that it was me.

They deflect compliments by reciprocating focus on others, which may demonstrate the value of *pakikisama* (to get along with others), emphasizing group harmony and unity rather than attracting attention to themselves. Several study participants acknowledged that this type of *hiya*, the inability to self-advertise compared to their Western counterparts, puts Filipinos at a disadvantage in seeking promotions or higher-level positions within their institutions. The ability of Filipinos to be selfless and show humility as an asset was also perceived by the participants as a challenge in their career advancement.

The value of *hiya* is also demonstrated in the way Filipinos communicate. To ensure *pakikisama* (to get along with others), *hiya* prevents us from boasting and acquiring individual attention. It is about the collective, not the individual effort that we desire to be recognized. As

collectivists, this behavior may, in part, be a mechanism to uphold communal unity (*bayanihan*) and its preservation of *kapwa*. Coupled with a sense of *hiya* and obligation towards others (*kapwa* and *utang na loob*), participants expressed discomfort with individual attention and were unwilling to self-advertise. While the CPR members relied on their “actions to speak for their work,” they also mentioned their reliance on others to recognize them as a result of *hiya*. This idea resonated when a participant stated, “they will recognize you if you are good enough.” Unfortunately, according to Kim and Berry (1993), the United States is a culture that emphasizes independence and outcome-oriented aspects of communication, such as clarity and effectiveness. On the contrary, Filipinos are interdependent communicators, which emphasizes avoiding hurting the listener’s feelings and minimizing impositions. With the recognition from others unrealized, the participants cited that their inability to self-advertise their accomplishments might prevent them from career advancements.

**Hiya - Shame or Guilt.** An alternative form of *hiya*, as an emotion of guilt or shame, profoundly affects Filipinos' social behaviors and interactions. In this context, it is a cultural value that drives Filipinos to be obedient and respectful to their parents, older siblings, and authority figures. Along with *utang na loob*, *hiya* towards their parents is a factor in the CPR participants’ career choices. In this context, Filipinos put the family's happiness and desires first, even if it is at a cost to the individual. *Hiya*, as shame may be a reason for Filipinos to work hard and strive for excellence regardless of consequences to themselves. This is to ensure that the individual does not bring shame to the family. For Filipinos, the cause for work extends beyond self-ambitions; rather, every action they take is a reflection of their family and their ancestors. As one participant disclosed, “we have shame because we don’t want our families to be ashamed of us. We also want them to be proud of us. If we bring shame, then we show guilt.”



Growing up, the participants jokingly admitted that most of the guilt they received came from their mothers. As children, when they were unruly, they often heard their mothers say, “I raised you, and this is what you are going to do. You will give me high blood pressure and a heart attack!” The participants told stories of passive-aggressive behaviors from their mothers as a way to shame them. For example, when they could not attend a family gathering, their mothers would remember and disclose to the whole family at the next gathering that they were unable to attend because of a more significant event. A participant stated, “I am a representation of my family, and so I’m going to make sure that whatever I do is to make them proud because the opposite is not to shame the family; the goal is always not to embarrass them.”

Hiya can also attach a stigma for one to admit they are having mental health issues. It can lead people to avoid seeking therapy for fear of bringing shame to their community, family, and themselves. This unmanaged mental health care barrier makes Filipino Americans have lower rates of seeking help than the general U.S. population and lower still compared to other Asian minority groups (Martinez et al., 2020). One participant shared their struggles with mental health and how her family managed it, “I was first diagnosed years ago with anxiety, and I remember being asked if it runs in the family. And I remember thinking, I don’t know, they don’t talk about it.” She never told her mom until adulthood because she feared her reaction. The participant worried that her mom would feel that she did something wrong and that her mother would feel she had caused it.

With their function to serve and the expectations of serving others, like parents, this idea naturally manifests in participants’ workspaces. The participants disclosed that they leveraged the concept of guilt, as they learned from their parents, to influence their staff. Having confidence in fostering strong relationships with individuals as a consequence of their collectivist

cultural values, they also agreed that to feel guilt, a strong relationship must already have been established, “you can’t guilt them unless you have a relationship with them.” When a staff member resisted an initiative, the participants felt confused and distressed as they expected reciprocity and support from their employees. During these instances, the CLE participants would question their actions and, at times, blame themselves. “I think like sometimes I feel as if I’m the one who did something wrong; that way, it’s easier for me to fix it myself. It’s almost like the default.” The feeling of shame or guilt as an expectation for themselves and others was prevalent among the Filipino American principals participating in these CLEs.

With the understanding of *hiya* as a form of shame or guilt, the CLE participants reflected on how *hiya* manifests in their workspaces. Some connected their employers as figures of authority, with similar self-imposed obligations they have towards their parents. Filipinos may protect and work loyally for their employers to avoid shaming them. Through this, the Filipinos' life comes with greater responsibility to others. This form of *hiya* may also be responsible for the inner struggles of colonial mentality that many Filipinos continue to experience in Western societies today.

### ***Utang na Loob to Family and Community***

Another cultural value of the Filipinos surfaced in the coded data sets. *Utang na loob*, in its literal English translation, is debt from one’s inner self, or reciprocity in its simplest term. In this research study, we discovered the variations of the acts of *utang na loob* in the context of the community and in the participants’ personal spaces. In traditional Filipino communities, *utang na loob* is key to upholding *bayanihan* (communal unity). As school leaders, an established behavior for Filipino principals is to promote *bayanihan* by reciprocating appreciation by performing tasks for others. Figure 11 demonstrates an example of the mechanism of these

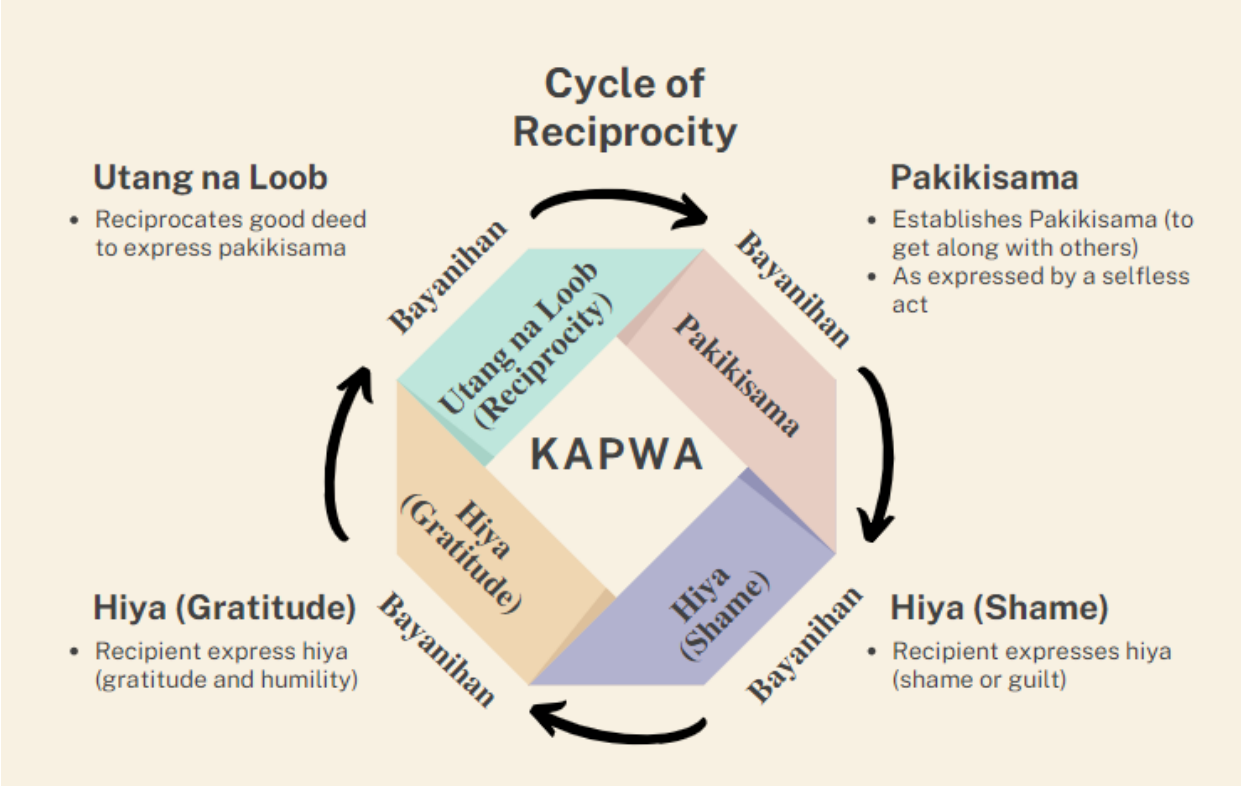


Figure 11. Cycle of Reciprocity.

values in establishing *bayanihan* through *pakikisama*, *hiya*, and *utang na loob*. At the core of these values is the recognition of a shared identity, *kapwa*. This pattern of reciprocity is a mechanism we use to establish relationships and for collectivists to establish teams. In this regard, Filipinos will attempt to provide support to kick-start the cycle multiple times until they feel that their acts are continuously not reciprocated.

**Utang na Loob Within Community.** In indigenous societies, relying on the community to care for each other is critical to an individual's survival (Desai, 2016). This pattern of reciprocity is visible in the Filipino value of *utang na loob*. Its whole meaning in all its ramifications is not easily defined; this expression represents an essential system of reciprocal obligations and behavioral expectations governing Filipinos' lives. Demby (2022) described *utang na loob* as a debt of one's inner soul. *Utang na loob* is "this feeling of needing to pay somebody back for something they did for you. This relationship could be with anyone – a friend, a family member, a colleague, a parent - anyone who did something meaningful for you" (Demby, 2022). It refers to reciprocity and doing what's good for the collective.

In Philippine villages, the act of *utang na loob* is key in upholding *bayanihan*. One of the participants told a story that exemplified this connection about her upbringing in the Philippines. The participant's father was a judge and owned the only van in their province. In a remote area where ambulances and travel are not easily accessible, their family's van was utilized by the village for a variety of reasons.

We grew up, and I can't tell you how many people had died in our van because we knew that when somebody had a heart attack, they came to our house and you go, it doesn't matter what time, with no questions, you take them to the hospital, and in some cases, you bring that body back home.

Conversely, when their family needed something, for example, when her father wants as simple as a particular fruit, “the whispers among the neighbors start, and people would deliver.” She attributed this to the priorities that Filipino families:

hold dear and everybody learned growing up as a kid about stories of *bayanihan* (spirit of communal unity and cooperation), you will not survive if you don’t know *bayanihan*.

When troubles come knocking on your door, and your neighbors don’t like you, you’re dead.

As an example, she talked about it in a practical sense “if you are not caring of your neighbors and a typhoon comes, and if your roof gets blown off, no one will help you.” Another participant alluded that “if you are not working to be a part of the community, then you’re in a sense getting voted out.” In these communities, good or bad, the family’s deeds last for generations, with their surnames attached to a particular trait. Usually, these bonds may last for generations leaving descendants to pay for their ancestors’ debt. This sense of gratitude and responsibility ensures that families and communities stay intact.

While the examples mentioned were based on events demonstrating how *utang na loob* and *bayanihan* may transpire in the Philippines, these values are embodied in our Filipino American principals as they perform their obligations as leaders in their community. Their natural ability to integrate into the community and act to serve the community are *bayanihan* characteristics common with these participants. This includes prioritizing the community's needs over the self and their altruistic sense to serve the underserved. While this trait can be perceived as an asset, it also poses a problem for Filipinos when others do not reciprocate. As collectivists, their sense of communal unity and cooperation may lead to feelings of frustration and exploitation in the American individualistic society.

As the CPR members experienced, the inability of others to reciprocate, as with colleagues from an individualist society, caused our participants confusion, leading to them questioning their actions and, at times, finding blame in themselves. We would then be more hesitant and mindful of these reactions by others as we include them in future projects. Coincidentally, internalized feelings of exploitation, disappointment, and self-guilt arise when others fail to reciprocate. In this statement, Principal GK expressed her confusion about others' inability to reciprocate.

It's all about reciprocity; that's the concept of *utang na loob*, if you do something for me, then I am inclined to do something for you. I never understood why people don't understand that. That's part of being in a community, or you will get voted out. Growing up, you always knew that if I did this, then I might get things in return. At the same time, there's no expectation of getting something back unless you're family.

**Utang na Loob in Families.** In personal spaces, *utang na loob* is the mechanism that preserves Filipinos' loyalty to their families. For Filipino parents, the imposed debt on their children comes from childbirth and rearing, a debt their children are forever bonded with and can never be paid. A participant disclosed her expectations for her children when she stated, "we just need to make sure we care for them because we know if we take care of them, they're going to take care of us." This statement echoed the intergenerational contract of reciprocity between parents and children. *Utang na loob* is also responsible for the participants need to make their parents proud. "They're always the first ones in my mind, to make them proud, I don't even think about myself, like being proud of myself; I think that's the least I can do for what they've done for me," as one referenced about her need to repay her debt to her parents by making them proud. Even in the act of participating in this study, participants referenced *utang na loob* as a

source of their participation, “we want to help you with your doctorate because we know that there’s going to come a time and you’re gonna help us with something or we know you’ll be there.” They also discussed how misdeeds and their consequences are long-lasting. One participant observed, “if you do something wrong like twenty years ago, oh no, as if the gods are watching. You never want to be in that position; the following drama will be unbearable.”

For many Filipinos, their strong desire to uphold their *utang na loob* to their families and follow their parents’ aspirations significantly impacted their becoming educators and how they perform their duties. Like many children raised biculturally, our principals straddled two cultural influences to become educators. As with other Filipinos positioned and influenced by their family’s career expectations, this, perhaps, is a factor in the underrepresentation of Filipinos in education. While performing their duties as principals and averting family shame (*hiya*), showing *utang na loob* to their parents “to make them proud” motivates our participants to perform highly in their profession. Principal NS talked about the source of why, as a Filipina, she works hard.

We will do what it takes to make our family proud of us. I just remember growing up that I’m a representation of my family, so I’m gonna make sure that whatever I do, is to make them proud. Because the opposite is don’t put shame (*hiya*) on the family, don’t embarrass them. I work hard, and when you do, your parents and family will talk about you; they show off their kids, which is their pride. You do what you do to make them proud. It’s always about my parents first. It’s not about me, so when I think of my parents as proud, I always think about them and their feelings first.

This intergenerational contract of reciprocity between parents and children by rewarding the parents of their accomplishments is a deep-rooted motivation for our principals to do a good job.

In doing so, Filipino principals are community-centered, with limited issues in performing their duties.

As reciprocity and collaboration are endemic to Filipinos based on their upbringing, how these values manifest at work and how they respond to their supervisors and care for their staff are reasonable. The participants disclosed that they unknowingly have similar expectations for their staff and supervisors at work. Filipino Americans may conform, comply, or obey because they expect others to return the favor or want to be socially accepted by others (*pakikisama*). With these collectivist assumptions, there were situations of disappointment when expectations were not reciprocated by those they worked with. They might find it challenging to recognize the differences in these transactions and instead find blame in themselves for their inability to connect. This was evidenced by the confusion some participants expressed regarding why people do not reciprocate, “I never understood why people don’t understand; that’s part of being in a community.” In close circles, they complain to those that understand their culture. Unfortunately, there are limited opportunities for them to be in places where they feel understood culturally and the demands of being a site administrator synchronously. They internalized these emotions and experienced self-blame, “I think like sometimes I feel as if I’m the one who did something wrong.” They become ashamed of their actions and express guilt for the lack of the expected reciprocation.

**Walang Utang na Loob.** *Utang na loob*, if applied in society, can propel other values, such as concern for social justice and the common good. As this process is invaluable, in Filipino society, it is also prone to misuse and abuse in Filipino society. In its toxic form, it can create a feeling of helplessness over a person where a person is helped and manipulated in the future. Otarra and Flynn (2021) suggest that Spanish colonization through Catholicism has taken



advantage of *utang na loob*. In converting the native Filipinos, the Spaniards understood the Filipinos' need to reciprocate, for “civilizing” them and for teaching them the ways of Catholicism. *Utang na loob* could be abused by holding the debt to someone’s head to get what one wants. It can then be exploitative.

It is easy to understand that some, especially Filipino Americans, would like to draw the line. This, however, is easier said than done. In Filipino culture, if the receiver does not reciprocate, they are deemed *walang hiya* (no shame) or *walang utang na loob* (no gratitude). When people try to end *utang na loob* relationships, even very exploitative ones, they are treated as betraying the community. They then feel that something is wrong with them and that they are not good enough (David, 2013). Consequently, the feeling of not being good enough is an experience many Asian American college students feel toward their experiences with their immigrant parents (Murphy-Shigematsu et al., 2012). To attend to these feelings and residual colonial mentality, a network of Filipino American administrators, where they can feel cultural affirmation and support of their actions, is beneficial in managing self-doubt and invalidating emotions.

Based on the data collected from this research study, the CLE participants demonstrated the close association of *hiya* (shame/guilt) and *utang na loob* (gratitude reciprocation) as Filipino values with significant influence on how Filipinos navigate their personal and professional spaces. The failure of a Filipino individual to participate in *utang na loob* brings feelings of *hiya*. When an individual fails to meet an intended goal or has performed an act that results in either familial or community disapproval, *hiya* or shame is the result. This guilt is directly correlated with *hiya* (shame), with Filipinos behaving in ways to avoid bringing shame to the family at all costs. There is a strong impulse for the child to avoid embarrassment to the family. As a

participant stated, “growing up, I was constantly reminded not to bring shame to myself and the family. I always saw it as a way to honor them, to reciprocate the things they’ve done for raising me. To this day, I still think about that.” In a traditional Filipino construct, an individual not knowing how to reciprocate or not having *utang na loob* (*walang utang na loob*) is considered shameless (*walang hiya*).

In these examples, many cultural values transpired, both separately and interdependently. While we may perceive these values as separate with characteristics that establish their worth, they are interwoven to form a cyclical nature in Filipino society. It is a cycle that relies on a fragile balance of giving and taking, shame and pride, and *kapwa* (shared identity or inner-self shared with others) or *walang kapwa* (losing one’s personhood) serving as the connection that Filipinos have to each other. These realizations and reflections became available only through discussions with individuals of similar values and upbringing. Our ability to form a network where we can feel affirmed and supported by others that look and act like us is essential in developing culturally authentic leadership (Young & Hockfield, 2019). The formation of an affinity group and discussion via the CLE has allowed the participants to not only rediscover their identity but also offered a place to develop ideas to reconnect others with their identity and support activism.

### **Finding 3: Bayanihan (Communal Unity): Working Together - Affinity Space**

Patterned in the Filipino custom of *bayanihan*, the participants disclosed the importance of a network established from the authentic spirit of communal unity. As with other collectivist cultures, *bayanihan*, a Filipino custom referring to the spirit of communal unity, work, and cooperation, is an asset and a driving element in how Filipinos function in their personal and workspaces. In the Western context, *bayanihan* may bear a resemblance to what Bandura (1997)

calls “collective efficacy,” which he defined as “a group’s shared belief in its conjoint capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment” (p. 477). According to Hattie (2009), collective efficacy strongly correlates with student achievement. In fact, Hattie (2009) positioned collective efficacy at the top of the list of factors that influence student achievement. For Filipinos, it is our innate ability to work and cooperate to achieve a particular goal as a community.

As educational leaders, we encounter a wide spectrum of situations daily, with many of our staff relying on us for answers or solutions. As heads of schools, we are in isolating circumstances with limited opportunities to interact with those in similar situations. For culturally underrepresented leaders, this experience is amplified. In the case of Filipino American principals, our ability to form an affinity group through this research project has provided a secure space where participants can feel authentic and vulnerably safe. This study observed the importance of a professional network where participants can feel personally and professionally supported by others of similar cultural backgrounds.

The CLE participants expressed isolation and being different, even in Asian American spaces. One participant stated, “even though we have some opportunities to be in Asian American spaces, I still don’t feel at home, that we belong; it’s definitely a different feel being here.” Another reported, “I still feel weird with my Korean and Chinese friends in education; while there are similarities, their culture is still very different.” A CLE participant disclosed that while similarities can be found in these professional Asian American spaces, they have difficulties expressing their true selves. Additionally, he stated, “I felt like I was forcing myself to be like them.” Even within Asian American spaces, there is a lack of acknowledgment that

certain Asian groups have privileges over others. Often, representation in these spaces is determined by their level of privilege.

The evidence from PAR Cycle Two indicated that engagement in a CLE was meaningful for the CPR members, both as a supportive network for administrators and as an authentic space for the school leaders to be vulnerable. Together, the Filipino American principals realized the importance of a Filipino American space. In the CLE, apart from the similarities of their job functions, the participants made connections instantly through storytelling, shared experiences of their upbringing, and familiarity with cultural values. CLE members reported the benefits of a Filipino American affinity group, from having a space to feel authentic to validation. A member noted, “we can be authentic in this space, we’re relaxed in this space, we can share things we wouldn’t normally share with others. So, this space is essential for all of us to validate who we are and our culture.” Another participant described what the space meant for them, “having this space for us benefits my soul, it benefits my mental state, and it grounds us.” Two participants with at least ten years of administrative experience and both as doctoral candidates, disclosed their persistent feelings of being an impostor in their professional roles and as doctoral students. With disbelief, one participant stated, “am I really a principal in charge of all these students and the school?” In the presence of other Filipino American principals, the affirming space provides participants with validation of their positions and accomplishments. One member proposed an external validation source: “when I feel like an impostor, I Google my name and read what others would read about me. I can see what I’ve done on websites and why I am where I am.”

CPR members reported that the times they spent in CLEs were meaningful as a supportive network for administrators and a space where they could be authentically vulnerable.

Principal KP talked about the importance of shared storytelling in our group's ability to connect with each other:

In other academic or job-related spaces, sometimes I feel like it's a competition. Not here, not with you guys. Here we can giggle and talk about mananggal (Filipino mythical monsters). Other organizations are too Americanized. Here, we have the same stories; if you don't have that, that connectedness with each other kind of disappears.

Principal NS agreed and reiterated the importance of stories, saying, "Our stories absolutely matter in how we are connected because my brother-in-law would not be able to relate, and he is Filipino."

Through dialogue, affirmation, and a shared space to promote their culture and values, personal and professional transformations became apparent to the participants. There were changes in how they perceived themselves at work. For example, our CPR members have made noticeable progress in contributing ideas in leadership spaces. They felt more confident in carrying out tasks sourced from a better understanding of their cultural identity. Studying the self through understanding our ontologies was transformative for all cohort members. As a transplant from another county, one participant isolated himself and did not partake in any administrative functions before meeting the group. After one evening, he thanked me and said, "I am glad I had the chance to meet you and your friends; I will definitely be more involved." This statement came after a challenging year after COVID that took an emotional toll on his mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Other participants were observed to be more vocal in leadership meetings. Their confidence in their positions as principals became more apparent after our sessions. The previously novice principals substantiated this observation in our last Cycle Two meetings. After disclosing this observation, one participant said, "thank you for that. I really do

feel more empowered to speak and advocate for our cause in meetings. If we're not the ones talking about this, then whom?" Our ability to feel empowered so we can respond better to the needs of our community is a goal of this research study. Accomplishing this is to have a continuous and compounding effect on the betterment of our communities.

Spaces specific to Filipino principals such as this allowed us to feel belonging and accepted, validating our uniqueness as Filipinos and not feeling isolated. We were individuals first before principals, and we loved that. From Principal Enriquez: "I'm so glad you brought us together for your project, Vern! I've been working in this county for six years, and you're all the first ones outside my district that I've hung out with. I love how we can just all share stories and enjoy each other's company. Thank you."

The essential and isolating work that site principals experience can be daunting. Coupled with the solitude and feelings of loneliness incited by the lack of Filipino American administrators in their respective districts, the experience can bring imbalance in their physical and emotional states, making their work less effective with extreme consequences to the students' learning environment. It is then critical to have networking spaces where site administrators cannot only be professionally developed but also have opportunities where underrepresented site administrators can process and validate the importance of their identity to impact the lives of our minoritized students further. While the CLE made significant progress in identifying the sources of their culturally related practices and has identified action items to support their work in promoting their cultural values, there is much work to be done in both sustaining the practices that have been identified and growth as research practitioners. In addition to recognizing the importance of an affinity space in the participants' professional and personal development, they additionally recognized the value of fostering a Filipino American community

in our workspaces and activism to elevate the needs and recognize the contributions of Filipino Americans in the United States.

### ***Filipino American Community Advocacy and Activism***

Underrepresented in educational leadership, the CLE provided participants with an environment to reflect on their cultural identity and how the current system is underperforming in representing their traditional cultural values. The CLE meetings generated recommendations on promoting their identity, culture, and values in their workspaces. This includes how they may better advocate for each other, providing Filipino American youth opportunities to learn better about their culture as Filipino Americans, and providing mentorship to Filipino American educators.

With their indigenous collectivist values in tow, Filipinos are best known as hard workers, displaying resilience, creativity, and resourcefulness in their daily lives. These uniquely Filipino qualities help us stand out as workers in our respective fields. Unsurprisingly, many foreign companies prefer offshoring in the Philippines and work with Filipino teams for quality work (Munoz & Welsh, 2006). However, as great as the workers are, the Filipinos, our traditional cultural values have conditioned our Filipino American participants to take the back seat and wait to be recognized for professional advancement. *Hiya*, as a complex quality of the Filipinos, may play a part in these occurrences. *Hiya* can be further defined as “a virtue of a person that controls individual wants for the welfare of the other person (*kapwa*)” (Lasquety-Reyes, 2016, p. 69). The value cautions the individual to self-promote to gain an advantage over the community. However, in a society where individualism is valued, and credentials serve as currency for career advancements, Filipino American participants discussed the need to support and promote one another when opportunities arise.

The participants agreed not to rely on others to recognize their great work. They questioned if they should “rely on other people to recognize us and keep waiting or do we recognize ourselves.” One way to do this is to submit award recommendations for each other. One participant stated, “we have integrity, and we would never put forward somebody undeserving, someone that will shame us, right?” Another way of promoting our capacities is a promise to talk positively about each other and look for opportunities to match our talents within our respective organizations. Unnatural and contrary to the value of *hiya* as it may seem, participants felt limited in their abilities to be recognized.

### ***Building the Future from Within***

Unlike other minoritized groups, whose culture is intentionally and annually celebrated, Filipino American students are encouraged to celebrate other cultures but have limited opportunities to celebrate their own. To promote student achievement and affirm the worth and dignity of African American and Latino students, these celebrations are championed and organized by our district leaders that form the African American Latino Leaders in Equity Development (ALLIED). No organization exists for Filipino Americans in most of the participating districts at this point. In one CLE meeting, a participant proposed, “why don’t we highlight our Filipino culture? We should have our own celebrations like we should be uplifting our kids, our students.” This comment sparked several opportunities to establish activities or events that will grow the understanding of the Filipino American youth of their culture. The hope is to empower them and normalize their cultural identity so they may see themselves positively and preserve their culture in the United States. The following two events are examples of activities to establish a culturally based community and call for activism. Several participants of this study facilitated these events, held in the PAR two-cycle.



**Filipino American Community Mixer.** Three CLE participants and their school’s respective Filipino American students and families met. The meeting originated from the idea that Filipino Americans in our school district did not have opportunities to celebrate their culture, expose Filipino American students to their identity, and regard their culture collectively. We intended to introduce ourselves as Filipino American principals in the district, share our background, and solicit information from students and parents on what we collectively hope to accomplish in future meetings. Although, the primary objective of the meeting was solely to recognize that a community of Filipinos exists (see Figure 12). For the principals, the meeting was an opportunity to tighten bonds with their school’s attendees, but introductions and connections were made with those outside their school community as well.

The meeting was the first of its kind in the school district. A parent with multiple children who attended the district disclosed that her son:

didn’t know too much about being Filipino until college. A space like this would have really benefited his identity as a Filipino growing up. My son Jack graduated from UCLA and just embraced the culture of being Filipino when he was there; I just wish he knew more about it earlier.

The parent also shared that “having three Filipino principals in this district is new and amazing ‘because I’ve been in this district for a long time, and we’ve never had this before. It’s important that my children see you guys in your positions.” This event became the catalyst to look for other opportunities to build this community and for the three principals to collaborate further between their three schools.

**Filipino American Activism.** The Filipino American Mixer afforded not only the Filipino American principals to generate a list of Filipino families in their respective schools; the

Join us for an Informal Meeting/Mixer/“Halo-Halo”  
for Filipino-American students & their families.  
Bring a dish to share, celebrate our common  
heritage, network, and build community together!



Hosted by Filipino-American Principals in the Learning Community:  
Narciso Sumbillo, Principal,  
Vern Caruz, Site Principal  
Lucy Villanueva, Principal



*Figure 12.* Filipino mixer flyer and event photos.

list also offered the ability to communicate and forward the families with information readily and with ease. Another opportunity to engage the Filipino American community in our school district came when the San Jose Public Library held a virtual conversation on Filipino American activism commemorating the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander heritage month (see Figure 13). Students and parents also discussed activism and the need for unity within the Filipino American community. Through storytelling, the audience heard the contribution of the Filipino Delano Manongs and Larry Itliong, the former president of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee. There were impassioned calls and rationale for activism. Specifically from *manong* (a term used to address an elderly man) Alex Edillor, founder of the Delano Filipino American historical society when he said, “tell the story in your neighborhoods about heroes like *manong* Larry, advocate for change, look for opportunities where you can raise your voice and say no longer are we gonna be the invisible force in this American society.” Inspired by these words, I view this study as an expression of activism and liberation from colonial mentality.

The CPR members sought opportunities to meet as an affinity group to learn more about and process the cultural values forming our identities. As we continued with the discovery of self, we viewed our CLEs as social justice and anti-racism in action. This PAR study consisted of two PAR cycles, which were intended to develop a community of practice in which we centered on the elements of our research questions that include identifying, applying, and promoting the cultural values of Filipino Americans. The data set provided an example of the depth of qualitative evidence I had accumulated to confirm this study’s findings. I analyzed from this data set in PAR Cycle Two as well as other data sets and intersected those with the emergent themes from PAR Cycle One to determine the findings. The final data set for each finding include codes

**AANHPI** **MONTH**  
**HERITAGE**

**LEAD FILIPINO**

FILIPINO AMERICAN NATIONAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
**DELANO CHAPTER**

**FRIDAY  
MAY 27, 2022  
5:00 PM**

**FILAM COMMUNITY & ACTIVISM:  
A VIRTUAL CONVERSATION**

Join us as we recognize and celebrate our Filipino American community. Hear from Alex Edillor, founder of the Delano Chapter of the Filipino American Historical Society, and Dr. Angelica Cortez, founder and executive director of LEAD Filipino, as they share their stories and many contributions to our society.

SCAN OR VISIT [BIT.LY/SJPLFILAM](https://bit.ly/sjplfilam)  
FOR MORE INFORMATION

Free event.  
Online registration required.

San José Public Library

Figure 13. Filam community and activism event.

from individual and group meetings, reflective memos, and community events transcripts and artifacts. As my coding evolved over the two cycles, I became more adept and specific about the coding for data, and it came to represent the three findings discussed.

### **Conclusion**

Through storytelling, interviews, and group conversations, the data indicated three findings from conducting a qualitative content analysis. First, this research study presented the significant influence of the Filipino family on cultural development and career choices. We discussed the immigration pathways the participants' families took in becoming American. Their pathways were not uncommon to many immigrants seeking improved opportunities for their families. Second is the personal and professional effects and influences of Filipino cultural values as educational leaders in their workspaces. While many cultural values, including the significance of the Western values they acquired for being American were at play in the participants' identity, two Filipino cultural values surfaced prominently: *hiya* and *utang na loob*. These values have interlinking effects on Filipino American principals' desire to establish *bayanihan* and, more profoundly, *kapwa*. *Hiya* as a source of shame and guilt, and *utang na loob* to their parents were the source of motivation to work hard and strive for excellence. *Hiya*, as in displaying humility, was a way to establish togetherness at work, but also seen by participants as a source of their inability to be under-recognized. *Utang na loob*, one's ability to reciprocate, is a mechanism, when continuous, enables the harmonious reciprocation of good deeds towards each other. This fuels the nature of *bayanihan* and, when discontinued, may cause underappreciation and self-guilt that our participants experienced. As collectivists and operating under the principle of Guajardo et al.'s (2016) CLE axiom tenet that "the people closest to the issue are best situated to discover answers to local concerns," a third finding of this research

study is the importance of affinity spaces for Filipinos to feel affirmed and supported. The effectiveness of affinity groups allows Filipino American principals the ability to express themselves authentically with fellow “insiders” of the culture. The network allowed participants to re-engage with their Filipino identity, reflect on their values, and understand better, how their cultural values permeate their personal lives and work as educational leaders. These spaces provided safety where they could feel authentic and understood by others of similar cultural backgrounds. There also is a need to establish Filipino American community groups in schools to empower the youth, preserve their culture from within the community, and act as a source of activism and unity within the Filipino American community. The PAR Cycles informed the CPR members of the importance of meeting as an affinity group to support each other and as a place to cultivate their identities and explore ways to promote the Filipino culture.

In the next and final chapter, I reviewed the study findings and discussed them within the context of corresponding literature associated with this research study. Following this discussion, I reviewed the research questions and presented a framework to assist in building an understanding of the cultural assets Filipino Americans bring to educational leadership and how to best support and nurture them. In addition, I discuss the implications of this research and subsequent findings about Filipino American educators on practice, policy, and research as it connects to the diverse needs of our changing national demographics. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a reflection on my own leadership development and transformation that transpired over the course of the PAR study.

## CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

For generations, minoritized children have continued to underperform academically, as measured by standardized testing regimens, and socio-emotionally, as demonstrated by the concerning disproportionate levels of emotional harm to which our educational system subjects our students of color (McKenzie, 2009). For these reasons, we need to diversify the perspectives of how we lead schools and leadership practices, where the foundation of its decision-making operations is formed (McKenzie, 2009). As the United States is experiencing a shift in population and student demographics, our school leaders must center and leverage their cultural gifts, assets, and histories to mirror the schools they serve. My Participatory Action Research (PAR) project aimed to empower Filipino American educational leaders to identify their cultural identity, co-create a plan, and apply and promote these cultural values in educational leadership spaces to provide an alternative form of leading the school systems. In addition to these research aims, I hoped this study would foster creative agency and help participants, and later readers, to find their power and voice by engaging directly with local community members. Thus, the design of this research study was predicated on the following theory of practice: If a co-practitioner research group of Filipino American administrators provides one another collegial support to identify their strengths and cultural assets, then they can develop practices that promote an alternative leadership model rooted in their cultural assets.

Inspired by Guajardo et al.'s (2016) Community Learning Exchange (CLE) axioms, this research study was developed under the principle that “people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns” (p. 32). It was likewise founded on the idea that inquiry is “done by or with insiders, but never to or on them” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 3). This research study utilized the PAR approach, an action-oriented advocacy method of inquiry.

PAR aims to create change within a specific setting by directly including those seeking change (Guajardo et al., 2016; Herr & Anderson, 2015). As Filipino Americans who lived, attended, and shared similar backgrounds and cultures to those they serve, this PAR study examined and employed Filipino American school principals as Co-Practitioner Researchers (CPR).

This study also embedded elements of critical ethnography within its design. As we understand complex ideas that juxtapose Western and indigenous values, socio-political factors, and educational concerns, we learn about ourselves and the influences of culture in the structures at play in our professional lives. My methodological design for this study helped me examine and make meaning from the interpretations of social realities expressed by the Filipino American educational leaders who were participants in this study. As participants shared their professional experiences and began looking at them through their Filipino American cultural lenses, their wonderings, and reflections moved toward how they might change their practices to better impact the communities within and surrounding their schools. This shift toward re-imagining their educational leadership practices was important given that although there is a growing number of educational initiatives, those initiatives, and the research literature supporting them, have been limited regarding the influence and impact of the cultural backgrounds and experiences of the leaders themselves. In particular, the backgrounds and experiences of Filipino Americans, whose culture reflects more collectivist-centered approaches to community and educational leadership, have largely been absent in the professional research literature. By investigating the experiences and culturally-informed perspectives of collectivist-centered educational leaders such as the Filipino American participants in this study, this research was designed to provide insight into the role culture plays with Filipino American educational leaders and how these values both manifest at work as well as inform the work itself.



Research designed to learn from the cultural perspectives of educational leaders from diverse backgrounds is important as the demographics of students in public schools in the US continue to grow more diverse. Similar to national trends toward greater racial and ethnic diversity, educators of color continue to be underrepresented in public schools in Santa Clara County, California, where this research study was conducted. This underrepresentation is particularly pronounced in educational leadership positions. In Santa Clara County, Filipino students comprise 4.2% of its student population, yet Filipino American teachers constitute 3.14% of teachers and only 1.8% of its administrators. This equates to only 19 administrators out of 1,030. Meanwhile, White public school teachers and administrators in Santa Clara County are overrepresented, as White students comprise 19.2% of the student population, while 57.8% of teachers and 54.1% of administrators are White. As this study involves the leadership and cultural values of Filipino American educators, six Filipino American principals with schools located in Santa Clara County, California, were employed. Chapter 4 provided a detailed description of the CPR members that participated in the study.

Through Participatory Action Research (PAR), we conducted a study about ourselves to improve not only conditions affecting Filipino Americans in educational leadership but also to represent an alternative form of leadership mindset that others can replicate in their organizations. This study consisted of two PAR cycles. In Table 12, I provide an overview of the key PAR activities from which I collected the variety of data used for analysis. These included data generated from community activities and individual and CPR group meetings. In Table 12, each \* notation represents a CPR member participating in the activities.

Table 12

*Key Activities: Two PAR Cycles of Inquiry*

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Header	PAR Cycle I (Fall 2021)				PAR Cycle II (Spring 2022)			
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Apr	May
Individual Meetings w/ CPR Members	*****							
CPR Meetings		*****	*****	****	*****	*****	****	****
FilAm Community Events							***	***

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Through my data analysis and resultant themes from PAR cycle activities, I identified three findings, which I discuss in detail in the following sections. I developed these findings by identifying relationships between overarching categories and codes from the two PAR cycles to determine emergent themes and subsequently develop a narrative of key findings. The first finding described the influences of Filipino families on the participants' career choices and the acquisition of cultural values that forms the foundation of their leadership styles. The second finding focuses on how these cultural values profoundly affect how Filipino Americans navigate their personal and professional workspaces. The third finding explores how, like many others who have been marginalized in U.S. society, cultural affinity spaces where members collectively create a supportive network to feel authentic and vulnerably safe are essential in supporting the development of Filipino American educators who can become authentic, culturally centered leaders. In this chapter, I summarize the three findings of this PAR and make connections to the literature. I introduce a conceptual framework and respond to the research questions. Finally, I address policy, practice, and research implications and conclude the chapter with a reflection on my leadership development over the course of the PAR study.

### **Discussion**

This PAR project generated a number of key findings. In this section, I reanalyze and substantiate the findings with extant literature. As a result of the findings, I developed a framework for understanding the elements of this study and offered an alternative perspective in establishing organizational unity. I then responded to the PAR research questions, examining the overarching and sub-questions guiding this study.

## **Key Findings and the Literature**

Through the PAR cycles of inquiry findings, I revealed that participating in a Community Learning Exchange (CLE), where Filipino American school leaders can feel authentic to tell their personal stories and have conversations about their culture and identity, supported them toward transformative and culturally responsive school leadership. Our CLE activities allowed us to understand the dynamics common in Filipino families and the genesis of our cultural values. We told stories to explain how, why, and what we have become. We then realized the importance of cultural affinity groups not only as administrators but also for self-validity. Finally, we identified and executed ways of advocacy, building our future from within, and the impact these actions might have in developing future leaders. To reiterate, the PAR findings are:

- influence of family on the development of culture and career choices,
- Filipino cultural values: effects on Filipino American educational leaders, and
- *bayanihan* (communal unity): working together - affinity space.

### ***Influence of Family on the Development of Culture and Career Choices***

The acquisition of Filipino culture is centered on the family structure, which “typically emphasizes respect for elders, loyalty and obligation to the family, and dependence upon the family” (David et al., 2017, p. 45). Many Filipino families are authoritarian, and the power of authority flows from the oldest to the youngest (Santos, 1983). This is demonstrated by the Filipino family’s preservation of absolute respect for the elders. Customary in Filipino families is the physical and linguistic display of respect. For example, it is unthinkable for younger siblings to call older siblings by their first name. Instead, younger siblings refer to their older sisters as “ate” and older brothers as “kuya” as a sign of respect and acknowledgment of their hierarchical place within the family structure. At the peak of this hierarchical order are the elders, the “*lolos*”

(grandfathers) and “*lolas*” (grandmothers) of the families. The elders represent wisdom and are the source of a lifetime of sacrifices for the family, thereby commanding ultimate respect and authority. Demonstrated physically by a “*mano*” (pressing one's forehead to the outreached hand of an elder), an honoring gesture used in Filipino culture performed as a sign of respect to elders and as a way of requesting a blessing from the elder. Children are often punished or reprimanded for not listening or not obeying elders. The disobedience can be seen as disrespectful and may bring shame (*hiya*) to the parents and family (David et al., 2017). The shaping of desirable behaviors and the elimination of unacceptable ones often “take the form of embarrassment (*shaming*) through teasing, derogatory remarks, and gossip” (Agbayani-Siewart & Enrile, 2003, p. 238).

In most households, choosing a career is a serious discussion between the parents and their influence on their child. Filipino families profoundly affect their children's career choices by upholding respect for the elders and applying their cultural values. For Filipino American children, their parents' immigration to the US contributed to their parent's dreams for their children to have comfortable and financially secure lives. As with most immigrants from developing countries, all our study's participants expressed that their parents were seeking more prosperous lives when they came to the US. The intent was for their children to make educational choices that would manifest their parents' aspirations for social and economic mobility through education, a prominent feature of the contemporary immigrant experience (Tseng, 2006). Filipino parents also demonstrated a work ethic fostered by diligence and perseverance. Our participants described their parents' hard work and obtaining jobs requiring less skill with less pay to provide for their families. It is common, even expected to sacrifice the abled self for the good of the family. There was a shared thread of stories between participants

about their family's obligations of monetarily supporting family members left in the Philippines. Their parents' experience made a deep impression as their modeling compelled our participants to work hard and succeed. The participants' desire to please their immigrant parents parallels previous research on 1.5 and second-generation children (Maramba, 2008).

Particularly in Filipino families, children choose careers that would please their parents. This tendency occurs greatly when parents want their children to take similar careers or pursue their family's "line of work." For many, this influence may result in a career choice, not for the child's betterment but for their parent's satisfaction (Brown, 2002). These situations were evident in our CPR participants' initial career choices before their transition to the educational field. Zellweger et al. (2011) observed that families with business backgrounds influenced their children to be successors of the family business regardless of their child's desires. Consequently, many Filipino children pursue careers half-heartedly which may contribute to the persistence of job-and-skills mismatch in the labor market.

Individuals with Filipino and American influences in their vocational path have experienced a marked distinction in their career development in the United States (Badger, 2002). Straddling two opposing cultures is an experience many children of immigrants face. In our study, the pull between the Filipino values of *utang na loob*, a child's obligation to their parents, and *hiya*, avoiding shame in the family, has been a dilemma common to many Filipino Americans.

### ***Filipino Cultural Values: Effects on Filipino American Educational Leaders***

The importance of culture can no longer be refuted. According to Atwater et al. (2021), global leadership and management norms are standardized primarily by researchers and contexts originating in the United States. Additionally, only 5% of those studies discussed the concept of

culture. Peterson and Hunt (1997) suggested, “U.S. culture has a disproportionate influence on the leadership concepts and relationships being used as starting points or building blocks for studies” (p. 220). For readers outside the culture, it is imperative to understand the values affecting how and why people from different cultures sometimes tend to decide differently. By acknowledging these differences, leaders improve their ability to function in various contexts and people (Atwater et al., 2021). For Filipinos, understanding these values' complex dynamics and nuances might enable them to feel validated and better emotionally process the sources and mechanisms of their actions and feelings (David, 2013).

In this study, we determined that *hiya* and *utang na loob* were the cultural values significant to establishing relationships (*pakikisama*) and shared identity (*kapwa*) at work. As a reminder, in its simple form, *hiya* can be translated as shame/guilt or humility, and *utang na loob* as gratitude. In doing so, and in support of Enriquez' (1992) assertion, when these values are aligned and promoted, *kapwa* is then established, thus forming *bayanihan* (collectivism/unity) in the community (see Figure 15). When these values are understood and accepted, they form an unspoken bond and affinity with other Filipinos and their families. David et al. (2017) affirmed this idea by using the Filipino's understanding of what makes a bad person (*masamang tao*). By using the Filipino value system, characteristics of a bad person often include not having (*walang hiya* or (*walang hiya*), *utang na loob* (*walang utang na loob*), and *pakikisama* (*walang pakikisama*). While not having these surface values is terrible, it is not as bad as someone considered to have no *kapwa* or *walang kapwa*. Enriquez (1992) explained this concept best when he stated:

One argument for the greater importance of *kapwa* is the shock or disbelief that the Filipino registers when confronted with one who is supposedly *walang kapwa*. If one is

*walang pakikisama*, others might still say, ‘He (or she) would eventually learn’ or ‘Let him (or her) be; that is his (or her) prerogative.’ If one is *walang hiya*, others say, ‘His (or her) parents should teach him (or her) a thing or two.’ If one is *walang utang na loob*, others might advise, ‘Avoid him (or her).’ But if one is *walang kapwa*, people say, ‘He (or she) must have reached rock bottom. He (or she) is the worst (p. 63).

As experienced and examined by the Co-Practitioner Researchers (CPR), these values, when examined, have deeper and more substantial meanings to Filipinos. While *hiya*, *utang na loob*, *pakikisama*, and *kapwa* are Filipino words or expressions that may have a superficial English translation, their essence and meaning as indigenous words cannot be fully translated without providing context and examples of how they matter in Filipino lives. Quine (1969) termed this inability to fully translate a word's meaning from one language to another as an intermediacy of translation. Quine (1969) suggested that to learn the semantics of a word, one must “see what is stimulating the other speaker” (p. 28). An individual’s experiences and mindset play a critical role in communication. Even when translated into the same language, two individuals may be speaking of the same thing in the same language but may have different thoughts about it in their minds and understanding. Thus, this study’s participants, as culturally experienced Filipino Americans, are essential in understanding the Filipino values at play.

Additionally, the process of CLE, with its emphasis on local voice, conforms with Enriquez’s (1975) areas of protest. Specifically, *sikolohiyang malaya* (liberated psychology) calls for indigenizing studies that challenge the imposition of psychology from a Western perspective that may not be beneficial or provide a false Filipino portrayal. The belief that research and evaluation performed by people who are affected by it the most were shared by Smith (2012). Similar to the CLE process with our CPR, Smith (2015) talked about the



experiences of researchers in Kaupapa Māori as having strong and healthy relationships built on respect, reciprocity, and mutual trust. The Māoris call these experiences *whanaungatanga* or kinship, a sense of family created through shared experiences of working together that provides people with a sense of belonging. This PAR study would not have been possible without the elements of indigenizing studies discussed by Enriquez (1975) and Smith (2015).

**Hiya (Shame/Guilt/Restraint).** As identified by the CLE participants, *hiya* (shame/humility) and *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) were the two Filipino values mentioned as cultural mechanisms that intersect their personal and professional lives. *Hiya* is a Filipino value of conscious self-control or restraint. Based on the participant's actions, *hiya*, in this form, allowed them to perform duties genuinely for their communities and void of external motivations such as the need for praise and positional gains. This is modeled by this statement “we are going to do everything for our community to make sure that they are taken care of, but we are not going to show it off.” *Hiya* may also be the reason for not wanting to “rock the boat.” Characterized in the Western context, this conscious restraint may be negatively perceived. Views of inauthenticity of one's feelings may even follow this line of thinking.

*Hiya*, as in guilt, was useful in subjugating and maintaining control over the people during the colonial period. As the Spaniards took control of the Philippines for 333 years, the introduction of Catholicism to subjugate the Filipinos and use *hiya* as guilt continues today. Guilt or Catholic guilt, according to (Nadal, 2020), is a psychological burden of feeling remorse or overwhelming self-doubt towards deviant or sinful actions. Our participant's ability to see themselves as leaders, with doubts about their leadership potential, may stem from colonial mentality. Colonial mentality is defined as the perception of ethnic and cultural inferiority and a form of internalized oppression (David & Okazaki, 2006). In identifying challenges of Filipino

Americans in leadership, the CPR team expressed undeserving of their leadership positions and highlighted their self-doubt and sense of inferiority. Fanon (1965) asserted that systemic denigration, similar to what occurred with the Filipinos under their colonial rulers, led the colonized to self-doubt, feeling inferior or confused about their identity. The CPR team identified this self-imposed discrimination as a barrier to their inability to acquire leadership positions, lead authentically, and apply their cultural values at work; as expressed by a participant, “we are critical of ourselves and feel unworthy of acquiring higher-level positions.” The sentiments of undeserving of the leadership positions we occupy highlighted our self-doubt. The CPR disclosed conditional bias as perceiving leaders as White males and self-discriminatory feelings of being an imposter.

Perhaps *hiya*, in the context of humility and self-control, as expressed by the CPR, can be better understood if we look at an alternative way of how they are emotionally processed. In this regard, there is a large tradition of thought in Western psychology that emotion has to come inside out so that emotions are there and that when an individual cannot express their emotions, they are being inauthentic (Mesquita, 2001). Freud might even say that they are suppressing their emotions. However, this does not seem to hold in other cultures. Mesquita (2001) observed that suppressed emotions among Asian Americans did not have the same effect. For example, when they suppress anger, they also feel less angry. The manner of thinking seems that if you do not think of your emotions as things inside you that have to be expressed, rather, they are essences that you cannot help. Emotions seen as regulated or adjusted based on situations seem to result in a better outcome. It is a different model of suppressing emotions. One that develops inside an individual and may have the potential to explode at some point; the other suggests that what you do in the world and how you behave in the world, in fact, changes what is happening inside you.

Therefore, what is happening inside you is malleable. Thus, as expressed by the Filipinos, self-restraint or conscious self-control are experienced differently than their American counterparts.

Acquired from their upbringing and avoiding shame in the family, the CLE participants presented *hiya* as a factor in their identity as Filipino American administrators. Unlike the Western perspective, shame in a collectivist culture can be viewed as a proper emotion. In the American culture, parenting tendencies are directed at wanting our children to feel good about themselves. We assume that if we give them enough love and praise, they will realize that they are special and unique to go and master their world. Mesquita (2001) believes this is not a universal goal and that shame, for other cultures, is the more appropriate emotion of parenting. Similar to the Filipino parenting method, parents want their children to feel the value of shame. According to Mesquita (2001), in collectivist cultures, parents want to teach their children social propriety, they want them to take their rightful position in the social network, and they want them to be humble. In such a culture, getting children to recognize that they violated the norms is much more important than getting yourself to recognize that they did something good. Shame is an emotion parents like in their children; children are accepted when they show shame, not rejected. It gives other people the idea that an individual had a proper upbringing. One of the worst insults a Filipino can receive is to be called *walang hiya*, with the literal translation of no shame. When an individual is told they have no shame, they are considered to have not learned how to behave appropriately and did not have the proper upbringing to behave correctly for their role and their position in the social network. As American parents raise their children to be independent and to go out in the world alone, in many Asian cultures, like the Filipinos, parents raise their children to be always interdependently part of their family. Children are expected not to go out in the world alone; they are supposed to keep the family name high. This difference in

parenting through shame or self-confidence significantly impacted the Filipino Americans nurtured within the two cultural spaces.

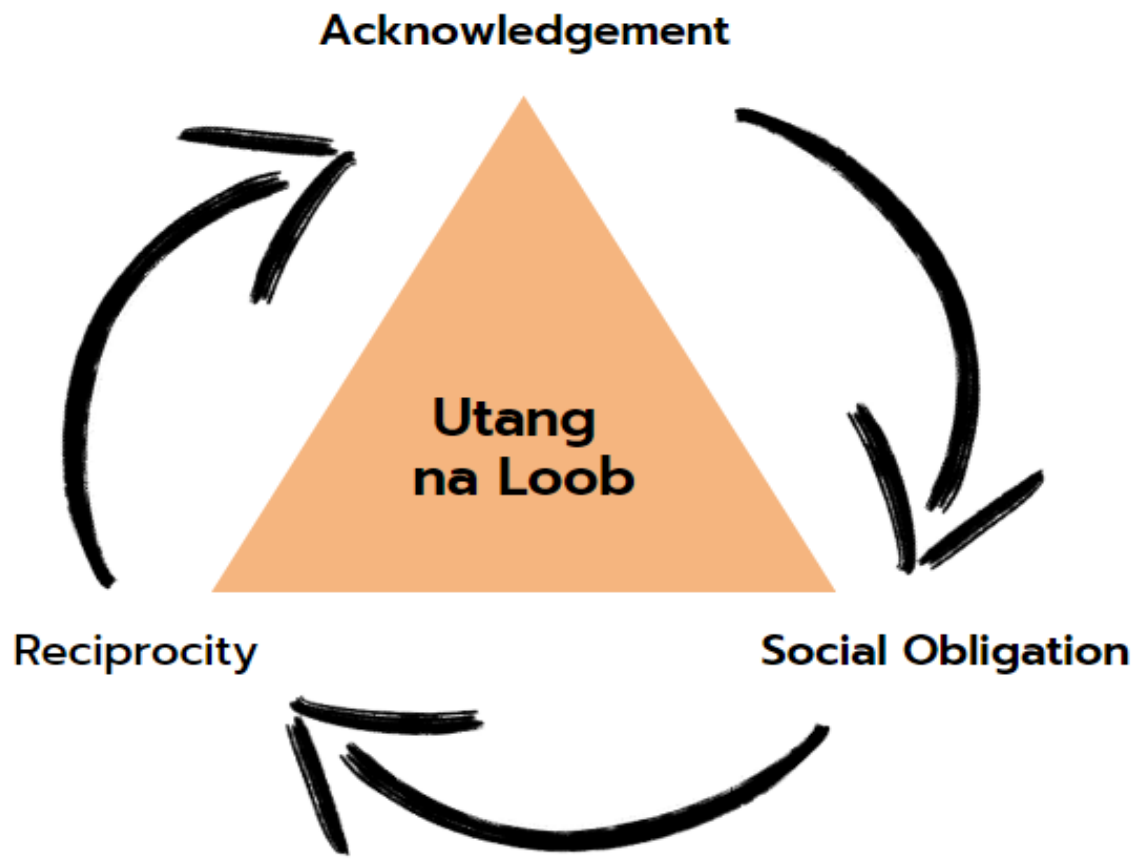
The pressure and stress that our students face is a national epidemic. This may be more pronounced when parental forms of parenting with shame are misaligned with their American-reared children. The CDC reported that in 2020, during the height of COVID-19, the proportion of mental-health emergency department visits among adolescents aged 12-17 years increased by 31% compared with that during 2019 (Yard et al., 2021). A report from the CDC found that more than half of high school students had experienced insults and other forms of emotional abuse from parents or other adults (Krause & Smolle, 2022). Consequently, the shaming intent of parents from collectivist culture may conflict with their U.S.-reared children. The suicide rates of Filipino Americans are significantly higher than other ethnic groups in the United States. According to Javier (2018), “Filipino youths have higher rates of adolescent female suicidal ideation (45.6%) compared with non-Hispanic whites (26.2%), Hispanic (33.4%), and African Americans (25.3%)” (p. 2). The collectivist ideals of parental shaming, as utilized, for example, by Asian parents to uplift their children, may be misaligned with their American-raised children’s view of shaming.

**Utang na Loob (Debt of Reciprocity).** As the second most referenced Filipino value after *hiya*, *utang na loob* played a significant role in our participants' motivation to succeed and how they perceived authority. Translated in English, it is *utang* (debt) *na* (from) *loob* (inner or core); hence *utang na loob* can be literally translated as debt from your inner self or your soul. It is associated with the Filipinos' character of being generous, hospitable, and believing in karma (Agaton, 2017). According to Reyes (2015), *utang na loob* is a dynamic circular process of reciprocity, where demonstrating *utang na loob* to an individual by reciprocation with more than

what is due may result in the receiver reciprocating back the favor. It is an extreme showing of gratitude. This common practice in Filipino society obliges the beneficiary not to forget the deed done even for many years. Its indigenous form is a reciprocating process that may last for generations. Figure 14, as adopted from Rungduin et al. (2015), demonstrates the interaction process of how the construct of *utang na loob* is experienced by many Filipinos. As Rungduin et al. (2015) asserted, acknowledgment comes before all others. As the recipient receives assistance, at the same time, the act elicits acknowledgment even if the received kindness demands no repayment. *Utang na loob* is a communal norm observed between the helper and those who were helped. While there is no requirement for repayment, the social demands of returning the good deed become of primary importance. Reciprocity manifests through the value of repaying. *Utang na loob* then functions as a social and interpersonal norm and becomes a social responsibility or obligation.

While *utang na loob* can be translated as indebtedness (Deloso, 2007), it is also understood among many Filipinos to be non-payable. There is an underlying expectation from the receiver, not the provider, the demand to be acknowledged and recognized. Unlike a regular loan or debt, there is no way to pay back the debt in many cases. It is up to each person to determine how to appropriately reciprocate the favor based on his or her relationship with the person they owe the favor.

In our study's context, the CPR members acknowledged their need to repay their parents by making them proud. All participants echoed this sentiment, "my family is always the first in my mind to make them proud; I think that's the least I can do for what they've done for me." Making their parents proud in their attempt to repay their parents for raising them is a deep source of motivation for all our participants to succeed. This determination to succeed for



*Figure 14.* Interaction process of Utang na Loob.

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reasons beyond self-interest is an asset and attitude many Filipinos possess. The indebtedness they feel for their families is attributed to a strong sense of duty and close connection to family members. However, when the good deed is not reciprocated by others or from those with different cultural perspectives on reciprocation, our CPR participants felt confusion and disappointment. During these situations, the participants confirmed they experience self-blame for their inability to connect and express guilt for the lack of the expected reciprocation from the receiver.

The selfless obligation of putting family first can be a source of tension. Filipinos in the United States are often forced to navigate contrasting and conflicting cultural values. Filipino Americans must make the difficult decision of subscribing to Western values of individualism and independence or adhering to Filipino values of interdependence and connectedness. For many second-generation Filipino Americans or Filipinos residing in Westernized cities in the Philippines, the pressures they feel to uphold traditional cultural values may be contrasted by the Western values of individualism. For them, *utang na loob* may be an infringement of their sense of making it their own way, that their money is theirs, or even that their life is their life to live (Demby, 2022). For second-generation Filipino Americans, these values might take a back seat to the Western culture they have been raised and educated in. Doing so might mean that the individual loses their connection to their community and, in part, might lose a part of their Filipino identity.

The loss of cultural identity and connection to the community may be related to one's physical well-being. Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) posited that parental support and obedience to traditional Filipino values improve psychological well-being. Due to failure to adhere to Filipino values, Americanized Filipino American youths may not feel such familial

support, which may contribute to their level of distress (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000). Highly assimilated Filipino Americans may also experience familial discord. According to a Filipino American Council of Chicago survey, “33% of their respondents experienced parent-child conflicts due to a clash between Filipino and American cultural values” (Cimmarusti, 1996, as cited in David, 2013, p. 133). Heras and Revilla (1994) also observed that mothers of highly assimilated Filipino American youths who no longer adhered to Filipino values have lower family satisfaction than mothers of more acculturated Filipino American adolescents. Subsequently, Filipino Americans considered not having *hiya*, *utang na loob*, or *pakikisama* may become marginalized, making it difficult for them “to connect with other Asian Americans, other minorities, and other Filipinos and Filipino Americans” (David, 2013, p. 133). Maintaining our cultural identity means we are part of a community and are in fellowship with other Filipinos. For Filipino Americans, their inability to have access to the Filipino community might mean a loss of their identity.

### ***Bayanihan (Communal Unity): Working Together - Affinity Space***

In addition to the effects of their cultural values on how Filipino Americans navigate their personal and work spaces, the final finding of this research study is the importance of affinity spaces in preserving the participants’ identity in becoming culturally authentic leaders. Studies have demonstrated interpretations of school principals’ sense of loneliness, such as the heavy burden of responsibility and stress that characterizes their work (Sarpkaya, 2014; Tahir et al., 2014) and the difficulty in developing professional communities (Campbell et al., 2014). As isolating leadership positions already are, this may be compounded by the infrequent interactions leaders have with people sharing similar cultural backgrounds and values.



The United States is steadily increasing its diversity in race and ethnicity. By 2045, it is projected that non-Hispanic Whites will no longer make up the majority of the U.S. population (United States Census, 2020). The changing demographics require that organizations recognize the need to increase diversity and how to create and foster an inclusive climate. While organizations have established efforts in campaigning for integrating diversity into the workplace dialogue, “diversity rhetoric and initiatives do not necessarily lead to positive climates nor is the link between a positive climate and enhanced organizational effectiveness always a strong one” (Groggins & Ryan, 2013, p. 265). As organizations continue to employ initiatives intended to help promote diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace, one strategy few organizations employ involves the creation of homogenous affinity groups (Groggins & Ryan, 2013).

The efforts to form the California Association of Asian and Pacific Leaders in Education (CAAPLE) are necessary and establish the first of its kind in California. In this statewide organization, Asian and Pacific islander educators can connect and grow. However, due to cultural differences among Asian Americans, there is a need to establish further homogenous groups where all groups’ concerns and needs are condensed in a more focused context. CPR members expressed isolation and being different even in Asian American spaces. One participant stated, “even though we have some opportunities to be in Asian American spaces, I still don’t feel at home, that we belong; it’s definitely a different feel being here.” As described in Chapter 4, Southeast Asians, specifically Filipino and Vietnamese Americans, have unique challenges and are disproportionately underrepresented in educational leadership. For example, Filipino and Vietnamese Americans lag in income and college attainment and have higher unemployment rates than their South and East Asian counterparts. This trend can also be observed with Filipino American students underperforming in the California academic standardized assessments. While

the values of collectivism are nurtured and represented in Asian cultures, this research study aims to provide Filipino American administrators with collegial support to identify their cultural identity.

With the differences in Asian American experiences, an affinity space specific to Filipino Americans is necessary to affirm their identity and validate their ability to be culturally authentic leaders. In discussing our values and identity, the CPR members determined that in no other spaces, even within Asian groups, can we discuss our experiences accurately and in full context. Our stories “bond us as siblings.” In alignment with Lambertz-Berndt (2016), our CPR group served us two purposes, emotional and instrumental. According to Parsons and Ridley (2012), the emotional purpose of affinity groups allows for an expressive outlet on highly sensitive topics. Parsons and Ridley (2012) claim that “the relationships gain through race-based affinity groups enable them to feel less alone with their emotions and help them build a stronger sense of self” (p. 40). Affinity groups allow participants to discuss emotional topics related to shared identity characteristics not readily available in work-related dialogues. Sharing similar experiences and challenges gave us an invaluable feeling of unity. Additionally, instrumentally, affinity groups promote information and knowledge sharing among the participants and identify and develop action steps to address the community’s needs (Van Aken et al., 1994). Such is the case for our CPR group. Emotionally, our affinity group provided us with a space where participants felt authentically safe and where they “can share things they wouldn’t normally share with others.” For second-generation Filipino Americans, affinity spaces may allow them to connect and help preserve their identity and be led by their cultural values to lead educational environments. Instrumentally, our affinity space allowed us to develop action steps for advocacy and the development of Filipino communities within our respective schools. This enabled us to

provide Filipino American youths the ability to learn their culture better and mentorship.

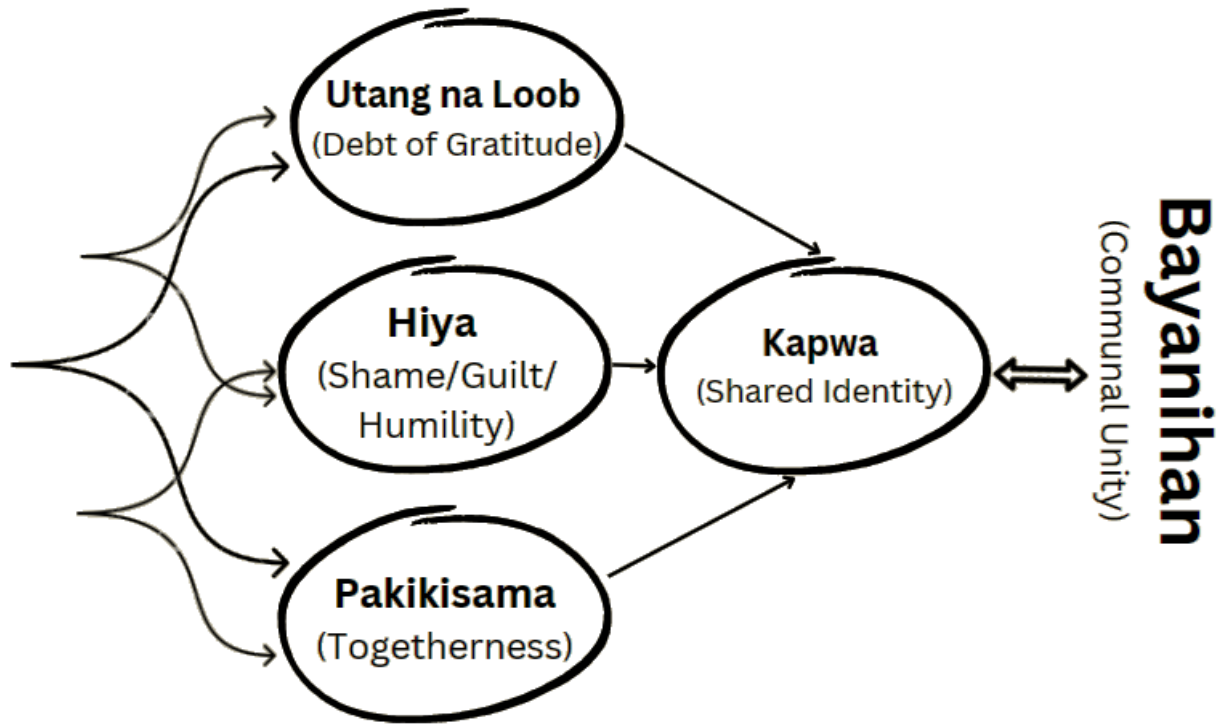
Professionally, affinity groups are essential in building the leadership capacities of Filipinos.

### **Emergent Conceptual Framework**

In our PAR cycles, we told stories about our family's journey of becoming American and discussed the values that make us Filipino. The task of identifying key concepts for understanding people's minds, personalities, or behaviors is a difficult task. While many values of Filipinos intersect and interplay with each other in a Filipino's psyche, Enriquez (1992) determined four contextual values we explored in this research study. Virgilio Enriquez, considered the father of Filipino Psychology, acknowledged that *hiya*, *utang na loob*, and *pakikisama* are fundamental values of Filipinos and are treated by social scientists as separate values in isolation from all others. Enriquez (1992) contends that the three concepts of *hiya*, *utang na loob*, and *pakikisama* form a triad "whose legs emanate from a single trunk" (p. 159) and that the actual core value of the Filipino personality Enriquez identified as *kapwa*. Other scholars (David, 2013; Nadal et al., 2010) referenced these values as central to the Filipino psyche. Upon review of the data, I observed that the core cultural values of *utang na loob*, *hiya*, and *pakikisama* complicatedly intermingle and immensely influence Filipinos' ability to interact in their changing environments and overall society. While these values can be perceived separately and independently, collectively, they are interwoven and depend on each other to form a balanced system that characterizes Filipino principles. At the core is one's ability to accomplish *kapwa*. *Kapwa*, a recognition of a shared identity, an inner self, shared with others, when projected into the larger spheres of a community, is magnified into *bayanihan*, communal unity (Coloma, 2021).

The empirical data acquired from this study substantiate these findings and bring to life the conceptual framework shown in Figure 15. Figure 15 is a foiled representation of this study's conceptual framework that evolved vis-a-vis the literature and through the participants' lived experiences. It is a framework to understand better the essence of *kapwa* and how Filipino American educational leaders bring our cultural values to our work. While identifying these values is useful in establishing individual and group expectations to promote organizational unity, it is only by way of actions that we may elicit organizational change. The decision to call this *Kapwaan* Framework is motivated by the premise of enacting change through praxis, the understanding that dialogue and reflection alone are not sufficient for change. Rather, transformation occurs through further action and critical reflection (Freire, 2000). *Kapwaan* is a word that does not exist in Tagalog but utilizes *kapwa*, a noun, as a base word. Inserting *an*, a Tagalog suffix denoting action, transforms the word *kapwa* as a verb to reflect the action required to enact change.

In developing this framework, I seek to understand the elements of Filipino indigenous values as they engross the Filipino experience. I reflected on what makes a collectivist society function and how these socio-emotional elements in an individual affect how they navigate their relationship with others and, on a larger scale, their effects on their community. Figure 15 represents how Filipinos process these values and the emotions and social obligations accompanying them in their respective collectivist communities. Understanding these complex relationships of compromising values can give Filipinos validity of their ability to nurture relationships and provide those outside of the culture access to a model for establishing organizational unity.



*Figure 15. Kapwaan framework of Filipino cultural values for understanding the findings.*

In establishing organizational unity, many factors must be considered, especially those involving human conditions. This framework proposes an alternative approach or view of the complexities of human relations and organizational development. It posits that organizations or communities are comprised of individuals that form its fabric. To foster organizational unity, individuals must have a shared identity or an inner self shared with others (*kapwa*) to function with morality and authenticity. The values of *utang na loob*, *hiya*, and *pakikisama* form the emotional elements, complexly interwoven values, that must be nurtured and engaged. In a society where organizations are judged by efficiency, consistency, and productivity, this framework views organizations as a collection of human experiences and positions humanistic values first rather than equating them to machines void of values and emotions. Proposed here is an alternative way of perceiving and acquiring organizational unity modeled after the collectivist values of an indigenous community.

### **Review of Research Questions**

The overarching question guiding this study was: To what extent can a CPR team of Filipino American educational leaders identify, co-create, and apply their cultural assets to engage in alternative equitable leadership practices? The three sub-questions were:

1. To what extent can a CPR group of Filipino American educational leaders understand their individual and collective identity through stories of self, family, and cultural histories?
2. To what extent can a CPR group of Filipino American educational leaders co-create alternative equitable leadership practices promoting the cultural assets of the Filipinos?

3. To what extent does a group of Filipino American educators apply their identity and cultural assets to their roles as educational leaders?
4. How do I inform and transform my leadership as I work with educators to promote the cultural assets of Filipinos?

Like many minoritized groups in the United States, opportunities for individuals to meet with a shared ethnicity, background, and culture are limited or non-existent. Such is the case for Filipino Americans with questions relating to cultural identity, pressures of assimilation, and empowerment as cultural leaders of their communities are often unresolved and neglected. Throughout this study, the CPR participants identified their cultural values and reclaimed their cultural identity as assets as they performed their duties as servant leaders of their school communities. Through storytelling and reflections, they identified the interconnectedness of Filipino values and their manifestations in their personal and professional lives. Mainly the CPR members identified the complexities of the values of *hiya* and *utang na loob* to establish *kapwa* as assets in their ability to lead schools and form relationships with others.

The CLE process and its principles rooted in helping people find their power and voice to respond to their local community's needs have been instrumental in our abilities to form *bayanihan* and develop actions to promote and advocate for our community. With goals of building Filipino communities in our respective schools and cultural advocacy, detailed in Chapter Six are the community events that took place during this study. Our affinity space of Filipino American principals has provided us the collegial support to feel validated, affirm our decisions, and confirm that our inherit cultural values can provide an alternative leadership approach desperately needed in education. Detailed in the leadership development section is my transformation as a leader and advocate for the cultural assets of Filipinos.

## **Implications**

As Co-Practitioner Researchers and an affinity group, we have determined that collectively, we share similar perspectives on the importance of relationships, communications, and how power is dispersed in our society. Attaining a principalship position means that we have demonstrated proficiency in Western leadership values and content-related knowledge deemed important to be successful in our positions. In doing so, we simultaneously understand and have succeeded in developing systems and processes as required by us. Given that Western leadership expectations continue to be insufficient in serving our most marginalized students and communities, perhaps we must focus more intently and apply a leadership approach rooted in the collectivist values and cultural assets of Filipinos. This way, as Filipino American educational leaders, we can lead with more cultural authenticity. Our CPR meetings have validated how we think about our place in this society, provided me a vision of what is essential personally as I do “work,” and how, with the values of the Filipinos, we can provide an alternative to conducting business in education.

### **Implications for Educational Leadership Practice**

The ability of Filipino Americans to form an affinity space to reclaim their identity and perceive their cultural values as assets as educational leaders are transformative. In this space, we supported each other emotionally and affirmed each other’s identity as we navigated our workspace, assisting us in becoming culturally authentic leaders. As organizations see the values of a diverse workforce, one strategy few organizations employ is the creation of homogenous groups, especially those sourced from the local communities. We must consider the knowledge of the people affected most by our decisions. The Filipino American participants of this research study possess beneficial leadership assets based on their cultural values of collectivism. Locally,



we must nurture their abilities to lead authentically rather than suppress leadership styles that are an alternative to the mainstream Western forms of leadership. As the diversity of people comes with diverse sets of cultures and values, we must learn to acknowledge them and understand that each brings an alternative set of knowledge to improve the conditions in our schools.

When I started my tenure in my district in 2012, I was the first and sole Filipino American administrator this district had employed. As a result of receptive employment, successful modeling, and valuing alternative leadership styles, my district has employed an additional four Filipino Americans as site administrators. They are all making their mark, representing their culture, and impacting how schools are led in their respective school. As they come to understand better the values of *bayanihan* and how the values of *hiya*, *utang na loob*, and *kapwa* operate in their respective communities, perhaps schools can be led based on these collectivist values of communal unity. As communities in which these principals lead recognize their values, conceivably, Filipino American principals can acquire more elevated leadership positions and have a greater impact on how policies are developed.

The lack of Filipino American representation in education may be a consequence of their parents' desire to acquire jobs that will ensure their children of social and economic mobility. In the spirit of *kapwa* and *bayanihan*, a perspective to encourage Filipino Americans to pursue education as a career choice is the prestige to render a more equitable and just educational environment for Filipinos and other marginalized groups to thrive. Redeeming a system viewed as the primary mechanism for economic advancement so that others are provided with more expanded socio-economic opportunities is in the altruistic nature of Filipinos. The essence of *kapwa* rests in an understanding that we have a social responsibility or obligation to others and equality as we recognize our common humanity.

As minoritized people, we are subjected to the influence and demands of White supremacy and colonialism. Our education and societal standards teach us to assimilate, positioning White people as the superior standard (Kendi, 2019). This idea assumes then that a racial group is inferior. Counter to this mindset is the position taken by Community Learning Exchanges. The principles of the CLE axioms naturally foster the essence of *bayanihan* and anti-racist approach. As the people closest to the issues engage through individual and community stories and experiences, CLEs “fosters a creative agency that helps people find their power and voice, and the process responds to the need for local communities to own their destiny” (Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 32). In the confines of work or in Western society, where individualism and linearity are prized, Filipinos functioning with their cultural values might possess feelings of isolation, frustration, and conformity challenges. Through the CLE process, the CPR group provided the participants with the ability to rely on nonlinear logic. Additionally, the participants’ lived experiences acted as sources of “true and real” information. Similar to *bayanihan*, where a group has the same collectivist mindsets, “it is neither a project nor an isolated event - it is a way of life” (Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 29). With a network and support from other Filipinos and by participating in CLEs, participants are better prepared to combat the negative effects of racism, perpetuating the minoritized feelings of invisibility and becoming inauthentic leaders.

### **Implications for Educational Policy**

According to CDE (2020), there has been a positive trend of diversifying our teachers and administrative workforce in California schools. While these efforts have the potential to close the representation gap in leadership, we must also develop policies to retain and support their work. Though approaches to improve on these efforts may differ, what must take place is

the group's ability to have a shared space. To create such an environment, school districts must recognize diversity, and the differences of perspective each of us in the organization brings are strengths and untapped assets that we can employ to address the issues in our localities.

In our school district, thirteen managers of Asian descent, all of whom are females except one, occupy positions from Assistant Superintendent and Principals to Directors of Facilities and Business. As researchers stress that the stereotype of the "successful leader" is still defined in masculine terms (Koenig et al., 2011), I have heard female Asian American colleagues speak of feelings of isolation, inferiority, and stress from the steady questioning of their decisions. Often, they are coached and supervised by male leaders that encourage them to be more assertive. One disclosed that her display of concern for others was met with advice from a White male mentor that she needed to be more "direct," "firm," and "aggressive."

How can we become authentic leaders if our cultural values are not affirmed? Affirmations may come from those that understand their collectivist nature and culture. Doing so can provide a counter-culture, establishing resistance to fill the current structure. As our district already has an administrator network for our Black and Latino colleagues, I was granted permission to start an Asian American managers group. The goal is to have a space where we can promote our cultural identity, feel emotionally supported, empowered, and receive affirmation when our leadership style mirrors our inherent values. Similar to our CPR group, I hope participants see their cultural values as assets and use them to transform themselves into culturally centered leaders. Upon forming this group, we can have affinity spaces for the diverse cultures represented, even in Asian communities.

Over the last year, the formation of the California Association of Asian & Pacific Leaders in Education (CAAPLE) has gained traction in establishing a network for Asian and Pacific

Island leaders in California. Already established administrators' organizations, such as the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), the California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators (CALSA), and the California Association of African-American Superintendents & Administrators (CAASA), have regional organizations. However, their presence in their respective districts is weak. If districts form organizations for administrators of Asian American descent, we can have a more substantial presence in the regional organization to support the mission of CAAPLE. In this manner, feedback, input, and solutions can come from the people closest to the issues and be directed to the state and federal levels.

### **Implications for Educational Leadership Research**

This PAR project used Community Learning Exchange axioms to develop a qualitative study in which co-researchers reclaimed their cultural identity in a brave space through cycles of inquiry. This research study provided participants with a schema that enabled them to organize conversations conceptually, name their experiences, make meaning of these experiences, and act upon them (Guajardo et al., 2016). From the assurance of having a safe space to collectively learn from each other, creating an affinity space for Filipino Americans to reclaim their identities, and responding to empower their communities, the CLE axioms validated the actions of this study.

The PAR design attempted to analyze the cultural identity of six Filipino American principals to understand how their cultural values manifest in their work as educational leaders. The PAR contributes to emerging research on the limited study based on Filipino Americans. Specifically, this study adds to the body of work on the educational leadership styles of minoritized leaders. In learning the cultural mechanisms at play with collectivist leaders such as

Filipino Americans, we can support the promotion, validate how they lead, and explore further the assets they bring to change the educational leadership paradigm. Another research implication of this study is to facilitate fact findings and decision-making efforts under the purview of the CLE axioms. Employing the CLE axioms and process will ensure that information and solution come locally and directly from those impacted most.

Some additional research questions that I would offer to future researchers as a result of this study include:

1. How do highly acculturated Filipino American experience the conflict between the collectivist values of being ethnically Filipino and Western values of individualism?
2. How do we encourage Filipino American researchers to add further to the body of research on Filipino Americans in education and in general?
3. To what extent can a group of diverse educational leaders establish a cross-cultural coalition that embodies the cultural values of all involved?

### **Study Limitations**

With only one participant who emigrated as an adult and the rest of the participants either born here or emigrated young, the participants in this study are highly acculturated Americans and did not grow up in a society immersed in the Filipino culture. Though acquired from their parents and family, their knowledge of Filipino cultural values is difficult to compare to those raised in the Philippines. As the process of this research study is to reclaim the participants' cultural identity, their thoughts and feelings on these values may differ from those residing in the Philippines.

The collectivist leadership approach and the fundamental values of prioritizing the group over the individual apply across ethnicities and other collectivist cultures. While leadership

continues to be entrenched in structures of White male patriarchy, as underrepresented groups, women and Filipino Americans share similarities in their challenges and cultures of working. The need for creating affinity spaces for women for emotional support and work affirmation mirrors those of the Filipinos in this research study. In addition to other collectivist groups, the CLE space and, as a process, can be transformational to other groups seeking to be represented and have their voices heard in conversations.

### **My Leadership Development**

As there is limited to no literature about the Filipino experience in educational leadership, I, along with other Filipino Americans in education, have minimal capacity to validate our identity in our workspaces. The limitation in accessing others with similar values and beliefs has incapacitated us from performing our tasks inauthentically to our cultures and values. With the experience of identifying and validating our indigenous identities at work, we could observe the patterns of oppression we unknowingly perpetuated. As professionals nurtured within the Western structures of ideologies and systems, we unintentionally perpetuated and supported this racist system. By rediscovering our identity and validating our culture, we, in turn, liberated ourselves.

Regardless of ethnicity and racial representation, we are all susceptible to perpetuating and worshipping the systems and processes we have come to familiarize ourselves with. The experience has made me realize that ethnic representation in leadership alone is insufficient in addressing inequity. While I observe and surround myself with leaders representing the community ethnically, their understanding of their cultural identity and indigenous values is critical in operating against the system. Without this understanding and courage to disrupt

systemic oppression, leaders of color are pawns, if not become oppressors themselves, sometimes acting more abominably than intentional racists.

As the most individualistic country in the world, according to Hofstede's scale of individualism, American individualism values autonomy, self-expression, and the pursuit of personal goals rather than emphasizing the group's interests (Hofstede, 1991). Though there are strengths like innovation that individualistic cultures possess, collectivism, as they pertain to education and educational leadership, is equally important. Collectivists value collaboration, communalism, and constructive interdependence (Hofstede, 1991). While leaders with individualistic values are charged with making decisions on the fate of our most vulnerable and struggling students, with most coming from collectivist cultural backgrounds, this misalignment in leadership values may be a source of educational inequities. Both the process of participatory action research and the influence of the Community Learning Exchange axiom that "the people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns" and "hope and change are built on assets and dreams of locals and the communities" (Guajardo et al., 2016) have shifted my idea of where power lies and the effects of positional power in facilitating power dynamics in schools.

Since this realization, my actions have shifted to conform to this ideology. From conducting meetings, communicating, collaborating, and acquiring and making sense of data, I have learned to be cognizant of performing my duties as a school leader from the collectivist's perspective. In addition to my actions, I have been a staunch proponent of decolonizing leadership by promoting and modeling collectivism. It has allowed me to examine systems built in traditional Western values and provide alternative perspectives in leadership.

Providing a platform to those that understand the community best has also become a purpose. In leadership spaces occupied by executives and academics, the voices of those we serve are only sometimes represented. I have since brought community members and community liaisons to speak in these conferences and educational environments to discuss the importance and benefits of sourcing power from the community. While the discussions apply to all leaders, our target audience is leaders of color. We hope to reconnect them with their indigenous values and promote collectivism in system development, as this research has provided me.

I have come to recognize that I need to examine the systems and processes in education presented to me. Part of this evolution is the recognition that as we partake in this society, we must acknowledge that we are racist, and it requires conscious thought and engagement to work towards being an antiracist (Kendi, 2019). To be an antiracist means to uplift the experiences of the disenfranchised and influence policies to address inequities. The validation I received in conducting this research study has elevated my confidence and affirmed an alternative to the Western approach to leadership.

Before conducting this research, I viewed leadership success as developing formulaic, consistent, and efficient processes corresponding with the Westernized values I have learned and tried to emulate. While acquiring feedback from the community was a component of most of these processes, it was performative and lacked authenticity. I have become more intentional in uplifting the voices of marginalized communities, ensuring that my actions are based on the input of those affected most. The changes I have made in my practice are to examine where power is sourced in decision-making, including identifying whom I am accountable for and whom my actions are serving. In making decisions, I have become more aware of the purposes of my responses. Why and how I respond to situations.



In addition, I am also mindful of building alliances. I recognize my allies and those that would benefit from an alternative perspective. I have become aware of promoting collectivist values and supporting individuals that possess these attributes. I am compelled that we can change the paradigm through alliances and the validation of our indigenous values.

Prior to this research study experience, I perceived leadership pursuit as one-dimensional, with titles and income as a measurement of one's success. In Western cultures, such as the current structure of education, success is derived from power, which is unidirectional and hierarchical. Often, it is through these positional statuses is where power is gauged. However, in such a structure, there lies a consequence of power and corresponding distance to local perspectives. Simply put, the "higher" one's positional power often means the farther they are in accessing local perspectives. They often become disconnected and removed from real-life situations and solutions. It seems that the more distant from the locals they are, the more they seem to rely on formulaic and process-oriented solutions. With little differentiation and authentic resolution, success is then measured based on the efficiency and consistency of the results. In such an environment, it seems that similar people breed similar results. We worship this leadership style and promote similar individuals to sustain the system. As a society, we lack the courage, creativity, and knowledge to seek alternative ways of looking at a problem and source in developing solutions.

As the United States experiences a change in demographics, ideologies, and varying student needs, as a society, we must also evolve to accommodate this change. The peril in our inability to evolve is leaders committed to their existing worlds rather than the evolving world around them. We become stuck in the binary either-or thinking between focusing on how we have always done things and how we will move in the future. This research study aims to elevate

these alternative perspectives and develop systems rooted in the local communities. As I complete this research study and a new understanding of the importance of culture and identity as an educational leader, I reflect on my responsibility as a researcher and leader in the Filipino American community. As an activist action researcher, I can, through practice, transform the actions of my fellow CLE participants into becoming culturally authentic leaders in their communities. Collectively, we re-learned and examined our identity through the storytelling of our upbringing. We learned that our indigenous values work interdependently with one another, and through experience and modeling from our families, we can develop communities rooted in reciprocity and togetherness. Our values come from indigenous Filipino communities that recognize shared identity and an inner self shared with others.

During a CLE, it was mentioned that even in Asian American spaces, we felt isolated, and only when we can be with one another do we feel authentic to our culture and ourselves. We also realized that we could impact the future. As potential role models to other Filipino Americans, educators, and aspiring leaders, we offer the capacity to see themselves in leadership roles and impact others to realize the possibilities. Unlike other minoritized groups, whose culture is intentionally and annually celebrated, Filipino American youths and their families should be provided opportunities to reconnect with their indigenous selves and validate their identities through organized community events and dialogue. Collectively, we can be authentic leaders if we offer ourselves affinity spaces as Filipino American educational leaders to rediscover our indigenous identity, organize our community, and promote our cultural assets.

### **Conclusion**

As a budding actress, my daughter has struggled with the challenges of auditioning and not getting her desired roles. For many, these experiences are lessons of humility, perseverance,

and disappointment, real-life lessons that would help her navigate future endeavors. They are also opportunities for reflection on her capabilities, hard work, and expectations. As she matures in her understanding of our society, these thoughts have shifted to her awareness of power and privilege, that while she works tirelessly to improve, castmates with lesser capacities are chosen consistently for leads simply by the color of their skin. She went so much as compile her own set of data to make sense of her feelings (three of fourteen featured players or named characters, and eight of the twelve ensemble cast were people of color). This, in a high school theatre company in Silicon Valley that is rich in diversity. Her response, as mature as her analysis, was, “I just work harder, regardless of my role, and maybe someday they will see how much better it could be when they cast with diversity.”

Much like theatre, a disproportionate amount of players are cast as educational leaders in our system. Similar to theatre, we are typecasted or sorted as a workforce according to deeply embedded social assumptions, skewing the quantity, size, and nature of roles available to different types of actors. This social typecasting is also “important because of the role actors play in representing social and aesthetic reality; and how these representations, in turn, affect the ways audiences come to understand society” (Friedman & O’Brien, 2017, p. 2). My study aims to address this gap by gaining insight into the perspectives of Filipino Americans on how their cultural values, as assets, manifest in their personal and professional spaces. To put it simply, I hope this study will reveal the intricacies of the collectivist values of the Filipinos to generate a better understanding of their identity to serve as an alternative way to lead in education.

During this process, as CPRs, we reclaimed our identities, affirmed each other as leaders, and hoped to empower others. In reclaiming our identity, telling our stories allowed us to process our inherited cultural values, their complexities, and their effects on how we lead. This research

study is as valuable a learning experience for us as the findings that may contribute to educational leadership and the Filipino American experience. We learned the intricacies of *hiya* (humility/shame) and *utang na loob* (indebted gratitude) as mechanisms for establishing *pakikisama* (relationship with others). When these values are aligned and promoted, *kapwa* (shared identity with others) is then established, thus forming *bayanihan* (collectivism/unity) in the community. Another finding is the importance of a professional network and establishing affinity spaces where participants can feel authentic, supported, and vulnerably safe. In professional settings, these affinity groups promote sharing of information and, more importantly, are places for collegial support to feel validated and affirmed. These essential spaces were also used to receive confirmation that our inherent cultural values can provide an alternative leadership approach in education. Collectively, we acquired the power and voice needed to respond to the needs of our community and determine our own destiny. We affirmed that the influence of our families in the development of our cultural values and the interpersonal relationships we practiced during our upbringing profoundly affected how we navigate our society, including our workspaces where these values permeate. Finally, I understand that these values and ways of working are not unique to collectivist Filipinos. As individuals with diverse backgrounds and strengths, we can all live with the premise of *kapwa*. Conceivably then, we can value our cultural diversity, authenticity, and shared identity, an inner self-shared with others.

The film rendition of *Matilda the Musical* (Warchus, 2022) and *Beauty and the Beast* (Hamilton, 2022) featured a diverse and eclectic cast, signaling a change of attitude toward diversity and inclusion. As Hollywood starts to recognize the importance of representation and the strength of diversity and diverse perspectives it brings, perhaps the systems and leadership in education can mirror and celebrate the diverse needs of the students we serve. This way, through

modeling and alternative ways of leading, we can empower our students to be the protagonists of their stories.

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# APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



**EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY**  
**University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board**  
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building · Mail Stop 682  
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834  
Office 252-744-2914 · Fax 252-744-2284  
[rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/](http://rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/)

## Notification of Exempt Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB  
To: [Virgilio Caruz](#)  
CC: [Matthew Militello](#)  
Date: 8/17/2021  
Re: [UMCIRB 21-001522](#)  
Alternative Leadership: Filipino American Perspectives and Responses to Educational Leadership

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 8/12/2021. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category # 1 & 2ab.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your application and/or protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

Document	Description
Appendix B Caruz Informed-Consent-Documents-Template-No-More-Than-Minimal-Risk.docx(0.01)	Consent Forms
Appendix C Caruz Individual Interview Protocol.docx(0.01)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Appendix D Caruz Group Interview Protocol.docx(0.01)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Appendix E Caruz Protocol_Community Learning Exchange.docx(0.01)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Caruz CLE Meeting Agenda.docx(0.01)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Caruz Recruitment Script.docx(0.01)	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Virgilio Caruz Proposal 7 25 2021.docx(0.01)	Study Protocol or Grant Application

For research studies where a waiver or alteration of HIPAA Authorization has been approved, the IRB states that each of the waiver criteria in 45 CFR 164.512(i)(1)(i)(A) and (2)(i) through (v) have been met. Additionally, the elements of PHI to be collected as described in items 1 and 2 of the Application for Waiver of Authorization have been determined to be the minimal necessary for the specified research.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.



## APPENDIX B: CITI PROGRAM TRAINING



Completion Date 16-Jan-2021  
Expiration Date 16-Jan-2024  
Record ID 40163436

This is to certify that:

**Virgilio Caruz**

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

**Human Research**  
(Curriculum Group)

**Group 2.Social / Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel**

(Course Learner Group)

**1 - Basic Course**  
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

**East Carolina University**

**CITI**  
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w8fba0348-95eb-4b1d-a8c7-52abe7175bdb-40163436](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w8fba0348-95eb-4b1d-a8c7-52abe7175bdb-40163436)

## APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM



### **Informed Consent to Participate in Research**

Information to consider before taking part in research that has no more than minimal risk.

Title of Research Study: *Kapwa Tao*: Filipino American Perspectives and Responses to Educational Leadership

Principal Investigator: Virgilio V. Caruz

Institution, Department or Division: East Carolina University, Department of Educational Leadership

Address: 1930 Lincoln Avenue, San Jose, California, 95125, U.S.A.

Telephone #: 408-835-6348

Study Coordinator: Dr. Matthew Militello

Telephone #: 252-328-6131

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Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) study issues related to society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems and the human condition. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take part in research.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

This participatory action research (PAR) project aims to identify assets of Filipino American educational leaders that facilitate the co-creation and application of cultural assets leadership practices. You are being invited to participate in this research because you are an educational leader of Filipino descent. The decision to take part in this research is yours to make. By doing this research, we hope to learn how Filipino American educators identify, co-create, and apply their cultural assets to engage in equitable leadership practices.

If you volunteer to take part in this research, you will be one of about 7 people to do so.

Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?

There are no known reasons why you should not participate in this research study.

What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?

You can choose not to participate.

#### **Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?**

All meetings and research will occur virtually utilizing WebEx platform. We will utilize passwords to ensure only participants can join the meetings. Any recordings will be housed on a secure flash drive locked in the researcher's home office. The recordings will not be stored on a hard drive or on a cloud-based platform. Recordings will be deleted after the study is finalized.

The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is approximately fifteen hours over the next nine months.

**What will I be asked to do?**

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to participate in an interview. All of the interview questions will focus on engaging you to identify, co-create, and application of cultural values in your leadership practices.

**What might I experience if I take part in the research?**

We don't know of any risks (the chance of harm) associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. We don't know if you will benefit from taking part in this study. There may not be any personal benefit to you, but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

**Will I be paid for taking part in this research?**

We will not be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

**Will it cost me to take part in this research?**

It will not cost you any money to be part of the research.

Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?

ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:

Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates human research. This includes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the North Carolina Department of Health, and the Office for Human Research Protections.

The University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) and its staff have responsibility for overseeing your welfare during this research and may need to see research records that identify you.

How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it?

The information in the study will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law.

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the data collection and data analysis process.

Consent forms and data from surveys, interviews, and focus groups will be maintained in a secure, locked location and will be stored for a minimum of three years after completion of the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study.

What if I decide I don't want to continue in this research?

You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop, and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

The people conducting this study will be able to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator at 408-835-6348 (weekdays, 8:00 am – 6:00 pm) or email [caruzv19@students.ecu.edu](mailto:caruzv19@students.ecu.edu).

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) at phone number 252-744-2914 (days, 8:00 am-5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director for Human Research Protections, at 252-744-2914

**I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?**

The person obtaining informed consent will ask you to read the following and if you agree, you should sign this form:

- I have read (or had read to me) all of the above information.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
  - I know that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.
  - By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.
  - I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

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**Participant's Name (PRINT)**

**Signature**

**Date**

**Person Obtaining Informed Consent:** I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above, and answered all of the person's questions about the research.

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**APPENDIX D: ASSETS AND CHALLENGES**

<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>MICRO</b>	<b>MESO</b>	<b>MACRO</b>
<p><b>Classroom or School</b> level or a smaller unit within the school (grade level, department, or team)</p> <p><b>District</b> level unit or team</p>	<p><b>Organizational level:</b> Full school level or district context, particularly including all the district level programs or people who have primary influence or control on FoP</p>	<p><b>Structural level:</b> social reproduction systems that affect the FoP</p> <p><b>State or national policy:</b></p> <p><b>Research:</b></p>
<u><b>ASSETS</b></u>	<u><b>ASSETS</b></u>	<u><b>ASSETS</b></u>
<p><b>FilAm Principals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Similar cultural values</li> <li>- Community-minded</li> <li>- Relationship based</li> <li>- Connection to family</li> <li>- Another PLI Principal</li> <li>- Care-givers</li> <li>- Handworkers</li> </ul> <p>If they don't believe in me, they I'll just go on my own. Denied my connection to the assets. Not Filipino enough.</p>	<p><b>School Districts/Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- DL Environment</li> <li>- Demographics of our students in SC County is diverse</li> <li>- 16 FilAm Administrators</li> </ul>	<p><b>Value of Educational Leadership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Filipinos as caregivers</li> <li>- Filipinos are hard workers</li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>CHALLENGES</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not rocking the boat, refrain from sharing ideas for the good of the group</li> <li>• Listen, follow through whatever the directive was. Authority figure. Transfer of this in leadership, unless it's in a small group.</li> <li>• Condition from respect for the elders. Elders = Authoritative</li> <li>• It becomes an insecurity. Have to push myself, because that's what a leader should do. We have to speak up to be a leader.</li> <li>• More pressure from us</li> </ul> <p>Imposter - Do we deserve to be here?  Questioning ourselves  We want more people  Insecurities - we are not boastful  Self-deprecating  Not comfortable</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>CHALLENGES</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under-represented</li> <li>• Not enough.</li> <li>• Even with in the Asian group</li> <li>• Under networked</li> <li>• Crab mentality-even with status-even if you're doing well, you're not. House slave or a field slave.</li> <li>• You talk too much - from mom- bec you're not always agreeable. You dont have the right to be opinionated. I'm never in agreeance with everybody, non-confrontation.</li> </ul> <p>Hinder our ability to be represented in the district level.  We are not looking into climbing that ladder.  We work hard, as is, we dont stop and pause.  Good enough - we can do the job.  We are so compliant. We will take one for the team.  Identity</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>CHALLENGES</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Family Pressures</li> <li>- White dominant society expectations</li> <li>- Education not a career choice</li> </ul> <p>Humility - We don't brag</p> <p>Cultural - We are thought not to be mayabang. They will recognize you if you're good enough.</p> <p>Crab mentality.</p> <p>We are not seen, health and hospitality.</p> <p>We don't feel worthy already.  Whistling Vivaldi.</p>
<b>MICRO</b>	<b>MESO</b>	<b>MACRO</b>
<b>CHALLENGES</b>		

## APPENDIX E: GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### *Kapwa (Shared Identity): Filipino American Perspectives and Responses to Educational Leadership* Group Interview Protocol

#### Introduction

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedules to meet with me today. I appreciate your willingness to participate in this focus group interview and will limit the time to one hour.

My name is Virgilio Caruz, I am hoping to identify how Filipino cultural values affect your leadership practices. This is to better understand the cultural assets of the Filipinos to create opportunities of engaging and applying these values in educational leadership practices. The information will be used to determine leadership practices promoting these cultural values.

#### Disclosures:

- Your participation in the study is voluntary. It is your decision whether or not to participate and you may elect to stop participating in the interview at any time.
- The interview will be digitally recorded in order to capture a comprehensive record of our conversation. All information collected will be kept confidential. Any information collected during the session that may identify any participant will only be disclosed with your prior permission. A coding system will be used in the management and analysis of the focus group data with no names or school identifiers associated with any of the recorded discussion.
- The interview will be conducted using a semi-structured and informal format. Several questions will be asked about both the individual knowledge and skills gained and the organization practices used.
- The interview will last approximately one hour.

#### Interview Questions

##### **TURN RECORDER ON AND STATE THE FOLLOWING:**

This is Virgilio Caruz, interviewing \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ for the *Kapwa* (Shared Identity): Filipino American Perspectives and Responses to Educational Leadership Study.

1. What made you become an educator?
2. What Filipino cultural values are you able to retain in the United States?
3. How does your Filipino values affect you as an educational leader?
4. What are challenges of being Filipino in educational leadership?
5. Why do you think there is a disproportionate number of Filipinos in education especially educational leadership?
6. How can we promote the cultural assets of being Filipino in educational leadership?
7. How can we mobilize other Filipino American educational leaders to create a network of support to promote these cultural assets?

