STORIES FROM FILIPINX STAFF: MAKING MEANING OF DECOLONIZING IN U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION

By

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this project was to lift up the stories of Filipinx staff and their meaning-making, meanings, and enactments of decolonization. Through journaling, an online group meeting, and individual interviews with five staff in higher education in the United States, I aimed to answer the following research questions: How do Filipinx higher education staff make meaning of "decolonizing"? From this overriding question came the following subquestions: What does "decolonizing" mean to Filipinx higher education staff? How do Filipinx higher education staff enact their meanings of "decolonizing"?

I created a heuristic to represent the staff's meaning-making process of decolonizing that emerged through their stories. Within this process, meanings are first catalyzed by encounters with a colonial orientation, which prompt personal growth in the form a decolonizing orientation. This decolonizing orientation is then carried and integrated into one's professional practice. Later encounters, such as the group process facilitated through this study, also provide further opportunities to shift and integrate their existing decolonizing orientation.

Through re-storying, I identified two predominant orientations towards decolonizing in their personal lives: 1) self-acceptance of a particular identity, 2) raised consciousness around issues of power. I also identified three types of decolonizing enactments: 1) bodily transformations, 2) redefining educational purpose, and 3) acts to dismantle oppression

Within their professional lives, I identified four overriding decolonizing orientations and six enactments (see Figure 5). The orientations were: 1) educating and empowering students, 2)

advocating for inclusion, 3) being “yourself”, and 4) dismantling colonial structures, particularly those that place staff above students. Enactments of these orientations included: 1) raising student consciousness through programming and dialogues on critical topics, 2) speaking up when witnessing oppressive acts, 3) sharing and asserting identity, 4) modifying technical systems through a student-centered lens, 5) working in student-governed spaces, and 6) “kitchen table activism.”

Overall, meaning-making, meanings, and enactments of decolonization in higher education for Filipinx staff, are shaped within encounters of conflicting orientations reflecting particular personal, institutional, and historical contexts. This study adds to the conversation on decolonizing higher education by going “underneath” the meanings and delving further into the meaning making and what experiences inform one’s meanings of decolonization through the lens of positionality. Specifically, stories from this study showed how the personal informs the professional, as well as how positionality matters through the lens of Filipinx higher education staff.

This dissertation is dedicated to my kababayan, and all those finding their way through the "nowhere" space.

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CHAPTER 1: THE STORY BEGINS

"What joy do you see in the other person?"

"What of their pain?"

"What did their ancestors look like?"

"Did they look like your ancestors?"

It was the last session of the day at the 2016 International Babaylan Conference, held by the Center for Babaylan Studies and Kathara Society. Having just presented, I felt I could finally relax and enjoy the rest of the session I was a part of, entitled "Stories of Self-Initiation and Other Rites of Passage." I joined the audience and the final presenter began facilitating an activity. She put attendees in concentric circles, so the inner and outer circles were facing one another. We were instructed not to speak as she posed various statements and questions one by one, including those in the epigraph above. We were given a moment to look at one another and then, after each prompt, she had us rotate so we faced a different person. During this exercise, I became overwhelmed with emotion as I contemplated each question while looking into the eyes of people I did not know. Even though I did not know them, her questions fostered a deep sense of connection between us and our histories. I began to wonder about each person's story.

The conference was like no space I had experienced before. As the theme was *Makasaysayang Pagtatagpo* (historic encounters): Filipinos and Indigenous Turtle Islanders revitalizing ancestral traditions together, the goal of the conference was to honor and celebrate the enduring relationship between Filipinos in the diaspora and the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island.

Having only attended academic conferences prior, there were so many things about the experience that were unfamiliar to me. And yet, I welcomed these differences; found them to

refreshing to my soul and rejuvenating for my spirit. They gave me much to ruminate on, some of which I still ruminate on to this day. For instance, instead of a university, hotel, or convention center, the conference took place at a YMCA camp in the middle of nature, where we were put into a room with three other people. I found myself surrounded by people whose life work included, but went beyond, academia—healers, community organizers, artists, and more. Ceremony was woven throughout the conference. Many of these ceremonies involved practices of the Indigenous peoples of the Indigenous Coast Salish territories we were on. I attended a session on how to talk to trees and shared my own journey learning about decolonization as part of a panel. Even though I was so nervous to share my story, I felt affirmed like never before when others told me my experiences resonated with theirs.

Overall, this conference was the embodiment of the questions and topics that had been on my mind the previous year: *What does it mean to be a settler on Indigenous land? What does it mean for me to wrestle with colonial legacies as a Filipina? How can I be in solidarity with Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island, with Indigenous peoples in the Philippines, with Filipinxs in the diaspora? What does it mean to live a life informed by decolonization?* Bearing witness to the knowledge-making facilitated by this conference opened me up to possibilities for a different future informed by a desire to integrate a decolonizing approach in my life. Given the Center for Babaylan Studies' mission around decolonization, attending the conference allowed me to see one vision of what decolonizing means.

Since my introduction to the term of decolonization, I have "latched" onto the term. Prior, ever since my late undergraduate years, I had attached myself to spaces deemed as "critical" "social justice" -based (and still do). Yet, learning about decolonization introduced a new lens, that for me, went even deeper than other terms in high circulation. On a personal level,

I felt it offered an opportunity to acknowledge ancestral histories; on a professional level, it offered an opportunity to contemplate the myriad manifestations of colonial legacies within higher education institutions. At the same time, I have noted the debates, the incommensurabilities, and cautions against uncritical uses of the word. Thus, a sense of responsibility to unearth and share this lens, and its possibilities and tensions it engenders, led me to this work. To me, it is not a matter of semantics, of "choosing the right word" amongst options. I choose to engage this word because in an embodied sense, it has led me to spaces, insights, and people who I believe are pushing notions of justice to new levels that are increasingly necessary.

Still, the way forward is not clear or easily defined, particularly in the realm of higher education. Deeper understandings and more perspectives on decolonization are needed. As such, this dissertation looks at how Filipinx higher education staff understand decolonization, and how they come to these understandings. Just as I got a brief glimpse of each person during the activity described above, this chapter provides an introductory look into the major topics of this dissertation. Next, I share my journey as I first encountered the literature around colonization and decolonization in higher education, noting the absences that stuck out for me.

Decolonization in Higher Education: Whose Stories are Missing?

I was first struck by how decolonization is a growing global movement in higher education. It has been prompted by increasing recognition of the colonial origins of higher education, colonialism's embeddedness throughout its workings, and its various harms (Bhambra et al., 2018; Cupples & Grosfoguel, 2019; Wilder, 2013). Many within higher education believe that resisting and working against colonialism's harms requires the development of a decolonial praxis to be taken up within and across colleges and universities. We have witnessed this through

global conferences on decolonizing the academy, such as that held by Julie Cupples and Ramon Grosfoguel in 2016, as well as through mostly student-led movements, such as "Rhodes Must Fall," "Leopold Must Fall," and "Why is my curriculum white? Why isn't my professor Black?" As such efforts suggest, at stake are continued material and epistemic violences and oppressions against minoritized populations. I was inspired by the range of examples of decolonizing efforts described in the literature.

Yet, I found the literature was dominated by faculty perspectives, who weigh in on what it can mean to decolonize academic disciplines, teaching and learning within the traditional classroom space, and research (e.g., Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; de Jong et al., 2019; Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondi, 2016). While there is no denying the value of this work, it can seem as though decolonial work is and can only be done by faculty. Some of the latest books on decolonizing the university have overlooked staff by virtue of being situated as a resource for "students and academic staff [faculty]" (Bhambra et al., 2018). Others have equated the "university" with the "academy" (Cupples & Grosfoguel, 2019) by positioning academic functions of the university as the only matters worth considering, despite the fact that universities go beyond in-class and online experiences (Padró, 2018).

For me, the absence of staff perspectives, as well as the absence of an acknowledgement that staff can contribute to decolonization in higher education, was alarming to me, given the integral roles they play in higher education institutions to advance or hinder decolonial aims. As a former staff member, I have witnessed many other staff engaging in justice work that to me, might be considered as decolonizing. I wondered, where are their voices in the literature? As a group that encompasses many different types of positions within institutional settings, staff are uniquely positioned to influence its many constituents—i.e., students, faculty, parents, other

staff, entities beyond the traditional university setting, policy, institutional culture, and campus climate—through their interactions and praxes. I agreed with Adefarakan (2018), who succinctly put it: “Decolonization cannot be confined within the walls of the classroom” (p. 239).

In my journey through the literature, gaps in standpoints also became apparent. These gaps are important to interrogate, given they have the potential to broaden existing conceptions of decolonizing the university. In short, our current understandings of what decolonization is, and how different colonial histories have informed the present, remain limited and in need of expansion. One perspective that is currently missing and can contribute to and help add to and complicate understandings of decolonization is the diasporic Filipinx community.

Colonized first by Spain (from 1521 to1898) and the United States (from 1898 to 1946), Filipinxs have a unique colonial history. Such a history has had particular current-day impacts on Filipinx people in many realms such as, racialization, internalized racism, schooling, and family life (Coloma, 2009; Espiritu, 2003; Root, 1997). Yet, they can also be considered settlers within the context of particular geographic contexts, such as the United States (Saranillio, 2013; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Their complex history and the intersections of multiple colonialities that make it up have yielded particular understandings of decolonization that may differ from counterparts who are differently positioned. A focus on Filipinx staff can thus broaden our understandings of what decolonization means, what decolonial work looks like, and who does/can do it.

Bringing a Focus on Filipinx Staff

In focusing on this particular population, I seek not to elevate Filipinx staff perspectives above all others, but to bring them into the broader conversation and put forth a vision of decoloniality that accounts for different groups in relation to each other. I particularly follow Parker et al. (2017) in that this “is not a project of commensurability, as Tuck and Yang

(2012) warn against, but of opening up and interrogating new possible futures in which indigenous land and life are a central part" (p. 243). Furthermore, I draw from those who would include, and at times center, colonized peoples from a multiplicity of contexts (Dei, 2011; Zavala, 2013). For instance, Zavala (2013) invoked a Raza standpoint "that privileges the vantage point of colonized peoples from Latin America" and argues "introducing a subaltern, Raza standpoint affords new opportunities and openings. Dei (2011), too, has brought a broader reading to Indigenousness, allowing for "displaced peoples, transitory, and migratory subjects and many others in Diasporic and transformed contexts to search and lay claim to a sense of belonging" (p. 26).

It is important to note here that I am not necessarily arguing for more flexible imaginings of Indigeneity by claiming a Filipinx Indigenous identity. Rather, as a diasporic Filipina, I resonate with the words of Adefarakan (2018), an Indigenous Yoruba woman living in Canada, whose work in part focuses on her own community. Like her, I undertake this work "so that the particularities of our history and circumstances can be effectively theorized on our own terms and from the entry point of our own experience" (p. 231).

In many respects, I am writing a dissertation that I wish I had been able to read before going into my previous work as a staff member in a university multicultural center. I want to contribute to the literature on decolonization in higher education to see more people, Filipinx and beyond, grapple with what is offered when we start to come to the language and decolonization and different ideas. On a practical level, learning about the specifics of how Filipinx staff understand decolonization can be a valuable source of learning for other staff seeking to learn about, adopt, promote, and enact decolonial praxis at their own institutions. Put another way, it is my hope that this can spur dialogue, inform practice and encourage staff to reimagine

the work they are doing. Unearthing complexities and broadening existing understandings of decolonization—as well as a deep understanding of the people who work towards it—can pave the way towards sensitivity and increased recognition of this group, its uniqueness, and can yield important insights for supporting Filipinx staff in their efforts. However, the benefits of such study go beyond supporting Filipinx staff. This research can also encourage the intentional development of decolonial praxis for other groups with unique colonial histories.

Purpose and Research Questions

As I just shared, my review of the literature on decolonizing higher education along with my personal experiences and identities led me to pursue this dissertation. The purpose of this project was to better understand the stories of Filipinx staff and their meaning-making, meanings, and enactments of decolonization. More specifically, this research seeks to uncover the experiences that have shaped their understandings of decolonization and decolonial practices.

Though my purpose has remained the same, going on this research journey has prompted me to modify my research questions. I began with the overriding research question: "What does 'decolonizing' mean to Filipinx higher education staff?" The two following subquestions were: "How have such understandings been informed by their lived experiences as Filipinx? In what ways do these understandings of decolonizing inform their work?"

As this dissertation unfolded, it became clear to me that "meaning-making" of decolonizing was as just as important as the meanings themselves. In other words, this study went "underneath" the meanings and delving further into the meaning making through the lens of positionality. Thus, I shifted my research questions are as follows:

- How do Filipinx higher education staff make meaning of "decolonizing"?
    - What does "decolonizing" mean to Filipinx higher education staff?

- How do Filipinx higher education staff enact their meanings of "decolonizing"?

Key terms, Assumptions, and Ongoing Tensions

Here, I elaborate on terms that have no easy definitions, yet were central to this study:

- **Decolonization**: In line with the spirit of this dissertation, which intentionally considers multiple definitions of decolonization in relation to one another, I kept an open approach to "defining" decolonization, as demonstrated in the following literature review. To limit decolonization to a single definition may arguably be seen as a colonizing move itself. That said, "decolonization can be broadly understood as an umbrella term for diverse efforts to resist the distinct but intertwined processes of colonization and racialization, to enact transformation and redress in reference to the historical and ongoing effects of these processes, and to create and keep alive modes of knowing, being, and relating that these processes seek to eradicate" (Stein & Andreotti, 2016, p. 1).
- **Filipinx**: I recognize the contested nature of the term Filipino in two ways. First, "Filipino" can be seen as a colonial term. That is, a Filipino identity is incoherent since it was created in the context of white supremacy, including the aggregation of several tribes and groups are under a term derived from historical colonization, i.e., that of King Philip II of Spain (Rodriguez, 2010). Second, there have been moves to make the term "Filipino" and its masculine connotation more gender-inclusive via the use of terms like Pin@y and, now, using the "x" to include those who identify as transgender, genderqueer, or non-binary. However, scholars like Atienza have critiqued the use of the "x," arguing that it is inaccessible and unused by those who it purports to represent. For the purposes of this dissertation, I follow Hanna (2017), who stated: "Recognizing the

'x,' for now, takes seriously the creative space-making interventions of some TGNC Filipinxs and Pilipinxs as recuperating pre-colonial and indigenous non-binary gender legacies, erased by both colonialism and hetero-patriarchal forms of Filipino nationalism" (p. 2). Acknowledging such tensions, I proceeded to use the term Filipinx as a practice of "strategic essentialism" or an intentional use of an "essentialist" term as a strategy for collective representation (Spivak, 1988). In other words, I ultimately used "Filipinx" as I still find it necessary to have an identifier around which to coalesce, or risk even further erasure and invisibility. I also approached "Filipinx" "not thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact…but as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall, 1990, p. 222). Thus, I used "Filipinx" with caution, neither expecting nor imposing a normative relationship to the term for those who were a part of this study. As will become clear through this dissertation, each person had a different relationship to the term, from resistance to embrace.

- **Staff**: In using the term "staff," I recognize the wide array of job types and positions that exist within colleges and universities. Because of this, there is no singular element that necessarily applies across all forms of staff. That said, in this dissertation, I use "staff" to refer to those whose professional work does not focus on teaching and research, which are primarily considered to be the work of faculty.

Dissertation Overview

Through this dissertation I argue that meaning-making, meanings, and enactments of decolonization in higher education for Filipinx staff, are shaped within encounters of conflicting orientations reflecting particular personal, institutional, and historical contexts.

This study focuses on Filipinx higher education staff and provides a story that elucidates the complexities, nuances, and tensions in moving towards, defining, and enacting a decolonizing orientation. In Chapter 2, I situate my study within the conversations around 1) decolonization in higher education, 2) staff in higher education, and 3) Filipinxs in higher education. In Chapter 3, I begin by describing my epistemological framework and methodology, which are centered around story and informed by Filipinx and Indigenous scholars. I conclude Chapter 3 with the story of how I selected the storytellers who would participate, who I call my *kababayan*. The chapter ends with a profile of each one. Having just shared the profiles of my kababayan, I continue in Chapter 4 with how we shared stories as a group, i.e., the methods, as well as the interpretive framework the guided my analysis of the stories.

Chapters 5 through 7 contain the stories from my kababayan in relation to my research questions about meanings, enactments, and the process of coming to a decolonizing orientation. Chapter 5 and 6 includes stories from the journeys of coming to, defining, and enacting a decolonization orientation. Chapter 5 focuses on personal lives, as well as a general trajectory of early painful encounters which implicated growth. Chapter 6 builds on Chapter 5 by following my kababayan's journeys in their professional lives. This chapter details how decolonizing orientations within one's personal life informed a decolonizing orientation within one's professional life, and how new encounters or reflection added to this orientation. Chapter 7 shines a light on the process of communal and reflexive meaning-making that defined this study. While Chapters 5 and 6 shared the stories my kababayan described in their individual journal entries, Chapter 7 tells the story of our group meaning-making of decolonization and how our engagement with each other caused shifts in, created debates around, and affirmed/built upon our decolonizing orientations. Finally, Chapter 8 presents the answers to the research questions,

implications for research and practice, and closes with reflections from myself and my kababayan about this research journey.

CHAPTER 2: UNRAVELING THE LITERATURE

Figure 1. Collage representing literature review

Note. Right-most picture "Self-Discovery 2" copyrighted by Rita Loyd at nurturingart.com. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix D).

At the end of my second semester in 2016, I created a version of the collage above (Figure 1) to represent my doctoral journey. The left-most picture is of a string unraveling (Joy, n.d.). The middle picture is of the word "purpose" against a mostly dark-blue background (Malik, n.d.). Finally, the right-most picture shows a woman with both hands on her heart. This collage has stayed with me since, serving as a reminder of my progress, even as its meanings have changed over time. In many ways, the pictures here reflect my review of the literature.

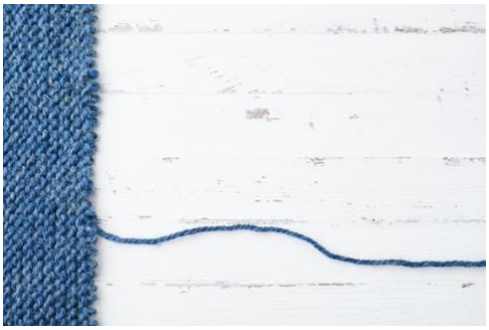
I begin with a broad discussion of the global literature on decolonizing higher education to paint a picture of the landscape in which decolonization has been written about. Just like an unraveling string, the collective body on decolonization seeks to *unravel* the tightly bound strings of colonialism. Furthermore, this body of literature provides a framework for understanding how scholars are making sense of decolonization, as well as how Filipinx higher education staff may fit, or not, within such sensemaking. I then review the literature on staff in

higher education to shed light on their professional contexts. I connect this part of the literature to the notion of *purpose,* as one's job may connect to their sense of purpose or purposes.

Finally, I review the literature on Filipinxs in U.S. higher education to connect them to larger conversations on decolonization and staff in higher education. This body of literature is symbolized by the picture of a woman feeling love for herself. As a Filipina in higher education, I rarely saw my Filipina self represented in the literature in my courses and I internalized this absence. Fortunately, my initial hesitancy in studying with the Filipinx community turned into an embrace and I approach this literature with a personal sense of love and appreciation. All three sections work in tandem to develop the rationale for my study, just as the three pictures above come together to form a whole.

Decolonization in Higher Education: Areas and Aims

Figure 2. Unraveling string



The metaphor of an unraveling string (see Figure 2) represents the literature on decolonization in higher education. Historical colonialism has weaved its own version of what higher education should look like and who it should serve, with patterns and knots that colonizing forces thought could not be undone. As such, colonial legacies in higher education are often taken for granted, though many are making concerted efforts to identify and unravel their threads. What can we learn through this unraveling? Where does this unraveling happen and to

what end? I answer these questions through the following two subthemes: *areas* in which the literature implies decolonization to occur and the *aims* of decolonization.

Areas of Decolonization in Higher Education

In this section, I examine the areas of higher education in which decolonization has taken place and determine whether these areas fall within the realm of staff. As I discuss next, much of the literature focuses on epistemic issues that fall within the realm of traditional faculty work.

Epistemic/knowledge production. The majority of the literature on decolonizing higher education has been written about in terms of epistemic issues within the realm of traditional faculty. Perhaps this is no surprise, given a perusal of some of the latest edited books on this topic, such as: *Decolonising the university: The emerging quest of non-eurocentric paradigms* (2014), *Decolonising the university* (2018), *Unsettling the westernized university* (2019). These texts reveal a tendency to equate the "university" with "academia." Thus, in this section, I describe literature that specifically discusses decolonizing disciplines, research and scholarship, and teaching and pedagogy.

Decolonizing disciplines. A number of scholars have taken up the task of reflecting on the colonial origins of disciplines like anthropology (Allen & Jobson, 2016; Harrison, 1997; Hlabangane & Radebe, 2016), archaeology (Atalay, 2006), to nursing (Green, 2016; McGibbon et al., 2014), and psychology (Adams et al., 2017; Reyes Cruz & Sonn, 2011; Segalo, 2016). These scholars have specifically written about what it would mean to decolonize said disciplines. Interestingly, the literature on decolonizing universities tends to focus on the humanities and social sciences (Lebakeng, 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondi, 2016). Ultimately, this literature espouses forms of "subaltern knowledge production that represent a challenge to the Eurocentric/western centric disciplines as they exist today" (Maldonado-Torres, 2012, p. 91) and

opposes epistemicide, through which minoritized epistemological paradigms are subordinated to those of Western paradigms (Lebakeng, 2016). In line with Spiegel et al. (2017), Vorster and Quinn (2017) state how decolonization in different institutional contexts, such as different disciplines, will be different (p. 42). Given this, they acknowledge it will take a lot of work to "understand exactly what the calls for decolonization mean in the university and in the different disciplines" (p. 42).

Decolonizing research and scholarship. The literature on decolonizing research also continues to grow (Bhattacharya, 2009; Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Mutua & Swadener, 2004; Paris & Winn, 2014; Patel, 2016; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). The common thread connecting these pieces is a desire to combat coloniality in research and a desire for epistemic changes to research processes, from 'before' the research (Al-Hardan, 2014) to issues of representation (Mutua & Swadener, 2004). Other scholars have presented decolonial methodologies that are culturally relevant to particular groups, including narratology within an African context (Dastile, 2016), the Fijian Vanua Research Framework (Nabobo-Baba, 2008), and 'talanoa' and 'faafaletui' in Samoa (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014).

Decolonizing teaching and pedagogy. In terms of teaching and pedagogy, scholars have primarily been concerned with issues of curriculum (McLaughlin & Whatman, 2011; Shahjahan et al., 2009), the classroom and its dynamics (Autar, 2017; Diversi & Moreira, 2013; Parker et al., 2017; Villanueva, 2013), and pedagogy (de Jong et al., 2019; Gaudry & Hancock, 2012; Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Madden, 2014; Shahjahan, 2015; Tejeda et al., 2003).

Overall, this literature revolves around knowledge production in the classroom. For instance, authors have theorized decolonization through the potential for critical race theory (CRT) to decolonize curriculum (McLaughlin & Whatman, 2011) and envisioned a decolonizing

pedagogy that reclaims Metis knowledge and disrupts colonial narratives in the classroom (Gaudry & Hancock, 2012). They have also argued for the centering of embodied pedagogies to disrupt Eurocentric notions of time that privilege dominant mind supremacy epistemologies (Shahjahan, 2015) and have theorized a decolonizing pedagogy for informing curricular content and reconceptualizing teaching and learning by drawing on postcolonial studies, CRT, spatial theory, and critical pedagogy.

Other authors have drawn primarily from their own experiences as classroom instructors to inform theory and offer examples of decolonizing pedagogy to others (Diversi & Moreira, 2013; Gaudry & Hancock, 2012; Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Parker et al., 2017; Villanueva, 2013). Some of these authors have offered a vision. For instance, Diversi and Moreira (2013) "attempt to examine, challenge, and resist neoliberal dehumanizing narratives of the Other in our classrooms" (p. 469). Gaudry and Hancock (2012), too, focused on the classroom and theorized a vision of decolonizing Metis pedagogy.

Beyond the Traditional Epistemic Level. In spite of the above, the discussion around decolonization in higher education has gone beyond epistemics, albeit to a limited extent. In what follows, I first describe two articles that offer perspectives on decolonization at the institutional and policy levels. I then highlight a group of authors who have advocated for deeper understandings of the materiality (or physical aspects) of decolonization and other university settings in which decolonization can take place. Importantly, their work has opened up the discussion to areas of decolonization beyond traditional faculty work (Burman, 2012; Garcia, 2018; Grosfoguel et al., 2016; Mbembe, 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016; la paperson, 2017).

Institutional and policy levels. The following two authors have specifically written on decolonization at the institutional and policy levels. Garcia (2018) has written about

decolonizing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and offered an organizational framework. The framework consists of nine dimensions: 1) purpose, 2) mission, 3) membership, 4) technology, 5) governance, 6) community standards, 7) justice and accountability, 8) incentive structure, and 9) external boundary management.

Shedding light on decolonization in terms of policy, Shahjahan (2011) has illuminated the Eurocentric colonial vestiges of the evidence-based education and policy movement. In doing so, Shahjahan (2011) reclaims "colonial histories and discourses with respect to evidence-based education movement in the USA, Canada, and Britain" (p. 185).

Critiquing the focus on knowledge production. Some scholars (Burman, 2012; Grosfoguel et al., 2016; la paperson, 2017), however, have critiqued the focus on knowledge production in scholarship on decolonization. For example, Burman (2012) astutely asks: "is there not a risk that a project aimed at decolonizing knowledge and decolonizing the university precisely by way of books and lectures - i.e., in a logocentric, or as I would suggest, a 'librocentric' project of decolonization - ends up reproducing the colonial epistemological asymmetries of knowledge production?" (p. 103). Grosfoguel et al. (2016) similarly critiqued the usual aspects of decolonization that ignore the materiality of a school.

Mbembe (2016) further expanded the areas in which decolonization of universities can occur, such as in buildings, classrooms, systems of access and management, bureaucratization, assessment, faculty evaluation, and the cycle that turns students into consumers and customers. He states there must be a process of decolonization both of knowledge *and* of the university as an institution. These areas are, undoubtedly, areas in which staff are involved.

To summarize, the literature on areas in higher education that have explored decolonization has largely been written from the perspective of faculty members, i.e., in terms of

disciplines, teaching and pedagogy, and research and scholarship. Notwithstanding the importance of faculty work, it is also crucial to consider the decolonizing contributions of staff. Although some authors have brought attention to decolonization beyond classrooms and research (described in the subsection "beyond the epistemic"), there remains a need to go beyond leveling critique and offering alternative settings and modes of decolonizing work. The literature thus continues to lack the perspectives of people who may be doing the work researchers describe in non-faculty capacities (e.g., higher education staff).

Ethical Aims of Decolonization in Higher Education

While the previous section established an understanding of the "areas" and "professional population" that have engaged decolonizing work in higher education, this section extends that discussion by illuminating the ways scholars have envisioned the ethical aims of decolonization. Rarely do authors explicitly say: "The aims of decolonization are x." Rather, the aims seem to be implied in the content of the author's writing. I thus suggest that how scholars understand and make sense of decolonization is implied in how they articulate decolonization's aims and what it entails. In this section, I describe three main ethical aims derived from the literature. The first is unsettling Eurocentrism or combating Western norms. The second is Indigenizing higher education, in which there is an implied desire to unsettle Eurocentrism as well as an explicit focus on Indigenous peoples, knowledges, and land. The third is the aim of "decolonization otherwise." This aim moves our thinking towards ontological questions as opposed to epistemological ones. While these three aims overlap and are ever shifting, I use this categorization as a starting point for making sense of the literature.

Furthermore, I contextualize these aims by highlighting authors' positionalities and geographical regions to highlight the geopolitics of knowledge. As Mignolo (2011) stated: "I

think where I am and do" (p. 80). What's more, I align this move with Cupples (2019) who stated:

> The westernized university, like colonial conquest and slavery, is then a globalized phenomenon, but *one that manifests itself in geographically specific forms*, depending on, in part, whether the university is located in a site of labour-focused colonialism, a site of settler colonialism (for the distinction, see Veracini, 2011) or in a colonial or imperial nation such as the UK that is home to large established communities of Commonwealth migrants and their descendants as well as to many international students from formerly colonized countries. *These distinct colonial forms reproduce Eurocentrism in different ways and engender different kinds of decolonial responses*. (p. 2, emphasis mine)

In other words, notions of decolonization are tied to geography. By organizing my discussion of the ethical aims of decolonization in this manner, I am not suggesting that all thinkers definitively fall neatly into boxes. On the contrary, different genealogies of thought regarding decolonization have been taken up globally and, therefore, cannot be easily categorized. Rather, I assert there are broad trends of thought that can reveal gaps in standpoints that indicate areas for further expansion contributing to this literature.

In what follows, I describe each theme while highlighting the continental and national contexts in which they have taken place. In some locations, there is a (relative) abundance of literature on the topic of decolonizing higher education; in others, not so much. I provide an overview of the currently available literature in each region and then highlight articles that are especially relevant to the proposed study.

Unsettling Eurocentrism. For some, the aims of decolonization have to do with unsettling Eurocentrism, specifically in terms of epistemic coloniality or the normalization of

western knowledge in higher education. Accordingly, several scholars have critiqued the dominance of Anglo-European culture, language, and theories in higher education. Some emphasize multiple ways of producing knowledge generally, while others offer particular non-Western ways of being and knowing as decolonizing acts. This focus on epistemics is perhaps unsurprising given that the literature has mostly been written from faculty perspectives as illuminated in the previous section. Many scholars have drawn inspiration from the Latin American sense of decoloniality (Bodin et al., 2012; Grosfoguel et al., 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondi, 2016) where they use certain terminology like the "Westernized" university, epistemic Eurocentrism, and the coloniality of knowledge, to describe colonialism as a Western, European enterprise. Pertinent concepts include transmodernity, attributed to Enrique Dussel; pluri-versalism as opposed to uni-versalism; and inter-epistemic dialogues leading to a new ecology of knowledges (Sithole, 2016; Segalo, 2016), attributed to Boaventura de Sousa Santos. This particular aim has been taken up in South Africa, Canada, the United States, and Europe.

South Africa. Compared to other locations, South Africa has produced a high volume of scholarship on decolonizing higher education. Renewed calls for decolonizing higher education—particularly around curriculum and access—arose out of student protests in 2015-2016, such as #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall. In terms of curriculum, many have advocated for a multiplicity of knowledges and/or the centering of Indigenous African frameworks (le Grange, 2016; Constandius et al., 2018; Leibowitz, 2017; Msila & Gumbo, 2016; Seepe, 2004; Vorster & Quinn, 2017). Some authors have pointed to the colonial origins of disciplines in African contexts, such as anthropology (Hlabangane & Radebe, 2016), tourism studies (Ndlovu, 2016), and social psychology (Segalo, 2016). Mbembe (2016), in particular, has advocated for decolonizing not only knowledge, but the university as a whole.

One particular study relates to mine, in the way they focus on meaning-making. Padayachee et al. (2018) conducted an empirical study where they engaged 15 lecturers and associate lecturers at a research-intensive South African university in a workshop (free-writing activities) about how they understood and made sense of different views on decolonization of the curriculum. They engaged 15 academic staff (lecturers and associate lecturers) at a research-intensive South African university in a workshop (free-writing activities) about how they understood and made sense of different views on decolonization of the curriculum. The lecturers then had a group discussion where they shared their thoughts from the free write as well as their own experiences. A salient theme emerging from the lecturers and students was the challenge of defining the term "decolonisation." At the same time, "there were more commonalities in their understanding of the term than differences. Key themes of personal and contextual relevance of the curriculum and the need to review and reimagine pedagogical strategies emerged from both" (p. 296-297). "Personal relevance" included power relations and positionality. Overall, the authors put forth a knowledge-based approach to the curriculum through which multiple forms of knowledge could be recognized and legitimized. The current study differs in that the focal question is around decolonization broadly, not just the curriculum.

Canada. In Canada, scholars have broached the topics of decolonizing curriculum and pedagogy. For instance, Dei (2011) has advocated for "epistemic openness based on shared and mutual respect and recognition of multiple knowledges" (p. 32). Here, the aim of decolonization is a multiplicity of knowledges within the curriculum and the empowerment of people normally not seen as knowledge producers.

In terms of pedagogy, some scholars have offered different frameworks to the Eurocentric colonial notion of a mind/body split and the separation of human and nonhuman. For

instance, Ng (2018) has offered understandings from Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and qigong, while Wong (2018) has discussed mindfulness-based pedagogy in the field of social work.

United States. In the U.S., multiple scholars have written about decolonization in teaching and pedagogy (Davis, 2010; Darder, 2016; Diversi & Moreira, 2013; Parker et al., 2017). Taken together, these works contest dehumanizing narratives of the 'other' and imperialistic epistemologies.

Of interest to the current study, Madden (2014) conducted empirical research on graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) who hold decolonial feminist commitments at a northeastern U.S. research university. Through in-depth questionnaires, five themes emerged including: 1) pedagogical philosophies anchored in decolonial feminism, 2) perceptions of power and privilege in higher education, 3) GTA self-efficacy and empowerment, 4) complexity of pedagogical experiences, and 5) pedagogical communities of support. Like Madden (2014), this dissertation engages a population of people who hold decolonial commitments.

Within the realm of research, Bhattacharya (2009) described a de/colonizing approach to research wherein she strives to capture multiple ways of producing knowledge. Meanwhile, Falcón (2016) put forth a transnational feminist methodology that she describes as decolonizing. Specifically, she asserted: "The aim of decolonizing research is to create new research models and practices" (Falcón, 2016, p. 176).

Europe. In different European countries, the language scholars use invites readers to consider issues of power in shaping relationships to knowledge within the university context. For instance, in a brief editorial to introduce a special issue of the interdisciplinary Dutch journal *Tijdschrit voor Genderstudies* (translates to Journal of Gender Studies) on "Decolonising the

University," de Jong et al. (2017) wrote: "The contributions to this special issue…ask what knowledge is, how it is produced and taught at universities, and for whose benefit" (p. 227). The authors are concerned with questions such as: "Why is my curriculum white? Why isn't my professor black?" (p. 227).

In terms of pedagogy, Autar (2017) sought to capture students' lived experiences of coloniality in the classroom through questionnaires, observations, and interviews with students, teachers, and policymakers at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. Crafting the story of "Student A" to highlight this coloniality, she envisions classroom dynamics wherein every attendee feels credible as a producer of knowledge. In terms of the disciplines, Craps et al. (2015) – writing from the U.K., Ireland, and Belgium – discussed decolonizing trauma studies in a roundtable format journal article that challenges the universalization of western models of trauma studies, such as of PTSD and western cultural trauma theory. They also engage the question of pedagogical ethics.

Mirza (2015) presented a slightly different approach to decolonizing that focuses on the experiences of Black and ethnicized female academics in higher education in the U.K. Specifically, she discusses their embodiment of gendered and racialized difference within the context of whiteness in the academy. In this article, decolonization implies social transformation of the institution that challenges and disrupts whiteness. Cupples (2019) also provided some explanation for British uses of the term decolonization: "While British universities are also subject to substantive decolonial challenges, the challenges come not from indigenous peoples who were settled there prior to conquest, but from non-white British students whose parents or grandparents migrated to the UK in the postwar period from Britain's former colonies" (Cupples, 2019, p. 7).

Indigenizing Universities/Settler Colonialism. Other scholars have focused on the task of indigenizing universities and resisting settler colonialism as the overall aim of decolonization in higher education (Battiste et al., 2002; Dei, 2011; Patel, 2016; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; Thaman, 2003; Tuck & Yang, 2012; la paperson, 2017). In this section, I discuss how some scholars have focused on Indigenous peoples and knowledges as the main factor in decolonization efforts, albeit with multiple and different aims; from reclaiming, to inclusion, and Indigenous sovereignty. This relates to the previous aim in that they share an implicit resistance of Eurocentrism. The difference, however, is that Indigenous peoples, knowledges, and lands are the main factors in decolonization efforts. This aim can be found in much of the literature from Canada, the Pacific Islands, Australia, New Zealand, Latin America, and the United States – geographical regions known as places of settler colonialism.

Turtle Island/Canada. Many Indigenous Canadian scholars have discussed teaching and pedagogy through different approaches (Brunette-Debassige, 2018; Gaudry & Hancock, 2012; Iseke-Barnes (2008). For instance, Omushkego Cree scholar Brunette-Debassige (2018) offered an embodied Indigenous pedagogy for decolonizing, while Metis scholar Iseke-Barnes (2008) shared pedagogical activities she uses in her classroom to help students better understand the impacts and legacies of colonialism.

Mi'kmaw scholar Battiste and her co-writers (2002) comprehensively defined decolonization by broadening it to multiple areas of the institution. They refer to "seven sites of animation" where they "see real potential for the change that would benefit all Canadians by addressing the deficit in public understanding that stems from the evasion or denial of Indigenous knowledge" (p. 91). The first area is that of "the elders" who should provide guidance of decolonizing work. The second site is that of "ethical guidelines" for respecting

Indigenous knowledge. The third area is that of Indigenous knowledge in "educational materials," such as books, journals, monographs, and more. The fourth site is sui generis curriculum. The fifth site is "critical Indigenous mass" where the hiring, support, mentoring, and valuing of Indigenous faculty is emphasized. The sixth site is that of "dialogues and networks," which must be fostered so those doing the work of incorporating Indigenous knowledges into academia can feel connected and supported. Finally, the authors support an "Indigenous renaissance" that encourages Indigenous artists to create as part of a "radical pedagogy of animation as criticisms of existing academic models" (Battiste et al., 2002, p. 93). Thus, Battiste et al. (2002) contributed to the literature by expanding what decolonization can look like in higher education and sites in which it can take place, specifically as they pertain to the aims of reclaiming and including indigenous knowledges. Areas include research, policy development, and Aboriginal students' and teachers' experiences.

Finally, Adefarakan (2018) represents a different entry point into the discussion of indigenizing universities. As an Indigenous Yoruban woman of the diaspora living on Canadian land. Adefarakan (2018) discussed how the Indigenous Yoruba concept of *ori* is a counterhegemonic entry point for decolonizing pedagogy through the integration of body, mind, and spirit.

Pacific Islands/Oceania. As a Tongan Scholar in the field of Pacific Studies, Thaman (2003) wrote about Indigenous knowledges, particularly that of Pacific peoples. She advocates multiple points of reclamation, including the reclamation of Oceanic perspectives, knowledge, and wisdom, and students reclaiming their education. Thaman (2003) further emphasized the significance of decolonizing Pacific studies by recognizing how western thought dominates Pacific peoples' lives, valuing alternative ways of thinking, and seeking to develop a culturally

inclusive and gender sensitive philosophy of education. Clement (2017), too, wrote on decolonization of the disciplines. As non-Indigenous faculty, Clement (2017) discussed the discipline of geography and advocates the re-centering of Indigenous frameworks to offer new possibilities for the discipline. In the area of research, Nabobo-Baba (2008) introduced an Indigenous Fijian research framework.

Australia. Curriculum is the predominant topic for scholars in Australia. For instance, informed by critical race theory (CRT), non-Indigenous Australian educators McLaughlin and Whatman (2011) discussed the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge in college curriculum. Similarly, non-Indigenous educators Mackinlay and Barney (2014) proposed transformative learning and pedagogy in Indigenous Australian Studies.

Nakata et al. (2012) spoke more broadly to the topic of knowledge production in Indigenous Studies, cautioning against uncritical resistance to Western inscription of the Indigenous and taking up Indigenous modes of knowledge production. Instead, they suggest Indigenous resistance can come through teaching students to contemplate the limits of current discourse and the complexities of knowledge production for Indigenous peoples. In terms of research, Aboriginal scholar Ober (2017) has discussed *kapati* (cup of tea) time, or storytelling as a data collection method in Indigenous research.

Aotearoa/New Zealand. Through her work on *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Maori scholar Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) focuses on indigenous knowledges as they relate to the research process in higher education. Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) specifically connects the "indigenous agenda of self-determination, indigenous rights and sovereignty, on the one hand, and on the other, a complementary indigenous research agenda that was about building capacity and working towards healing, reconciliation and development" (p. xiii). Although decolonization involves

deconstruction, it has a much larger aim of positively impacting the lives of indigenous peoples (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999).

Latin America. Within Latin America, I found articles in the context of Nicaragua and Bolivia. Cupples and Glynn (2014) discussed a particular university, The Universidad de las Regiones Autónomas de la Costa Caribe Nicaragüense (URACCAN, or University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast), whose pedagogic model is based on the concept of interculturality, with origins in Black and Indigenous social movements in Latin America. This institution organizes its teaching programs, departments, and institutes to Costeno approaches and ways of knowing. Additionally, Swedish/Bolivian anthropologist Burman (2012), wrote about Indigenous Ayamara epistemology, but cautions against the haphazard inclusion of Indigenous knowledges, stating, "… if indigenous knowledge is integrated into the university it may result that instead of decolonizing the university we end up colonizing indigenous knowledge" (p. 116).

Turtle Island/United States. Literature coming from Turtle Island/the U.S. broadly covers pedagogy and research. For instance, Cherry-McDaniel (2016) who identifies as an African American teacher educator at an HBCU, aligned her definition with Indigenous land repatriation. Though she discussed using Native feminist texts with her students, she described such a pedagogy as de-weaponizing, rather than decolonizing, since it does not involve the returning of land to Indigenous peoples. In the literature on decolonizing research, Patel (2016) argued that "educational research has served functions of settler colonialism more than it has served learning and knowledge" (p. 30), thereby asserting the necessity of identifying how such logics manifest to guard against reproducing them.

Although their piece does not focus specifically on higher education, Tuck and Yang (2012) have been increasingly cited within higher education literature. They, too, emphasized the indigenous agenda of self-determination and sovereignty. In their conceptual article, Tuck and Yang (2012) advanced a definition of the aims of decolonization as "the repatriation of Indigenous land and life" in settler colonial contexts, upholding the sovereignty of Native people (p. 1). la paperson (2017) has echoed this, articulating that "Decolonization is, put bluntly, the rematriation of land, the regeneration of relations, and the forwarding of Indigenous and Black and queer futures - a process that requires countering what power seems to be up to" (p. xv).

Decolonization "Otherwise." Finally, I share one additional perspective on the aims of decolonization. Andreotti et al. (2015) took a different approach than previous authors. A group of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars writing in a Canadian context, they used "social cartography" (Paulston, 2009) to "map" different interpretations of decolonization in higher education. Pedagogically, social cartography serves as a "tool to generate new vocabularies that can potentially lead to imaginaries beyond the naturalized grammar of modernity" (p. 22). Through the act of creating this cartography, they were able to outline various implications and have articulated four different "spaces," i.e., what decolonization means in the "space," and the practice the "space" prompts. The major difference is that they go beyond epistemology and bring in the ontological to ask what decolonization would look like if we were to question our ontological attachments and reach the edges of our "knowing and being" (p. 37).

To summarize the debate around the *aims* of decolonization in higher education, there are three main ways the aims have been articulated and particular regions where these aims are particularly invoked or espoused: 1) unsettling Eurocentrism [United States, Europe, Latin America, Africa]; 2) indigenizing [United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Pacific

Islands]; and 3) decolonization "otherwise" [Canada]. These various articulations of the ethical aims of decolonization – in addition to areas – provide insights into scholars' rich and varied sensemaking around the meaning of decolonization. However, what remains scarce are in-depth discussions of authors' own life experiences and how they have informed their understandings of decolonization. Deeper insight into the life experiences and identities of these scholars and how they inform their understandings of decolonization would help further expand our notions of decolonization and its connections to peoples' lives. We could ask: Are there definitive understandings of decolonization? How might such definitions be informed by and influenced by authors' own life experiences and multiple subjectivities? What more could we learn?

A focus on the U.S. context. I wish to highlight the U.S. context, as it is the context in which my study is set. As seen above, the U.S. in particular is a site wherein the definitions of decolonization are offered and debated. The U.S. is both a settler colonial nation and one that had a colonial relationship with other nations, such as the Philippines. People of different social positionalities, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, white, people of color, and multiracial, have offered work that touches on both aims. However, I noticed that the Filipinx diasporic perspective and their unique colonial history is largely absent from the discussion on decolonizing higher education.

Within the literature, a number of scholars from and/or working in the U.S. have acknowledged and honored Tuck and Yang (2012), who defined decolonization as the repatriation of Indigenous land and life. Yet, the same scholars have often asserted and moved forward with other new or existing definitions, such as: Zavala (2013) who defined decolonization as "anti-colonial struggle that grows out of grassroots spaces" (p. 57); Bhattacharya (2016) and Bhattacharya and Kim (2018) who "focus on colonizing knowledges

and the positional superiority of Western knowledge making" (p. 3); Garcia (2018) who draws on theorizations of coloniality (Cervantes & Saldaña, 2015; Quijano, 2000, 2007); and Parker et al. (2017), who note that "ours is not a project of commensurability…but of opening up and interrogating new possible futures in which indigenous land and life are a central part" (p. 245). Of note, Zavala (2013) and Garcia (2018) drew upon Chicanx histories and perspectives.

Overall, the global literature on decolonizing higher education provides a framework for discerning how decolonizing higher education is understood by various scholars. I situate this proposed study in the global literature because, as Leibowitz (2017) stated in regard to her research in South Africa: this proposed study focuses on the U.S./Filipinx diasporic context and debates, but "with an understanding that these are informed by, and hopefully inform, international scholarly debates" (p. 94). In this review, I have shown how the literature on decolonization in higher education unravels through the two main lenses of areas and aims. In the first subsection on areas, I established that faculty areas, perspectives, and experiences are dominant, leaving a significant gap in terms of staff. In the second subsection on aims, I argued that, although we can identify three main "types" of aims, we do not know much about how authors' lives and positionalities shape understandings of these aims. Additionally, I showed the U.S. to be a particular site of debate and the Filipinx perspective to be one that is largely absent from the discussion on decolonizing higher education. The next two themes discuss the extant of the literature on the two relevant gaps highlighted above: 1) staff in higher education and 2) Filipinxs in higher education.

Staff in Higher Education

Figure 3. Purpose

Many (but not all) people connect a sense of *purpose* to their work. This deeper sense of inner drive, motivation, and values attached to *purpose* is what I am particularly interested in when thinking about staff in higher education. How does value tied to decolonization play a role in the lives of staff? To what extent is this question engaged in the literature on higher education staff? Before answering this, I start by sharing literature that discusses questions of who and how many staff there are in U.S. higher education, their contributions, obstacles, and minoritized staff perspectives.

Who are university staff? How many are there? Who do they work with?

Administrative staff are referred to in a number of ways in the literature. Bauer (2000) described staff as the "front lines" of institutions who act as a first point of contact for students, legislative officials, or other institutional stakeholders, as well as who promote student enrollment, retention, and satisfaction (p. 87). Somers et al. (1998) took a broader view, thinking of them as backstage employees who support the university behind the scenes in roles ranging from janitor to vice president. From a representational lens, Szekeres (2004) refered to them as "invisible employees" to call attention to concerns surrounding their marginalization. Finally, Whitchurch (2009) recognized the changing nature of this group, referring to them as a small group of blended professionals who occupy increasingly specialized roles, require a growing

number of educational credentials, and contribute to multiple institutional goals (Whitchurch, 2009). Yet, although this group has been written about, there is still no general consensus about who they are and what defines them.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; 2016), university employees other than faculty and graduate assistants make up 51.1% of staffing classifications across institution types. Furthermore, administrative staff will continue to grow due to increased enrollments and demand for higher education.

Although I share the numbers of staff and highlight their growth, I do not use this as my sole rationale for their focus in my study, but rather as a secondary rationale. That is, I do not use a "distributive justice" lens wherein higher numbers mean they are more important. Rather, I am using a "relational lens" and the perspective that "they exist," therefore they are important. These numbers make it all the more important that we seek to uncover the nuance and perspectives within this group.

Contributions of staff to higher education institutions

Within the small body of work on staff, one main area of discussion is staff contributions to institutions of higher education. Across the literature, authors have highlighted how staff support the university operations and the success of students and faculty (Graham & Regan, 2016; Regan et al., 2014; Szekeres, 2011). For example, in a study on administrative staff in the UK and Australia, Graham and Regan (2016) found that administrative staff regularly contributed to positive student outcomes but were not seen as pedagogical partners within the institution. Some scholars from the United States have also suggested engaging administrative staff to improve institutional effectiveness in areas such as student success and campus climate (Hurtado et al., 2015; Schmitt et al., 2015).

Obstacles

Scholars have also looked at the obstacles faced by staff. These range from feelings of marginalization as well as feeling underutilized and underappreciated to questions of professionalization (Szekeres, 2011; Whitchurch, 2009; Young et al., 2015). This literature is notably limited, and mostly comes from the U.S. Staff have also reported feelings of alienation, limited autonomy, inequitable working conditions, and limited opportunity for professional growth in workplaces (Smerek & Peterson, 2007; Szekeres, 2004). Some have also experienced "hierarchical microaggressions" (Young et al., 2015).

Divisions between faculty and staff. Szekeres (2011) noted that negative perceptions of administrative positions "have strained relationships between academic and administrative staff to a point where administrative staff may feel as though they are treated as 'poor relations of the university system, representing an underclass in terms of pay, conditions and flexibility" (p. 684). Furthermore, growth and differentiation among staff has led to higher levels of "distrust and misunderstanding" between academic and administrative staff (Bok, 2013, p. 33). As the project of decolonizing is one that many suggest requires collaboration, strained relationships can prevent people from realizing their potential as a collaborative entity working towards decolonization.

Minoritized staff perspectives and experiences

A number of authors have written about the perspectives and experiences of staff from different positionalities (Amey, 1999; Gomez et al., 2015; Ideta & Cooper, 1999). Others have focused on less-studied staff positions (Magolda, 2014; Pearson, 2008), some of which include women senior administrators in community colleges (Amey, 1999). Finally, one dissertation

looked at the phenomenon of multicultural competence in student affairs practitioners (St. Clair, 2007).

Of those with minoritized identities, Amey (1999) has analyzed structural and cultural barriers in community colleges that negatively impact women's experiences in senior administration. Gomez et al. (2015) used a life history methodology to explore the academic life histories (focused on schooling and work experiences) of two higher education staff of color at a PWI in the midwestern United States. More specifically, they examined how working in a predominantly white environment "demands that staff members of color find means of answering overt and implied criticisms of their daily work" (p. 676). Finally, Ideta and Cooper (1999) studied Asian women leaders, noting they occupy a difficult area in which behaviors normatively associated with leaders, such as displays of power and authority, are considered doubly atypical in their identities as Asian women.

Magolda (2014) and Pearson (2008) elevated the experiences of staff who are often invisible due to their positions. Magolda (2014) undertook a year-long ethnographic study of college custodians in the U.S. In presenting their stories, they argued campuses are significantly losing out by not recognizing the wisdom of their custodians. On the other hand, Pearson (2008) wrote about the experiences of administrative support staff and, in reflecting on academic elitism, noted: "…we acknowledge an equation in university life: our inner thoughts and the facts of our life challenges are not perceived to be equal to those academic workers who have more credentials" (p. 127). Pearson (2008) thus presented several scenarios of administrative staff workflow and pointed to the rampant devaluation of their work, despite their integral role in university functions.

Finally, St. Clair (2007)'s dissertation took a phenomenological approach to exploring the journey of developing multicultural competence for student affairs professionals. Themes spanned three different realms: personal, professional, and structural/institutional. In this study, St. Clair (2007) brought a qualitative element to a topic that has largely been studied quantitatively. This study, like St. Clair (2007)'s, operates under the assumption that one's life experiences serve as a lens and foundation for future beliefs and values.

Within these studies on minoritized staff, there is a common thread of focusing on methodologies that highlight story, narrative, and experience. Like this group of authors, I believe these methodologies are necessary for better understanding populations we know little about. This group of studies also largely documents minoritized struggles and challenges. Although struggles and challenges are mentioned by participants in this dissertation study, my larger purpose is to examine meaning-making in decolonization practices.

I return now to my questions regarding *purpose*, values, inner drive, and motivation. As the above indicates, little explicit discussion exists around this topic. Although this section provides important background context and presents the various directions the literature has gone, there is still more to learn. For instance, how might a sense of professional *purpose* related to one's job as a staffperson merge with a sense of purpose tied to decolonization?

Figure 4. Self-love.

Note. From "Self-Discovery 2" by Rita Loyd at nurturingart.com. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix D).

In some higher education spaces, there is a stigma against "me-search" or "we-search," or scholarship in which someone studies with, for, and about their own community. For a long time, internalizing that stigma meant I did not focus on Filipinxs at all in my coursework. I did not realize how incomplete this made me feel until I started to unapologetically pursue projects related to Filipinxs. In the following literature on Filipinxs in higher education, I feel a sense of love, appreciation, and connection for those who choose to focus on Filipinx issues and perspectives. I feel a deep sense of honor building on their work to deepen discussions on decolonization. Of the three images, the one above (Figure 4) is the only one that shows a human being, thereby signifying the necessity of recognizing social positionality in larger discussions on decolonization and staff.

It is true that the uniqueness of the Filipinx positionality has not gone unshared in the broader higher education literature. There is indeed, a relatively small but growing body of literature on Filipinxs in higher education. Yet, this literature is limited in many ways. First, it primarily focuses on the experiences of undergraduate students (Besnard, 2003; Buenavista,

2007, 2010, 2013; Buenavista et al., 2009; Castillo, 2002; Leong, 1985, 1991, 1993; Maramba, 2008; Museus & Maramba, 2011; Ong & Viernes, 2012; Strobel, 2001; Surla & Poon, 2015; Vea, 2013) and faculty (de Jesus, 2005; Halagao, 2013; Maramba & Nadal, 2013; Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009; Trinidad, 2014). There are also a couple works on graduate students (Nadal et al., 2010; Nievera-Lozano, 2012).

Especially important to note in the context of this study is that the higher education literature on Filipinxs has yet to deeply examine issues related to colonization. The literature on faculty tends to be autoethnographic and focus on topics related to curriculum, pedagogy, and the overall experience of being Filipinx in the academy (de Jesus, 2005; Halagao, 2013; Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009; Trinidad, 2014). The literature on students focuses on topics related to student experiences, identity development, sense of belonging, and campus climate (Maramba, 2008; Maramba & Museus, 2011, 2012; Museus & Maramba, 2010). Within the literature on students particularly, there seems to be a predominant focus on the model minority and perpetual foreigner myths, constructs which have been dominant in research on Asian Americans broadly. Yet, recent scholarship has begun to challenge the ideological base of these constructs, such as Poon et al. (2015), who called for a reframing of research on Asian Americans and Pacific Islander (AAPIs) in higher education "that does not reinforce hegemonic ideology" (p. 1). Given this, there are limited exceptions in education literature that center decolonization. Next, I outline the literature on Filipinx students and faculty related to decolonization. Afterwards, I will share studies that have been done on Filipinx higher education staff.

Filipinx Students and Decolonization

Two articles on Filipinx students have touched on the topic of decolonization. Writing from her lens as a Filipina, Strobel (2001) discussed the decolonization process of post-1965 Filipino Americans, mostly college students. For her, Filipino history must be reclaimed, and such a process becomes one of reclaiming memory as well: "To reclaim memory at the personal level is to engage in the process of creating a collective memory of a people's history" (pp. 72-73). Furthermore, Strobel (2001) included indigeneity in noting: "decolonization strengthens the cultural connection to the Filipino indigenous culture as a source of grounding (p. 63). Through this articulation, Strobel (2001) invokes the colonial history of the Philippines regarding their colonization by both Spain and the United States. This is key to the author's argument for "reclamation of one's cultural self and the recovery and healing of traumatic memory" (Strobel, 2001, p. 63).

Strobel (2001)'s study used a participatory research method and its parallel, *pagtatanung-tanong*: an indigenous Filipino research method grounded on the Filipino core values of *pakikiramdam* (shared perception) and *pakikipagkapwa-tao* (shared identity) (p. 64). There were eight participants, which included Filipino American college students as well as community and cultural leaders in Northern California. Strobel spent over a year with participants, engaging in in-depth dialogues, interviews, and other activities such as casual visits, shared meals, and socializing to discuss and write about their decolonization experience. Most participants were 1.5-generation, having come to the U.S. when they were children. Over the course of the year, Strobel found five generative themes: 1) the affective content of decolonization, 2) the power of naming and telling, 3) the need for Filipino cultural and historical knowledge, 4) the role of language and memory, and 5) the role of Filipino spirituality.

Meanwhile, Halagao (2004) interviewed six undergraduate Filipino Americans about a semester-long experience involving intensive education on Filipino history and education, which she described as a decolonizing curriculum. Methods included discussions, dialogues, and journaling. Halagao (2004) found the students made connections between historical and contemporary experiences, became aware of colonial mentality (CM), enhanced their ethnic identity, and were inspired to take social action.

These two studies provide different approaches to understanding decolonization with Filipinx students. They differ from the current study, however, in that the participants were mainly undergraduate students as opposed to staff. Additionally, decolonization in these studies was primarily a personal process, leaving room to explore what decolonization could mean within public, professional contexts.

Filipinx Faculty and Decolonization

More closely related to this proposed research is a recent dissertation by Nievera-Lozano (2016) titled *Portraits of decolonizing praxis: How the lives of critically engaged Pinay [Filipina American] scholars inform their work*. Nievera-Lozano (2016) was guided by four research questions: 1) what are the life histories and/or experiences of critically engaged Pinay (Filipina American) faculty in academia?, 2) How do transformative moments in their life histories shape their teaching practices?, 3) How do they become transformative intellectuals? How do these teachers practice reflexive teaching and how does it work?, and 4) How does their work contribute to the larger political project of equitable, decolonizing education? To explore these research questions, she used an embodied, sutured portraiture methodology, creating "portraits" of the six Pinay faculty she interviewed and spent time with. Across the portraits, Nievera-

Lozano identified three themes: 1) the disenchantment of empire, 2) the creation of resistant socialities, and 3) Pinayist pedagogical praxis.

In this way, Nievera-Lozano's (2016) dissertation starts to bridge an important gap in current understandings of how coloniality shapes the lives and work of Filipinx faculty in academia. She situates their stories as "part of a larger project to decolonize the academy" (p. 13), yet, as mentioned, her focuses only on faculty and their scholar-activist work, leaving room to explore how issues of coloniality inform the work of Filipinx staff in higher education. Additionally, all her faculty participants were from or teaching in California, inviting consideration of the perspectives of people living in other parts of the U.S. This study this builds on her work by pursuing a similar topic, but with higher education staff.

Filipinx Staff

Some studies on Asian American staff broadly in higher education have included Filipinx participants in areas like career development (Chung, 2008; Fouad et al., 2008; Mella, 2012; Suh, 2005; Wilking, 2001; Wong, 2002), the "bamboo" ceiling (Hyun, 2005; Khator, 2010; Lee, 2002; Lum, 2008; Phan, 2013; Wong, 2002), and the harm of the model minority stereotype (Mella, 2012; Neilson, 2002; Ng et al., 2007; Wong, 2002).

Looking at Filipinx staff specifically, a study by Agbayani (1996) has demonstrated how Filipinxs in Hawaii are underrepresented in all levels of higher education, including faculty and administration. In addition, one dissertation has examined the experiences of Filipinx staff. Bagunu (2017) analyzed career decision-making of higher education professionals (student affairs and academic affairs) of Philippine descent. Using a critical race theory framework and narrative as well as a phenomenological methodology, Bagunu (2017) created a counter-narrative to stereotypes of Asian and Pacific Islanders in higher education. Specifically, Bagunu

(2017) focused on how they made career decisions in the context of their life course and what factors influenced their decisions to persist and advance in higher education as a career field. The study was comprised of 20 semi-structured interviews with participants at various career life stages. She found participants were influenced by several factors, including family, culture, external factors, career goals, role models, work values, self-identity, authority figures, and education. Bagunu (2017) also found that context, role, and time impacted career decision-making and noted future areas of research on groups like classified staff. Importantly, she touches on the possible impacts of colonization on Filipinxs, such as the internalization of western values and impacted educational expectations. Bagunu's (2017) study thus makes important inroads to understanding Filipinx staff in higher education and the proposed study continues in this vein but with a focus on decolonization with a wider range of staff.

In sum, I have presented the existing literature on Filipinxs in higher education in this section. Although this literature is limited, the focus on students and faculty—and resulting lack of research on staff—is unsurprising and mirrors broader trends in higher education literature, as illustrated earlier in this chapter. In studying with Filipinx staff and learning about their understandings of decolonization through story, this dissertation makes further inroads in understanding this particular population that often gets left out.

Conclusion

As observed through my reading of the literature, there is no singular definition of decolonization. Rather, there are several articulations. In regard to terminologies (decolonization, in this case), Mackinlay and Barney (2014) have stated: "The terms are sometimes used synonymously or sometimes as a part of departure, and the *social-cultural-historical-political-pedagogical-personal locatedness of the researcher and research itself sometimes determines*

which is preferred" (pp. 56-57, emphasis mine). In other words, the term decolonization and the ways scholars have taken it up may be related to the "locatedness" (or positionality and geography) of the writer.

As this chapter demonstrates, although the concept of decolonization in higher education has been extensively engaged, significant gaps remain—particularly those regarding the absence of staff and Filipinx perspectives, and a deeper consideration of how positionality and lived experience inform current knowledge. This dissertation thus provides a unique perspective on how decolonization in higher education is understood by a population with a unique colonial history, whose perspectives have not often been included. By listening to the narratives of Filipinx staff and how they make sense of and understand decolonization, we continue to build a broader understanding of decolonization in its many forms, opening up further possibilities for decolonial collaboration in higher education and beyond. In the next chapter, I describe my journey through epistemology and methodology centered on story, as well as present profiles of the storytellers who would help me start to fill the aforementioned gaps in the literature.

CHAPTER 3: GUIDED BY STORY AND STORYTELLERS

> I feel like you can keep peeling back all of these layers, all of these different pieces of evidence that come from our colonial legacies, and then, kind of, go, what's left of me? I'm become very mindful too when, you know, I see this a lot in folks who are trying very hard to decolonize, and not understanding that now they're walking into the kind of territory where now you're just appropriating an Indigenous experience that is not yours either. So for me, *I always kind of feel like I'm in this nowhere place*. Sometimes it sounds like well, that sounds very hopeless. But I also kind of feel like, that's kind of an optimal place to be. Just kind of liminal, right? In a place where you can just kind of examine those pieces critically.

The Journey into and through "Nowhere"

The quote above was spoken by Barbara Jane Reyes, a Pinay who tells stories through poetry. She was on a webinar I watched this past summer on Pinay Poetics, and that was her response to a question on how she works through the effects of colonialism through her poetry. As I heard her say these words, she was describing exactly I've felt in my journey thinking through an approach to this study, specifically my epistemology and methodology. That is, I've felt in a "nowhere place."

I was first led to this "nowhere place" after my advisor encouraged me to seek out decolonizing/indigenous epistemes that better align with the topic of my study. Such a move that would help ensure that my work is not simply work *about* Filipinxs, but Filipinx through-and-through. The more I reflected on this challenge and on my time at the Center for Babaylan Studies Conference where I was surrounded by Filipinxs, the more I realized what an important move this would be.

On face value, it seemed like a simple task. I did not find much regarding Filipinx epistemologies, yet questions, hesitations and ethical concerns surfaced quickly. Although my search for Filipinx epistemologies and methodologies was illuminating, different factors prevented me from identifying them for this study. My hesitancies were driven by existential and affective questions, all tying back to my sense of dislocation as part of the Filipinx diaspora. *Am I Filipino "enough" to use these? Can I appropriate my own culture? Am I recolonizing? Am I in some ways succumbing to and reinscribing essentialist notions of identity through my actions*? As a diasporic Filipina in the settler-colonial U.S., I am a settler on indigenous land. Furthermore, as a diasporic Filipina who does not know whether my genealogy traces back to indigenous groups within the Philippines, I hesitate to lean in *fully* into indigenous Filipino epistemologies, as I mentioned in the previous section. In essence, I was "nowhere." I felt I did not have a place to land, epistemologically and methodologically.

Yet, feelings of hopelessness turned into feelings of possibility when I realized this liminal space was in fact, "optimal," while also requiring criticality. I felt I could finally move forward. Thus, despite my hesitations and an imperfect process/reflection, I move forward with drawing from Filipinx indigenous and diasporic, as well as Indigenous, epistemologies and frames as a foundation for the paradigm of knowledge and conceptual frame for this study.

Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to help readers understand how story – from the lens of Filipinx and Indigenous scholars – was at the center of my approach to this study. First, I describe the epistemology undergirding this work, which I call a 'decolonizing epistemology.' Following, I detail story as a culturally-sustaining methodology. Finally, I describe the storytellers who were a part of this study, who I call my *kababayan*. Kababayan in Tagalog literally means fellow countryperson or Filipino. Acknowledging the tensions around the word

Filipinx, I use the word kababayan not to flatten and essentialize who we are, but to acknowledge our journey and shared space in this research process together, recognizing the identities we share and do not share, Furthermore, I use "my" not as a possessive, but to signal our relationship. I include the journey towards finding them as well as short profiles of them because they too, are at the center of this study. Knowledge comes through them. Their stories are the heart of this dissertation.

A "Decolonizing Epistemology"

From the outset, it is important to acknowledge epistemology is a western research concept (Kovach, 2005; Meyer, 2001). As Kovach (2005) described, western research language can silence the marginalized. At the same time, to be perceived with a sense of legitimacy in the academy requires adoption of the dominant research language. Given this fact, Meyer (2001) explains the necessity of using Western research concepts while at the same time working to deconstruct and question them.

I draw upon Indigenous scholars' definitions of epistemology. Cree scholar, Shawn Wilson (2008) provided the following definition of epistemology: "the study of the nature of thinking or knowing [involving] the theory of how we come to have knowledge or how we know that we know something" (p. 33). Kovach (2005) adds: Indigenous epistemology "includes a way of knowing that is fluid (Little Bear, 2000) and experiential, derived from teachings transmitted from generation to generation by storytelling; each story is alive with the nuances and wisdom of the storyteller (King, 2003)…It is a knowledge that is both intuitive and quiet" (Kovach, 2005, p. 26). For Meyer (2001), Wilson (2008), and other scholars, epistemology and ontology are intertwined and cannot be separated. Indigenous epistemology draws from one's

personal and cultural knowledge (Kovach, 2005). As I further elaborate in the next section, these understandings of epistemology are compatible with the epistemology I present.

I call my epistemology a "decolonizing epistemology" which is important because it aligns with the population and topic of this proposed study – Filipinxs and decolonization. In calling this a "decolonizing epistemology," I do not suggest that a singular decolonizing epistemology exists, rather, given the diversity of genealogies of decolonizing critiques, "it is not possible to articulate a definitive version of 'decolonial critique'" (Stein, in press). Following, I discuss and connect elements of primarily Filipinx and Indigenous epistemologies. I describe three ways of knowing espoused by these communities: 1) kapwa/relationality, 2) kuwento/kuwentuhan/story, and 3) naming, reflection, and action.

Kapwa

Kapwa translates to "fellow being" or "shared being" and refers to a feeling of connection with other people, regardless of 'blood' connection, or social and demographic factors. There is a recognition that one has a shared inner self with others that should not be separated (David et al., 2017). Kapwa is at the "heart of the structure of Filipino values" (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000, p. 56). Furthermore, Nadal (2012) suggests that kapwa implies that Filipinxs will feel an intrinsic connection on an interpersonal, spiritual, and emotional level amongst family, friends, or even Filipinx people they do not know. In my interpretation, kapwa relates to the Indigenous concept of relationality. This includes relationship on several levels, including with other people, the environment/land, the cosmos, and ideas. Within Indigenous ontology and epistemology, relationships both shape, and are reality. Additionally, Meyer (2001) posits relationship as an epistemological category, where relationship and knowledge can be seen as the self through other. In essence, I see relationality, and kapwa, as a context for knowing in

this study, including relationships between myself and the kababayan, between us, and between our ideas.

Kuwento/kuwentuhan

Filipinx communities also find resonance through kuwento (story) and *kuwentuhan* (storytelling; Orteza, 1997; Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000). Jocson (2008) shares that *kuwento*, both noun and verb, as cultural and sociolinguistic practice, is a communicative tool drawn from Philippine folk and oral traditions still alive for many Filipinos and Filipinx Americans today. Stories transform experiences into a sequence of events of significance for the teller. Through story, we see a reflection of the storyteller's "inner thoughts, feelings, beliefs, aspirations, values, goals, expectations, and creativity" (Jocson, 2008, p. 243). *Kuwento* also offers a way of reflecting on what, how, and why particular stories are told. With kuwentuhan used in the spirit of kapwa, there is an opportunity for the construction of newer understandings (Pe-Pua, 2006, p. 118). Finally, within *kuwentuhan*, telling and listening are both important.

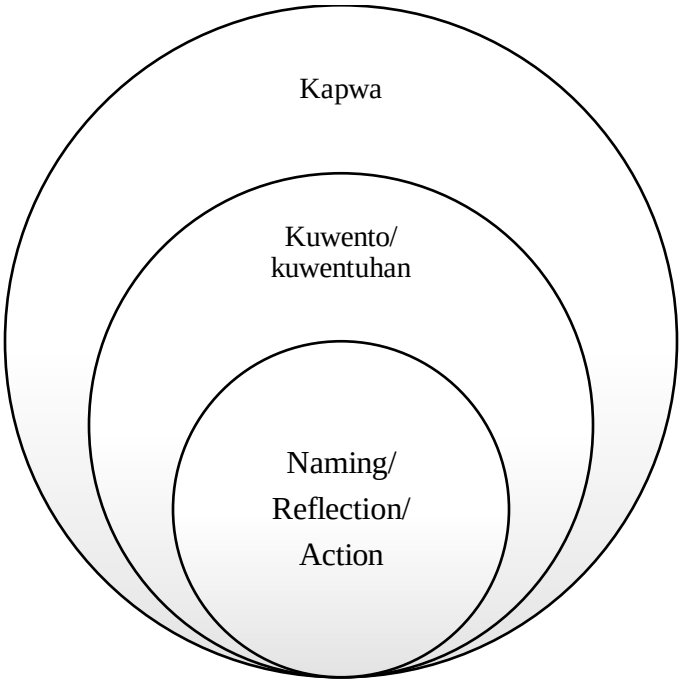
Story and storytelling are not unique to Filipinxs, but are important for several groups. "Every human culture in the world seems to create stories as a way of making sense of the world (Tuwe, 2016, p. 2). Cherokee author Thomas King would concur when he states: "The truth about stories, is that's all we are" (King, 2005, p. 2). Several Indigenous peoples draw upon story (Begay & Maryboy, 1998; Cajete, 2000). Black feminist epistemology, too, views story as a way of knowing (Collins, 2009). In this vein, Nadar (2014) highlighted one defining feature of African feminist epistemology – 'narrative knowing.' Finally, as articulated by narrative inquiry scholars, stories of research participants are researched as a way of knowing and experience is the starting point (Bhattacharya, 2017; Kim, 2016). Ultimately, knowledge comes through stories, through stories we share and create knowledge.

Naming/reflection/action

Finally, put forward by Freire (1985) as a decolonizing process, this process of thinking and knowing was used and built upon by various Pinay scholars, such as Merlyne Cruz (2013) and Leny Strobel (2001). *Naming* refers to naming internalized oppression, the oppressor, and oppressive structures. *Reflection* refers to gaining the ability to question one's reality as constructed by colonial narratives. *Action* involves giving back to marginalized communities and telling and writing one's own story – "that in the telling and writing, others may be encouraged to tell their own" (Strobel, 2001, p. 66). While such a process could be seen at an individual level, it can be done collaboratively in inviting dialogue. I suggest that naming/reflection/action emerge through the act of storytellers creating and constructing their story as an individual, as well as through the act of storytelling with others.

Figure 5 shows how I conceptualize the relationship between these elements. *Kapwa* forms the relational context for my study, as knowledge was created through interactions between the Filipinx participants and myself. Within this context of *kapwa*, *kuwento* is the particular form of knowing that knowledge will come through. Finally, embedded within and prompted by the *kuwento* are elements of naming, reflection, and action that acknowledges particularities of their meaning making around decolonization. Having shared my epistemology, I now turn to my methodology, and detail my journey to it.

Figure 5. Epistemological elements in relationship



Story as Culturally-Relevant and Decolonial Methodology

Perhaps at one of the peaks of my exasperation, feeling once again ready to throw in the towel, I revisited the work of a friend and PhD student in another department. She had written on "story" in the context of her own work and I was in need of inspiration. One reference caught my eye, and led me to another, then to another. First, was Powell et al.'s (2014) work, which led me to Monberg's (2008) piece: *Listening for legacies: or, how I began to hear Dorothy Laigo Cordova, the Pinay behind the Podium known as FANHS*. I was particularly struck by the following quotes: the first is Cordova's words from a previous interview with Monberg; the second is part of Monberg's commentary:

> You know, I like to compare Filipino American history or even all kinds of history: it's like a great big beach that's not sandy. It's like the beaches we have in the Northwest are full of stone. And so, when you ask people to give you history, some of them will just tell

> you about a beach that's all white sand. And others will say, well, there's a beach with a whole bunch of rocks. What I want people in FANHS [Filipino American National Historical Society] to do is to say, there's a beach with rocks, but under every rock, there's a different story. And to go down. And possibly even / for them to even dig down / and find what's further down…(1999, 9; slashes indicate a pause in narration)
>
> Unlike other (though certainly not all) Asian Pacific American groups, multiple layers of colonization make the topic of history—for both Filipina/os and Filipina/o Americans—a continual process of excavation: *we must listen to the story under every rock* (Monberg, 2008, p. 94, emphasis mine).

In her article, Monberg (2008) described how she was struck by such a poignant metaphor – Pilipinx community members (specifically in the U.S. context, within the context of the article) as rocks who each have a story – and she returns to it multiple times throughout her chapter. In the second quote, Monberg (2008) further elaborated on the significance of stories for Pilipinxs as colonized peoples.

It was then, reading that article, that I *knew*. Story would need to be my methodology. This article would serve as my first link between the Filipinx community and storytelling (which in turn would lead me to what I have included about story in the previous chapter). Monberg (2008) further described a strong tradition of orality within Filipinx cultures and how oral modes were put to different uses – especially in the face of colonization – to carry history, cultural memory, and tradition" (p. 92). Thus, story is a key component to my methodology because orality (i.e., oral storytelling) is central to knowledge making in Filipinx cultures (Monberg, 2008).

Storytelling provides a decolonial entry point, a way to move beyond traditional, colonial research methods predominant in higher education (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). Powell et al. (2014) shared that when they use the term "decolonial" they refer to the stories from those of colonized communities striving to delink from colonialism. Thus, the telling of stories from Pilipinxs with a commitment to decolonization can be viewed as decolonial methodology. Certainly, storytelling is not limited to the Filipinx community. As mentioned previously, story is integral to Indigenous communities (Begay & Maryboy, 1998; Cajete, 2000; Kovach, 2005; Powell et al., 2014). At the same time, stories told by Filipinxs could invite different specifics that can add to our understandings.

Storytelling offers an appropriate way of exploring their sensemaking and understandings of decolonization in higher education. The stories shared – both in terms of an overarching narrative and the stories that make them up – were rich sources for understanding our experiences and how we make meaning of them. Story, and the avenue it affords people to assert their voices, can offer a way of reclaiming. Furthermore, this can be a particularly powerful methodology in this research with Filipinx staff given the long history of Filipinxs being told their stories and histories through a western lens.

Story in Bayanihan

In diving through the literature on Filpinxs in higher education and Filipinx epistemologies, I found myself inspired by the works of those who have studied decolonization and related topics amongst groups where collective meaning making amongst groups occurred (e.g., David, 2013; Halagao, 2004; Strobel, 2001). Such an approach to research, where relationships are built over time between the participants themselves, and between participant and "researcher," to me, represents a decolonizing gesture away from exploitation to

collaboration (Bhattacharya, 2009; Zavala, 2013). Not only that, but this space of collective meaning-making can also bring about a sense of healing and empowerment. Thus, in the spirit of *Kapwa*, I sought to build *bayanihan* in story. I initially came across the concept of *bayanihan* from another person's research and felt inspired to take up this concept as well.

Bayanihan is derived from the word *bayan*, meaning nation, town, or community. Bayanihan refers to "communal or community spirit" (Marshall, 2018, p. 7). While *kapwa* captures an overall sense of connectedness and relationality, for me, *bayanihan* takes this idea one step further. There is an additional component of intentionality, of working together as a group.

Storytelling is a relational endeavor. In the spirit of *kapwa*, I sought to create and facilitate a *bayanihan* as the "site" through which stories are told. As Monberg (2008) shared, oral histories can create spaces for dialogue and have the potential to create a sense of community that is meaningful to community members. I also drew inspiration from *kuwentuhan* as "method [that] allows a free flow of opinions and experiences…" (p. 117). It is an indigenous research method of collecting data from a group or individuals who express their opinions, beliefs, knowledge and experience freely and informally" (Enriquez, 1988, as cited in Pe-Pua, 2006). Orteza (1997) adds that *kuwentuhan*, guided by *kapwa*, can be seen as a form of collective research wherein researchers and participants occupy equal status. Because of the emphasis of equality of status between researcher and participants, I was active alongside my kababayan and participated in all of the research activities. At the same time, I acknowledge that because of my position as the one undergoing the research, I could never fully attain a "true" sense of equality between us.

Within the context of this proposed dissertation, the goal of the *bayanihan* was to make meaning individually and collectively in relation to the research questions:

- How do Filipinx higher education staff make meaning of "decolonizing"?
    - What does "decolonizing" mean to Filipinx higher education staff?
    - How do Filipinx higher education staff enact their meanings of "decolonizing"?

Ultimately, this space was one where I and my *kababayan* shared stories that would begin to *unravel* the ways colonialism has manifested in our lives, re-shape or discover a new sense of *purpose*, and to grow in a feeling of *self-love* and love of community.

The Storytellers, My Kababayan

Having described how story is at the center of the epistemology and methodology, in this section, I now present the storytellers – J.A., "Jasmine," Mitchell, "Liza," and Vanessa. First, I tell the story of how I selected the storytellers, then I present profiles of each to help the reader start to build a relationship with each storyteller that will grow as each following chapter unfolds.

All the storytellers identified with the following criteria, as listed on the initial interest form (Appendix A):

(1) Self-identifies as Filipinx;

(2) Variation in other identities (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, etc.);

(3) Currently works in higher education as a staff member;

(4) Variation in working area of higher education (e.g., academic affairs, student affairs)

(5) Variation in geographical location within the U.S.;

(6) Identify as having an interest in decolonization/that it informs their work in some way

All self-identified as Filipinx, though I recognize the tension the term can carry for some as mentioned in Chapter 1. For J.A. for instance, who identifies *much* more strongly as Katutubo

(Indigenous) and his specific tribes, than Filipinx. Furthermore, although all identified as Filipinx, I do not wish to paint them as a homogenous group. Although there are no journal prompts that explicitly asked about their other identities, I discussed other identities in the re-storying process where relevant.

In terms of professional work, I sought to have variation in areas of staff represented to highlight how understandings and practices of decolonization may vary across different staff areas. As the literature on decolonization in higher education has a focus on teaching in the classroom setting and academic research, I sought to include people whose professional work lies primarily within other types of duties.

I sought broad geographical representation as much of the literature on Filipinxs in the U.S. is written by scholars on the West Coast and/or the study participants come only from, or primarily from the West Coast. This is not to say Filipinxs on the West coast are homogenous, yet there are still limits. As Ocampo (2016) stated: "When it came to ethnic and racial identities, location was everything. The significance and meaning of Filipino identity often depended on social and institutional context" (p. 171).

Lastly, to help ensure relevance to the research question, the storytellers agreed they had an interest in issues related to decolonization. In talking with others about this proposed study, others suggested perhaps including people who have not heard of decolonization. I agree their perspectives would be valuable and could perhaps tell us more about how colonial mentality works (David & Okazaki, 2006). However, I believe turning the focus to those who have an awareness and interest in decolonization brings us to another boundary of knowledge and can powerfully further our understandings of what justice looks like and can look like. In his interviews with Filipinxs in Southern California, Ocampo (2016) noted how participants'

narratives connected to the topic of colonialism even though colonialism was never mentioned explicitly in the interviews. What more can be learned from those who have identified colonialism in their lives?

Recruiting

As part of recruitment, I created a Google form which both gave potential participants more information on the research, and elicited their responses to a number of questions (see Appendix X for the full form). The first page of the Google form gave potential participants more information on the research, including a list of participant criteria, a short questionnaire, an overview study activities (i.e., journaling, group meeting, individual interview), and information regarding next steps (e.g., I will be in touch with them to let them know if they have been selected).

The next pages of the Google form asked for responses regarding their background (e.g., identities, where they work), as well as why they were interested and what decolonization meant to them and how their understanding of decolonization informs their work. My initial thought was that based on the responses I would select 8-10 people to speak with for the introductory meeting.

I recruited through multiple avenues. To begin, I recruited through the main professional associations for higher education staff. For example, for student affairs professionals associations, I focused on ACPA (American College Personnel Association) and NASPA (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators). Both professional associations also have affinity groups for those who identify as Asian. There is also a Facebook group “Pinxys in Student Affairs” where I posted an announcement. However, although many people working in higher education are professional associations, not everyone is. Because of this fact, I also

contacted Filipinx Studies Programs and Asian American Studies programs across the U.S. to distribute a study invitation across their listservs, as those who have gone through an ethnic studies program may have an increased interest in decolonization. I also reached out to personal contacts and utilized snowball sampling to further extend the reach of recruitment.

Selecting storytellers

I was anxious to see if, and how many, people would fill out the Google form. I wondered if people would be interested in the topic, or if they would feel that the research required too much of a time commitment. In the end, I received 21 responses. I was encouraged by what I considered to be a sizable response, especially considering in the end, I was looking to ultimately invite three to four people to join.

I enjoyed reading through all of the responses and was amazed by the range of identities, hometowns, institutions, and roles of the potential participants. I also felt inspired by the responses to why they wanted to participate and their thoughts on decolonization. While I initially thought the Google form responses would be enough to make decisions, it became clear to me that was not the case. I felt that each person would have a lot to contribute to the group. I made the decision to email everyone who filled out the form and invite them to an introductory meeting. Then, from the meetings I would make a final decision.

After emailing all of those who filled out the Google form to invite them to an introductory meeting, I received responses from 13 interested people. The rest either had other commitments that prevented them from being able to participate for the full duration of the study or did not respond. I scheduled 30-minute meetings with the 13 people. In the spirit of relationality, it was important to me to virtually meet each person who wanted to participate, as this would be the beginning of our relationship. The purpose of the introductory meeting was to

personally introduce myself to each potential participant, as well as to answer any questions they had about the study, as well as ask them to elaborate on their meanings of decolonization. I enjoyed all of the introductory meetings, learning about them, and getting to hear more about the meaning of decolonization in their lives. As they spoke, as well as after each meeting, I took notes on my initial impressions.

Even after the introductory meetings, it was still a challenging process to deliberate between people. I wanted to include everyone, because I felt they all had something to offer including a range of ways they thought about decolonization in the scope of their work. Unfortunately, time constraints would prevent me from being able to include everyone. I even briefly thought about potentially running two groups simultaneously to be able to include more people, but ultimately decided it would be most feasible to stick with one group as initially planned.

After more reflection about the purpose of this dissertation being about staff, it became clear that a variety of professional positions would be the main criteria for joining, followed by intersecting identities with Filipinx. I ultimately decided to invite five people to join the group who are in different types of professional settings, institutional types, have different identities in addition to Filipinx, and who each think about decolonization in different ways. An overall profile of my kababayan is in Table 1.

Who are they? Here, I provide an introduction to each person. I include background information that I believe is particularly helpful for understanding them in later chapters, as well as their points of uniqueness amongst our group. I also talk about impressions that struck me at the beginning of this project, and why I ultimately decided to invite them to join the group. Some

elected to use a pseudonym, while others did not. For those who requested and chose their pseudonym, I include their name in quotation marks.

J.A.

J.A. started his first journal entry by sharing his given name, but also his "Anglofied or Filipinofied" name, the first of his many nods to the differences between Filipinxs of Indigenous backgrounds. He was born a small village in Zambales, Philippines. As a young child in the Philippines, he attended a boarding school which sought not only to spread Roman Catholicism to Katutubo (Indigenous Peoples), but also to "modernize" and "Filipinize" their students, a colonial project of the Philippines for the purpose of creating a national Filipino identity.

His and his family's life changed forever when Apo' N'malyari' (Mt. Pinatubo) erupted for nearly 1 week in 1991, when he was 5 years old. Those living in the surrounding area, including his family, were forced to travel for their safety. J.A. emotionally recounted in great detail the experience of the eruption – of ashes and rocks raining down around, of his mom and aunt praying the rosary as their car shook from the earthquake, of seeing other families asking for rides and walking in the ash, that many people died trying to leave – details seared into his memory. From their village, they embarked on a long journey. They first headed to Subic Bay, Olangapo City. Then, on June 18, 1991, when the U.S. government opened its military gates for anyone to run to the cargo plans to be transported to the U.S. J.A.'s family, along with hundreds of other families, got onto a plane headed to Guam, then Honolulu, Hawai'i, then Seattle. In Seattle, they were processed by the U.S. government and classified as refugees. The next day, they were on a plane to Long Beach, where they would stay.

His experiences and interactions amongst Filipinos growing up in Long Beach would show him who belonged and who didn't; how Indigenous peoples from the Philippines were

looked down upon. Such experiences would influence his educational journey. J.A.'s educational trajectory and projects related back to issues of Filipinxs and Indigeneity, from his undergrad, to master's and current PhD project.

He currently works in the field of student access and retention as an advisor at a large, private institution on the west coast of the U.S., also his undergraduate institution. The center is student-run, and does work around educational justice, outreach to high school students of color, retaining marginalized students, and creating alternative forms of media and art. In his specific role, he supports student-initiated access and outreach programs, academic lectures and research. Interestingly, in his fourth year as an undergraduate, he was one of the student leaders who created the center in which he currently works.

There were many factors prompting me to invite J.A. to join. Having been more attuned to issues of indigeneity after attending the Center for Babaylan Studies Conference, it drew my attention when I saw that J.A. identified as Indigenous Asian American/Katutubo American (specifically, Aeta, Igorot, Lipi, Moro), as well as intersecting with a queer identity. Also, in our introductory meeting, he emphasized the true uniqueness of the center at which he works – the structure of which is the only of its kind in the U.S. It was evident J.A. could contribute much to our discussions to come.

J.A., in his own words, described himself as "a part, but not a part" in reference to membership and belonging within the Filipinx American community as a Katutubo (Indigenous) American. Yet, the phrase too could apply to his straddling multiple professional worlds, as he is also a PhD Candidate and adjunct professor in addition to his role as a staff member. Accordingly, his entries were also sprinkled with academic references, reflecting his academic

interest and expertise. These many elements of his identity showed through his beliefs around decolonizing.

"Jasmine"

Born in an East Asian country, Jasmine spent most of her life living in different places in California – often around many other Filipinx Americans, though her military family status, school and work would lead her to many places across the U.S. Living in a range of locations would contribute to her sense of self, how she viewed others, and her understanding of socio-political climates.

In her undergraduate career, she was able to take Asian American Studies, Filipino Studies, and Tagalog courses. Her college experience was transformative, ultimately influencing her desire to work in higher education with and for students. This love for higher education would lead her to her master's and PhD in Higher Education where she says her Filipina American identity especially impacted her experience. As a doctoral student was very involved, volunteering at the campus' center for Asians and Asian Americans, taught Asian American studies courses, as well as completed her dissertation on an Asian American-related topic.

Currently, she works in a mid-level position in global engagement at a community college in the southwestern U.S., and at the time of the study, had spent the past 11 years of her life living and working there. She has worked in that role since 2015, though she had two positions in the institutions prior. Her role is very multi-faceted, and includes strategic leadership, programming for international students, leading study abroad efforts.

During our introductory meeting, she enthusiastically expressed multiple times how much she wanted to be a part of the study. Much of this enthusiasm stemmed from the fact that living where she does in the southwestern U.S., there are not many Filipinxs, she was yearning to

be a part of the community that this project would create – to learn and contribute. A large reason I invited her to participate was because of her professional role working in global engagement at a community college. No other potential participant worked in the area of global engagement.

I came to understand Jasmine – who identifies as a Filipina American, Asian American, female – a person of "many." A woman who embraced her many roles (e.g., as a single parent, godmother, etc.), had lived in a number of places, and who, now being in her mid-40s, had worked a number of professional positions over 20 years in higher education. Through all of these experiences and roles, she developed a confident voice to draw upon in her work towards decolonizing.

"Liza"

Liza, who identifies as a Cebuana, Pilipina American in her upper 30's, and Protestant, was the first in her family to be born in the U.S. Her dad was in the US Navy; her mom a registered nurse, settled in a working-class community in the West Coast of the U.S. Most of her large extended family is still based close by, though Liza and her husband and two kids now live in a nearby suburb.

She described college being a major touchpoint in her personal growth. She was part of a special class recruited by her undergraduate institution from her high school. Going to an undergraduate institution was a bit of a culture shock for her. Having come from a working-class community, she was intimidated by the privileges other students had, such as private tutors and alumni parents. About half of the group she was recruited with identified as Filipino, and almost half didn't make it through the first year. Her time in college also challenged the beliefs she grew up within a "pro-life Republican" family.

After she graduated, she worked as a Teacher through Teach For American, then a few years later earned a master's degree with a focus on Higher Education. After graduate school, she became the director of the retention program that she worked at as an undergraduate student. Though she loved her work, becoming pregnant and the stress of the long commute made it necessary for her to find a job closer to home. After a long job-search process, she began student services work at a for-profit institution much closer to home. After that, she took on an administrative role at the institution she currently works, an urban community college in the southwestern U.S. that is also an HIS.

Over time, she rose through the ranks and is now a senior systems analyst. As she clarified, she is not a programmer, but an intermediary between the technical staff and administrators across campus. They gather a range of information about students, including registration and enrollment, the gender and sexuality, and food insecurity and homelessness. It was a job she "fell into" because she didn't know it existed. Although she was initially sad to not work with students one-on-one anymore, she quickly realized she could make a big impact on the institution, having seen how outdated the institution's systems were.

What immediately struck me was Liza's working as a systems analyst. *How could someone do decolonizing work there, I wondered?* During our introductory meeting she also pointed out that she had never left her home state, which could make her unique. For all these reasons, I invited Liza to join the group.

The idea of "redefinition" comes up for me in reflecting on Liza. Her experiences in education would lead her to re-evaluate her existing beliefs about her identity and the purpose of education, both of which would influence her thinking around decolonization.

Mitchell

Mitchell was born in the Philippines to a white father and Filipina mother and has had dual citizenship since they were 15. Mitchell grew up in the Philippines raised solely by their mom. They earned their bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the University of Saint La Salle in the Philippines. When they were 22, they moved to California, where their dad and stepmom live, and pursued a Master's in Public Administration. They reflected on how their racialized experiences in the Philippines and California differed. In the Philippines, they were highly regarded for their English fluency and lighter skin. After he moved was when they started to experience racial discrimination due to their Asian identity.

Currently, they live and work in Fayetteville, Arkansas at a large public university as a Coordinator for Residence Education. They had been in the job about a year at the time of this study. Within their job, they supervise Resident Assistants, one Graduate Assistant and two halls. They also organize campus-wide programs, hear conduct cases and meet with students with violations, and participate in departmental and campus committees. The job appealed to them because they "wanted to mold socially responsible students and be an agent of decolonization through diversity trainings and programs." Mitchell found their way to the world of residence and student affairs through taking on a graduate assistantship in housing after two jobs that were not a fit for them.

Mitchell was keenly aware of their potential to contribute and eager for the opportunity to participate. As they shared on the initial interest form: "I would like to contribute to Filipinx academic literature currently developed in the USA. I want to share the experience of bi-racial/non-binary Filipinxs in higher education." Given their identities as previously discussed, in

addition to being in residence life in an entry-level role in the South, which was unique amongst the potential participants, I extended an invitation to Mitchell to join the group.

The idea of "code-switching" became prominent as I got to know Mitchell (they/them/their) through their sharings. Mitchell's identities as bi-racial, non-binary, and having lived in both the Philippines and the U.S., made up the boundaries between which they would feel the need to code-switch, adding another layer to the group's sensemaking around decolonization.

Vanessa

Vanessa was born in the southwestern U.S. Her white dad was a Peace Corp volunteer in Batangas, Philippines, where he met Vanessa's mother. They married in 1975, then came to the U.S. Growing up, she and her sister were the only Filipinos in their neighborhood, and often the only Asians at their school. Her family moved to Guam when Vanessa reached 6th grade to be closer to the Philippines. During her teenage years, she was able to visit her extended family in the Philippines every summer.

Religion was a prominent theme in her writings, as might be expected when learning of her professional role in religious life. Her family is very active in the Catholic church, and she maintains a particular relationship with Catholicism, even as she is no longer Catholic. She reflected on how every trip to the Philippines seemed to include a wedding, baptism, holy day, or funeral. Such life cycle rituals are part of her identity as a Filipina.

Vanessa went on to study at a large state school in the Southwestern U.S. Some major points during her undergraduate include her participation in interfaith dialogues and study abroad in Japan. In Japan, she studied Buddhism and Shinto. About study abroad she commented: "being in a place so potent with pain, and seeking healing" were part of what led her to her

graduate school path where she studied religion and peacemaking. Going into graduate school, she dreamed of being the first humanist chaplain to serve as a Dean of religious life, and boldly articulated this point to her classmates.

At the time of the study, she was coming upon her second work anniversary as an upper-level administrator in religious life at a large private institution on the west coast of the U.S. In this role, she supports and promotes university religious and spiritual life and oversees more than 90 student groups and 50 religious directors on campus. Her office provides invocations/benedictions at convocation and also plan the Baccalaureate ceremony. They also do several programs and events each week. At an individual level, she provides spiritual care and confidential counseling to any student, staff, faculty or community member who comes to her. Prior, she worked at a large, private institution in the same state, for several years.

My initial impression of Vanessa included her intentionality and reflection which came through as she described her interest in participating. I found her responses on the initial recruitment form particularly compelling: "I'd like the opportunity to further reflect on my campus work, and how it aligns with my values. I consider myself an activist and advocate, but I sometimes lose track of these roles in the everyday administration of my campus work. So this forum will provide the space for me to articulate the intersections of my calling, with that of my job description." Her role as an Associate Dean of Religious Life, and time spent between Arizona and Guam, was also unique to the group and a large factor in extending her an invitation.

Vanessa, to me, represents a couple of things through her sharings. What sticks out for me is her personal growth – as she struggled to become a bolder version of herself (something not modeled to her as she was growing up), and as she came into her own understandings of

herself as a bi-racial and atheist Filipina American, shades of identity that are not the "norm" amongst Filipinx communities that would come to be part of how she understood decolonization.

Table 1. Kababayan profiles

Name (pseudonyms in quotations)	Self-identification	Professional Area	Professional Role at time of study	Institution type, geography
J.A.	Indigenous Asian American, Katutubo American (Aeta, Igorot, Lipi, Moro), Queer	Access and Retention	Program Advisor	Large, public university on the U.S. west coast
"Jasmine"	Filipino American and Asian Pacific American, female, 40s	Global Engagement	Associate Director	Community college and HSI in the Southwestern U.S.
"Liza"	Pilipina American, 30s	Information Technology	Sr. Systems Analyst	Community college on the U.S. west coast
Mitchell	Bi-racial Filipino and White, non-binary, millennial	Residence Life	Coordinator	Large, public university in the Southern U.S.
Vanessa	Filipina American, cis-female, atheist	Religious and Spiritual life	Associate Dean	Large, private university on the U.S. west coast

Conclusion

In this chapter, I described the multiple ways story guided my approach to this study. Filipinx and Indigenous scholars both informed my epistemology and methodology. I also shared how I brought together my kababayan, and provided an introduction to each person. Having described the epistemology, methodology, and storytellers guiding this study, in the following chapter I describe specifically what my kababayan and I did as a group and how I analyzed their stories.

CHAPTER 4: ENGAGING AND INTERPRETING THE BAYANIHAN EXPERIENCE

Building upon the previous chapter, which described how story guides my approach to this study, this chapter, discusses the methods that drove the stories *bayanihan*, and the interpretive framework that both guided and emerged from the stories. Both the methods and interpretive framework included primarily Filipinx scholars. First, I describe how my kababayan and I told stories as a group. Then, I describe how after listening I re-storied what was shared.

The Bayanihan Experience

In this section, I describe how the stories were told amongst myself and my kababayan. As mentioned, this happened within a group context. There was a combination of individual journaling, reading and responding to each other's journal entries, and a zoom meeting. Each of these methods is informed by my methodology revolving around story as a relational endeavor. To my knowledge, I have not seen any studies that have been designed in this exact way. Yet, Mendoza (2002) reminds me of the broadening settings in which Filipino and Filipinx American academics do research and theorize, such as *kapihan* (coffeeshop gatherings), *balitaktakan* (informal chats and discussion), mediated e-mail conversations, and conference meetings. Mendoza's (2002) articulation of the broadening of modes of orality and theorizing for the Filipinx diasporic community helps to rationalize a "non-traditional" research design.

Storytelling Activities

Having shared my desire to approach the research in a collective way, I now share the flow of storytelling activities: 1) journal writing/forum-posting, 2) group kuwento time, 3) optional individual interview.

Online Journal Writing and Sharing. The major component involved journal writing on part of my kababayan and I as the initial way to elicit stories. Journaling gave us the space and

opportunity to reflect and write stories. The initial inspiration came Nomura's (2003) book chapter which documented Dorothy Laigo Cordova's journal-writing groups as part of the Filipino Women in America: 1860-1985 project. The purpose of these groups was "to encourage women to write their own histories and share their stories with their families and community. Through journal writing, Cordova helped the women rediscover and write their personal history" (Nomura, 2003, p. 138). Journaling can provide new insight into their lives and challenges traditional boundaries the define who can write history. I also found that other Filipina scholars have used journaling within their work, including Strobel (2001) and Halagao (2004).

I provided four different journaling prompts (see Appendix B for full journal prompts), guided by the research questions. The first two prompts were centered around "personal lives," which included any area outside of professional work (e.g., family, schooling, community). The last two prompts then centered around "professional lives," relating specifically to their professional roles and workspaces. The inspiration to "structure" the journal prompts in this way came from a friend who I had review my journal prompts during my dissertation proposal stage. She posed the question of "should there perhaps be a flow in the prompts that goes from personal to professional, given a possible relationship between the two?" I agreed with her thoughts and adjusted my prompts accordingly.

The first prompt centered around: "The Story of You and Colonization in Your Personal Life." The purpose of this prompt was to give all of us an introduction to each other personally as well as to begin a discussion around colonization. The second prompt was on: "What Decolonization Means to You in Your Personal Life." The purpose of this prompt was to build off the previous one's initial explorations of colonization, and turn our attention towards the way we work and have worked towards decolonization in our personal lives. The third prompt

covered: “The Story of You and Your Job, and Higher Education as a Colonizing Space.” This prompt marked a shift on attention from personal to professional lives, and began a discussion around colonization within higher education spaces.

The fourth and final prompt was on the topic: “Decolonization and Your Work.” Through this final prompt, my intention was to bring together all the previous topics.

Before writing, I provided a guide for writing the journal entries (see Appendix C). To assuage my kababayan from seeking “perfection” in their journal entries, I drew from Cordova’s approach. Cordova explained to workshop participants that “journal writing is a nonrestrictive form of writing…There are no mistakes. Keep writing free, flowing thoughts. You are writing ‘bits and pieces of you.’ Journal writing is a method of ‘talking to yourself.’ Your journal does not have to be a finished product” (Nomura, 2003, p. 140).

I gave the group a new prompt every 4 weeks. I made myself readily available to answer any questions about the prompts were clarifications needed, but did not get asked for clarifications throughout the process. I had initially envisioned each person would write and post their prompt within the first 2 weeks of a given month and respond to each of the other posts by the end of that month. However, knowing that the lives of staff can get busy, I was flexible with timelines as needed.

Initially, I did not set a minimum or maximum word count, so that my kababayan could write freely without pressure. After the first month, I checked in with them to ask about how time management is going with the prompts and reading and responding to other’s prompts. I heard from the group that things were going fine. However, after a check-in with my advisor, I decided to encourage a minimum word count of 1000 words so that there would be a substantial

amount of text to read and respond to. I did not strictly enforce this limit, and for the most part, the group wrote around 1000 or more for the entries.

Online forum space. I set up an online forum space where we posted our journal writings and everyone else commented, to further promote ongoing relationship building in the *Bayanihan*. We used an unpublished Google site that was private to the group.

Documents and artifacts. As part of their journal writing processes, I invited my kababayan to include any documents and artifacts that may shed further light on the stories they told. I made suggestions with each prompt but left it up to each individual to decide if and what to share. These included personal items such as previous journal entries or photographs, and/or items related to their professional work, such as agendas or announcements, depending on the prompt.

Online Group Kuwento Time. After each journal prompt was completed and commented upon, the final component was a Zoom "Kuwento Time." This entailed bringing everyone together in an online space for an opportunity for collective meaning-making about the prompts, stories shared, and the experience of participating. The purpose was to share and dialogue together in real-time, adding more to their (our) meaning-making of decolonization. This online group time took 2 hours.

Optional individual follow-up interviews. My kababayan also had the opportunity for a follow-up interview. My impetus for including a follow interview was for them to share anything that came up for them after the group kuwento time, anything they did not feel comfortable sharing during the group kuwento time, as well as for me to ask any clarifications on their journal entries.

The journal entries left me with many areas I wanted to follow up with, so I highly encouraged my kababayan to do an individual interview with me, though still said it was optional. All of my kababayan agreed to do an interview with me, which lasted for roughly 1 hour each.

Field notes. Finally, I kept field notes in a researcher journal to make sense of each journal, interview, follow-up interview, and the zoom meeting. Through these field notes, I recorded reactions, thoughts, and emotions that I had in response.

On confidentiality

Because of the group nature of this design, my kababayan could not be guaranteed absolute anonymity and were offered an opportunity to participate with a pseudonym (i.e., share journal entries under a pseudonym; participate in the zoom call with the camera off). All were open to the rest of the kababayan knowing their identities; I perceived that all who opted into this project did so with the desire to connect with others. However, they were also given the option pseudonym used for the re-storying process in the dissertation itself.

On recruitment and retention

I recognized that this was an intensive ask of time and labor for the kababayan. My hope was that those who were interested in participating: 1) were drawn to a topic for which there are few spaces dedicated for dialogue, 2) welcomed the opportunity for long-term reflection that will be beneficial to them on a personal and professional level, 3) sought to connect with others with similar interests.

Re-storying: Analyzing and Interpreting Stories

Just as the process of gathering stories is something that is not prescriptive, the same can be said for the process of analysis and interpretation. Still, guiding points from Indigenous and

narrative inquiry scholars were key. First was relational accountability, including my relationships with my kababayan, as well as relationships within and between their stories (Wilson, 2008). I also focused on intuitive logic, rather than linear logic. As Wilson (2008) stated: "Logic needs to become more intuitive as the researcher must look at an entire system of relationships as a whole. To break any piece of the topic away from the rest will destroy the relationships that the piece holds with the rest of the topic" (p. 120). The idea of following intuition more so than linear logic, resonates with Kim's (2016) beliefs regarding narrative inquiry analysis, where there is an element of "flirting" with the data (p. 195). In this sense, analysis should welcome surprise, curiosity, and play with ideas. Above all, the main idea here is excavating stories from the data rather than decontextualizing them.

Transcription and organization

I transcribed the group zoom and individual interviews myself as a way to get a deeper connection with the data. I also copied and pasted each journal entry for each person into its own word document. To organize the data from multiple sources, I printed out all the data and organized it by participant in a binder.

Reading and re-reading the stories

I then read and re-read the data (journal entries and responses, zoom transcript, individual interview transcripts) to re-familiarize myself with the kababayan and their stories. I read them both person by person (i.e., all of Liza's entries, then all of Vanessa's entries), as well as journal prompt by journal prompt (i.e., all entries to Prompt #1, then Prompt #2, etc.). While reading, I took note of specific stories in each one while making note of what I perceived to be the significance. I also wrote observations and insights regarding the "overall narrative."

It is important to note that not everybody wrote about the same specific topics. For each prompt, there were multiple questions that each person could answer. It was my intention that the questions all related to the over-arching topic for that specific entry. I did not want the journaling to feel like an assignment, but rather more like a free-write, and that is why I did not want to over-direct their writing (e.g., ask them to write two paragraphs in relation to a specific question, another paragraph on another). Each collaborator chose to focus on different parts of the prompts, creating what could be perceived as an "unevenness" amongst the responses. As an example, some people wrote about religion, while others did not. However, just because someone did not focus on religion does not mean it has not been an important part of their lives and process of decolonizing. Each person wrote about what came to mind at the time. Thus, their responses via journaling, and through our group and individual interviews all represent their thinking at a certain point at time. Initially, I felt challenged by this "unevenness." Yet, as I explain in the next section, I was able to come to a structure that I believe honored the "uneven" points as contributing to the richness of the data, while staying true to the overall purpose of this dissertation.

Re-storying

The re-storying process was very much an iterative one. There are several possibilities for re-storying and re-presenting stories and narratives. Guided by intuition after immersing myself in the stories, I used "writing as a method of inquiry" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), which is an inquiry that that emphasizes writing itself as an analytical tool. My initial writing focused on thematic analysis. While I do believe a more thematic analysis can still honor the stories, I ended up feeling like too much was lost in the process. As I read through, a thematic analysis was

illuminating, yet I couldn't help but feel that a reader would not be able to have a good "sense" of each of my kababayan as an individual, which was one of my goals as a researcher.

I then tried instead writing by keeping each person's narrative "intact." I was curious to see whether it could work to really focus on each person one-by-one. I tried out writing out a mini-narrative for each person, first around their journeys around decolonization in their personal lives, then in their professional lives. When I stepped back and reviewed this structure, I felt that it was a good way of balancing wanting to honor each person's story, keeping stories in context, while allowing a critical look across entries.

After writing the chapters on decolonizing in personal and professional lives, I felt that something was missing. Important to understanding the meanings of decolonization was our process as a group. Through our engagements, we made meaning. Thus, a final data chapter explores the communal and reflexive process of meaning-making of decolonization as a group. Throughout my analysis, I remained conscientious to key ideas put forth in the decolonizing epistemology and methodology that I outlined.

Interpretive Framework

I did not go into the re-storying process with an interpretive framework. Rather, a framework emerged as I read and re-read the stories. In this section, I discuss how Pinayism (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005) and orientations/encounters/emotions (Ahmed, 2004, 2006) guided my re-storying process.

Pinayism

Pinayism is a relatively recent framework, first coined by Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales in 2005. Her initial theorizations came through interviews with 12 Pinays who were service providers, academics, political organizers, cultural workers, writers, artists, students, and

teachers. Since then, Pinayism has grown and been applied across a range of areas, including education, the arts, and entrepreneurship. It is not a single epistemology nor just a Filipino version of feminism or womanism. Pinayism is localized in the United States, although it tries to provide a forum to make connections to the issues of Filipinas and Filipinos in diaspora" (p. 140). Pinayism is part of efforts to "explore and create new forms and mechanisms to understand the Pinay/Pinoy experience in the United States" (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005, p. 140).

Initially, when I learned about Pinayism, I did not see it "fitting" with my work. First, there is the fact that it was theorized based only on Pinays in southern California. As someone who grew up in the Midwest (Cincinnati, Ohio), I wondered to what extent this would resonate with people outside of a southern California context. Furthermore, as this study included people of any gender identity, I did not think Pinayism would not be completely appropriate. That changed when I attended the Pinay Power II conference last April.

At the conference, I presented on the epistemology/methodology laid out in my dissertation proposal as part of a scholarly panel. There was a discussant who read the papers that we submitted. I had a chance to speak with her one-on-one, and one comment that stuck with me was that she didn't think I had to leave out Pinayism, that it could still be relevant. As she spoke, I realized that my initial hesitations were narrow-minded. After all, as a simple comparison, a study does not have to include only women to use a feminist lens. I sat with her comment for a while, and after more reading and reflecting, came around to see that Pinayism could help provide a lens for this work. Coming back to Pinayism after completing story gathering, I identified three elements of Pinayism that help me to make sense of the Filipinx staff's journeys in making meaning of decolonization as well as the meanings themselves.

Global, local, personal levels. Pinayism seeks to connect to global to the local to personal stories (Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009, p. 179). In essence, using a Pinayism lens recognizes three levels as well as prompts analysis of their interconnections. In the context of this dissertation I bring in the "global" aspect when discussing the histories of colonization within the Philippines, and the continued legacies of colonization in the Philippines and the U.S., and around the world. The "local" level pertains to one's immediate surroundings. For instance, the place someone has grown up, the city where they currently live, and particularly the institution in which they currently work. They engage the "personal" level when discussing one's emotions, beliefs, and experiences. Bringing attention to the interconnection between these three levels helps us to understand the ways our experiences are shaped by histories and contexts.

Complexity of intersections. Pinayism does not have gender politics as the main focus, rather, seeks to "engage the complexity of intersections where race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, spirituality/religion, educational status, age, place of birth, diasporic migration, citizenship and love cross" (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005, p. 141). Thus, Pinayism gives space and encourages exploration of the particularities of one's multiple identities. Each person's different identities were relevant to their discussions of colonization and decolonization in different ways. Pinayism allowed deeper engagement throughout the chapters with each person's salient identities as intersecting with Filipinx, whether it was being non-binary, a woman, Katutubo, or atheist.

Pain implicates growth. Finally, Pinayism posits that pain implicates growth (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005 p. 139). In Pinayism, these concepts of pain and growth are broad, and could refer to pain and growth on a personal level, or to the growth of Pinayism as a lens in general. Within this dissertation, I primarily apply these concepts of pain our encounters with

various forms of colonization, while growth primarily refers to one's personal growth towards their meanings of decolonization and the growth they seek to promote within their work contexts.

Orientation, Encounters, and Emotion

Ahmed's (2006; 2014) work on orientation, encounters, and emotion, collectively complement and help facilitate a Pinayist analysis. Orientation (Ahmed, 2006) refers to the values, beliefs, interests to which one ascribes. Orientations are not neutral, yet are socially, culturally, and historically shaped. Orientation, encounters, and emotion complement Pinayism by illuminating the "movement" within each idea (i.e., global, local, personal; complexity of intersections; pain implicates growth). That is, narratives consisted of "encounters" with people or knowledge that provoked certain thoughts and actions that we would eventually come to understand as "decolonizing." Emotions would also be a part of each encounter, elucidating the boundaries between oneself and others.

Importantly, emotion goes beyond an individual's experience and requires illuminating the "histories that preceded and directed [encounters and emotions]" (Schmitz & Ahmed, 2014, p. 97). The histories (and legacies) of colonization for Filipinxs and within higher education are the most salient histories undergirding our experiences and encounters within our stories.

Pain is the most salient emotion, talked about primarily in Chapter 5. The experience of pain surfaces the boundaries of who you are and who you are not, demarcating one's belonging and unbelonging, reminding us "[t]here are worlds that are orientated towards some bodies more than others" (Ahmed, 2014, pp. 100-101). The impact of pain is not singular, but can have a variety of impacts: "The intensity of pain sensations makes us aware of our bodily surfaces, and

points to the dynamic nature of surfacing itself (turning in, turning away, moving towards, moving away)" (Ahmed, 2004, pp. 26-27).

Taken altogether, these ideas from this interpretive framework prompt questions such as: What types of encounters on a personal level cause pain and prompt growth towards a decolonizing orientation? What orientations are held by as higher education institution (the local level), and what histories inform these orientations? How does someone with a decolonizing orientation enact it? How do different identities prompt different decolonizing orientations? What impact can decolonizing efforts within higher education have beyond the personal level? What type of growth can occur?

"Member-checking": Accountability to relationships

Finally, in the spirit of relational accountability, I offered my kababayan the opportunity to review some of my analysis, so they could give feedback if they wished. After the conclusion of the individual interviews, I asked whether they would like: a transcription of their individual interview or zoom, a one-pager overviewing how I wrote about them, or a full draft of the findings chapters. Three wished to see a full draft of the findings chapters. I finally had findings chapters drafts and sent them (the introductions, their "narratives", and the conclusions to Chapters 5 and 6) to the three in October 2020. I was anxious to receive their replies, as I wanted to do justice to their stories and wanted the framework to be one that resonated with them. I made it clear that I was open to all types of feedback, whether critically constructive or affirming of what I had come up with thus far. All three replied after reading with very encouraging and affirming words, with no constructive feedback nor any other suggestions. One even asked if they could share the draft with their mother, and I told them that I would be fine with that. I was

flattered and honored they would want to share it with their mother. I did not view this process as "member-checking," but rather relationship-building and an integral part of the research process.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I described the multiple methods I used to elicit and engage stories with my kababayan, as well as the iterative process of re-storying. I also detailed the interpretive framework consisting of Pinayism (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005) and orientation/encounters/emotion (Ahmed, 2006, 2014) that both informed and emerged from this study. I ended this chapter with how I sought to keep relationally accountable to my kababayan through member-checking. The next three chapters contain the re-stories I came to through my iterative writing progress. Chapter 5 begins the re-stories by recounting my kababayan's journeys towards a decolonization orientation in their personal lives, and the meanings they made along the way.

CHAPTER 5: DECOLONIZING IN OUR PERSONAL LIVES

"Real" Filipinos are light-skinned.

"Real" Filipinos don't date white people.

"Real" Filipinos worship white people.

"Real" Filipinos identify only as men or women.

"Real" Filipinos are Catholic.

"Real" Filipinos aren't Indigenous.

"Real" Filipinos aren't multiracial.

"Real" Filipinos speak Tagalog.

"Real" Filipinos don't speak up.

"Real" Filipinos don't question authority.

"Real" Filipinos' experiences don't count as "knowledge."

Where Our Conversation Begins

The above are some of the collective messages we received at various points in our lives, whether from family, friends, classmates, strangers, or society at large. These messages have caused us annoyance, anguish, pain. I start here, with these messages, because our stories of decolonizing higher education start with us: in stories from our pasts that shaped our subjectivity, and in the identities to which we subscribed or rejected. Stories of decolonizing in higher education have faces, names, fears, hopes, that do not materialize out of nowhere, but are borne from people, experiences, and histories. I start with the "personal" to acknowledge and recognize us as whole beings who bring ourselves and our past experiences into our work, and as people who have lives outside of work.

In this chapter, I present re-stories of my kababayan's journeys towards defining a decolonizing orientation in our personal lives, which largely entailed confronting the above messages. Our narratives consisted of painful encounters with people or knowledge that provoked certain thoughts and actions, which we would come to understand as "decolonizing." Within these encounters was a meeting of conflicting orientations. Specifically, we encountered people with different orientations towards what it means to be Filipinx and the ways that we did not meet predominant expectations of what it means to be Filipinx, that surfaced emotions and the boundaries between ourselves and others, but also prompted growth in our own lives towards redefining ourselves as Filipinxs and decolonizing stances. In other words, the emotion of pain – as evoked through encounters of different orientations towards what it means to be Filipinx – was a key catalyst in our meaning-making, motivation, and transition towards a decolonizing orientation. By catalyst, I do not necessarily mean a linear/direct catalyst, but something that brings about an opening up, a breaking – a revelation that reveals something about one's subjectivity and the way the world "works." It is not "cause and effect," but evocation from a memory to re-orient oneself – to think, live, and/or differently in the future.

As Pinayism (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005) and Ahmed's (2006; 2014) work on orientation, encounter, and emotion remind us, encounters are not neutral experiences. Thus, as I present a re-story of their journeys of pain implicating growth towards a decolonizing orientation, I concurrently elucidate the 1) social, cultural, and historical contexts surrounding each encounter in their journeys, 2) personal, local, and global, and 3) complexity of intersections most salient to their journeys towards a decolonizing orientation.

I illuminate colonial histories in our narratives, unpacking the legacies of Spanish and American colonization of the Philippines that have been passed down through the generations and across borders, including the areas of religion, gender, colorism, etc.

This movement of pain to growth is facilitated through different "practices." These include another encounter, reflection (either by oneself or with others), or educational spaces, such as a college class. In this chapter, the growth described by my kababayan is of a personal nature – and reflected through an intentional change in one's orientation towards themselves and decolonizing. In essence, there is a re-definition of self, one's purpose, or values that is decolonizing.

Next, I share portions of each person's personal journey towards defining and enacting decolonizing in our personal lives, one person at a time. For each, I provide a brief introduction to give context to why each story/part of their narrative is being shared. I then present the narratives in two sections for each person: First is painful encounter(s), followed by implicated growth towards a decolonizing orientation, which includes what it means for each person and what it looks like.

Mitchell

Mitchell recalled early, painful encounters with their family and within schooling that invalidated their queer and non-binary identities. Retrospective reflection and a graduate class would help Mitchell towards defining a decolonizing orientation in their personal life. This decolonizing orientation included self-acceptance and coming out as queer and non-binary, as well as educating others around oppressive legacies, like the ones that caused them pain in their early life.

“I was wrong”

In their first journal entry, Mitchell recalled painful encounters within family and schooling that reflected differences in orientations to sexuality and gender expression. Mitchell shared a specific experience from early childhood growing up in the Philippines regarding the way their relatives responded to their crush:

> I discovered my queer identity at a young age. I was seven years old when I had my first crush on a boy. He was in sixth grade and I was in first grade. Obviously the age gap would not have made anything possible however that did not stop me from looking. One Sunday, I was walking back home from church (Baptist) with my cousins and my aunt (my mom’s sister). I remember us all jestingly talking about each other’s crushes. When it was my turn to speak, I innocently disclosed who I had a crush on without any idea what the ramifications of it were. I was met with reactions that shamed me and made me believe for a large part of my life that I was wrong.

In this encounter, there was a meeting of orientations which was painful for Mitchell. On the one hand, Mitchell’s relatives made apparent their disapproval of queer attraction. Mitchell could not have predicted such a reaction, which incited conflict in them around their own queer identity. This story illustrates how, at a young age, Mitchell was “taught” there was a “right” and “wrong” way to be romantically attracted to someone. In essence, they faced punishment in the form of shame through their relatives’ reactions. Yet, as Ahmed (2014) reminds us, we must look beyond the obvious cause of pain. So, while we might be inclined to point to Mitchell’s relatives as being the source of this shame, it is important to take a wider view by exploring the “histories that preceded and directed” this painful encounter (Schmitz & Ahmed, 2014, p. 97).

The histories and legacies of colonization of Spanish colonization in the Philippines inform Mitchell's relatives' perceptions of their queer and non-binary identities. Specifically, Spanish colonizers brought Christianity (primarily Catholicism) to the Philippines. To this day, the country is over 90% Christian. As part of this Christianity, there exists a strict understanding that gender consists of only men and women, and that relationships must be heteronormative. Any attraction or relationship outside of heteronormativity thus tends to be viewed to be as "a sin." Mitchell's story thus demonstrates how their relatives reflect this belief.

What's more, Mitchell experienced institutional regulation around their gender expression in their private Catholic school. In particular, they described a monthly encounter they were forced to endure with much disdain: "The Discipline Officer would check all of the boys' haircut immediately after the flag ceremony and make sure that it adheres with the length requirement: two inches above the ear short. I despised it." In this local school context, they were "taught" what is acceptable gender expression within a binary society (i.e., boys and men only have short hair) via institutional regulation. This story illustrates the convergence of differing orientations towards gender expression in that Mitchell was oriented toward freedom (i.e., wearing their hair as they liked) and the school was oriented toward very specific ideas of what "girls" or "boys" should looks like (i.e., long hair vs. short hair). The school's orientation thus oriented the staff and their regulatory actions.

Schmitz and Ahmed (2014) remind us that "[w]orlds are actually made to shelter some bodies and not others" (p. 101). In the above stories, Mitchell's body is one that is not "sheltered" or protected. In this way, Mitchell's stories indicate that their identities were invalidated by both family members and the institution of school. Yet, in critically examining the

pain of these encounters, Mitchell experienced an internal reorientation—a turning inward, away from the sources of pain who, through words and actions, made Mitchell feel they were "wrong."

"Deconstructing belief systems"

The above section presented Mitchell's stories and explored how they received the colonial messaging that it is "wrong" to be queer and non-binary via painful encounters with school and family members. This raises the question: how did Mitchell grow from such experiences towards a decolonizing orientation? What does decolonization mean to Mitchell in relation to these encounters? First, I describe education and reflection as conduits towards Mitchell's decolonizing orientation.

Mitchell began thinking about decolonization in more "formal" terms during a class in graduate school on LGBTQ+ Issues and Histories in their second year. This class introduced them to the concepts of intersectionality and interlocking systems of oppression. In addition to reading about issues on racial and gender inequality in the U.S., they learned how "as a bi-racial and non-binary person, I am subject to compounding forms of oppression because of my non-white/heteronormative identities." Mitchell came to understand these concepts as part of decolonization, though decolonization was not explicitly named during the class. The class thus helped Mitchell further reorient away from the beliefs that had caused them pain as a child and toward new learnings and new possibilities.

Although Mitchell's explicit thinking around decolonization began in graduate school, through retrospective reflection, Mitchell pointed to their mother as an earlier source of learning about decolonization. As Mitchell explained: "In hindsight and with the privilege of perspective, I realize that decolonization has always been a part of my life due to my family history." They

elaborated on decolonization as something they first learned through her, who raised them as a single mother; a taboo status in a Catholic-dominated society.

Mitchell's mother attended college while Mitchell was in pre-school and part of grade school. They went to the same university (in the Philippines, an institution is deemed a "university" if it offers K-12 education alongside undergraduate and post-graduate education). Mitchell specifically recalled:

> I have vivid memories of her bringing me my lunch in her college uniform (yes, private universities in the Philippines require uniforms in all educational levels). After school, I would hang around with my mom when she had to spend time working on homework or a project, sometimes with her classmates. It was through these interactions that I started understanding how extraordinary it was for her to be a single mother and an undergrad student. Overhearing conversations my mom had with her classmates, I came to realize at a very young age that it was not conventional for a woman to be single and a mother. Through the same conversations, I learned that *la-in na ang panahon subong*** (times are changing) and *ang babayi pwede na mangin successful biskan wala siya bana*** (a woman can be successful without a husband). My Mom remains single to this day.

The above story indicates that, in relation to their definition of decolonization as the unpacking and de-centering of oppressive societal conventions, Mitchell's mom's very existence—through her status as a single mother and an undergraduate student—defied and continues to defy hegemonic norms in multiple ways.

Given the aforementioned educational experience and reflection, Mitchell came to describe decolonization in their personal life as "the unpacking and de-centering of societal conventions to make space for marginalized voices and experiences forced on the fringes." They

specifically referenced conventions centered on the "white heteronormative category," like regulating gender in accordance to prescribed hair length by and by vilifying non-heteronormative attraction, both of which Mitchell experienced growing up. Their process thus includes "deconstructing belief systems that are entrenched in society which are passed down from previous generations," a point they have acknowledged their own complicity in.

Today, Mitchell is out as queer and non-binary and they have long hair and wear androgynous clothing. Coming to this place took time and entailed a process of decolonization that brought them face-to-face with the colonial norms mentioned in the previous section. It wasn't until college, when hair length policies became more lenient, that they were able to start growing their hair out. What's more, it wasn't until graduate school that they came out as non-binary. Such moves reflect move from a re-orienting inward away from pain, to moving towards a new acceptance of themself. Mitchell's decision to grow their hair out is notable as decolonizing entails bodily transformation. To this effect, Ahmed has noted that bodies are structures, as a teacher of hers once explained: "Even when we are thinking about the individual body, we should not think of it as unrelated to structural questions" (Schmitz & Ahmed, 2014, p. 100).

These encounters in Mitchell's journey help us better understand how "[c]olonization has not only showed up in [their] life with [their] Filipinx identity, it also has with [their] non-binary gender identity" and that it has particularly done so at the intersection of these identities. In summary, graduate school and reflection helped Mitchell identify how colonization has affected them, how decolonization could be (and had been) part of their life, and what a vision for broader decolonization could look like.

J.A.

For J.A., encounters between himself as Katutubo, and Filipinxs, revealed a prevalent orientation excluding Katutubos and deeming them inferior to Filipinxs. Though he initially internalized this painful belief, his college years provided multiple opportunities to re-orient. Specifically, encountering other Katutubos provided an example of what it could look like to embrace his Katutubo identity. Simultaneously, encounters with Filipinxs who engaged in appropriation of his culture also drove him to realize that his Katutubo culture was not inferior. Ultimately, J.A.'s grows from someone who did not embrace his Katutubo culture, to embracing it. Thus, J.A.'s described his decolonizing orientation in his personal life as continuing his Katutubo culture and traditions and working against a Filipinx nationalist identity.

"Egot"

While Mitchell's stories centered their queer and non-binary identities, J.A.'s stories recounted his early experiences as a Katutubo (Indigenous Filipino) American, stemming as far back as his time in kindergarten. As he described it, coming to the U.S. as Katutubo American refugees came with its own kind of culture shock as he began schooling, which was altogether different from his previous boarding school experience in the Philippines.

In particular, J.A. shared how, in kindergarten, he was put into an English-learning class that consisted mainly of other refugee kids from the Philippines, as well as Cambodian, Latinx, and Laotian kids. Being new to the school, no one had known who he or who the other kids were. J.A. especially recalled a physically and emotionally painful encounter that happened during the first week of school. He was playing in the playground with other kids, when a Filipino boy (not Indigenous) pushed him, calling him "Egot" and causing him to scrape his face on the blacktop.

He did not know what the word meant, so when he got home that day, he told his mom what happened. She didn't explain the meaning of "Egot" at the time. It was only later that J.A. learned "Egot" was a derogatory term used against Black people "derived from Filipino racism against Igorots (an Indigenous group in the Philippines)."

This encounter reveals a racist orientation and underlying history unknown to many Filipinxs. The Filipino boy that pushed J.A. used a slur originating from colonial histories. When the Spanish colonized the Philippines, they killed many Indigenous tribes while trying to "civilize" others. In the process, the "civilized" Filipinos took on the Western perspective of superiority to the "backwards" and "savage" Indigenous peoples. The Filipino boy who pushed J.A. had used a word passed down through generations; a word that represents a widespread belief that non-Indigenous Filipinos are in the "majority," while Katutubos are erased and perceived to be inferior or invisible. The Filipino boy can thus be understood as asserting an orientation toward Filipino dominance and exclusion of Katutubo that has traveled through diaspora, even at such a young age (Lee & Leo, 2013).

News of this encounter caused a drastic change in his mother's and father's approach to raising their children. As J.A. shared: "That is when my mom decided to raise us Filipino. She did not want us to be seen as Katutubo because being Indigenous means we will get bullied by Filipinos." J.A.'s pain was his parents' pain too. Thus, J.A.'s parents then began the family's "Filipinization" process, which entailed learning Tagalog, eating mainstream Filipino food, and "investing in 'Filipino culture.'" J.A. highlighted, "All the way up to college, my parents demanded we become Filipino." In this way, his parents' decision reflects internalized oppression, a phenomenon in which an oppressed group perceives themselves to be inferior to another group, while also seeking to be more "like" the more valued group (David, 2013; Fanon,

1963). J.A.'s parents actions demonstrate a reorientation or moving away from pain (Katutubo identity) and a movement toward a Tagalog/Filipino identity. According to this logic, to be Filipino is to belong and to be accepted. To be Katutubo is not.

J.A. brought in a global, migration commentary on the aforementioned encounter: "Reflecting on this experience, if Filipinos come to United States to be more American/Western, us Indigenous Peoples came to the United States to become Filipino, an identity that we never invested in nor we were seen as being a part of in the Philippines." J.A.'s critique also highlights the problematic colonial notion of nation-state markers based on Westphalian assumptions exported to the world via Europe (Sharma & Wright, 2008).

Since it was instilled in him from the aforementioned encounter, J.A. carried an orientation of adopting a Filipino identity over a Katutubo identity with him to college. This new local context, and the differing demographic, would prove to shape his experience. During my follow-up interview with J.A., he shared that, within the first 2 years of his undergraduate, he met a few other students who were Moro and Igorot [two different Indigenous groups in the Philippines.] He recalled that they had their own group and didn't associate with the other Fil-Am (Filipino Americans) students on campus. He remembered approaching them and sharing his family lineage, explaining what Village he was in and that they replied by asking, "well, why don't you continue actually identifying as Indigenous?" At first, he said "no" and was very hesitant to do so. However, he remarked that later college experiences with Filipinxs brought up pains of the past connected to his earlier childhood story, and that these experiences evoked anger which would propel him towards a re-orientation of embracing his Katutubo identity.

It was during college that J.A. observed non-Indigenous Filipinxs as "cultural tourists" of his and other Indigenous Filipinx groups' cultures. Observations prompted reflection and

realizations as "began to see how Filipinx Americans, the same people who told me I was not Filipinx, [performed] my culture [by] getting my people's tattoos and collecting our artifacts. I was angry and realized that their appropriation means I still have remained invisible and non-modern."

For instance, he recalled an encounter when one of the presidents of the Filipino student organization on campus was getting ready for a barbecue sale and told J.A. he needed help. Yet, the president told J.A. and his friends: "Oh, this is a Filipino thing," thereby implying Katutubos were not included. J.A. and his friends were shocked at the blatant assertion that they did not belong, though their comment reflected an orientation he was all too familiar with. They were all the more surprised when the day of the barbecue came, and the student organization members were selling the barbecue "in bahags" [traditional loincloth of the Igorot people]. Though J.A. didn't say anything at the time, some of the older Igorot students expressed frustration to the student organization, saying, "how dare you tell us it's a Filipino thing but you reappropriate our culture, and you're just selling barbecue."

Such incidents aside, Pilipino Culture Nights (PCNs) were what pushed J.A. "over the edge." Though PCNs are "staple" events for many Filipinx student organizations across the U.S., they have been critiqued for they ways they essentialize Filipinxs while erasing and suspending Katutubo Americans (Gonzalves, 2005). Relatedly, when J.A. introduced himself as Indigenous or Katutubo to other Filipinxs, he was immediately asked if he could teach them a folk dance, or if he ate dogs, or if his people were "civilized." Such experiences helped J.A. understand why his parents wanted to be Filipino rather than Indigenous and "still carried the baggage of hating Filipinos for what they did to our people." Collectively, these encounters highlight different orientations toward identity that ultimately pushing J.A. "over the edge" of the boundary of what

he felt to be tolerable or acceptable. Going over this edge drove him to actively re-orient to identify as Katutubo and exercise caution in his relationships with Filipinxs.

"I Wear My Tattoos Proudly"

The stories above described how J.A.'s early life consisted of an orientation deeming Katutubo inferior reflected through various Filipinx peers in school. Also weaved into the stories above were the conduits through which pain implicated growth. In particular, there were the other Katutubo college students, who were an example of what it could look like to claim Katutubo identity. There was also the Filipinxs who engaged in appropriation and cultural tourism, and J.A.'s anger that came through realizations that their actions were not right. For J.A., personal growth was from someone who did not embrace his Katutubo identity, to someone who does. This growth is part of journey towards a decolonizing orientation. In contrast to our other kababayan, his personal decolonization process entailed "disidentifying with Filipino and back to [his] Indigenous identity" through "continuing...culture and tradition" of his family's tribes. he did not fully understand, in childhood, he went along with his parents who, out of fear, told him that, in the United States, "we are now Filipino." Yet, his childhood experiences with discrimination compounded with those he experienced in college prompted him to challenge his parents in college. It is important to note that, for J.A., decolonizing is a word that requires much scrutiny. As J.A. explained:

> As a Katutubo American, my experiences of decolonization [have] been not against Western or American identity, but from a nationalist identity. What does it mean for an Indigenous person or Indigenous people to decolonize? We are often seen as a monolithic community outside of modernity and never diasporic, and thus, our mere presence in the

> US already disrupts the nationalist framework that is Philippine-America. Again, I ask, how do we, Indigenous people decolonize?

Here, J.A.'s questioning indicates a critique of nationalistic impulses as a necessary part of decolonization (Fanon, 1963; Mignolo, 2011).

Getting Indigenous tattoos connected to his tribes were one way of decolonizing for J.A., a means to uphold a new orientation of who he was and where he was going as Katutubo. During our time together, he shared his process of getting his family tribe tattoos and wrote about how it contrasted with others who are not Katutubo. His process began in 2005 and 2006, when he petitioned tattoo designs from both sides of his family, the Ifugao Igorot and the Iranun Moro. It wasn't until 10 years later that his request was approved. He then went to an approved tattoo artist 2 hours away from where he lived to get it done.

Importantly, his experience of getting these tattoos contrasted with those of the Filipinx Americans he observed around him. He expressed feelings of irritation during and after his undergraduate at seeing "his people's traditional markings on Filipinx bodies…especially when they did a Polynesian-Igorot hybrid tattoo." In contrast he shared: "I had to wait. I had to get blessings. I had to get approved. My designs were not chosen by me. I wear my tattoos proudly because they are unique and not like 'other Filipinx' 'tribal' tattoos." He further shared how his tattoos are incomplete because he has to earn the rest. His father is almost 60 years old and had only just gotten his own approved, even though he petitioned in the early 1990s. As Katutubos, he shared: "tattoos are sacred and not about 'decolonizing' or 'indigenizing.' Having tattoos means they are continuing their culture and tradition. The designs are chosen carefully, not something found online or in a book.

Similar to Mitchell, J.A. describes a physical transformation as part of a decolonizing process, that upholds an orientation of where he is going and who he is. Whereas Mitchell's transformation included hair length and dress, J.A.'s entailed tattoos. Tattoos, thus, can be understood as an embodiment of identity—a symbolic gesture where process and preparation are as important as the design itself.

Jasmine

Jasmine experienced shaming encounters with a prominent Filipinx student leader in her undergraduate who made her feel like she did not belong since she was dating a white person, a "colonizer," at the time. These encounters prompted her to reflect on her knowledge of colonization and its legacies, and how to combat it. Through these reflections and undergraduate courses, she would grow into a decolonizing orientation defined as thoughtful action; i.e., as becoming educated and educating others in ways that are "appropriate" to the situation and context. She looked back on those experiences not only as key pathways to where she is now, but also as examples of ways she does not want to interact with other people. The student leader she described perhaps had "good" intentions and a desire to bring people to a certain consciousness, but for Jasmine, his methods did not resonate.

"Why are you with the colonizer?"

Jasmine shared how, one day, she and her white boyfriend were walking through the student union when the well-known Filipinx student leader saw them. The student leader asked her, "Why are you with the colonizer?" Jasmine felt the question was accusatory, as if the leader were saying, "How dare you be with the colonizer?" She recalled not commenting and walking away. The semester after, she enrolled in her first Asian American Studies course. Within the class, the same student leader approached her desk and asked: "Are you here to decolonize

yourself?" These questions were perhaps asked with the intention of presenting Jasmine an opportunity to think about internalized oppression (e.g., Am I dating a white person, because I believe white people are superior? What colonial beliefs/structures do I uphold?). Yet, they were asked like accusations. In articulating how she perceived the student leader's questioning, Jasmine noted:

> So it's just interesting that [the student leader] felt so comfortable just blasting me, you know, and saying like, 'what are you doing in this class?' like I didn't belong there because I had a white boyfriend and I didn't belong there 'cause I didn't fit his image of showcasing my Filipinoness, you know, in his eyes.

The student leader's questions thus demonstrated a particular orientation toward "Filipino-ness" and what that means, implying Jasmine's unbelonging. His questions highlighting their differences (i.e., understandings of decolonization) and implying a hierarchy among them. Unpacking the student leader's questioning, it seems ironic that the student leader uses decolonization as a tool of shame towards Jasmine. In a colonizing way, he imposes his own strict definitions of what it means to be Filipinx, and what is "acceptable" for Filipinxs (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001).

Jasmine called these memories "key pathways" on her journey toward exploring colonization, decolonization, and what it can mean to be Filipinx. Though painful, the encounters helped her reflect on "who I am today, what kind of leader I am, and what ways I work to improve society and how I respond and treat others." More specifically, these encounters drove her to be mindful in developing her own beliefs about where, how, and to whom she directed her anger and desire to enact decolonizing approaches.

“Decolonization is an action word”

From those initial encounters with the aforementioned student leader, Jasmine grew in her image of herself as a Filipina and worked to actively educate herself on Filipinx issues and decolonization through classwork, as well as developed her own methods of interacting with others. Jasmine began volunteering for different things and eagerly participated in her Asian American Studies classes. As she wrote: “I was really eager and interested in learning, and in every single class I would go to, I would become more and more disgusted about how little I knew about the Filipino experience in the United States.” Though she did not explicitly try to become friends with the student leader, she recalled “he made it a point to occasionally make comments to me about his support of my growth as a Filipina, as a Pinay.” Her response: “I didn’t care. I didn’t need his approval.” She didn’t stop dating her white boyfriend at the time due to his comment. She also “thought he was a jerk for making that comment to me and not embracing that I was in the class.”

Jasmine further shared how she came to understand the student leader’s “behavior” as an “outward display of superiority.” Nowadays, she uses him as an example in presentations, speaking engagements, and daily conversations as “a reminder that our community perpetuates oppression as well...and this is worse when we treat our own community with such contempt.” Jasmine’s reflections through these stories are a key reminder that shared identity does not mean people think or act in the same ways.

Jasmine’s articulation of what decolonization has meant for her in her personal life indeed reflects her personal growth. In particular, Jasmine focused on decolonization as an action word, informed by the culmination of her life experiences up to the present. She described having a strong “radar” for oppressive and discriminatory actions, and that her responsiveness

depends on a number of factors, including her personal safety and energy level. Some things that prompt action include: “trigger words or phrases include any references to my being minimized, viewed as a foreigner, or direct personal targeting.” Thus, her growth can be seen in the way she moved from her shock and lack of direct response to the Filipinx student leader, to someone knowledgeable about dynamics of power at play with an ability to respond in the moment as needed.

As a recent example of decolonization as an action word in her life, she wrote about a trip she and her son had recently made and a specific experience they had in the airport. Upon approaching the security belt, a young white man cut in front of them. In the moment, she identified his behavior as reflecting the global orientation towards whiteness (Leonardo, 2002). Using her framework thoughtful action, she questioned him about his actions, especially because the airport was rarely busy, and it generally takes 5 to 10 minutes to go through security. The man said Jasmine and her son were slowing down the line and that’s why he decided to go ahead of them. She was “stunned by his capacity to freely move ahead of [them]…angry about how he dismissed [them].” She said in response: “Your white privilege doesn’t give you the authority to move in front of us. I’ve never seen anyone do that before.” She then picked up her and her son’s things and said: “We are going before you, and you are after us.” The man was shocked by her response, and Jasmine heard him say, “I can’t believe you said that.” No one who witnessed the incident, including other airport goers and TSA, said anything.

In this story, decolonizing for Jasmine meant taking action by identifying and confronting a colonizing orientation, white privilege at play. In this instance, Jasmine spoke up differently, this time directing her anger toward whiteness, the result of which disrupted the colonizer.

Liza

Liza recalled an encounter during her undergraduate that caused her to reflect on her orientation towards education and its purpose. Through continued reflection and dialogue within the context of a student organization, Liza grows from someone educationally motivated by finances and job security, to working towards social justice. Thus, her decolonizing orientation in her personal life means redefining one's educational purpose.

"To make big money for all those rich people?"

Unlike our other kababayan, a key encounter that influenced Liza's personal growth was a genuine invitation to think critically about her upbringing. Put another way, the encounter illuminated for her the colonial mindset she had been socialized into and ultimately led to a re-orientation towards the purpose of education.

In her first journal entry, Liza described beginning college with an orientation toward education as a vehicle for a good job and nothing else. However, that initial mindset did not last long. In her second year of undergrad, she began her "processes of redefining [her] education and decolonizing [herself]." In her entry, Liza shared important social spaces in college that have impacted her, including a student organization and her work with a student retention center. She recounted a specific conversation with one of the leaders of the student organization that ultimately interrupted her job/money mindset. Liza shared:

> I recall sitting on the couch in the office with a few of the leaders between classes. When asked about my career goals, I told one of them I wanted to work in entertainment law. His response: *To make big money for all those rich people?* I was surprised. Everyone else I told was thrilled by the prospect of me being a lawyer (and in glitzy Hollywood, no

less). It was the first time I had to really think about what a college degree really meant for me.

In this encounter, two different orientations toward education met head-on: Liza was oriented toward education in terms of career and economic goals while the student leader challenged this mindset with an orientation toward education as a space for social justice. This differs from the types of pain, negation, and unbelonging that the other kababayan faced, though it could be said Liza perhaps experienced a sense of pain for not realizing sooner that her orientation could be critiqued.

After this pivotal conversation, she came to understand how colonial histories and legacies had informed her initial orientation. In particular, colonization of the Philippines "has led us to focus heavily on the economic outcome of education," a dominant discourse in the U.S. and increasingly global (Inglis, 2016; McArthur, 2011; Surla & Poon, 2015). The fact that "everyone else" was "thrilled" by her desire to be an entertainment lawyer is telling in terms of how ingrained the orientation of education as solely an economic tool is within Filipinx communities in diaspora.

"Redefine Education for Myself"

Indeed, the aforementioned encounter would kickstart Liza's personal journey of reflection and dialogue toward defining and enacting a decolonizing orientation of redefining education for herself. Specifically, Liza transformed and showed growth from someone educationally motivated by finances and job security to working towards social justice. She entered college with the intention of trying not to get involved with anything ("I was there to get an education and get out and get married") but by the end of her first year, she knew "there's more to this education thing than just getting a degree." Liza further discussed the people and

spaces that influenced this shift in orientation, one of the most prominent being the Filipinx student organization she got involved with.

According to Liza, the student organization she joined "challenged students to find more meaning and relevance in the privilege of a college experience and degree…to look deeper into themselves and define how they could effect change." Thoughtful dialogue with peers was part of the experience. Through formal peer-counseling, mentorship spaces, and casual walks between classes, she thoughtfully reflected with peers who were also "striving to decolonize, define their purpose and identity [and] how they would impact the world." In engaging with the group, Liza both individually and collectively considered questions like: "What did it meant to be Pilipinx at a prestigious, competitive school like [ours]? How do my choices support the oppression or liberation of certain groups of people? Why were my bright peers from high school dropping out of college?" Liza noted that there were many questions, "and the years that followed would be small steps in a long journey to answer these questions."

Moreover, there was a component of activism in the student organization that also put her "in a space to think about what decolonization meant." At the time, the student organization was engaged in protesting higher education anti-affirmative action policies that they organized to advocate for Filipino veterans.

Liza's reflections on the student organization combined with her explicit definition of decolonization demonstrated how decolonization, for her, has become a process of learning and unlearning. As she tells it, this process and its learning possibilities are afforded by certain spaces and people, in her case, the student organization. Furthermore, she shared that the process of decolonizing can implicitly be broken down into two components. The first component is asking questions to gain an understanding and seek relevancy. Regarding this, Liza said,

"Decolonization was kind of breaking away, or to give rhyme and reason to why we were struggling, and I think that's what made it relevant." After this understanding, comes a more "active" and forward-looking action to "actualize your potential." She described this process as "arduous," whereas "sometimes it's more convenient to just go with the flow than carving out your own path." Liza asserted that, in education, decolonization ultimately meant redefinition — i.e., redefining a sense of purpose and intention for her future; to not "make big money for all those rich people," but to work toward social justice.

Vanessa

Whereas other participants described a particular painful encounter or set of related ones that spurred them towards personal growth and a decolonizing orientation, the encounters Vanessa shared with the group spanned multiple arenas. In other words, she did not single out a specific encounter, but rather a set of related ones. Vanessa shared stories about encountering people who held orientations that differed from hers about what it meant to be Filipinx, that prompted her to reflect on her identity and what it meant. Her identities as atheist, biracial, and non-speaker of Tagalog initially elicited pain through particular encounters. However, over time, she would grow to accept these "unexpected identities" for a Filipina and define and enact a decolonizing orientation that included finding and asserting an identity outside of colonial Filipinx legacies and expectations.

"I've always felt like I would never be Filipinx enough"

From the outset, Vanessa wrote straightforwardly: "As someone mixed raced [Filipino and white], and not being fluent in Tagalog – I've always felt like I would never be Filipinx enough." She was born in Arizona and moved to Guam at a young age. There was a large contrast in her and her family's experience in these locations. In Arizona, she and her sister

"stuck out" as the only Filipinxs and Asians at their schools, but in Guam, there were many Filipinxs. Though she was originally excited to move to Guam and be around other Filipinxs, she unfortunately didn't "find a home" with them. Attending middle and high school in Guam thus informed her "perception of self" in that she doesn't speak Tagalog, whereas many of the Filipinxs in Guam did: "And for some reason, [I] just didn't click." Even at age 10, she started thinking that "clearly I'm not Filipino enough because I don't speak Tagalog. I can't even hang with the Filipinos." The orientation of Filipinx on Guam knowing Tagalog, while Vanessa did not, set up a barrier between Vanessa and her peers.

It is a common narrative in the U.S., one I grapple with myself, that second generation Filipinxs do not grow up learning Tagalog (or other dialect). This is often because parents want their kids to fit in. They recognize there is a value given to the English language here, while Tagalog and other dialects are devalued. This is connected to colonization where Spanish and American colonizers imposed their languages on the peoples living in the Philippines (Strobel, 2001).

In addition to her bi-racial identity and not being able to speak Tagalog, her atheism was another factor that distinguished her from most Filipinxs around her. Vanessa described that, though she lacked a belief in God as early as the age of 12, she did not share this fact with friends and family in Guam and the Philippines. She chose not to share it because from collective encounters with Filipinxs, it was "clear to [her] that religion played an important role in connecting [her] to others, and to [her] culture." Her orientation toward religion thus differed from that of her community. As mentioned in Mitchell's narrative, Spanish colonization of the Philippines included the imposition of Catholicism, which remains the prevalent religion to this day, including in diaspora. Vanessa only began to voice her atheism to close friends around the

age of 17, after she had moved back to Arizona with her family and was no longer surrounded by Catholicism like she had been in Guam and the Philippines.

Another part of her narrative involved realizing her internalized oppression through an encounter with a professor. In her first journal entry, she wrote about an experience she had in an Asian American Studies course. Vanessa described being surprised when, one day, the instructor asked her mother to come in and give a guest lecture. The instructor wanted the students to hear first-hand from somebody who immigrated to Arizona at a time where there were not many Filipinxs there.

Not unlike the narratives of other immigrants to the U.S., Vanessa's mom had a college degree but had difficulty finding a job in the U.S. This phenomenon of western countries devaluing foreign credentials and discounting immigrant skills is an increasingly global phenomenon (Esses et al., 2006; Guo, 2009). She took work cleaning houses, bagging groceries, and working at convenience stories. As a child, her mother was abused by her parents and told she was ugly. Vanessa internalized this messaging as the member of her family with the darkest skin:

> She and I both were nervous about her speaking in front of my large class of college students. She had never spoken in front of an audience. She had internalized the belief that she was ugly, and thus had nothing valuable to share with others. These beliefs had been reinforced upon facing racism in the U.S. But that college course was perhaps my first glimpse into understanding how some forms of knowledge are legitimized, and others devalued. Neither my mother nor I had considered her personal experiences as lecture worthy. But this professor challenged our class to think otherwise.

Vanessa's mother's story clearly demonstrates the generational transmission of colonial ideas. An orientation towards colorism abounds in the Philippines as well as in the diaspora, and this story details how, stemming from Spanish and American colonization, colorism has been maintained throughout many generations and across diaspora, (Dixon & Telles, 2017; Kiang & Takeuchi, 2009; Rondilla et al., 2007). Yet, as described in the previous quote, the connotation of having darker skin goes beyond beauty standards. It can impact how a person values (or not) their own knowledge and life experiences. Not only did Vanessa's mother not feel she had something worthy to contribute, Vanessa felt the same due to her learned, internalized oppression. At the same time, Vanessa's professor held an orientation that Filipinxs' knowledges and experiences were valuable, which would also re-orient Vanessa away from colorism.

"Embodying the unexpected, and bucking the norms"

As the above stories indicate, Vanessa grew up encountering prevalent orientations towards what it meant to be Filipinx and who was considered Filipinx. Her bi-racial identity and lack of speaking Tagalog meant she never felt fully accepted. Furthermore, she knew she could not be open with her atheism amongst Filipinxs. At the same time, she had developed a sense of inferiority in regard to Filipinx knowledge, as seen in the story about her mother.

Over time, through reflection, she would grow to accept herself as Filipina while coming to define a decolonizing orientation in her personal life. Overall, Vanessa's stories and reflections on decolonization as a response to such messages were tied to her self-expression and included an examination of her values. In the beginning of her second journal entry, she summarized: "In my personal life, I can identify at least two forms/acts of decolonization: 1) Rejection of Western notions of divinity and what is sacred, 2) Critically examining internalized definitions of what it means to be Filipinx." In unpacking these forms of decolonization in her

life, she wove together connections between music, religion, and identity. She started by describing her orientation to punk music in her young adult years:

> Punk music came to define my outlook as young adult, and I think atheism complimented my demeanor at that time. Punk music was loud, fast, fun and sometimes stupid, but more often, its lyrics were a call out of injustices in the world.

As the above illustrates, punk music articulated much of her anger at the world around her, anger that stemmed from leaving Guam and the Philippines and once again living amongst people who did not understand her culture or accent. The punk scene allowed her to be "dark, vicious, and something unexpected." She changed her self-image, shaved her long hair, had multiple ear piercings, and dressed in vintage clothing. For her, "all of these acts seemed to be a call to liberation. A form of decolonizing myself." In this way, just like Mitchell and J.A., Vanessa's narrative included aspects of physical, embodied transformation as part of decolonizing.

Although punk as a subculture originated and has been heavily influenced by cisgender, heterosexual, and European men (Leblanc, 2008), nonetheless it has indeed been a "countercultural space shaped by the needs, demands, and artistic passions of women, people of colour, the LGBTQ community, and other minoritised groups" (Romero, 2020, p. 10), including diasporic Filipinxs (Ambrose, 2017; Romero, 2016).

She also described how she understood her atheism as an "act of rejecting colonization." Of this claim, Vanessa specifically referenced a song "Just an obstruction" by the punk band All Against Authority. The song is about injustices against Indigenous peoples in the current-day U.S. For her, there was a connection between the song's message and Filipinx histories:

> Just like the song above had mentioned -- the colonizers had wanted Filipinxs to adopt their God, and leave behind their old traditions. We were also meant to adopt capitalism

> and individualism -- whereas the Filipinx traditions I had grown up with prioritized balance with the natural earth, as well as harmony within our barrio.

In other words, the song prompted Vanessa to connect how colonization through the spread of Christianity similarly impacted Indigenous peoples in the US as well as Filipinx peoples in both the Philippines and US. Although Catholic rituals offered opportunities to gather Filipinxs in community, "it ultimately asked us to put on a pedestal a Westernized notion of God" for the purpose of domination.

She would also come to embrace her atheism and believe she was no less Filipinx than those around her. Even beyond herself, Vanessa outlined some of the ways she has observed Filipinxs existing outside colonial ideas:

> Americans tend to lump all Asians into one group - expecting us to be quiet and subservient. But I know Filipinxs are loud, just as our country of origin is loud. We're suppose[d] to have straight black hair and light skin. When in fact our skin, hair and eyes come in all shades of brown to black. Our elders told us to be lawyers, doctors, nurses. And so we did that -- but we also pursued a higher education, beyond those prized professions. And while I am so proud of my many cousins who are nurses, and my sister who works for justice through her law firm – I am also proud of the Filipinxs who are successful on their own unlikely paths. Decolonization shows up in all these ways – in embodying the unexpected, and bucking the norms.

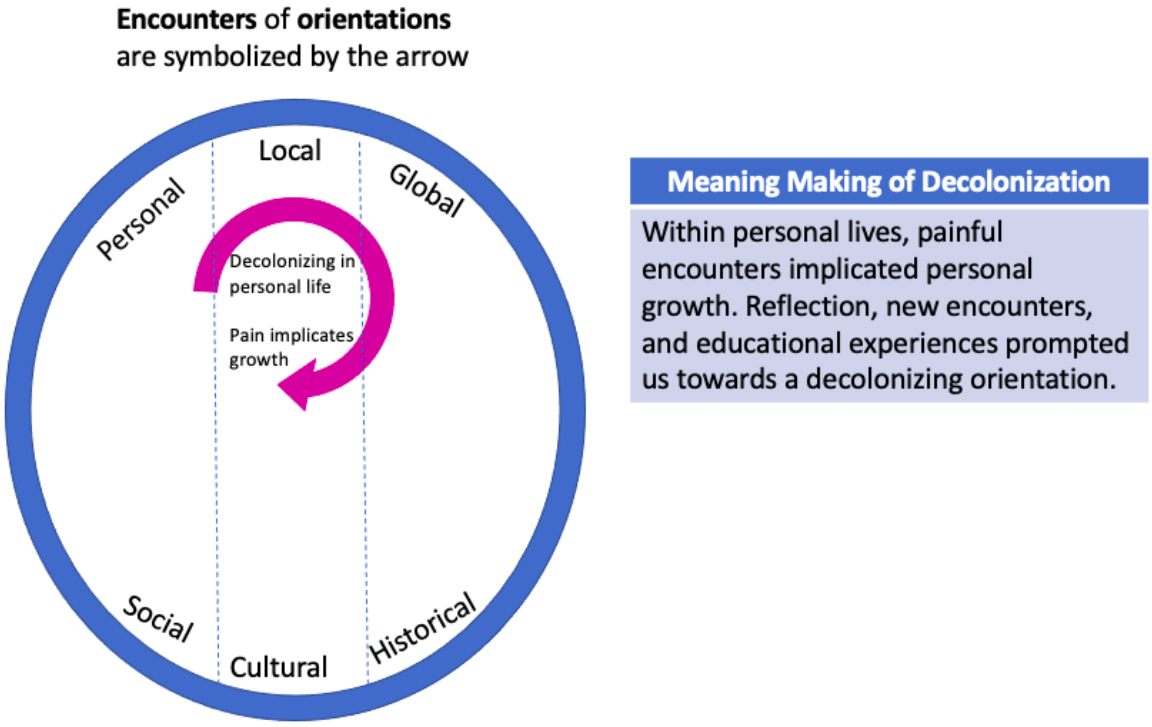
Though surrounded by people narrow and restrictive messaging about what it meant to be Filipinx, she grew in her self-acceptance and belief that she could define who she was, and didn't let such messaging "deter [her] from what being Filipinx was for [her]." Perhaps her path was "unlikely" compared to that of most of her peers given the power of dominant orientations, but

the traits that once caused her anguish, that had made her feel "not enough," no longer impacted her feelings of belonging.

Conclusion

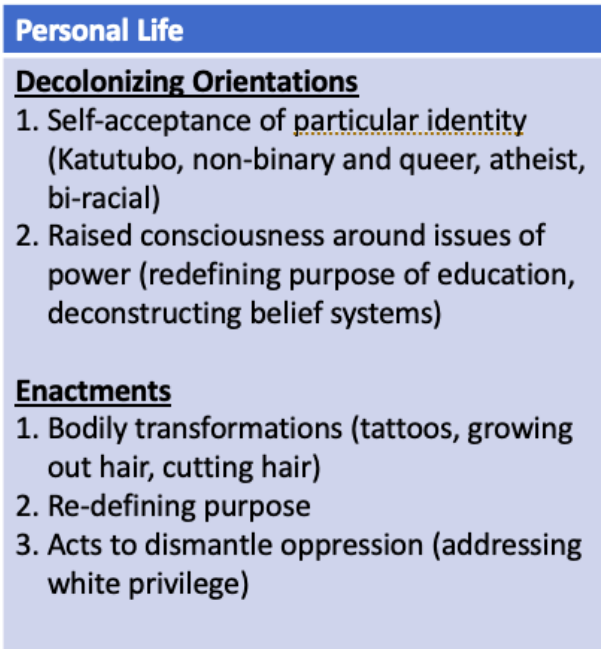
In this chapter, I shared *the kababayan's* journeys towards defining and enacting decolonizing in their personal lives. These journeys were largely tied to early painful encounters that revealed differences in orientations between themselves and those around them tied to various colonial histories. Across participants reflecting on colonization in their own lives, they shared largely on moments of pain that were related to their Filipinx identity, which brought them face-to-face with expectations around this identity, and how they did not meet them; which made it difficult for their own sense of belonging and self-acceptance. These early painful encounters implicated later growth, and reflections, education, and further encounters moved my kababayan towards re-orientations towards decolonizing and critiquing the "expectations" of Filipinx handed down to them. Figure 6 illustrates this meaning-making process.

Figure 6. Meaning-making process in personal lives



Through re-storying, I identified two predominant orientations towards decolonizing and three types of enactments in one's personal life (see Figure 7). First is self-acceptance of a particular identity. Specifically, this is an identity that intersects with Filipinx which they were shamed about and/or made them feel a sense of unbelonging. J.A.'s identity as Katutubo, Mitchell's identities as non-binary, queer, and bi-racial, and Vanessa's identities as atheist and bi-racial are all examples of this. The second predominant orientation was raised consciousness around issues of power. I include within this Liza's redefining purpose of education, and Mitchell's orientation of deconstructing belief systems.

Figure 7. Decolonizing orientations and enactments in personal lives



I also identified three types of decolonizing enactments within their personal lives. First was bodily transformations, as seen through Mitchell's growing out their hair, Vanessa's cutting of her hair, and J.A.'s tattoos. The second enactment was redefining educational purpose, as stated by Liza. Finally, there are acts to dismantle oppression, such as seen through Jasmine's example of addressing white privilege.

In the next chapter, I extend the discussion around growth and defining decolonizing in their personal lives, to explore the journeys of the kababayan in bringing, developing, and/or navigating their definitions of decolonizing in their work contexts.

CHAPTER 6: DECOLONIZING IN THE WORK CONTEXT

> Nepantleras are threshold people; they live within and among multiple worlds, and develop what Anzaldúa describes as a "perspective from the cracks." Nepantleras use their views from these cracks-between-worlds to invent holistic, relational theories and tactics enabling them to reconceive or in other ways transform the various worlds in which they exist. (Keating, 2005, p. 9)

"Perspectives From the Cracks"

In their fourth journal entry about decolonizing in their work, Mitchell described themself as a bridge-maker, inspired by the terms Neplanta/Neplantera in the article cited above. The concept of neplantera, as described above, comes from the work of Gloria Anzaldúa. Mitchell, drew inspiration from the concept of Neplantera to make sense of themself as a person bringing a decolonizing approach, informed by their positionality, to a colonizing workspace (i.e., U.S. higher education). After reading and re-reading my kababayan's entries, I came back to this notion that Mitchell introduced as a way to think about how their decolonizing orientations informed their work. Their "perspectives from the cracks" shape them in ways particular to their identities and contexts and give them a unique vantage point to use their orientations to transform the spaces and people they interact with in their work contexts.

Importantly, decolonizing orientations are not static, but dynamic in the sense that they shape and are shaped by the environment and our interactions with that environment. As such, this chapter not only includes the "what" of decolonizing (i.e., what participants are oriented toward doing; what do their "perspectives from the cracks" compel them to do?), but also more holistically explores their work context, and their experiences in it. For each person, I describe why and how context, particularly "local" institutional context, shapes what they do to

decolonize in their professional sphere. Context includes: the roles of their job, their program area (i.e., student affairs versus system analytics), the type of institution they work at, the population with which they work, and where (geographically) they work.

Related to reorientation is growth, another salient theme in their stories. Again, this growth occurs on a personal level (i.e., growth in understanding and consciousness) and results in an increased capacity to enact a decolonizing orientation. The stories in this chapter build upon the decolonization orientations discussed in the previous chapter, and recognize the new spaces, places, and encounters to which we bring this growth and our re-orientations, particularly in higher education. Furthermore, actualizing these re-orientations can influence people and spaces beyond the individual and create further shifts in the people and structures around them. Through these processes of growth through re-orientation, the kababayan experienced changes in themselves that they later channeled into their work and visions for decolonial world-making. This chapter is thus also about decolonial world-making *within the university*. In other words, each person's personal growth and transformation to a decolonizing orientation have sought share this growth to prompt further growth in their work contexts (e.g., among the people with whom they work, the institution itself, etc.).

In this chapter, I discuss what decolonizing means and looks like in my kababayan's work contexts. Just as in the stories in the previous chapter, our stories indicate instances of (re)-orientation in our professional lives. In other words, work is another arena in which conflicting orientations between individual people meet; however, the orientation of the institution itself (e.g., the institution's "culture" and its students, staff, and faculty populations) becomes salient as it may or may not align with the orientations of my kababayan.

In what follows, I detail each person's decolonizing orientation in their work contexts as well as how they enact it. At the start of each section, I provide a reminder of each person's current professional role. I follow this with a reminder of what decolonizing meant to the them in their personal lives, including the relevant re-orientation and growth that occurred for them after particularly painful encounters. It is necessary to revisit this because it provides important context to their work commitments and shows how decolonizing their personal life largely informed their definition of decolonization in their professional life. I then share the meaning of decolonization in their professional lives. After this brief introduction, I overview each person's local context, then I expand on the ways they enact their decolonizing orientation in their specific contexts.

Mitchell: "Exposing Students to New Ideas and Alternative Ways of Being"

At the time of recruitment, Mitchell was going into their second year working at a large, public, 4-year institution in the Southern U.S. as a coordinator for residence life. In their role, they had a range of responsibilities, such as supervising resident assistants, organizing campus-wide educational events and activities, and training and development for residence life staff.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Mitchell described decolonization in their personal life as unpacking and de-centering white, heteronormative conventions that have been sustained through multiple generations. This definition encompasses Mitchell's re-orientation toward decolonizing, a re-orientation born of their early encounters with ridicule for their sexual orientation and regulation of their gender expression. For them, re-orientation made possible a new mindset through which they were able to foster self-acceptance and come out with their non-binary identity. Within their professional role, Mitchell shared that decolonization "means exposing my students to new ideas and alternative ways of being." Looking at these definitions

within their personal and professional contexts, a connection became clear. That is, within this definition in their professional life is an embedded critique of long-standing "white, heteronormative conventions." Furthermore, Mitchell's stories of enacting their decolonizing orientation significantly centered on how they educate the student population largely, but not only, in regard to LGB and trans/queer issues.

Unpacking the "local" work context

For Mitchell, the location of their institution in the Southern U.S., and what follows from this location (i.e., demographics, Christian dominance), are the main contextual factors that contributed to conflicting orientations between Mitchell and their institution. It is important to note that I do not wish to essentialize the Southern U.S. given prevalent rhetoric of this region being "backwards" (Blain, 2018). Rather, I recognize the legacies and continued activism that occurs in that region, while recounting Mitchell's observations and experiences.

To begin, Mitchell painted a picture of their institution as one that was insular, and that lacked diversity and social justice training before they arrived. Mitchell noted how the campus really needed diversity and inclusion training from someone who did not attend the institution, because, as they described, most people working were alumni, "so the ideas are kind of just like…circulating." This was a contrast to the orientation of their master's degree institution, which they described as "activist-oriented."

The demographics of the student body, which reflected that of the state/region, was mostly homogeneous, white, and Christian. In reflecting on the significance of this, Mitchell noted, "I probably will be the first non-binary person of color they were going to meet, or they [will] ever meet." Given this, Mitchell dove into the work, aware of how necessary it was from their own experiences. They got involved with Safe Zone ally trainings and was a trainer for RA

training on LGBTQ topics and histories. In all, Mitchell felt the campus appreciated "the new perspective, the new experiences, the new background" and felt like a "catalyst" for new knowledge and ideas. Although Mitchell embraced being a "catalyst" for ideas that were new to the institution, they also felt an accompanying sense of challenge and fatigue, as one of the only people who held their decolonizing orientation. Regarding the planning of programming for Trans Day of Remembrance, Mitchell expressed feeling alone in their desire to sustain such programming in the long term: "should I be the one who can always keep doing that work? Like no one else will pick it up?"

Enacting their decolonizing orientation

What did it mean for Mitchell to enact their decolonizing orientation of "exposing students to new ideas and alternative ways of being" in their professional life? In reflecting on what engaging with students looked like for them, they suggested that, as a student affairs professional, it was harder to require students to read articles or books. For them, the nature of the job moreso entailed "engag[ing] them in the process of decolonization through programs and facilitating discussions." In short, enactment came through programs and discussions to raise student consciousness around issues of power.

To this effect, Mitchell shared some specific collaborative programmatic examples. The examples they shared were all tied to LGBTQ issues. One program raised consciousness around LGBTQ issues, which included collaborating with a professor of Queer theory Mitchell had also spearheaded a queer-inclusive sex education program, in which they invited a queer counselor from their health center to talk about safer queer-inclusive sex practices. In collaboration with their campus' Multicultural Center, they also organized a campus-wide observance of Transgender Day of Remembrance. They placed trans flags across various places on campus,

with each flag signifying a trans person whose life has been taken by transphobia. Moroever, Mitchell helped organize a trans panel that become a mandatory training for all RAs. The panel consisted of seven trans people from the campus and local community who spoke about their experiences as trans people.

Mitchell's orientation to decolonization via exposing students to new and alternative ways of being, specifically related to LGBTQ issues, seeks to interrupt colonial violence against LGBTQ peoples in higher education and beyond (Lugones, 2007; Jones, 2014; Siegel, 2019). Yet, LGBTQ issues are often considered "new" and "alternative" because they are not the norm, particularly in the south. Mitchell thus works to grow students' (and staff's) consciousness, yet the resistance they have faced in doing so, I argue, exemplify differences in orientation.

They particularly grappled with religious overtones in planning and implementing LGBTQ-related programming. Mitchell described a general orientation in the South that anything outside of scripture should not be followed. They illustrated this through a specific encounter with a resident assistant (RA). They described how one of their RAs approached them after learning she was required to attend the trans panel as part of training. She told Mitchell that she could not attend as the premise of the panel conflicted with her Christian beliefs. She did not want to "conform to how society views trans people because I don't believe it's okay." This encounter demonstrates how Mitchell's decolonizing orientation of exposing students to new and alternative knowledges, is resisted by some of the students they desire to reach.

Finally, Mitchell elaborated in their interview that their existence as non-binary might be decolonizing in the workplace in and of itself. They stated, "[I]present myself to the world as authentically as possible...just being myself, like, I'm just doing the normal Mitchell, doing the normal me." Again, Mitchell's decolonizing orientation of wanting to expose students to

alternative ways of being is apparent. However, the difference is that they do so not through programming, but by being themself as a non-binary person. Yet, how they are received by some people points to a difference in orientation. That is, on a personal level, Mitchell feels their non-binary identity on campus is tokenized in that they are perceived as "this new part, like this person, is a nonbinary person and the 'thing'." They explained this tokenization by connecting it to geography (i.e., working in the South). They feel tokenized, even though the politeness of "Southern culture" prevents people from saying tokenizing remarks out loud directly to them. It is "an invisible force that [they] deal with on the daily."

In sum, Mitchell's decolonizing orientation of exposing students to new and alternative ideas is enacted in two different ways. Through programming, Mitchell's seeks to grow students' critical consciousness, particularly around LGBTQ issues. Through being themself as a non-binary person, they also seek to expand students' understandings of gender identity beyond the binary. How Mitchell experiences enacting their decolonizing orientation is very much shaped by their location in the Southern U.S. and the demographic body as predominately white and Christian.

J.A.: "Critiquing Against the Romance of Community"

J.A. works in a mid-level role in student recruitment and retention, where his responsibilities include access and outreach programming as well as academic lectures and research. He works at a large, public research university on the west coast of the U.S. At the time of this study, he was coming up on his third year in the role.

For J.A., decolonizing in his personal life entailed disidentifying with a Filipino American identity that marginalized and oppressed Indigenous Filipinx peoples. By disidentifying from this, he was able to re-orient toward an Indigenous identity anchored in

continuing the cultures and traditions of his family tribes. Getting Indigenous tattoos were one way of decolonizing for him, even as he finds tension with the term.

Following, I explore how J.A. defines and enacts decolonization in his professional life by decolonizing the colonial structures of university, critiquing the romance of 'community,' and deconstructing normative activism via "Kitchen Table Activism." I especially highlight where J.A.'s stories indicate that his personal re-orientation to decolonizing has shaped his professional orientation, and where other sources added new layers to their decolonizing orientation.

Unpacking the "local" work context

Prior to his role in his current office, J.A. worked in a different office in the same institution. J.A. attributes the work done his previous office to furthering his understanding of decolonizing possibilities in higher education. Specifically, he explained that it helped him move towards his professional decolonization orientation described above. He described how his previous office did student affairs-type work, but was technically under academic affairs. This fact meant they could take an especially critical approach to their work. As he described, they could critique student affairs' orientation toward neoliberal and romanticized structures of care, diversity, inclusion, and equity. Some programmatic examples he gave included lecturers critiquing "Pan-Indianness in pow wows" and "how performing national culture can erase indigenous and ethnic minorities in Filipinx, Vietnamese, Khmer, and Japanese Culture Nights." The latter example connects with J.A.'s decolonizing orientation from the previous chapter.

J.A. noted that such activities as described above were "rare for a cultural center" in academia. This "rarity" points to the unique orientation to critical programming that his office had, compared to institutions. When J.A. moved from his previous office to his current one, he

carried with him the decolonization orientation cultivated through his previous work, and his personal life.

Enacting his decolonizing orientation

J.A. shared a few examples of enacting their decolonizing orientation within the context of their work. First, was "critiquing against the romance of community." This was done through "saying" no and through holding critical discussions. The second was flipping the power structure that places staff above students. Last, was engaging in "kitchen table activism."

Critiquing the romance of community was evident in his personal life as Katutubo within Filipinx spaces, but it also came through his work. Specifically, he would regularly engage in critical discussions with student staff. Sometimes these discussions were in the work of workshops, and some open sessions by student staff who have open discussion to engage necessary conversations before holding a program. He provided several examples. I elaborate on two examples below.

J.A. elaborated on important questions regarding the concept of decolonizing. First drawing from his own identity as Katutubo, what does decolonization mean where there are several layers of colonization (e.g., "decolonize from American? Decolonize from Spanish? Decolonize from Arabism? Decolonize from Filipinoism?"). Another key theme is around being Indigenous to another land, while living on Indigenous lands (e.g., What does it mean to be an Indigenous person living in un-seceded, colonized lands of the [people indigenous to the land I am on]? What does actual decolonization look like when I am a settler and have benefited from colonization?" He also encourages students to think about the emotional attachments people have to the concept of decolonizing. Such questions and themes represent a critical questioning around decolonization intended to provide opportunities for students to grow in their consciousness.

Another example of a discussion was around the use of kente cloth for campus events such as celebrating Kwanzaa and Black graduation. Specifically, the discussion engaged critique around the use of the kente cloth for Black Americans as a decolonizing act. There is a growing African community at the institution and as J.A. shared, many in the African community (particularly Central, South, and East Africans) do not have an orientation toward kente cloth as they don't feel that it is representative of their culture. Within the office, continuing conversations are happening to figure out for instance, "what does that mean to be Afro Caribbean and have no connection to kente cloth?"

Part of this critique comes through "saying no." In his professional life, part of his work includes interfacing with Filipinx Americans. There are times he has to be tolerant when seeing his indigenous cultures appropriated "and at times, bastardized" while also trying to understand their romanticized notions of decolonization. An example of him saying "no" is when Filipinx American students tried to bring a group to campus to talk about "dying tattoo culture," even though, as J.A. noted, no one in the group was actually Igorot and they have been opposed by the entity Igorot International. He has also said no to cultural events with "indigenous" dances, which are not actual dances of indigenous peoples.

J.A.'s decolonizing orientation in critiquing the romance of community, as it pertains to a number of different demographic groups, is in alignment with the center he works at. Fortunately, the difficult discussions are welcomed in the space. In saying no and holding critical discussions, he resists the colonial, romanticized definitions of "community," growing the critical consciousness of those he engages with (Joseph, 2002).

Dismantling colonial structures is another form of decolonization J.A. strives to enact in his daily work. As he noted, student workers are valued the least within a capitalist structure.

However, in his center, students are the directors and the advisors (J.A.'s position) work for them. In situations on campus where administrators need input from his office and they reach out to him, his approach as an advisor is to let the other administrators know that he will pass along their message so that the students can provide the needed input. In this way, J.A. positions himself as a conduit rather than a decision-maker, which can sometimes frustrate the university, given the university's orientation towards maintaining hierarchies for the purpose or order and efficiency.

A programmatic example of dismantling colonial structures is his center's "alternative tours." These campus tours that highlight the campus' history of activism rather than the traditional showing of buildings, talks about majors, and the general "fluff[ing] up the university." Instead, the tours highlight where student protested and where activists have stood. J.A. noted that, "admissions hates [the tour] because we don't sell the university the way they want to." This example directly speaks to Mbembe's (2016) assertion that decolonizing the university should interrupt the cycle that turns students into consumers and customers.

Given the above, critiquing the romance of community, for J.A., not only pertains to identity groups, but also to higher education as a whole. Indeed, higher education in the U.S. imposes the notion that hierarchy that, in many ways, should order the way things should be (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). Through J.A.'s stories, there is an evident difference in orientation toward hierarchy between himself and the center, and the wider administration. Nevertheless, his stories also demonstrate that enacting his orientation toward decolonization and justice has created exciting opportunities for others – especially students – to grow their critical consciousness.

The last way that J.A. enacts a decolonizing orientation is through "kitchen table activism." J.A. learned this concept from his mentor at his previous office. Kitchen table activism includes "the small things [that] actually sustain activism." He explained that the concept comes from Ella Baker, who was a prominent Black woman activist during the civil rights movement. Baker and other women at the time were told their primary focus should be in the home. To decentralize the home, Ella Baker engaged in kitchen table activism through acts like making sure people were fed, that there was a microphone if needed, etc. In recounting this, J.A. acknowledges the gendered and essentialized nature of the concept, but also points out that all types of activism are necessary.

J.A. enacts this concept in the center by providing things like water, a dishwasher, and dishwashing soap. He views this kind of care as "a form of support and retention." Furthermore, an orientation toward this kind of care and support means further enacting a decolonial approach to working in a colonial institution. Having things like free tampons and pads in the center disrupts a structure that demands women pay for someone their bodies can't control. Items like tampons and pads are put into the office budget every year.

Overall, J.A. brings their decolonizing orientation of critiquing the romance of community, and dismantling hierarchies in multiple ways. Through programs and critical discussions with students, he strives to present students with opportunities to grow their consciousness and to question their attachments to nationalism. Through working in and upholding a student-governed space as legitimate to colleagues who believes otherwise, J.A. brings an opportunity for colleagues to grow beyond their current understandings of hierarchies of staff above students. Finally, J.A. brings a particular decolonizing orientation to activism that differs from mainstream notions of activism as violent that are predominant (Dei &

Asgharzadeh, 2001). His stories show that decolonization can be centered on the peaceful, systemic deconstruction of normative forms of activism. Again, through enacting this decolonizing approach, J.A.'s professional work grows others' understanding of what activism can be. J.A.'s context, of being in an institution with multiple spaces that align with such critical thinking (such as his previous work office), and the institutionalized nature of being in an office that is student-governed, shape his ability to enact his decolonizing orientation.

Jasmine: "Raise Consciousness, Validate Others, Dismantle Oppression"

Jasmine is an upper-level administrator in global engagement at a community college in the southwestern U.S. that is also a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI). Here, she interfaces with the entire college community to promote global engagement opportunities across campus. In particular, Jasmine is responsible for study abroad efforts and programming that brings domestic and international communities together on campus. She has been in the role for about 5 years.

Jasmine's stories from her personal life led to an understanding of decolonization as taking thoughtful action in response to oppressive acts. In the previous chapter, she gave the example of interrupting and educating someone on white privilege. This orientation carries forward into her work, where her orientation toward decolonization similarly takes the form of thoughtfully responding to moments "where communities are silenced, ignored, devalued, undervalued, dismissed, and invisible."

Unpacking the "local" work context

A major key to understanding Jasmine's decolonizing orientation in her professional context is that she works at a community college that is a Hispanic-serving Institution (HSI) and that Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) issues are absent from the culture of the college. The HSI designation is very important to the institution and comes up often as an

explicit responsibility and focus on supporting Hispanic/Latinx student success. Jasmine is proud to work at an HSI but is also "consciously aware that there are other racial and ethnic and other oppressed groups [on campus] that oftentimes get neglected." Indeed, there are very few APIDA, let alone Filipino, staff at the institution. In her words, "APIDA presence within faculty, staff, and administrators is dismal. Even worse, the APIDA voice is lacking." In her stories, she shared how the institution recently held its first ethnic studies conference. Her initial elation about the conference dwindled when she learned that her participation on one panel would be the only time an APIDA voice was featured. Furthermore, she also works under the pressure of institutional rhetoric such as the commitment of high-level administrators to study abroad and their desire for the institution to be in the top 20 community colleges in study abroad.

Enacting her decolonizing orientation

Jasmine described two main ways in which she brings a decolonization orientation centered on raising consciousness and dismantling oppression to her work. The first is decolonizing action that is a response to communities being devalued or invisible. The second is decolonizing her work setting by being who she is as a Filipina.

The first way she enacts a decolonizing orientation is by addressing unequal participation in study abroad. Contextually, Jasmine explained that, given her responsibility of encouraging students to study abroad, she is often congratulated on her success with Latinx student participation in this regard. The institution has actually won awards for their high numbers of underrepresented student engagement in study abroad, specifically Latinx and Native American students. Jasmine is indeed proud of these successes. At the same time, she is highly aware and disheartened that the numbers of "African American, APIDA, and disabled student participation

is minimal or non-existent." At the time we talked, there wasn't a single African American student at the institution who had studied abroad.

To work towards decolonizing this initiative, she often thinks critically about how she can reach out to other underrepresented populations and further increase participation. From her perspective, her decolonizing orientation is unique in her context: "if someone else was sitting in my shoes and in charge of this, there would be very little attention placed on recruiting those groups" because the successes of Latinx and Native American students studying abroad would overshadow the lack of participation of other groups. She thus remains critical of how numbers are valued leaned on to justify programming or the institution's definition of who is "underrepresented" and worthy of resources and support.

Her decolonizing actions spurred by such critical thought thus include doing a lot of outreach. She specifically reaches out to students she knows from the aforementioned groups that have yet to participate in study abroad. She also works with faculty members, asks them to think about specific students, and encourages them to consider study abroad programs. Moreover, she has conversations with academic advisors, to help them think more intentionally about particular populations in regard to study abroad.

Jasmine's decolonizing orientation of wanting to respond to the invisibilization of marginalized communities on campus is apparent in these above stories. She specifically works against the predominant colonizing notion of "distributive justice" that posits that larger "numbers" should dominate who gets attention and who doesn't (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001; Young, 2001). Through her outreach, she has worked to grow the consciousness of many others—i.e., those who have not habitualized thinking about and addressing unequal participation and those who may believe study abroad is not an option for them.

The second way Jasmine decolonizes in her work setting is by bringing herself and her Filipina identity into her workspace. Her office space speaks to who she is, sharing pieces of [her] identity as a mom, family member, proud Pinay, and university graduate." Additionally, she has introduced different Filipinx games to students and colleagues at various college events and as shared Filipinx food with her office colleagues. She has been well-received at such times: "They loved it [the food]! One colleague always requests this dish [pancit palabok] and will offer to purchase whatever ingredients are needed."

On her desk is a Filipino name plate that had been given to her by her parents. It reminds her of her family, legacy, and "responsibility to continually act, do, and be authentic." She also keeps a picture given to her by a Filipinx student organization she worked with at a previous institution. She recalled them fondly for the way they welcomed her into their lives, and allowed her to challenge them to do more and be proud of being Filipinx. Putting artifacts like these in her work environment serve as a way to decolonize the space in an institutional culture where APIDA presence is sparse. They are daily reminders to herself and others of who she is, and they thereby ground her and drive her to continue contributing to the visibilization of APIDA identities on campus.

In sum, Jasmine's decolonizing orientation informs her thoughtful actions in response to the invisibilization of marginalized communities. This decolonizing orientation is manifested through her examples of advocating and outreaching on behalf of marginalized communities, as well as being herself in an institution with very few APIDA professionals. By asserting her own identity in and beyond her office, she helps the campus to grow, re-orient, and better value their APIDA staff.

Liza: Putting Students in the "Driver's Seat" of their Education

Liza is an upper-level administrator in information technology (IT) at a large, public community college on the west coast of the U.S. The institution is a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI). There, she supports the institution's student information system, particularly in relation to admission, registration, records and graduation.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Liza understood decolonization in her personal life to be a redefining of education for herself. Specifically, she entered college oriented toward education as a means towards an economic end. Her encounters in a student organization later prompted her to re-orientate to education as a space to work towards social justice.

How Liza defines decolonization in her professional life is inextricably related to how she defines it in her personal life. In particular, she described decolonization as actions that bring students closer to taking control of their education, a process that includes making institutional regulations and processes transparent and inclusive as well as untangling red-tape and bureaucracy, so students feel more autonomy to reach their academic goals. In essence, Liza works to ensure students are in the "driver's seat" of their academic and personal planning.

Unpacking the "local" work context

The community college context is important for understanding Liza's experience. Community colleges create learning spaces for all; yet, Liza is disappointed by how often state legislation is required to get college faculty and administrators to prioritize students. Liza also drew attention to how limiting some of the school's rudimentary processes and technology can be. She chalked it up outdated systems to the undervaluing of community colleges in general, and the racist and classist attitudes that exist towards urban campuses with majority students of color. She thinks about this, too, from students' perspective: "I feel like [students] only have a

finite source of energy. And we make it so hard for our students to actually do anything at our college, that they can't grow and develop as humans or students or be pushed to become critical thinkers at a minimum, let alone explore their identity. Because they're so busy just doing basic admin stuff, like it's so tragic." In other words, political, fiscal, and time pressures are part of her daily reality at the community college where she works.

The "culture" of IT also gives important context to Liza's stories. As someone who values decolonization in education, she hasn't met many people she's perceived to be "similarly-minded." In particular, she has noticed a generational gap wherein there are "old school programmers," and there are younger staff who come from program management programs without much technical experience. Moreover, coming from a student affairs background like hers is also rare. She further noted: "I see the other administrators who are really in here for students, that believe education is more than just getting a job after this…. there's a few of us doing this work. It's not just us lifting this by ourselves."

Finally, being a higher-level administrator also impacts her decolonization orientation and her subsequent enactments. She is in a place of influence and can "steer" and "filter" tasks through her own lens to be, as much as possible, in line with her own orientations toward decolonization and justice.

Enacting her decolonizing orientation

Liza gave a few different examples of what decolonizing by putting students in the driver's seat looks like for her. First, was making institutional processes more inclusive by mapping more ethnic identities and Indigenous nations into their student system. For context, the state community colleges, "after years of discussion and lagging behind other segments of higher education, finally changed their ethnicity markers from 21 to 194 groups." Liza acknowledged

that such an action "sounds technical, maybe even boring." Yet, to her, this change is a small step toward decolonization. She stated: "I'd hope that, when a student sees African: Nigeria or Asian American: Hmong, or the ability to choose multiple ethnicities, they feel seen. The unique characteristics of the community feel acknowledged." This illustrates her decolonizing orientation of wanting students to be in the driver's seat of their education in that students are given more choice in identifying themselves. This decolonizing act, which had to be mandated from above, is evidence of the institution's growth and their budding willingness to meet the needs of its students and their identities. It thus interrupts an imposing colonial narrative that has, for decades, limited students' ability for self-determination and educational autonomy (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001).

A second way Liza shared that she practices decolonizing through the use of a student-centered design lens. At the time we talked, her office was going through a large redesign of the student system that directly impacts how students interact with the institution. In redesigning the system, she used the framework of a first-generation student as baseline, i.e., a student "who is not going to have anyone to ask, and if they can't figure it out just by reading it, then it's insufficient. We have to work harder." Liza further elaborated:

> When I think of student-centered design, I'm thinking I want the students to be able to basically not have to rely on somebody else. Because a lot of our design was always like that, like our administration. They're like, "Oh, I've been in meetings with counselors" I'm like, "you guys are counselors, you should be ashamed of yourself." They're like, "Well, you know, there's no way a student could know those things, they're gonna have to sit with a counselor." And in the same breath, they'll tell you that they don't have bandwidth to meet with every student. I'm like, well, if you can't meet with 17,000

> students, then your design is flawed because you're assuming that they're going to come see you, but they can't. And, and so that's the reason why, so we challenged a lot of things with our design for our upgrade.

As the above indicates, Liza has been met with skepticism around the goal of creating something so user-friendly that they don't need to consult with anyone, but has proved her skeptics wrong. She can also feel the difference between her and other administrators' orientations toward student-centered design. In this regard, Liza talked about doing presentations for the administrations about the redesign and how it's based on student-centered design. She shared how sometimes she feels that other administrators she feels just throw around the term "student-centered," and only use it when it's convenient.

When possible, direct student perspectives help inform decisions about design. Liza's office has student workers with whom administration include in the design process by checking ideas with them. Unfortunately, though, getting direct student perspectives is not always possible, particularly when there are temporal pressures. For instance, the system's upgrade is usually an 18-month process, but Liza's school is doing it in 6 months. She explained how, at the moment, they were "incredibly backlogged," "behind schedule," and "understaffed." At the times she is unable to consult with student staff, she grapples with the question of "Now that I am not a student leader, how do I respect the students' rightful place in determining the course of the student success initiatives while still supporting the outcomes of the institution overall?"

The above stories detail how Liza views student-centered design as part of her orientation toward decolonization in her work. For her, this type of design humanizes and thereby re-orients the technical work. Student-centered design through the framework of a first-generation student is decolonizing in that it decenters the privileged, elite white students for which U.S. higher

education was originally created for (Patton, 2016; Wilder, 2013). It also acknowledges that staff don't know everything and that students should have a say in how they interact with the institution. Furthermore, Liza's promotion of student-centered design thus presents an avenue for IT culture to grow and re-orient within her institution and more broadly.

Vanessa: "There's More to the Story than What is Being Told"

Vanessa is an upper-level administrator in religious life at a large, private research university on the west coast of the U.S. In her role, she provides oversight to religious and spiritual groups, religious directors on campus, ceremonial functions, and spiritual care. In addition, she takes up other tasks when called upon to do so, such as being a point-person on campus for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) issues. When she began journaling for this study, she was about to start her second year in the role.

As described in the previous chapter, Vanessa personally defined decolonization in two ways: 1) rejection of western notions of divinity and what is sacred, and 2) critically examining internalized definitions of what it means to be Filipinx. She specifically wrestled with her atheism, inability to speak to Tagalog, and her bi-racial identity; interpreting them as markers of being "less Filipino." She eventually came to critique these normative, colonial narratives and embrace herself and who she is.

This context is important to understanding how she enacts decolonization in her professional life, as she views decolonizing the university as a process of decentering hegemonic narratives. This meaning developed for her while working at her previous institution. There, she was present for a student-led movement for achieving a more broadly representative faculty. Vanessa got to be one of many advisors that connected with students and worked with them as they organized. Of that time, she said: "that was probably my very first time I was just like,

actually, yeah, this is a process of decolonization, a process of saying that there's more than one history, there's more to the story than what is being told."

Unpacking the "local" work context

Within her role, there were a number of factors that worked "for" and "against" her desire to bring a decolonizing approach to her practice. First, Vanessa talked about how the culture of the campus was more "casual," which allowed her to feel more like herself, as compared to her previous institution where she felt she felt stifled in her ability to bring her full self to her work.

Vanessa's positional level as an upper-level administrator is also an important part of her context. She theorized in our conversations that she and her job title could've contributed to a different experience than the one she had in her previous institution too. In other words, being in a higher-level position means she doesn't feel like she has "to protect [herself] and [her] job" or conduct herself in a different manner, like via code-switching, like she felt she had to at her previous institution where she occupied a lower positional level.

The "culture" of her religious office is also unique, as demonstrated through her comparisons with her previous institution. Religious life at her previous institution only hired religious leaders who represented Abrahamic faiths. Within the religious life office at her current institution, however, there are staff members who "believed deeply in inter-religious engagement and also that students were shifting away from traditional religious frameworks," thereby making it a space that would welcome her as a humanist and atheist.

Another key part of Vanessa's context is that working in the religious life office affords some freedoms other staff do not have. As an endorsed religious leader, she has the ability to "speak in ways and invoke the sacred in ways that…99% of people on campus, do not." Furthermore, this affords key freedoms in programming, particularly when partnering with

student groups. She gave examples of issues with which her department can engage, such as immigration, LGBT rights, and Israel and Palestine. Other departments, she noted, "may not want to touch [these things]" due to their controversy surrounding such topics.

Though the above suggests Vanessa didn't have to contend with certain challenges in enacting a decolonizing orientation, other challenges still existed. For instance, the large size of the institution adds to her context in that it at times acts as a barrier to decolonizing efforts. All of these characteristics of her local context contributing to shaping her enactments of her decolonizing orientation.

Enacting her decolonizing orientation

In the stories she shared, Vanessa discussed a multi-pronged approach to decolonizing in her work as an administrator. The first prong is "personal" where she speaks up in response to witnessing or hearing acts of oppression. To this effect, she explained how, as "a product of my mother's immigrant narrative, I just had this sense that 'you don't make waves' sort of thing." As mentioned in the previous chapter, her mother faced a lot of discrimination that caused her to take on an attitude of "that's how things were, you just continued with your day." However, Vanessa knows she cannot bring such an attitude to her work, particularly as an Asian woman at a deanship level. In her words, she has to "model things differently," particularly when there is a large audience, "Whether it's something racist, sexist, or otherwise."

As an example of speaking up, Vanessa shared a story from a particular meeting. She attended this meeting as a point-person for DACA on her campus. The purpose of the gathering was periodically to ensure that students and administrators were on the same page to push for a Dream Center on campus. A new administrator had joined in, and during the meeting, voiced her opinion perhaps the campus did not need a Dream Center since the actual number of

undocumented students was unknown, but rather a center that would benefit a greater number of students in need.

Vanessa understood the other administrator's point of view, but she also knew she had to challenge a viewpoint that invalidated the needs of undocumented students. Thus, she chose to speak up supporting the other woman's notion that the institution should support more students but confirmed that a Dream Center was still an important goal for the campus. Vanessa brought up some of the relevant data points that indicated a substantial undocumented student, and staff population by considering the city they are in. In particular that a certain percentage of people know or live with an undocumented person and that they are a large institution. As one familiar with traditional administrators' orientations, Vanessa is prepared to correct such assumptions and "make sure even the students are prepared to speak to that issue too because it's going to come up again."

This story is illustrative of a meeting of conflicting orientations. Specifically, Vanessa supported the idea of a Dream Center, but the other staff member did not. Vanessa externalized her orientation by speaking up and, by speaking up as a Filipina, she resisted a colonial mentality of "don't make waves" and that her voice didn't matter She also demonstrated her personal growth, as in earlier times she may not have said anything. It is also important to note that she enacted a move toward growth regarding the kind of institutional paradigm she wants to foster by influencing others' worldviews in the meeting.

The second prong is programmatic work. One programmatic example Vanessa gave related to holding a discussion about LGBTQ issues and religion. Sparked by an incident at Duke, several students approached Vanessa about starting a petition to have the religious student groups on campus sign to show that they are welcoming and affirming, "because if they're not,

why are we endorsing them to be here?" It was definitely a "hot button" topic, as the student activities staff surmised they could lose a majority of the religious groups by broaching the topic. Even Vanessa's boss did not have a clear answer for how they should address it.

Vanessa then emailed the religious directors, all of whom are religious professionals endorsed by a religious body, inviting them to sign a statement that they affirmed LGBTQ students. However, Vanessa only received five responses, which was very disappointing to her. In contrast to Vanessa's engagement with the students, student activities staff were trying to shut down the students and dissuade them from organize a petition or rally. Ultimately, her office ended up partnering with their LGBT resource center to host a National Coming Out Day event that critically engaged the topics of LGBT identities and religion. It was a sorely needed conversation on campus, given that many LGBT people leave religion because they feel rejected.

This is an example wherein a student affairs office wanted to shut down student-raised issues from the get-go. Instead, Vanessa's office "created a venue where we could have the discussion." This specific example of decolonizing addresses the colonial norms espoused by multiple religions that do not welcome LGBT people. In reaching out to students and religious leaders across campus and holding an event, however, Vanessa and her colleagues created an opportunity for growth in consciousness around these issues on campus.

Finally, Vanessa also gave the example of leading a particular Alternative Break trip that interrupted hegemonic narratives about Indigenous peoples. During this trip, Vanessa and the students she traveled with worked exclusively with Native-led organizations with projects that the Native organizations themselves prioritized:

> We didn't say, hey, "we've got manual labor," where do you want us to dig a hole or something? No. They said, "No, actually, we need help setting up the thrift store. We got

> like 1000 pounds of donations, and there's no one to organize it." And so we go in and we had 20 students, like we did that in half a day. And so then the then they're like, "oh, shoot, well, then why don't you go over to the school then and we're going to go do this."

Vanessa acknowledged the tensions and critique of spring break trips, which can be voyeuristic and are harmful to the communities they purport to "help." Yet, Vanessa highlighted how "it's actually an opportunity for [students] to learn Native histories as opposed to just the histories that we teach on this campus. They get to hear history from the people and about those people's ancestors." At best, alternative breaks and similar service-oriented trips can radicalize students, expose them to issues they do not encounter on a day-to-day basis, and see another way of being in the world.

In this story, she acts upon an orientation of wanting to "radicalize" students, and interrupt the colonial erasure and devaluing of Native lives through leading an Alternative Break trip. In doing so, she seeks to grow the consciousness of students.

She also talked about decolonizing in trying to get a land acknowledgement for the Indigenous group whose land the university occupies. To her, it seemed like a simple request: "Seriously, I can buy a rock and I can print a plaque…and yet for some reason, I don't know where the administration just sort of puts a hard stop on things like that. So anyhow, that's just one example, that in an institution this size, a seemingly easy task turned out to be impossible." Still, most of the time, Vanessa does feel support from student affairs, "but it is only amongst them that I ever get these red flags," wherein they caution that "maybe we shouldn't be pursuing that at this time" or "maybe we should ask for something a little less than that." There is a meeting of orientations wherein Vanessa seeks to center Indigenous peoples through a physical

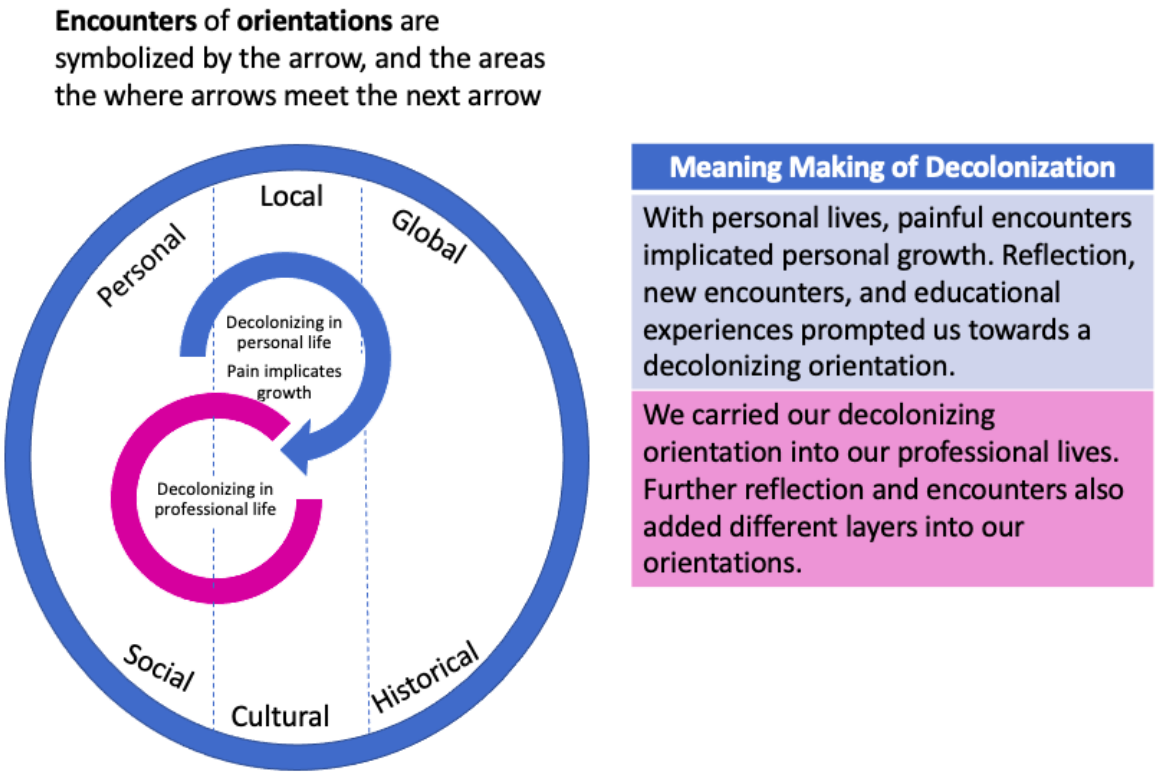
acknowledgement, but even in her high level it was not possible as her orientation did not align with that of the wider administration in her large institution.

In sum, Vanessa's decolonizing orientation of decentering hegemonic narratives comes through her work in a few different ways. Through speaking up as a woman of color in response to oppressive comments and acts, she seeks to grow people's consciousness around the particular topic at hand, but also challenge stereotypical notions of women of color. Programming, too, is an opportunity for her to present an opportunity for students to grow in their critical consciousness. Finally, her efforts towards elevating Indigenous issues help students to grow beyond mainstream erasure and stereotyping of that group.

Conclusion

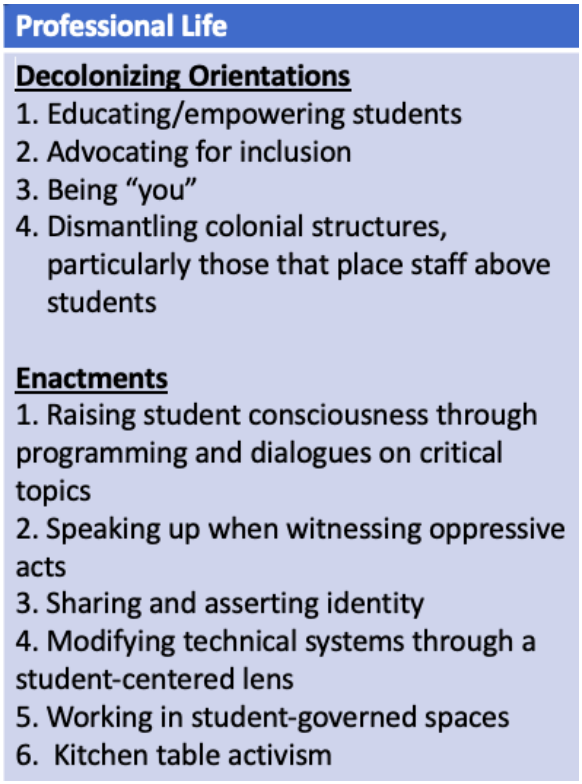
In this chapter, I discussed what decolonizing means and looks like for my kababayan in each of their professional contexts. In presenting their stories, I showed how each brings a decolonizing orientation to their work that they enact in ways specific to their positions, goals, constituents, institutions, locations, and histories. Largely, these decolonizing orientations followed from the decolonizing orientations from their personal lives, though further encounters, and reflection also integrated new components into their decolonizing orientations. I also demonstrated how each person's context plays a significant role in how their decolonizing efforts are made and received. Figure 8 illustrates this meaning-making process.

Figure 8. Meaning-making process in professional life



Through their stories, I identified four overriding decolonizing orientations and six enactments (see Figure 9). The orientations were: 1) educating and empowering students, 2) advocating for inclusion, 3) being "yourself", and 4) dismantling colonial structures, particularly those that place staff above students. Enactments of these orientations included: 1) raising student consciousness through programming and dialogues on critical topics, 2) speaking up when witnessing oppressive acts, 3) sharing and asserting identity, 4) modifying technical systems through a student-centered lens, 5) working in student-governed spaces, and 6) "kitchen table activism."

Figure 9. Decolonizing orientations and enactments in professional lives



These stories together indicate that each person brings their personal growth in their decolonizing orientations to their work in efforts to promote growth and transformation in their settings. These last two chapters highlighted each person's individual journey and context. The next chapter will consider our group process in making meaning of decolonization.

CHAPTER 7: THINKING THROUGH DECOLONIZATION RELATIONALLY

In the previous chapters, the narratives were written one person at a time. First, was a discussion of decolonization in their personal lives, followed by discussion of decolonization in their professional lives. The focus on individuals was intentional, so that each person's individuality and context could shine through. I did not want each person's stories to get lost. I wanted the reader to be able to "get to know" each person in a deeper way than might be possible through thematic analysis only. However, as previously noted, beyond our own personal journals, we responded to each other's journals, and virtually met as a group after journaling. Our experience was always in relationship with one another. This story is incomplete without deeper exploration into our interactions.

Thus, in this chapter I delve into the group's relational meaning-making around decolonization, highlighting the reflexive and communal nature of making sense of decolonization within the unique context of our group. Embedded within relational engagement is the meeting of both shared and distinct orientations towards decolonizing. Through this meeting of orientations, both individual and collective growth occurred. *What did it look like to make sense of what decolonization meant to us, as a group? How did we affirm, challenge, or expand notions of decolonization, both in our personal and professional lives, and beyond? How did we respond to each other's stories and perspectives? What insights were gleaned? What questions were raised?*

In this chapter, I argue that we must take into account the relational process of meaning-making when it comes to decolonization. Meanings of decolonization are dynamic and shifting, and depends on people's experiences and identity. Collective meaning-making also adds another layer to its dynamism. Our conversations underscored the way that "decolonization" does not

have a fixed meaning, rather, the meaning shifts depending on the person, context, and amongst whom it is discussed. Specifically, I found that through our communal meaning-making of decolonization consisted of: 1) shifts in our orientations based on what others shared, 2) "debates"/exploring different contours inspired by other's questions and insights, and 3) building upon other's perspectives by providing additional related examples or nuancing the perspective.

Shifts

In this first section, I describe how some stories and perspectives shared cause shifts among some of our orientations. Specifically, I discuss how J.A.'s contribution of the notion "complex personhood" and his assertion of his Katutubo identity spurred changes in the ways we thought about decolonization.

"Complex Personhood"

As already noted, the organization of the chapters was such that I explored decolonization in their personal lives, then decolonization in our professional lives. In making that division, there are some assumptions. There is an assumption that there is indeed a separation between the two, though it does not foreclose on the possibility that they are connected across spaces.
As I continued to immerse myself amongst the journal entries and transcriptions, there were several insights that add further nuance to the consideration of decolonization "across" spaces, what they look like, and how they connect/relate to each other, or do not.

J.A. introduced the idea of "complex personhood" to our Zoom discussion, asserting the fluidity of "decolonizing's" meaning across space and time.

> The term [decolonization] becomes really interesting depending on time, context, and current situations of what's going on in the United States right now, with 45 [President Donald Trump]. And, what do we say when we attribute decolonization to particular

> imperial projects? Right? And so, what is it about me that I want to decolonize but at the same time I have to have an awkward relationship with my hardcore republican Trump-supporting military Dad? And then do I cushion my decolonization at home, and be a little more radical outside of home, but then be professional when I work in the university? So, I think that's where complex personhood is sometimes not really addressed when it comes to these terms. That we are humans. We are complex individuals of intersecting and at times violent identities amongst, within ourselves. And so how are we navigating terms when, when those terms become violent? For us externally and internally?

There is a lot to unpack within this quote. For one, J.A. identifies time, context, and current situation (such as politics) as factors that tie into making meaning of decolonization. He also brings up what I might call "the compartmentalization" of decolonization. Decolonizing might be possible/impossible, or look one way or another, depending on one's space. There might be something you want to work towards decolonizing in yourself, but what if decolonizing does not align with the political views of a parent? Would decolonization look one way at home, vs. in the broader community, vs. working in the university? Such questions are important to grapple with because we are all whole human beings. Perhaps, any discussion of decolonization that does not take into account a holistic consideration of contexts, is incomplete. What are the limits of only discussing decolonizing within one "area," whether it be family, work, community, or otherwise? Are these not all interacting?

J.A. shared a related anecdote that similarly prompted us to think about what decolonization means in different spaces in our lives, and whether we live consistently across multiple areas. He shared how at a higher education conference he was with a group of people

discussing decolonization, gender identity, and sexuality. Some folks were talking about how they support trans, queer, and non-binary students. A question came up of whether they would tolerate students wearing non-normative gendered clothing, to which the group replied they would. However, someone then asked the group "will you allow your male-born child to wear a dress?" In contrast to the previous question, no one answered yes. The person who asked the question called out the group for only being "for social justice and decolonizing only in a professional level." For J.A., this brought up the question of:

> How do we bring [decolonizing] back to our homes? With a conservative family? If you have children? If you have nieces and nephews, etc.? What are those discussions looking like? Or is it safe for us to say that we can decolonize because we're in this chat room, we're in a university, we work in a setting that allows it? And so, what does that mean to be comfortable with decolonization?

Again, J.A. had some pointed, complex insights that asked us to put a mirror up to how we seek to bring decolonizing efforts across multiple aspects of our lives.

This idea of "complex personhood" was new for most of the group, and prompted new reflections for some. In other words, there was a shift from a "compartmentalized" view of decolonization, to recognizing interconnections. Jasmine reflected and shared how she tries to be as consistent as possible between her personal and professional lives. She gave an example of how she is friends with a colleague who is in a same sex relationship and have a child. Jasmine and her colleague have a good working relationship, but they are also friends outside of work. When her son has a birthday party, she would invite her colleague's child. Jasmine shared: "I think we can't be afraid. We shouldn't be afraid of different realities. And we need to honor

that." At the same time, Jasmine acknowledges people can have boundaries for whatever reason even if she does not agree.

In contrast, Vanessa reflected on how in some ways, she's "less radical" with her family, and has more opportunity to bring a decolonizing approach to her work. With her family, she typically avoids talking about religion and politics as a way to protect herself and her relationships. They hold very different religious and political beliefs. On the other hand, in her professional life, Vanessa described how she gets a lot of space and time to engage with students and administrators through a decolonizing lens. She wrote: "it feels like on this campus, I am able to wield my power in a way that does bring about change." She tries to make the most of all of the audiences that she has. In part, her positional level adds to her ability to reach others. She knows seemingly small, intentional choices through a decolonizing lens can influence those around here. She gave an example of trainings with administrators on supporting undocumented students. She knows that some administrators come into a training with a view of undocumented students as "illegals," but she has an opportunity to "change the narrative" as someone in her leadership role "to just speak in a way that doesn't criminalize our students can help to shift the campus culture."

Awareness of and Respect for Katutubo Experiences and Perspectives

Many in the group were not aware about the Katutubo identity before J.A.'s introduction. Understandably, learning about Katutubos prompted shifts amongst myself and others, to integrate an awareness of this identity into our decolonizing orientations. For instance, Mitchell, who grew up in the Philippines commented in response to J.A.'s first journal entry about how in their education in the Philippines, they were taught about the indigenous peoples of the Philippines in a very surface-level manner. Mitchell continued:

> Decolonization indeed is not just an external affair: separation from a foreign colonizer's influence. It also is an internal affair: the acknowledgement of the valid and legitimate existence of indigenous cultures within the Filipino culture. *And even with those statements, my concept of decolonization is challenged in a much deeper level* (emphasis mine).

The last sentence demonstrates that a shift happened in Mitchell's decolonizing orientation.

In our Zoom meeting, Jasmine shared how the biggest insight she gleaned throughout our time together was learning that there are Indigenous communities within the Philippines in diaspora, which she was never exposed to nor learned about. She even expressed that she wanted to talk with her parents about how this topic, "and maybe also challenge them," if they were to express a stereotypical viewpoint of Katutubos.

I seconded what Jasmine shared, adding that I thought what he shared was very powerful and that I felt "guilty or ashamed in a way that I had never heard the word Katutubo before, as an identity." I wondered how I'd never encountered that identity in all the Filipinx spaces I'd been in in my life (and I have been in many!). Relatedly, I remember being a bit caught off-guard reading a portion of J.A.'s first journal entry, which also expressed his strong disagreement with a number of predominant figures within the Filipinx community, who he believes promote an appropriative understanding of Katutubo identity and customs. I was surprised when I read that one of these people (and an organization in which they are a leader) were on that list. I was conflicted because I felt my experiences at their events were meaningful, even as I still was processing through what they meant for me. I debated internally on what to do. *Do I share that I've attended events held by that organization? Would he no longer be comfortable being a part of our group?* In the end, I thought I should be honest and shared in my response to J.A.'s first

journal entry that I had indeed attended a conference and that I hoped that fact did not deter him from sharing his honest perspectives. Undoubtedly, J.A.'s critique as a Katutubo person caused a critical shift in my decolonizing orientation.

Debate

In this section, I describe how a "debate" explored the different contours inspired by particular questions and insights. By "debate," I am not referring to a debate in technical terms, but rather how through free-flowing conversation, multiple perspectives on a single topic are shared and engaged. Here, I focus on one "debate" around the uniqueness of the term "decolonizing" as compared to other arguably related terms.

Uniqueness of "Decolonization" Term

Wanting to dig deeper into what my kababayan felt was offered by the term "decolonizing" in contrast to other terms, I posed the question to the group of how they perceive the term "decolonization" to be different from "social justice" or "equity" during our Zoom meeting. There was not consensus, but rather varied opinions, a sense of tension and "struggle to think about it." The intention of this question was not to come to a resolution, but to create a space for dialogue and multiple opinions. The following remarks came primarily from the Zoom meeting, with some journal responses where relevant.

Some members placed emphasis on decolonization as an internal process that happens within oneself, implying that terms like "social justice," "equity," or "inclusion" were more about "external" work that happens within one's work context. Liza shared how "it's [decolonization] a very internal thing, like it's creating the space to learn about yourself." Additionally, many people, including myself, Liza, Vanessa, and Mitchell resonated with a feeling of not being Filipinx "enough" or feeling an imposter syndrome, as something that

needed to be grappled with as part of one's decolonizing as an internal process. We connected this feeling to colonization, wherein a "standard definition" of Filipinx has been handed down to us, to which we used to compare ourselves (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001).

Moving to more "external" aspects of decolonization, there was a lot of energy around Jasmine's discussion of decolonization as an "action word," particularly when it came to speaking up and her anecdote at the airport. We expressed a range of emotion, from admiration to gratitude to Jasmine. Many affirmed her bravery and expressed gratitude for her ability to speak up. Multiple of us shared how in our own lives, it was often a struggle to speak up, ourselves. We shared similar experiences of being invisibilized, but not always choosing to confront or educate, including myself. Vanessa shared how she had been groomed to "let things go." Liza shared how internal forces hold her back sometimes. Such internal forces are arguably from colonial sources.

Other members asserted that decolonization must recognize Indigenous issues, spanning geographical contexts. Vanessa agreed that decolonization includes an individual process, but felt a tension. She shared that having grown up on Guam, she witnessed actual efforts toward decolonization by people who want their land back: "They want the military to leave. They want ancestral lands to be honored. And all of that to me is true decolonization, bringing it back to the people it belongs to."

While acknowledging the significance of land and sovereignty raised by other members, compared to other terms, Liza appreciates how the term decolonization "makes you acknowledge ancestral history" in a way that others don't. She sees it as powerful term in the way that it acknowledges of a colonial history and provokes people to start questioning the ways

manifestations of colonization show up in their lives. Thus, she sees the word as a starting point for Filipinxs in particular moving beyond only seeing themselves in the scope of modernity.

Connected to recognizing both land issues, and one's ancestral history, Liza also asked some insightful questions for Filipinxs in diaspora who are grappling with a recognizing their colonial history and wanting to be respectful of Katutubo, in a journal response. She wondered: Is there an ethical way for Filipinxs to get tattoos without being appropriative? Or should they not be done at all? Reading J.A.'s entry made her reflect back to her previous professional role working with Filipinxs. She thought about her former students "that already struggled to see themselves within the Pilipinx community because their family stories were often lost or hidden" and was open to hearing about how Filipinxs could better connect "the Katutubo story as their explore their own."

This "debate" suggests that there are multi-faceted understandings to decolonization, as well as different perspectives on what makes it unique versus other terms. It is not an either/or, but perhaps takes on a fluid meaning that is informed by people's past experiences. For instance, Vanessa specifically brings up her experience growing up on Guam and how that experience for her emphasizes Indigenous land issues. With Liza, there is a connection to her previous experiences with the Filipinx student organization, and how that experience gave her an opportunity to do lots of internal reflection around the impacts of colonization in her life. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, the intention of exploring the uniqueness of the term "decolonization" was not to come to consensus. There is still much more room to think through how "decolonization" differs from words such as "social justice" and "equity" beyond a distinction of internal/external. Still, challenging questions elicited opportunities for the kababayan to reflect further within, and beyond our online space.

Building

In this last section, I describe how stories evoked other memories or a strong, affirming response amongst my kababayan. In essence, these types of responses to me represented a desire to build understandings about particular topics. The difference between debate and building is that debate includes differing perspectives that are held, whereas for building, responses are made in agreement and seek to affirm and built onto that idea. Specifically, I focus on how stories and reflections around settler and generational identities brought up related stories from others.

Settler Identities

In my second journal entry, I brought up how I came to learn about how I am implicated as a settler on Indigenous land through the work on Tuck and Yang (2012). In response, both Vanessa and J.A. agreed on the importance of acknowledging our settler identities and shared examples of how it shows up in their higher education contexts.

Building upon my entry, J.A. shared how he acknowledges the Indigenous nation whenever traveling to give guest lectures or presentations to acknowledge "that I am unwelcomed settler in someone else's nation." When giving an acknowledgement, he rotates between three Katutubo languages as "a way to speak in my Indigenous tongue to the Indigenous peoples of the land."

Vanessa too found resonance in being reflexive about her settler identity. She shared how although she advises her institution's Native American and Pacific Islander student organizations, she makes it clear them that she is neither Native nor Indigenous, but that she and her family are immigrants and settlers. To her, "acknowledgement should impact how we navigate this land, and how we understand our relationship to it, and its first people." In relation

to the student groups, she is a guide and supporter as the students are the experts on their communities.

She also shared about was not directly a part of, but which she observed. I share this example because even though it was not directly part of Vanessa's work, it is important to recognize that staff members not only exist within the scope of their job responsibilities, but beyond, and observe and are a part of different spaces on campus as well. Staff have a possibility of impacting others on campus, and learning lessons from different spaces too.

Specifically, she described how other campus staff partnered with an outside organization that claimed to represent various Indigenous artists to plan a major film festival for campus. The staff invited students from the Native American student organization on campus to be panelists. However, the staff planners learned that the organization they partnered with had been criticized for misrepresenting their relationship with tribal nations, and because of this, students from the Native American student organization chose not to participate or attend. Unfortunately, "what could have been an amazing festival turned into a horrible failure on the part of the campus staff." The incident could have been avoided had the staff been reflexive about their settler identities, and chosen to plan with and alongside their Native American students.

Generational Identities

For many, decolonizing efforts, both in personal and professional lives, touched on the topic of generations. "Building" within the group also highlighted how decolonization is largely understood as a generational issue. What people bring to the table depends in part, on both generational positionality (i.e., what generation(s) is one a part of) and the beliefs ascribed to particular generations. This topic of generational identities was discussed in both personal family and professional contexts.

Personal context. Within our personal lives, family was the main area of thinking about generations and decolonizing. Many of my kababayan discussed how they differed from their parents' generation, and have come to different understandings and are making intentional changes in what they do, and with their children. For instance, Vanessa shared how she was raised to be quiet and non-critical. She learned such lessons from her mother, who was just trying the survive. She reminds herself that she is part of a new generation, "and it is more than necessary to speak my case and demand the respect I have earned." Jasmine talked about differences between her and her parents regarding how they viewed discrimination. Not unlike Vanessa's parents, whereas Jasmine's parents would have an attitude of "it's okay, just focus on doing well in school" when encountering discrimination, she takes a different approach with her own son. She has long conversations with her son, about how to address it, how it impacts him, and what he can do.

Though there was an overall sense of critique on older generations' understandings of decolonization (or lack of exposure to it), there was also some understanding. Jasmine shared the following after reading one of Mitchell's journals describing his mother's role in his understanding of decolonization: "Sometimes, unfairly, I often thought my mom needed to be decolonized and questioned her submissiveness towards my dad. I came to realize that she is responsible for her own journey and her happiness and that I couldn't define her." Jasmine's comment added a new layer of nuance to the discussion around this topic.

Professional context. Within professional contexts too, there was a recognition of overriding generational differences and tensions, particularly around millenials (younger vs. older staff). This was a sentiment first expressed within one of Mitchell's journals and built upon on by J.A. Mitchell shared a story about he questioned an oppressive policy (i.e., being required

to check email at least once a day on vacation and respond accordingly) in a work meeting, which caused an older co-worker to later express their annoyance about how "millenials [such as Mitchell] always want to know the 'why' behind everything." Mitchell though to themselves that millenials are "far too aware of exploitative capitalistic systems and want to know that we are not used (or used as minimally as possible) to uphold the same system that seeks to destroy us and our spirit."

J.A.'s response to Mitchell's built on this idea of the particular consciousness of millennials and Gen Z's. He commented on how fear around millennials that creates systemic and institutional anxiety, theorizing that "this is the decentralizing, decolonial and deconstructing powers that others imagine we have…the power to raise anxiety and create fear that leads to the creation for social change." In this way, J.A. makes a connection between generation and a decolonizing orientation.

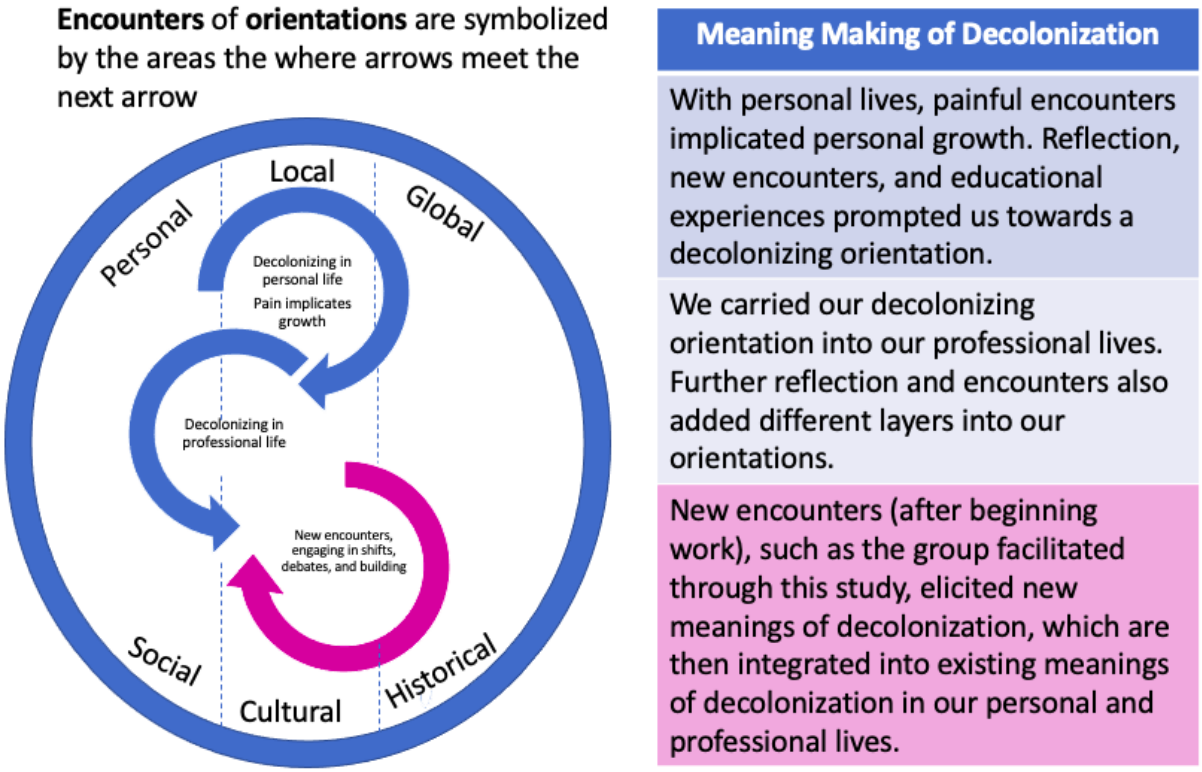
Millennials also came up in one of Vanessa's journal responses. The story she told to build upon previous discussions was about a previous supervisor who was dismissive of millennials in particular, because to her, millennials did not respect her authority.
She compared her previous supervisor to her current one, who does not express the same viewpoints. Vanessa's story added a layer of nuance to the discussion about generational tensions in demonstrating how generations are not homogenous in their viewpoints towards millennials.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I demonstrated how communal engagement elicited further insights around decolonization for the group, thereby prompting growth for each individual and the group collectively in their decolonization orientations. Figure 6 illustrates this process. The responses,

questions, observations, affirmations, and challenges put forth throughout by the kababayan displayed a dynamic process of meaning-making which showed evolving meaning over time, with others, and across spaces. Continual engagement elicited insights and stories that would not have been shared otherwise. This chapter specifically showed engagements that could be characterized as: 1) shifts, 2) a debate, and 3) affirming/building. Within shifts, I discuss how thoughts around complex personhood and Katutubo identities became new frames that others began to grapple with, and integrate into their own thinking. Within debates, I focus primarily on a debate around the uniqueness of the term "decolonizing." Finally, within the building section, I discuss how reflections around settler and generational identity evoked thoughts and memories for others. Each of these modes of engagement, furthered our individual and collective understandings of the meaning of decolonization, what it looks like, and our roles in enacting it. These methods of engagement show the power of collective contexts and how engagement can highlight the dynamic and contextual nature of the term "decolonizing." Figure 10 shows how new encounters (such as the group facilitated for this study) continue to interact with each person's decolonizing orientations.

Figure 10. Meaning-making through additional encounters and reflections



CHAPTER 8: THIS STORY ENDS, NEW ONES BEGIN

> When I return to a place or an idea or a person, there is a remembering and a reawakening, meaning, that I remember something that was critical to me at a particular point in time and then often awaken to something they I did not catch or notice before…Discursive, intuitive engagement of remembering, of reawakening is what I hope for all of us, and I hope that the series provides an opening for you to explore and engage more in the seen and unseen, the heard and the unheard, the known and the unknown.

The above quote is from Dr. Amanda Tachine, closing out the Association for the Study of Higher Education's (ASHE) 2019 webinar on decolonial world-making. While writing this chapter, something inside me sparked a memory of this webinar and I felt compelled to watch it again. Upon my (re)watching, this was one of the passages that struck me. *Remembering* and *reawakening*. Truly, these words captured the research processes I journeyed on alongside my kababayan – as we recalled stories from our lives, and made meaning of them beyond that given moment. They capture my process of analyzing and interpreting the stories, of finding deeper meanings, new connections with every reading, every written draft. Importantly, acts of remembering and of reawakening provide an opening for further engagement. It is my hope this dissertation does the same.

Thus, I conclude this dissertation after a process of remembering and reawakening, and in this chapter share a series of "openings" that can be further engaged to continue the story. I begin with a synthesis of my findings in relation to my guiding research questions. I then share implications for scholarship and practice, and limitations. To close this dissertation, I share a bit about "what's next" for myself and the rest of my kababayan.

Synthesizing the Stories

Andreotti et al. (2015) used a social cartography to "map" different interpretations of decolonization in higher education as a pedagogical tool. In the spirit of "mapping" interpretations of decolonization in the context of higher education as done by Andreotti et al. (2015), this dissertation too "maps" the meaning-making, meanings, and enactments of decolonization at the previously unexamined intersection of Filipinxs, staff, and decolonizing higher education. As Andreotti et al. (2015) note, these mappings do not represent a neutral "reality." That is, the exercise is pedagogical, rather than normative. What has surfaced through this dissertation is not an end point, but now offers new insights that can be engaged further.

In this section, I revisit the research questions at the center of this study and respond to them based on my kababayan's sharings. The overarching research questions were:

- How do Filipinx higher education staff make meaning of "decolonizing"?
    - What does "decolonizing" mean to Filipinx higher education staff?
    - How do Filipinx higher education staff enact their meanings of "decolonizing"?

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 describe the meaning-making process, meanings, and enactments of decolonization. Figure 11 captures the meaning-making process described in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, against the backdrop of the interpretive framework described in Chapter 4. This heuristic is intended to give an overall visual representation of the process that can be easily understood. However, I do not wish to oversimplify the process. It is important to emphasize the interconnections between the arrows, which are not uni-directional, but rather connect and symbolize mutual influence (e.g., the personal can inform the professional, the professional can inform the personal, and new encounters can inform both the personal and the professional). I also do not position this to be a linear, "developmental" process, but one of constant "becoming"

(Alexander, 2005; Hall, 1990). Additionally, although all three arrows are not physically placed across all context areas (i.e., personal/local/global, social/cultural/historical), the entirety of the meaning-making process does indeed take place across all of these collective contexts. Figure 12 summarizes the decolonizing orientations and enactments described in Chapters 5 and 6.

Figure 11. Overall meaning-making process of decolonizing

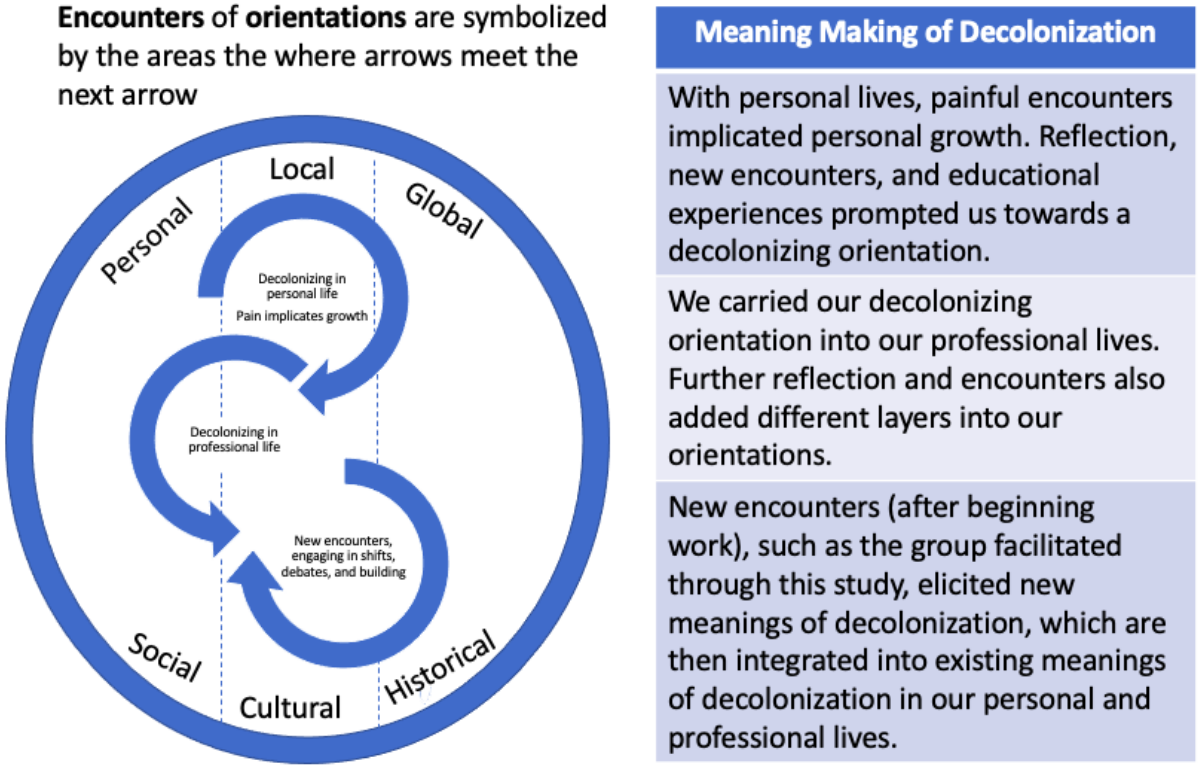


Figure 12. Summary of decolonizing orientations and enactments

Personal Life	Professional Life
Decolonizing Orientations 1. Self-acceptance of particular identity (Katutubo, non-binary and queer, atheist, bi-racial) 2. Raised consciousness around issues of power (redefining purpose of education, deconstructing belief systems) **Enactments** 1. Bodily transformations (tattoos, growing out hair, cutting hair) 2. Re-defining purpose 3. Acts to dismantle oppression (addressing white privilege)	**Decolonizing Orientations** 1. Educating/empowering students 2. Advocating for inclusion 3. Being "you" 4. Dismantling colonial structures, particularly those that place staff above students **Enactments** 1. Raising student consciousness through programming and dialogues on critical topics 2. Speaking up when witnessing oppressive acts 3. Sharing and asserting identity 4. Modifying technical systems through a student-centered lens 5. Working in student-governed spaces 6. Kitchen table activism

Each chapter builds on the previous one by adding another layer of meaning-making, meanings, and enactments. In Chapter 5, I began with my kababayan's stories that illustrated their understandings and enactments of decolonizing in their personal lives. They told stories from different parts of their lives, including from their childhoods and early undergraduate years. The stories centered mostly on painful encounters that took place with family members, grade-school peers, college peers, and student organizations, and each highlighted differences in orientations between themselves and those around them tied to colonial histories of religion, heteronormativity, education, and language. As Pinayism reminds us, pain implicates growth. For my kababayan, additional encounters, reflection (by oneself or with peers), and formal education experiences (i.e., undergraduate and graduate classes) helped them grow towards a decolonizing orientation. The meanings of decolonizing in their personal lives stemming from

such encounters were varied. The two main area of meanings that emerged for me were: 1) self-acceptance and (re)claiming their identities, and 2) raising consciousness around issues of power. From these meanings, the enactments of decolonizing included: 1) bodily transformations, 2) re-defining purpose, and 3) carrying out acts to dismantle oppression.

Chapter 6 builds on this foundation by exploring how the kababayan enact decolonizing in their professional lives and especially highlights how the stories they shared about decolonizing in their personal lives impact their orientation to decolonizing in their professional lives. This study found that for some, there is clearer link between the meanings of decolonizing in their personal and professional life. In essence, there is carrying over of their meaning of decolonizing in their personal life into their professional life. For others, there was a more "parallel" connection between the meanings. Furthermore, new encounters, reflection, and educational experiences, also influenced their decolonizing orientation within their work.

Within our professional lives, there was a wide variety of meanings of decolonizing, yet these meanings still seemed to coalesce around a handful of ideas. The first is 1) educating/empowering students, 2) advocating for inclusion, 3) being who they are, and 4) dismantling colonial structures. Enactments in their professional lives also varied, and included speaking up, addressing unequal participation in programs and initiatives, bringing their "whole" self, programming on critical topics, modifying access and management systems, giving power to students, and kitchen table activism.

Chapter 7 added the final layer of meaning-making around decolonization for the kababayan. Whereas the previous chapters highlighted their individual meaning-making, this chapter revealed the ways that reflexive and communal engagement influenced how many of the kababayan understood decolonization. Three main ways of engagement emerged: 1) shifting our

orientations, 2) debate eliciting contrasting perspectives, 3) affirming and building on others. Each of these types of engagement expanded our understandings of decolonization, what it means and looks like, the significance of positionality.

Overall, I argued that meaning-making, meanings, and enactments of decolonization in higher education for Filipinx staff, are shaped within encounters of conflicting orientations reflecting particular personal, institutional, and historical contexts. Moreover, this dissertation argues for continued, relational meaning-making regarding decolonization in higher education and that staff, in particular, should be a key component of this meaning-making. Meaning-making is important given the term is often used without explicit mention of social, cultural, or geopolitical significance, and tensions exist regarding its meaning (Andreotti et al., 2015; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Without attention to the meaning-making, meanings are assumed to be universal and risk being hegemonic. As "decolonization" is being used and explored more in higher education, it is likely even more people will continue to gravitate to it. More use necessitates more engagement and reflexivity. As shown in their stories, "decolonization" is a word that most of my kababayan first came to through their identities as Filipinx or Katutubo, that then became relevant in their work as staff. Given this connection between identity and meaning-making, more research and dialogue are needed to include groups that have thus far not been part of the conversation.

Extending the Stories of Decolonizing Higher Education

This study expands the scope of the existing conversations around decolonization in higher education in two key ways. First, this study adds to the conversation by delving into meaning making and what experiences inform one's meanings of decolonization. Second, this study starts to fill a notable gap by focusing on staff in higher education.

The findings affirm scholars' claims that meanings of decolonization are contingent on context. A number of scholars highlight how meanings of decolonization vary based on geography, particular the place one is writing about and its particular colonial histories, as well as positionality (e.g., Adefarakan, 2018; Cupples, 2019; Leibowitz, 2017; Mignolo, 2011; Stein & Andreotti, 2016). Other scholars have looked at the meanings of decolonization through empirical study, though for faculty and students and in relation curriculum (e.g., Padayachee et al., 2018). This study adds to the conversation by going "underneath" the meanings and delving further into the meaning making and what experiences inform one's meanings of decolonization through the lens of positionality. Specifically, stories from this study showed how the personal informs the professional, as well as how positionality matters through the lens of Filipinx higher education staff.

The findings start to fill a gap of staff perspectives that had only yet been gestured to within the literature. The findings lend two new dimensions to thinking about areas and aims of decolonizing, and how to work towards those aims. Mbembe (2016) wrote that decolonization can happen through buildings, [physical space of] classrooms, systems of access and management, bureaucratization, assessment, faculty evaluation, and the cycle that turns students into consumers and customers. The findings contribute how decolonizing orientations can be brought into areas such as access and management systems, access and retention, global engagement, residence life, and spiritual and religious life.

Within the literature on decolonization in higher education, I identified two main aims in Chapter 2: unsettling Eurocentrism and indigenizing. The findings support and add nuance the two general aims of: unsettling Eurocentrism and indigenizing discussed in Chapter 2. The decolonizing orientations that were brought up by my kababayan that aligned with unsettling

Eurocentrism included: 1) Empowering and educating, 2) being who they are, 3) advocating for inclusion, 4) interrupting colonial structures. The decolonizing orientations of 1) critiquing the romance of community (particularly around nationalistic identities), and 2) "kitchen table activism" represent two particular orientations that I did not encounter in the literature, and add nuance to this aim.

The aim of indigenizing was also present within this study, though to a lesser degree. Different than the literature, indigenizing was not about repatriation, and more about being aware of one's positionality as a settler and engaging in practices that acknowledged the land they were on. The Katutubo identity adds nuance to this aim. That is, the findings bring attention to how the Katutubo identity is often ignored and/or erased inside and outside of higher education within "mainstream" Filipinx spaces. Indigenizing in this sense means acknowledging Katutubos and their perspectives as Indigenous peoples.

Contributing to the Literature on Filipinxs

This study also contributes a productive expansion of the identity of "Filipinx" in including intersections not often seen in the literature, including those who identify as Katutubo, atheist, Protestant, and non-binary. Katutubos are often not included or considered within research. Within the literature on Filipinxs broadly, there is not much mention of Katutubos, and sometimes an oppositional positioning. Within religion, the focus is on the predominance of Catholicism while ignoring or relegating to the margins those with different spiritual and religious identities. Finally, the non-binary identity is also not mentioned in the literature which reproduces the gender binary. Collectively, my kababayan represent a "new generation," whose identities, and experiences related to these identities, must be continued to be acknowledged in the literature on Filipinxs, in higher education and broadly. Moreover, the varied identities and

meaning-making of my kababayan also speak to the evolving nature of Filipinxs in diaspora. As Hall (1990) wrote: diaspora is not defined by a single essence, "but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (p. 235).

Theoretical Implications

Use of Culturally Sustaining Theories in Research. This study provides support for the use of culturally sustaining theories to examine and understand the lived experiences of participants of color, particularly Filipinx staff in higher education (Paris, 2012). Within this study, the orientations and encounters highlighted were often directly connected to their identities as Filipinx, which necessitated a need to utilize theories acknowledging the particularities of Filipinx subjectivities. Pinayism (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005) offered a frame…. to consider the way array of subjectivities, and the historical, geographical, etc. that were a part of Filipinxs meaning-making regarding decolonization. As a relatively "newer" framework/epistemology with only a few existing examples of its application in higher education research, there was a lot of room to consider how using a Pinayism framework could aid in better understanding the kababayan's lived experiences and their meanings of decolonization. As such, this dissertation extends Pinayism by honing in on "growth" and considering a multitude of intersections. Orientation, encounters, and emotion (Ahmed, 2006, 2014) also proved an appropriate way to think about meaning-making around decolonizing and how encounters and spaces within personal and higher education contexts influence this meaning. This study can serve as an example of how to build a culturally sustaining framework. Future research can

continue to utilize combinations of frameworks/epistemologies that center focal populations (e.g., Filipinxs), as well as the context of that given research (meaning-making of decolonizing).

Methodological Implications

Influence of Story/Bayanihan Experience. The culturally sustaining methodology centered around storytelling allowed my kababayan and I to share their thoughts regarding each person's journal entries, what decolonization means to them, and related stories. This revealed an overriding sense of gratitude and appreciation for each other's sharing throughout the process, as participants expressed their gratefulness for peers' honesty, "being real," vulnerability, and space to share what might be considered "unpopular opinions" in other spaces, Filipinx, or otherwise. For instance, Jasmine shared she felt a sense of "safety" and "solidarity" and that it was a "self-reflective" space that she really "honored." Expressions like these helped to create an inviting space. Throughout our time together, J.A. was very conscious of the ways he was "different" from the rest due to his Katutubo identity, but still noted "it was [a] very reflective way of seeing how there are moments where folks are actually eager to learn and really eager to get to know myself and Indigenous peoples, and not in a very superficial way." He further added that he "enjoyed the process." Comments like those mentioned above suggest future research can be conducted in similarly collective, relational ways and spaces that can lead not only to new scholarly understandings, but to affective, personal connections and building community.

It is also important to note the role that my positionality likely played within data gathering. I identify as Filipina and also was a staff member in higher education. Because of these shared elements, I felt more comfortable engaging throughout the activities. Thus, at the same time, as a culturally sustaining methodology, future research should bear in mind that the methodology should be relevant to the demographic group that is the focus of the study.

Use of Technology for Collective Sharing across Spaces. Technology was essential to my dissertation in two ways. First, Google Sites proved a viable tool for collective journaling. It was relatively user friendly, did not require extensive technical knowledge to utilize, and was secure in that they site could be made private and accessible only to members of the group. Through simple directions, the kababayan easily posted their entries and responses. I got the group started by posting my own journals and responses first so all could see and work from an example. Second, Zoom further facilitated our ability to meet synchronously as a group after journals were completed. We were located all over the U.S., yet were all able have meaningful dialogue with each other through Zoom. Future scholarship might thus use similar technologies to enable connections between people that would otherwise not be possible without more time and money, and provide opportunities to yield a wider set of data beyond one locality.

Directions for Future Research

Next, I discuss three major future directions for the scholarly literature based on the results of this study. First, I discuss additional areas in regards to decolonizing meanings. Then I discuss additional staff and Filipinx communities that could be included in future research.

Decolonizing Meanings

Beyond soft and radical reform. The meanings and enactments of decolonization in the kababayan's professional realms can largely be interpreted as a type of "soft reform" decolonization, or focused on inclusion achieved through personal or institutional transformation; or "radical reform," which prompts systemic changes which re-structure social relations at multiple levels (Andreotti et al., 2015). For instance, examples of Mitchell's programming aimed at giving voice to LGBTQ groups in particular, or Vanessa's example of alternative spring breaks to radicalize students and interrupt hegemonic narratives of Indigenous

peoples, might be considered examples of "radical reform" in the ways they recognize inequitable historical dynamics and seek to address them.

Future research could focus on seeking out further ways of decolonizing, including "beyond-reform," which recognizes ontological dominance. This space leads to three main responses: system walk out, hacking, or hospicing. System walk out refers to developing alternative communities and epistemologies in spaces external or marginal to higher education institutions. System hacking means creating spaces within the system and using its resources to inform people about the violences of the system. J.A.'s examples of kitchen table activism and alternative tours might be considered examples of system hacking, thus there is room for much more research. Finally, system hospicing is not about "doing" in a way the previous two responses are, but is invokes a deeper, spiritual reflection. As Andreotti et al. (2015) explain: "hospicing would entail sitting with a system in decline, learning from its history, offering palliative care, seeing oneself in that which is dying…and clearing the space for something new" (p. 28). This type of reflection would then open up new possibilities for decolonizing.

Beyond "cognitive" knowing. Efforts to decolonize shared by the kababayan largely centered on "knowing." For instance, goals of programming on critical topics were largely to raise critical consciousness "add" new knowledges to students' minds. Future research can thus attend to decolonizing in terms of one's "being" (Alexander, 2005; Andreotti et al., 2015). For example, what might decolonizing look like on a spiritual level?

Addressing anti-Blackness as part of decolonizing. Different theorists focusing on decolonization have discussed the topic of anti-Blackness and have emphasized Black futurities as necessary part of decolonizing, particularly in a U.S. context (e.g., la paperson, 2017). It is important to note the ways anti-Blackness did and did not show up in the kababayan's narratives.

The term “Egot,” as explained in Chapter 5, was a derogatory term used toward J.A. because of his Katutubo identity. However, it is important to point out that the term is also derogatory towards Black people, which signals an anti-Black orientation for some (I would argue many) Filipinxs (David, 2020). Additionally, decolonizing in professional settings in regards to Black students was absent from most stories shared by the kababayan with the exception of Jasmine who discussed Black participation in study abroad. Had I brought up the topic of anti-Blackness explicitly, it may be that the kababayan would have spoken to it more. Regardless, it is an area of study that deserves more attention, particularly in terms of higher education staff.

Limits of fluidity. Collectively, Chapters 5, 6 and 7 point to the fluidity of decolonizing meanings that are contingent on context. Acknowledging this fluidity helps to powerfully recognize and validate the experiences and meaning-making of the Filipinx staff in this study. At the same time, it is important to grapple with the limits of such fluidity. Is there a point where meanings become metaphor (Tuck & Yang, 2012)? Are there boundaries around who can get to “define” decolonizing and its enactments? Future research, empirical or philosophical, can further tease out such questions.

More Staff Storytellers

This study included six people (including myself). This small number yielded rich data from a variety of different professional roles. At the same time, there are many others different types of roles within universities. Thus, while this study productively extended the conversation of decolonizing higher education beyond the classroom, there are many different staff roles beyond those who were a part of this study. Thus, future research can include a wider array of staff. Taken together, the following three areas for future research acknowledge how orientations toward decolonizing are contingent on context, particularly in regards to space and time.

Decolonizing beyond students. The kababayan mostly described decolonizing for the sake of students. This was particularly notable because not everyone works in traditional student affairs roles, nor did they all have degrees in student affairs (though some did). Future research should thus explore what decolonizing looks like for staff with different orientations other than toward students. For instance, what about staff who work mostly with faculty? With administration? In campus libraries? Furthermore, classified staff like college custodians are often invisible due to their positions (Magolda, 2014; Pearson, 2008; Schmitt et al., 2015).

More institutional types and geographic diversity. This study included people from an array of institutional types, including private institutions, large public institutions, and community colleges. Future research might look at smaller institutions, liberal arts colleges, and other minority-serving institutions (MSIs), for instance. Additionally, four of the Kababayan worked on the West Coast (three of them within one state). Thus, future research can consider how different geographic contexts may influence meanings of decolonizing, such as on the East Coast, and Pacific Northwest.

Covid-era. Within less than 6 months of completing our research activities for this study, Covid-19 changed the face of higher education. All of our conversations together took place in a pre-COVID time. Questions arise regarding how work contexts differ given that we are 9 months into this particular global pandemic. Future research can consider how meanings of decolonizing have shifted with university work happening in mostly online spaces, and other shifts that have happened due to Covid-19.

More Filipinx Storytellers

As previously mentioned, this study included a broader range of identities than typically seen within research including Filipinxs. That said, there are voices and identities that remain

unheard in the scholarly literature on decolonizing higher education. In the future, research could bring in the stories of a wider array of Filipinxs.

More geographic diversity within U.S. Geography matters not only for thinking through types of staff roles, but also in regards to Filipinx identities. For instance, geography helps to determine what the demographics of one's location look like (i.e., are there many Filipinxs around? Many Indigenous peoples?). Of the six people, three were on the West Coast of the U.S., one in the Pacific Southwest of the U.S., one in the Southern U.S., and me in the Midwest. The perspectives offered by people in the Eastern U.S., for instance would add to the narratives and stories shared.

Beyond U.S. As already mentioned, this study was with Filipinx higher education staff only in the U.S. This was intentional, to give structure and given the limits of my existing networks. Extending this type of research to be undertaken with people globally would contribute even further to understandings of decolonizing in higher education, staff, and Filipinxs.

More intersectionality. The kababayan hold a number of different identities, yet there are still many that were not represented in this study. It's also important to understand that the identities that were present in the kababayan are not meant to be representative of all people holding those identities. Put another way, J.A.'s narrative does not represent all Katutubos, nor does Mitchell's narrative represent all non-binary Filipinxs, nor does Vanessa's represent all atheistic Filipinas.

Implications for Practice

This implication of continued, relational meaning-making for the scholarship also applies to practice. Communal, reflexive engagement, such as done through this study, is part of what can move people toward greater intention, purpose and imagination in their work.

The stories and perspectives of the kababayan furthermore imply multiple recommendations for practice. These implications center on creating more dialogic spaces for discussing decolonization. I thus first present more rationale for dialogic spaces as well as potential topics for that dialogue. I then discuss in what types of spaces dialogues can take place. These recommendations apply to both Filipinx staff and higher education staff more broadly.

A Case for More Dialogic Spaces around "Decolonization"

Intentionality as a staff member. I came to this research seeking to re-define my intentions, or what values and purposes I bring to my work. Though I am not currently a staff member in higher education, I took the opportunity to join my kababayan in reflecting upon my previous work. Several of my kababayan similarly reflected on wanting a space like that provided by this research project to reflect on their purposes for work, and to live and work with more intention. Together, these comments reflect the reality that many staff get caught up in day-to-day, without much opportunity to bring critical reflection to their praxis. Comments like these indicate a need for more spaces in higher education for reflexive, communal meaning-making around decolonization.

Relationship between the personal and the professional. The findings of this study illuminate how the orientations we come to inhabit in our personal lives can carry over into work. Dialoguing about how people perceive this link or do not therefore prompt deeper conversations amongst staff regarding where they come from and what informs their work.

Perhaps these dialogic spaces can transform relationships between colleagues, where staff become more knowledgeable not only about colleagues, but also about different histories, perspectives. The work becomes more relational in a sense. At the same time, what people want to share or not share should be actively discussed and accommodated to respect personal boundaries.

Intergenerational discussions. The findings also make a case for more intergenerational discussions in terms of age and staff position level. Specifically, the findings suggest that the kababayan perceived people of different generations to have different orientations toward decolonizing as well as to each other. Promoting intergenerational discussions can thus help foster more meaningful relationships among participants and generations, and thereby enhance collaborative efforts towards decolonizing.

Orientations within the workplace. The findings of this study also suggest dialogues can occur around the question of what orientations particular workplaces support and which ones they don't. For example, the kababayan brought up different elements regarding what encourages their decolonizing orientations (e.g., mentors and supportive supervisors) and what act as barriers to them (e.g., institutional rhetoric). Having a space to discuss such elements particular to their contexts can create generative exchanges between staff that can help them to navigate their particular contexts.

More awareness of Indigenous peoples and issues. The findings also suggest that more attention should be paid to Indigenous peoples and issues, including Katutubo and those Indigenous to Turtle Island. It is very telling that learning about the Katutubo and some of their issues via J.A. was the very first time people including myself had ever heard about (or even spoken with) a Katutubo person before.

Locating Dialogic Spaces

As already discussed, findings from my study suggest people from similar identities desire spaces in which they can discuss their experiences with one another. Spaces for those still in graduate education, for newer professionals, and more seasoned professionals could all stand to participate in such spaces.

Graduate Education. Graduate programs are a space wherein future staff can further develop their sense of who do they want to be and what types of beliefs they want to bring to their work. As such, discussions on decolonizing can be integrated into course assignments and can inspire ideas for guest speakers.

Of course, those working as higher education staff come from a variety of fields and disciplines. Even within the scope of this research, three of the kababayan had master's degrees in higher education and student affairs, while the other three had master's degrees in different areas. Because many who graduate from student affairs programs end up working in institutions of higher education, student affairs programs are one area to create such dialogic spaces.

Within and across institutions. Dialogic spaces can also be created and facilitated in institutions for specific demographic groups and across groups. Dialogic spaces can thus be part of professional development opportunities offered by the institutions. Furthermore, efforts to create such spaces can and should also take place across institutions of higher education, as this dissertation did. Looking across institutions, both formal and informal spaces, online and in-person spaces can provide opportunity for staff to connect and engage. What's more, there are online spaces such as the *Pinxys in Student Affairs* Facebook group that could help facilitate such a dialogue. Professional associations and conferences can also be spaces to establish and encourage cross-institutional dialogues. For instance, I am a member of the Asian Pacific

American Network (APAN) through the American College Personnel Association (ACPA). APAN hosts a number of annual dialogues for staff to attend and engage with.

Other Supports for Staff

More holistic support for staff. Beyond dialogic spaces for discussing decolonizing in higher education, the findings suggest other types of support are needed. Specifically, the kababayan mentioned different personal challenges as staff members with decolonizing orientations. Some kababayan mentioned seeking therapists to help them work through such challenges. Engaging in decolonizing efforts without much support can be taxing on mental health. It is important to have mental health professionals who understand. At the same time, finding a therapist who does "understand" can be a difficult task.

Limitations

Here, I discuss four methodological limitations. The first is regarding engaging in a relational space. It is possible that conducting a study in a collective context could influence what gets shared and what doesn't. Although many kababayan expressed that our collective space felt like a "safe" one overall, this does not necessarily mean it always felt that way. For example, if journaling had been done individually knowing several other people would not read it, the entries might have looked very different.

There are also three limitations I perceived with journaling. Although much was elicited through the journaling prompts, other methods may have elicited different types of information. For instance, after reading my second journal entry, Jasmine commented on how she realized she hadn't talked about decolonization as it applied to gender and her family life, but that it was certainly an area she could have written about.

Another limitation of journaling was that I did not have the ability to "re-direct" or probe the kababayan's responses. Given this, the optional individual interviews at the end of the project became an opportunity for the kababayan to share what they didn't get to during the Zoom meeting, as well as an opportunity for me to follow up on curiosities that came from their journal entries.

Additionally, although the kababayan could ask questions in of others in their responses, such questions were not necessarily be answered, given that the method asked for only one round of responses on each journal entry. Everyone thus had the opportunity to reply once and did not engage more than that on each entry. As such, future research could include more opportunities to engage written content and have extended conversation around topics.

Growth and Gratitude

This journey alongside my kababayan has been deeply meaningful for each of us in different ways and I am deeply grateful for each person. For some, it was an opportunity to engage in dialogue with other Filipinx staff. For others it was an opportunity to reflect on and clarify their intentions and feel affirmed as a Katutubo. Regardless of the *how*, we each came away from the process having grown in some way.

To move towards a feeling of closure, I included a question in the last journal prompt regarding how we saw ourselves moving forward, given our time together. Before presenting some of what was shared, it is important to reckon with J.A.'s disagreement the question. He provided a critical response regarding thinking about the future. In his words:

> I also oppose such notions of "this is how I am going to decolonize" or talk about the future, because romanticizing speculative possibilities is too much based on an imagined future that oftentimes excludes others who have actual affect and effect of continued

> colonization as forced communities into federal, capitalist, and possessive investment in whiteness structures of the United States.

A fair critique, to be sure. Bearing this in mind, we shared our hopes for the future, particularly those regarding family, their work, and society in general. The kababayan with children talked specifically about their children and the example they hope to set for them and about building relationships with family. Some shared about their anticipated next professional steps.

Since the group meeting, Mitchell has moved onto a new position, which is also in residence life. After working in higher education for 20 years, Jasmine is contemplating her next professional steps and her purpose. Beyond this, she aspires to be a children's book author. Since our group meeting, she has already released two books on Filipinx themes. Being a children's book author has been a long-time goal of hers, as she knows books are one way of "decolonizing minds." Liza is looking toward higher levels of administration in community colleges, the sector she knows well and the one in which she will be most fulfilled and impactful. Liza specifically shared: "I'd like to think that in my small ways, in challenging what education means to our community or what professionally purpose I have had in my career, are continuous steps toward decolonization for myself, my family, and community."

Some talked about higher education not necessarily as their professional work, but in terms of how they are seeking to continuously educate themselves. For example, still feeling new in her role, Vanessa knows that there will be many opportunities to bring a decolonizing approach to her work. One thing she has done toward this is audit a Native Studies Course and other courses because she believes there is more to learn. She intends to audit more courses in the future, because she recognizes how she can keep growing and intends to keep a decolonizing lens in her work, whether through continuing to speak up or through program planning.

When I shared “what’s next” for me in my final journal entry with the group, I explained that I honestly did not know, but that I did know I needed to find something that aligned with my values, including my desire to live an enact a decolonizing orientation. Having conversations with other Filipinxs and a Katutubo American throughout this project has made it clear to me that I want to do this consistently across all areas of my life, to the extent that it feels possible.

I emerge from this dissertation holding the range of emotions, tensions, hopes, and challenges that were part of our process. My kababayan have informed me and my life, and I hope that I and this process is mutually impactful and useful. In all, it is the work of collectives that bears the most generative work toward understanding and enacting decolonizing in our professional work, and beyond.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interest Form

Filipinx Higher Education Staff and Decolonization: Interest Form [Google Form]

Mabuhay and hello,

My name is Annabelle Estera and I am a PhD candidate at Michigan State University in the Department of Educational Administration in East Lansing, Michigan. I am conducting a qualitative dissertation study titled Stories from Filipinx Staff: New Perspectives on Decolonizing Higher Education. The purpose of my study is to learn how Filipinx staff in U.S. higher education understand decolonization and how these understandings inform the work that they do. As "decolonization" is a widely debated term, my aim is to learn with and from Filipinx higher education staff, and put their understandings of decolonization in dialogue with others' understandings currently found in higher education scholarship and practice.

For my doctoral dissertation, I am looking for participants who meet the following criteria:

1) Self-identifies as Filipinx (having heritage stemming from the Philippines);
2) Currently works in higher education in the U.S. as a staff member/administrator (e.g., student affairs, academic affairs, librarians, etc.);
3) Self-identifies as having an interest in decolonization and that it informs their work in some way;
4) Has access to a web camera

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and will include:

- A brief introductory meeting online with me to introduce myself and the study, and answer any questions potential participants may have;
- Asynchronous journal writing in an online space (to be privately accessible by the group members only) to reflect, write stories, and name experiences. Each group member will write four journal entries to share stories related to the journal prompts, and respond to each group member's posts. Journal entries will touch on the topics of identity, work experience, and decolonization. Journal writing will take place over 3-4 months;
- Online group kuwento (story) time. After all journal entries and responses are completed, this kuwento time will bring the group together to dialogue about the experience of journaling;
- Optional online individual interview, should participants wish to share more after the group kuwento time

There are several benefits to taking part in this study. First, each participant who completes the entire research study (introductory meeting, journaling, online group kuwento time) will be given

a $50 Amazon or Starbucks gift card (your choice) at the end of the study. Additionally, I will also send you a book on contemporary Filipinx issues (e.g., The Pilipinx Radical Imagination Reader). I also believe this opportunity for long-term reflection will be of personal and professional benefit, as you will have a chance to reflect on your experiences and perspectives in more depth with other Filipinx staff.

If you meet the above criteria and this project sounds like it may be of interest to you, please fill out all parts of this form. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email at esteraan@msu.edu. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Annabelle Estera
Ph.D Candidate | Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education (HALE)
Graduate Assistant
College of Education | Michigan State University
esteraan@msu.edu

Activities

Please note there are 3 short sections to fill out

Through this study, I am hoping to create a rich, small community experience among Filipinx higher education staff that will include 3-4 people plus myself.

Thus, as previously mentioned, this study will consist of multiple activities. In this section of the form I want to ensure your interest in participating in the multiple parts.

If you would like more detailed information regarding any of these activities, please contact me at esteraan@msu.edu.

All information on this form will be considered confidential, and the form itself will be stored in a secure location.

Do you have access to a web camera?

- Yes
- No

I am interested in having an introductory one-on-one meeting to learn more about this study and share more about my interest in participating.

- I agree

I am interested in participating in an online shared journaling space (privately accessible to group members only), where I will write four entries and respond to the entries of those in the group.

- I agree

I am interested in participating in an online meeting space with those in the small group to discuss the journaling experience.

- I agree

I understand that I will have the opportunity to do an individual interview to share additional thoughts after the online group meeting space, if I so choose.

- I agree

I anticipate having some availability May-Sept. 2019 to participate in the various activities. (Journaling will be done on your own time; online group kuwento time will likely be scheduled in Sept. 2019 pending group availabilities).

- I agree

*Please note due to the study design, you must agree to the above statements in order to participate.

Background Information

All information on this form will be considered confidential, and the form itself will be stored in a secure location.

Name _____

Email Address _____

Personal Pronouns _____

How do you identify (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, age, etc.)? _____

What do you consider your hometown(s) to be? _____

At what institution are you currently working? _____

What is your current role? Also, please provide a brief description of your job duties. _____

Your Interest

Tell me a little bit about why you are interested in participating in this study (up to 3 sentences).

What does decolonization mean to you? In what ways does your understanding of decolonization inform your work? (3-4 sentences) _____

Thank you for your interest!

*Please note - depending on how many people complete this form, and my desire to create a small group of 3-4 people, there is a possibility that I may not be able to offer every interested person a brief introductory meeting with me and the opportunity to participate in this study. Should this be the case for you, I am still truly grateful for your interest and hope this study will lead to further spaces to dialogue on these important topics.

Either way, I will be in touch with you soon! Should you have any questions, please contact me at esteraan@msu.edu

APPENDIX B

Journal Prompts

Prompt #1: The Story of You and Colonization in Your Personal Life

We are a newly formed group! I am so glad you have chosen to be a part of it. The purpose of this first prompt is two-fold. First, this prompt will give us an introduction to each other personally and get a better sense of the group you will be sharing with. Second, as mentioned above, the topical focus of decolonization within this study first requires an understanding of colonization – thus, this prompt will also give us space to work through the places and spaces colonization manifests in our personal lives, from childhood to today. I know this may be a heavy way to begin our journaling process together, but my hope is that in beginning our entries with a discussion of colonization, the more we can unravel through our time together.

Surely, one journal post could not encompass all of who you are, but hopefully through these initial entries we can begin to get to know each other and some of our important life experiences thus far.

To begin, please share your name and a bit about your intentions for participating. Also, please share a picture of yourself that is meaningful to you, and the meaning behind it.

Guiding questions to respond to include:

- Where were you born? Where have you lived? How did you get there (e.g., family history/immigration/refugee story)? Where are you now (geographically)?
- Share about your family. What is your relationship like with your family members?
- Share about your schooling experiences (could include college). What was your schooling experience like in relation to your identity as Filipinx, or other salient identities?
- Share a memorable experience, or experiences, from your childhood, adolescence, or college-going, related to your identity as Filipinx, or as it intersects with another identity.
- What are the areas of your life in which colonization has manifested? (e.g., religion/spirituality, language, identity, family, schooling, etc.). Share a memorable experience, or experiences demonstrating the manifestations of colonization in your life and how it has affected you, and/or continues to affect you.
- In addition, please feel free to share any information about yourself that you feel is important for others in the group to know about you (e.g., other salient identities, values, beliefs that you hold that are central to who you are as a person, and perhaps, stories that demonstrate how these manifest for you).

You do not need to answer *every* question – these are meant to give you potential ideas and areas to write about. Overall, see this journal as a space to introduce ourselves and began a conversation around the manifestations of colonization in our personal lives. Just be sure to include particular experiences/stories (at least 1-2, or more) that relate to the prompt.

(For this prompt, hold off on delving deeply into decolonization in your personal life - we will get to that in the second prompt! Also, hold off on your staff/work contexts as we'll also get to that later.)

Prompt #2: What Decolonization Means to You in Your Personal Life
Now that we've gotten to know each other a little bit and laid out some of the ways in which colonization has and continues to impact us in our personal lives, let's turn our attention towards the way we work and have worked towards decolonization in our personal lives.
Guiding questions to respond to include:

1) Describe what decolonization means to you in your personal life. What does this process look like for you?
2) Describe how you first learned about decolonization in your personal life.
    - What images, people, or experiences come to mind? What words, phrases, or sayings?
3) Has your understanding of decolonization in your personal life changed over time? If so, please describe the experiences that contributed to these changes in understanding.
4) What does decolonization in your personal life mean for you, your health, for your community?
5) For any of the above prompts, share a memorable experience, or experiences, and any related artifacts (e.g., photograph, . Also, please elaborate on the significance of the experience or artifacts for you.

Here again, the focus will be more on your personal life (rather than professional/work context). Feel free to expand upon what you wrote about in Journal #1, reflect based on people's previous comments, and/or bring in new elements. Like the last prompt, be sure to include particular experiences/stories (at least 1-2, or more) that relate to the prompt.

Prompt #3: The Story of You and Your Job, and Higher Education as a Colonizing Space
Now that we've gotten a chance to learn about each other a bit and our personal contexts, I'd like us to build upon this foundation and really focus on your ***work*** experiences and contexts. Given that we are all staff members, this prompt gives us a chance to learn about each other's paths, motivations, and work contexts. (Since I am not currently a staff member, I will write with my previous work experience in mind!).
Additionally, through this prompt we will share the ways in which we have experienced or observed our work contexts as colonizing spaces.

1. To begin, please share your institution, job title, how long you have been in this role, and a little bit about what you do in your current role.

2. Then, the two guiding prompts to respond to are (please write about both):

    - Describe your journey to your current job (feel free to discuss previous jobs as part of this journey). Feel free to discuss this journey: logistically, emotionally, spiritually, geographically, physically, etc.
        - In particular, please include any stories related to your motivations to enter your career path or current role. Who and what was involved? How and why did that experience or experiences motivate you?

- In what ways have you experienced or observed your work context as a colonizing space (e.g., personal interactions, policies, structures)?
    - In particular, please include a related story or stories as an example. How did you make sense of that experience or experiences? How did it impact you personally and as a staff member?

3. For any above the prompts:
    - Is there a related picture or document, or other artifact, that you'd like to share?

In addition, as you know this is an unfolding process for me and for us as a group. I am learning things along the way, after some additional reflecting based on your comments and conversation with my advisor, I would like to encourage a minimum of 1,000 words (roughly a paragraph more than the 750-word minimum) and a maximum of 1,500 words. I have greatly enjoyed reading and engaging with everyone's entries and find myself wanting to know more! So, the intention behind this slight bump up comes from a desire to be able to capture more of the fullness and richness of each of your stories and narratives. Should this be an issue or if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to let me know.

Prompt #4: Decolonization and Your Work

Thank you for all of your thoughtful journal entries thus far! We've learned a little bit about each other's backgrounds and work experiences. Through this final prompt, my intention is to bring together all the previous topics – yourself, your work, and decolonization.

There are two main parts to this last prompt. Please respond to both parts (i.e., Stories of Decolonization/Making Meaning of Decolonization.) However, you do not need to respond to each sub-question, unless you would like, as I know there are many. Rather they are there to help you brainstorm ideas and get your memories jogging around facets of your experiences.

Part 1. Stories of Decolonization/Decolonizing and Your Work (Share a memorable experience, or experiences, and artifact that relates to your responses)

- Describe how you first learned about decolonization in your professional life/current role.
    - What images, people, or experiences come to mind? What words, phrases, or sayings?
- What does decolonization mean to you in your current role? Describe how you work towards decolonization in this role.
    - This can be about your general approach to work, specific job duties, relationships with others, particular behaviors and practices, or anything else that comes up for you.
    - What barriers or challenges do you encounter in working towards decolonization in your work? Is there a time you sought to bring a decolonizing perspective to an aspect of your work, but were "unsuccessful"?
    - What factors in your work context aid in/or are conducive to your efforts towards decolonization? Describe a time you were successful in your efforts and what played a role in that "success."

Part 2. Making Meaning of Decolonization and Your Work

- Do you see your personal and professional efforts around decolonization to be related or separate? How so? Is there an experience that comes to mind that demonstrates this?
- Do you think your identity as Filipinx (or other salient identities) connects to your efforts to decolonize in your work setting? If so, how?
- What does decolonization in your professional life mean for you, your health, for your community?
- Given your reflections over all four prompts, "what's next" for you in your journey towards decolonizing?

Again, I'd like to encourage a response of 1,000-1,500 words in order to capture more of your voices and stories!

Prompt for Responding to Each Other's Entries

- What struck you about the journal entry?
- Do you have any experiences that resonate with those shared? If so, please share.
- Do you have any experiences that contrast with those shared? If so, please share.
- What new questions or insights arose for you as you read the journal entry?
- Feel free to share an artifact in your responses if it comes up in your thinking.

APPENDIX C

Journaling Guide

Journaling will give us the space and opportunity to reflect, write stories, and name our experiences as Filipinxs who have an interest in decolonization. I do not provide a singular definition of "decolonization" as my intention is to make space for the meanings that you attribute to this concept, and the different contexts in which this term is salient for you.
For these journal entries, I am especially interested in stories – the experiences and moments that these prompts and questions bring to mind for you. As such, I encourage you to keep in mind some elements and questions that will help me and the group members to better understand your experiences: ***What happened? What feelings and emotions did you have in the moment? Now, how do you make sense of that particular experience?*** That being said, feel free to share other reflections and thoughts in addition to your stories.

On flow and organization of the journal prompts:

- My hope is that each journal prompt provides a foundation for the next one. I wrote these entries with the assumption that and understanding of decolonization first requires an unpacking of colonization, thus, you will see a flow from *colonization to decolonization*. There is also a flow of *personal to professional*. This is because I am also working from an assumption that our personal lives and experiences influence our professional lives. I realize these are artificial splits in a lot of ways and these may overlap, but my hope is that this structure will help to provide a more holistic understanding of decolonization in our lives.

Here are a few guidelines to keep in mind:

- I will be readily available via email to answer any questions about the prompts should clarifications be needed. I am also open to feedback around the prompts.
- Although content is more important than length, I would encourage a minimum of 750 words (no maximum) in order for us to all have an ample amount of writing to process and respond to. After our "first round" of journaling I will check in to see how this word count works for everyone – we can adjust if necessary.
- For these entries, you do not need to aim for "perfection." As offered by Dorothy Cordova: "journal writing is a nonrestrictive form of writing…There are no mistakes. Keep writing free, flowing thoughts. You are writing 'bits and pieces of you.' Journal writing is a method of 'talking to yourself.' Your journal does not have to be a finished product."
- I realize that in this journaling experience we will be writing with the knowledge that other people will be reading, but my hope is that in this context you are not overwhelmed with the need for heavy editing, perfect grammar, etc. I see journaling within this context as both stream of consciousness, with light editing for clarity for readers.

I hope that this journaling experience will be meaningful for you – empowering, illuminating, and/or healing in some way. That being said, perhaps you end up writing parts that you would rather not share with the group. That is completely fine. Or perhaps, there are parts you are comfortable sharing with the group, but would rather not be included in the dissertation. That is completely fine too.

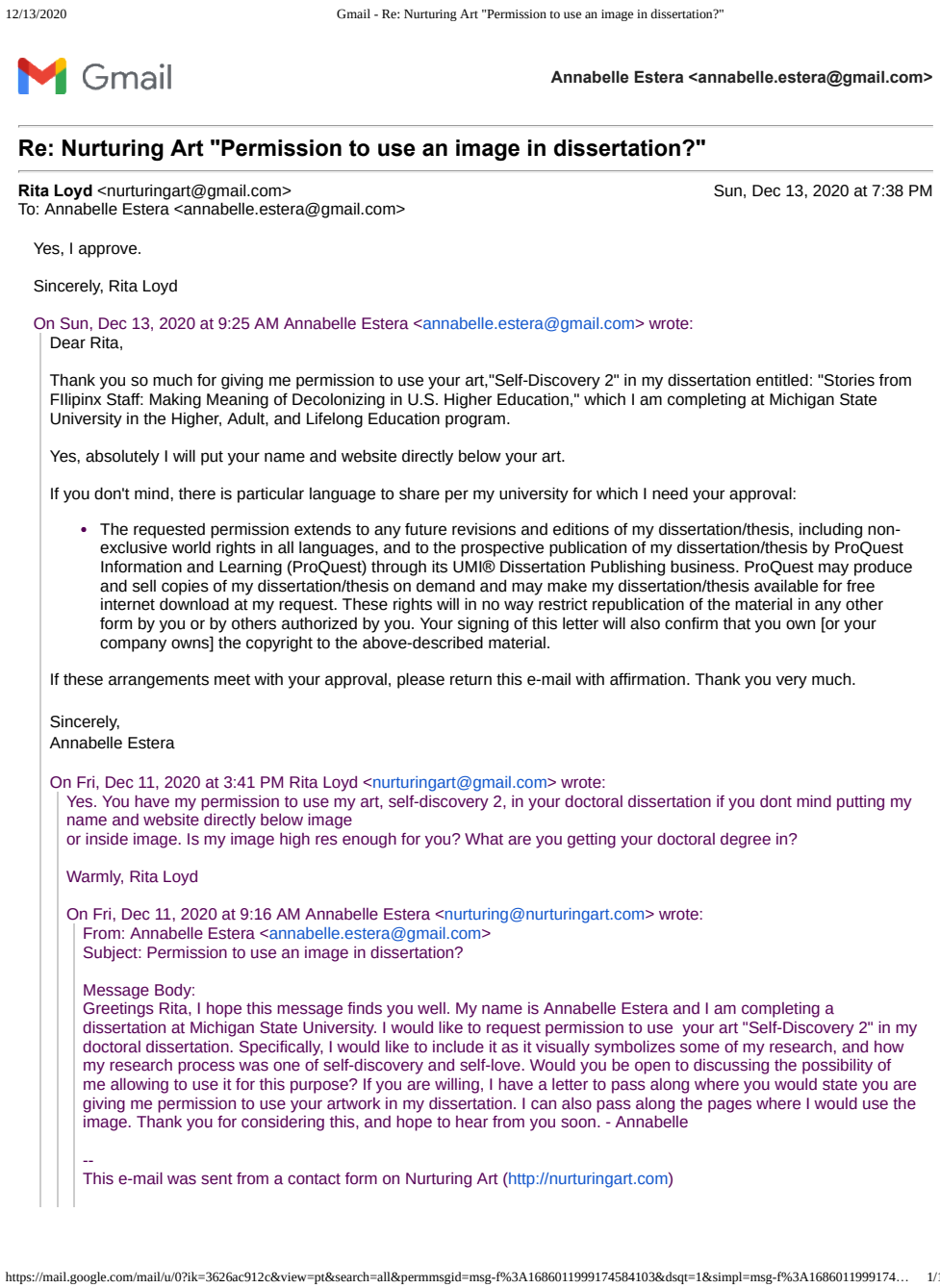
I also encourage you to view the journaling process as a type of sacred space, perhaps listening to a playlist or writing in a location that is meaningful to you, if it is possible.

Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat (thanks everyone) and I look forward to being on this journey with you.

APPENDIX D

Permissions from Rita Loyd

Figure 13. Email permission from Rita Loyd



12/13/2020 Gmail - Re: Nurturing Art "Permission to use an image in dissertation?"

Gmail **Annabelle Estera <annabelle.estera@gmail.com>**

Re: Nurturing Art "Permission to use an image in dissertation?"

Rita Loyd <nurturingart@gmail.com> Sun, Dec 13, 2020 at 7:38 PM
To: Annabelle Estera <annabelle.estera@gmail.com>

Yes, I approve.

Sincerely, Rita Loyd

On Sun, Dec 13, 2020 at 9:25 AM Annabelle Estera <annabelle.estera@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Rita,

Thank you so much for giving me permission to use your art,"Self-Discovery 2" in my dissertation entitled: "Stories from FIlipinx Staff: Making Meaning of Decolonizing in U.S. Higher Education," which I am completing at Michigan State University in the Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education program.

Yes, absolutely I will put your name and website directly below your art.

If you don't mind, there is particular language to share per my university for which I need your approval:

- The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my dissertation/thesis, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages, and to the prospective publication of my dissertation/thesis by ProQuest Information and Learning (ProQuest) through its UMI® Dissertation Publishing business. ProQuest may produce and sell copies of my dissertation/thesis on demand and may make my dissertation/thesis available for free internet download at my request. These rights will in no way restrict republication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that you own [or your company owns] the copyright to the above-described material.

If these arrangements meet with your approval, please return this e-mail with affirmation. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Annabelle Estera

On Fri, Dec 11, 2020 at 3:41 PM Rita Loyd <nurturingart@gmail.com> wrote:

Yes. You have my permission to use my art, self-discovery 2, in your doctoral dissertation if you dont mind putting my name and website directly below image
or inside image. Is my image high res enough for you? What are you getting your doctoral degree in?

Warmly, Rita Loyd

On Fri, Dec 11, 2020 at 9:16 AM Annabelle Estera <nurturing@nurturingart.com> wrote:

From: Annabelle Estera <annabelle.estera@gmail.com>
Subject: Permission to use an image in dissertation?

Message Body:
Greetings Rita, I hope this message finds you well. My name is Annabelle Estera and I am completing a dissertation at Michigan State University. I would like to request permission to use your art "Self-Discovery 2" in my doctoral dissertation. Specifically, I would like to include it as it visually symbolizes some of my research, and how my research process was one of self-discovery and self-love. Would you be open to discussing the possibility of me allowing to use it for this purpose? If you are willing, I have a letter to pass along where you would state you are giving me permission to use your artwork in my dissertation. I can also pass along the pages where I would use the image. Thank you for considering this, and hope to hear from you soon. - Annabelle

--
This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Nurturing Art (http://nurturingart.com)

https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ik=3626ac912c&view=pt&search=all&permmsgid=msg-f%3A1686011999174584103&dsqt=1&simpl=msg-f%3A1686011999174… 1/1

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