

Issues Affecting U.S. Filipino Student Access to Postsecondary Education: A Critical Race Theory Perspective

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There are 3.2 million Filipinos in the United States, arguably the largest Asian American ethnic group. Although 36.7% of Filipino adults have college degrees, which is much higher than their ethnic and racial counterparts, U.S. Filipino¹ youth have fewer postsecondary opportunities. Filipino immigrant and second-generation youth exhibit high secondary “push out” rates, suffer from depression and other mental health issues, demonstrate lower levels of participation and retention in higher education, and attend less selective colleges if they pursue postsecondary education. They are additionally marginalized by institutional policies that do not consider the complexity of their lives. In the context of color-blind educational discourse, their issues have been rendered largely invisible; they are often not targeted or eligible for institution-sponsored postsecondary access and retention programs. In this paper, I use Critical Race Theory to guide a review of literature to show how the intersection between immigration, socioeconomic status, and race shape the barriers to postsecondary opportunities for U.S. Filipinos.

The election of President Barack Obama exemplifies the onset of what has been dubbed America’s postracial era—a time in which race and racism no longer play a factor in the life chances of people in the United States. The idea of postraciality, however, is not a new idea to the higher education landscape. Since the attack began on affirmative action policies in the 1970s and grew rampant through the early part of this decade, colleges and universities have had to deal with creating and implementing educational policies that have simultaneously attempted to address racial marginalization in higher education while not explicitly using the language of race (Chang, Witt, Jones, & Hakuta, 2003; Takagi, 1992). More specifically, anti-affirmative action educational policies have limited the ability of public institutions to use race and ethnicity as factors in the development of programs aimed at addressing the disparities in postsecondary opportunities for students of color.

Sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2009) argued that the idea of postraciality is a manifestation of color-blind racism, the racial ideology that serves to maintain the racial structure of

¹U.S. Filipinos refers to people of Filipino descent residing in the United States. The term is used over the more commonly used term, Filipino American, to better encompass persons who do not identify as American, particularly those who are undocumented.

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White supremacy in the United States. Aligned with Bonilla-Silva's assertion of the centrality of racism in the United States, education scholars have developed Critical Race Theory (CRT)—a theoretical framework that interrogates the ways in which White supremacy shapes the experiences of people of color (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009). Education scholar Daniel Solorzano (1998) identified five central tenets that guide a CRT examination of racial phenomena in education: (a) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism, (b) the existence and need to challenge dominant ideology, (c) the role of social justice in using such a framework, (d) the necessity and validity of using the experiential knowledge of people of color, and (e) the utility of interdisciplinary perspectives to holistically understand the experiences of students of color within historical and contemporary contexts. Together, the tenets assert that the historical and contemporary experiences of students of color must be examined within a context of educational policies and practices that perpetuate racial marginalization within education.

In lieu of race-conscious policies, colleges and universities have developed color-blind programs and services targeting “nontraditional” students: those who are first-generation, low-income, and/or historically underrepresented college students (Tierney, Corwin, & Colyar, 2005). Through CRT, we can identify such color-blind discourse as problematic in three major ways. First, the aforementioned designations serve as inadequate proxies for race and often do not encompass students with complex experiences. Second, as institutions have budget constraints and must ensure program success, targeted students from underrepresented communities often represent those who are already college bound. Finally, the very institutions that have had a long history of marginalizing students of color remain solely responsible for determining best practices regarding the recruitment and retention of these students. Such factors have led to the negligent oversight of academically struggling students from marginalized communities of color whose issues are only highlighted under race-conscious policies. In this article, I examine one such group: U.S. Filipinos.

U.S. Filipinos were one of the first ethnic groups to be removed from affirmative action protection in the 1980s (Buenavista, 2007; Okamura, 1998; Sun, 1997). Since then, little attention has been paid to their postsecondary access and retention issues as they have been racialized as model minorities, a stereotype that attributes Asian American academic success to hard work and culturally essentialist characteristics (Chou & Feagin, 2008). Given that Filipinos' educational experiences have been largely absent from educational discourse, I use CRT to guide a review of the literature that highlights the barriers to postsecondary education for U.S. Filipinos. In the following, I provide a brief overview of Filipino history and demographic information in the United States, to better contextualize their educational experiences. Further, I conduct an interdisciplinary review of literature that examines how immigration, socioeconomic status, and race intersect to shape the lack of postsecondary opportunities for U.S. Filipinos. The goal of this article is to highlight how some U.S. Filipinos are academically and socioeconomically placed at risk—a phenomenon that remains obscured by a color-blind education discourse that deemphasizes the importance of examining the experiences of students from specific ethnic and racial groups.

THE CASE FOR EXAMINING FILIPINOS IN THE UNITED STATES

The most effective means of subjugating a people is to capture their minds. (Renato Constantino, 1970, p. 21)

CRT challenges ahistoricism in education research, and is concerned with understanding the contemporary experiences of students of color in context of their community's history in the United States. Therefore, it is important to discuss how the presence of Filipinos in the United States is directly tied to the American colonization of the Philippines. Philippine historian Renato Constantino made the previous statement as a reference to the central role public education had in the American colonizing project in the Philippines.

The Philippines was a formal U.S. colony from 1898–1946 and arguably remains an American neocolony due to its economic dependence (San Juan, 2007; Shirmer & Shalom, 1987). Since 1898, White American values, beliefs, and practices have systematically been introduced to Filipinos in the Philippines through public education. Constantino (1970) named this specific process of American colonization the “mis-education of the Filipino” (p. 20). He argued that one example of such cultural imposition is the prevalent use of English in Philippine classrooms. The result is Filipino familiarity with, although not proficiency in, the English language.

Although language is only one manifestation of colonization, another is represented in the subsequent diaspora of Filipinos throughout the world, namely as workers in the United States (San Juan, 1992). Although Filipinos in the Philippines are insufficiently indoctrinated into White American culture, such exposure has created a workforce on which the United States continues to rely and has led to the mass movement of Filipinos to the United States. As such, the injurious relationship between American (neo)colonialism and the Philippines warrants further examination, particularly through an understanding of the contemporary experiences of Filipinos in the United States as vestiges of this relationship.

There are 3.2 million Filipinos in the United States, of whom 10% are undocumented (Hoeffler, Rytina, & Baker, 2009; U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Considering the size of the undocumented population, Filipinos are arguably the largest Asian American ethnic group. Almost half of the U.S. Filipino population geographically resides in California, and the second largest contingent resides in Hawai'i (Lai & Arguelles, 2003). Although the socioeconomic backgrounds of Filipinos are diverse, more than 60% work in low-wage and/or service-sector work (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). This statistic is somewhat enigmatic when one considers that 36.7% of Filipino adults have college degrees—a much higher rate of educational attainment compared to their ethnic and racial counterparts. This disconnect only serves to indicate how such adult educational attainment occurred before immigration—this is significant because U.S. Filipino youth have fewer postsecondary opportunities.

The educational barriers faced by Filipino youth are underexamined, as their issues have been hidden by their racialization as Asian Americans. Asian Americans are plagued by the model minority stereotype, a belief that Asian Americans have achieved academic and socioeconomic success in the United States through hard work and regardless of their minority status (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Nakanishi & Nishida, 1995). Sociologists Rosalind Chou and Joe Feagin (2008) argued that the political function of the model minority myth is to promote the idea that racism no longer exists in the United States and that racial disparities remain due to individual inadequacies of minorities, rather than institutional factors that prevent the advancement of people of color. In this sense, color-blind educational discourse only exacerbates the lack of awareness of U.S. Filipino educational experiences. As neocolonial immigrants and consolidated under a larger Asian American category, U.S. Filipinos are invisible.

Overview of U.S. Filipino Educational Experiences

U.S. Filipinos face various barriers to postsecondary education. Filipino immigrant and second-generation youth in the United States exhibit high secondary “push-out” rates (National Federation of Filipino American Associations, 2007; Tintiagco-Cubales, 2007); suffer from depression and other mental health issues (Tompar-Tiu & Sustento-Seneriches, 1995); demonstrate lower levels of participation and retention in higher education (Azores, 1986–1987; Fuligni & Witcow, 2004; Okamura, 1998); and attend less selective colleges if they pursue postsecondary education (Chu, 1991; Teranishi, Ceja, Antonio, Allen, & McDonough, 2004). Filipinos are also marginalized by institutional policies that do not consider the complexity of their lives (Buena Vista, Jayakumar, & Misa-Escalante, 2009). Under color-blind policies, Filipinos are not necessarily recognized as first-generation, low-income, or historically underrepresented college students in the literal meaning of these constructs (Buena Vista, 2007). Therefore, they are often not targeted or eligible for institution-sponsored postsecondary access and retention programs.

From the little information available in a national context, Filipino youth have less access to postsecondary education for myriad reasons, but particularly due to relatively high push-out rates compared to their Asian American counterparts (National Federation of Filipino American Associations, 2007). In 2005, they represented 18.7% of the 1.4 million Asian American dropouts ages 16–24, second only to Chinese students (20.9%; National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). In the state of California, where the majority of Filipinos reside and where disaggregated data are readily available, they also exhibit higher secondary push-out rates compared to other Asian Americans. According to the California Department of Education (CDE, 2009a), Filipinos constituted 27.2% of the approximately 4,400 Asian American secondary dropouts in the 2007–2008 academic year.

Within the field of education, little scholarship has focused on the experiences of U.S. Filipinos. Filipino educational issues are often described in sociological projects that examine their larger experiences in the United States (Espiritu, 2003; Okamura, 1998). Education-centered discussions that mention Filipino experiences are also often a result of larger quantitative projects that attempt to disaggregate Asian American experiences, as well as qualitative comparative studies in which Filipinos represent an outlier to the model minority stereotype (Fuligni & Witcow, 2004; Teranishi, 2002; Teranishi et al., 2004). Further, there are few scholars who have examined U.S. Filipinos who are academically and socioeconomically placed at risk (Teranishi, 2002; Tintiagco-Cubales, 2007).

What, then, are the barriers to postsecondary education for U.S. Filipinos who are both socioeconomically and academically disadvantaged? What issues affect U.S. Filipino student access to postsecondary education, particularly for those who are placed at risk? To answer these questions, I use CRT to guide a review of literature focused on U.S. Filipino educational experiences. CRT predicated the examination of the social, political, and historical contexts that shape (or misshape) the educational trajectories of students of color. Therefore, I reviewed scholarship from fields ranging from education, ethnic studies, public health, and sociology, to achieve a comprehensive understanding of factors that place U.S. Filipino students at risk within academic and social contexts.

An initial search for literature revealed the limited amount of scholarship specifically focused on U.S. Filipino educational experiences. Approximately 20 master’s theses and doctoral

dissertations focused on various issues ranging from language and education, immigration, employment, and retention and counseling issues. About 10 articles subsequently published by the authors of these theses and dissertations were then reviewed; in addition to about 20 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters that focused on Filipinos, Filipinos and education, or Asian American educational experiences in which disaggregated data on Filipinos were available. The majority of the research that examined contemporary U.S. Filipino educational issues or factors related to education was published from 1980 to the present.

As previously mentioned, secondary push-out rates limit postsecondary opportunities for Filipino youth. However, a review of literature from multiple disciplines reveals that push-out rates are often shaped by many other factors. In the following sections, I discuss three of the factors that represented themes prevalent in research on U.S. Filipinos. More specifically, I examine how postsecondary access is often simultaneously fostered and compounded by immigration, socioeconomic status, and race—factors highlighted through a race-conscious lens. When these factors are examined in relation to each other, we are able to see a more comprehensive picture of the educational issues for Filipino youth who are placed at risk.

THE ROLE OF IMMIGRATION ON POSTSECONDARY OPPORTUNITIES

Immigration has been shown to shape postsecondary opportunities for youth (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Qin, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). Among the most common issues among first- and second-generation immigrant students are language barriers in schools, particularly the inability of education policies and social practices within schools to accommodate the learning of English language learners (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). However, although some youth are at a disadvantage in school due to language barriers, the educational aspirations of first- and second-generation youth do not significantly differ, as such students were found to benefit from the emphasis on education by their immigrant parents (Gonzalez, 2005; Kao & Tienda, 2005). In addition to language, it is important to interrogate the role of parental immigration and (non)citizenship status on children's educational opportunities. More specifically, for U.S. Filipinos, the role of immigration must also be considered because the majority (54.7%) are immigrants (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).

Language Barriers

Although the majority of Filipino school-aged children are born in the United States, immigration and subsequent language barriers influence Filipino educational experiences. Nearly 22% of Filipinos under age 18 were born outside of the United States, whereas the majority of Filipino school-aged children were born in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2007). However, regardless of generational status, Filipino elementary and secondary students experience educational issues related to parental immigration, primarily in context of language. Nearly 58% of U.S. Filipinos speak a language other than English at home, and almost 20% reported that they spoke English less than “very well” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).

According to the NCES (2007), 36.3% of Filipino elementary and secondary students in the United States spoke a language other than English at home. Further, 10% of these students

reported speaking English with difficulty. In California, Filipino students constituted only 1.7% of the 1.5 million students whose primary language at home was not English, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and those recognized as English Proficient (CDE, 2009b). Although this percentage seems small overall, ELL students who spoke Filipino languages (e.g., Cebuano/Visayan, Ilocano, Pilipino/Tagalog) were the third largest ELL student group, after Spanish and Vietnamese speakers. Bilingual Filipino students face challenges in improving their English comprehension not necessarily because of their parents' unfamiliarity with English or the diversity of Filipino languages, but rather because of the shortage of qualified teachers fluent in the languages and/or who are formally trained to work with these students (Bilingual Education Office, 1986).

The Challenge of Undocumented Status

Discrimination against Filipino immigrants, especially those who are undocumented (Rodriguez & Balce, 2004; San Juan, 2007), has been on the rise. Filipino TNTs—a colloquial term for the phrase *tago ng tago*, which in Tagalog literally refers to those who are hiding—represent the largest undocumented Asian ethnic group in the United States. Immigration discourse tends to focus on the labor aspect of undocumented people's experiences (Montoya, 1997; Parreñas, 2001), but an emerging trend is to focus on undocumented student experiences (Madera et al., 2008). Although policies outline the legal right for undocumented youth to attend school, there are several barriers to postsecondary opportunities for undocumented people, particularly the absence of institutional support required to make educational access a realistic opportunity for all (Gonzales, 2009; Rincon, 2008).

In an edited book project about undocumented student experiences by the University of California—Los Angeles (UCLA) Center for Labor Research and Education, John Carlo² (2008) wrote an autobiographical account regarding his and his mother's experiences as undocumented Filipino immigrants. With undocumented status, it was difficult to attain work for daily survival, much less money for school. Carlo noted that, in addition to such financial constraints, he suffered from social stigma attached to their lack of papers, mental depression, and an overwhelming amount of responsibility for the survival of his family that ultimately trumped his educational priorities. Although the problems he described are similar for many undocumented students, the invisibility of undocumented Filipino issues in immigration discourse exacerbates such issues.

Immigration and Postsecondary Opportunities

Immigration influences Filipino postsecondary opportunities in various ways. Although the majority of Filipino students were born in the United States, language barriers have been found to limit educational access for first- and second-generation immigrants. Further, for some immigrant youth, undocumented status often creates mental health and financial stresses beyond academics. In the following section, I examine how the latter—socioeconomic status (SES)—is intertwined with immigration to also shape postsecondary opportunities.

²A pseudonym.

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND FILIPINO SOCIOHISTORICAL CONTEXTS

Generally, SES affects the college access and retention of students of color, as research demonstrates that students from low-income backgrounds have lower educational aspirations and rates of persistence and educational attainment (Hossler, Schmidt, & Vesper, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Students' SES often determines their ability to tap into both tangible and intangible resources for college (McDonough, 1997). As students from middle- and upper-income backgrounds are more likely to attend schools with college-going cultures and can afford to pay for supplemental academic assistance (e.g., private college counselors or tutoring), low-income students' inability to access such sources of support intensifies existing educational disparities.

U.S. Filipinos occupy a unique position regarding SES. Data points such as average family income mislead the general public into assuming that Filipinos enjoy SES mobility; such information obscures that Filipino families often have more income contributors per family and subsequently a lower per capita income (Lai & Arguelles, 2003). Filipino labor experiences are characterized by occupational downgrading or underemployment, in which Filipinos are employed in jobs that are vastly noncommensurate with their educational attainment (Espiritu, 2003; Madamba, 1998). Although more than one-third of Filipino adults have earned a bachelor's degree outside of the United States, few are able to find employment that reflects their training due to factors such as language discrimination and racism in the job market.

Underemployment and Family Consolidation

Filipino underemployment has led to several socioeconomic trends that impact the educational experiences of Filipino youth. In a qualitative study of Filipino students attending an urban high school, ethnic studies scholar Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales (2007) identified how the school participation of these students was influenced by financial constraints that fostered difficult living conditions at home. Through ethnographic interviews with and textual analysis of journals written by urban Filipino youth, Tintiangco-Cubales discussed one important theme among many: "family consolidation" (p. 36). Family consolidation is a phenomenon in which one household is comprised of more than one nuclear family; it is used as a strategy to counter socioeconomic difficulties such as occupational downgrading. Tintiangco-Cubales highlighted the issues that could arise from such living conditions, including stress associated with a lack of time and ability to focus on schoolwork at home due to an overcrowded household, increased family obligations, and/or conflict arising among and between family members. Thus, although family consolidation serves as one strategy to enhance socioeconomic stability, it is one that may have a detrimental impact on youth engagement in school.

Socioeconomic Status and College Choice

Whereas family consolidation demonstrates how SES influences Filipino school participation, SES also plays a role in college choice. In a quantitative study focused on the college choice process for Asian American students, Robert Teranishi and his colleagues (2004) found that Filipino academic aspirations are influenced by perceived college costs. Filipinos consider a

wide range of postsecondary institutional types but are more likely to attend less selective institutions: two-year community colleges and proprietary schools, as well as public four-year institutions located within a close proximity to home. Filipino college aspirations are shaped by factors associated with family influence and proximity to home; however, such factors are framed within a SES context. Students often feel limited to schools they perceive will not place a financial burden on their families and feel compelled to stay close to home to reduce expenses and continue working to support their families.

Socioeconomic Status and Postsecondary Opportunities

Low SES influences postsecondary opportunities because students experience family and work-related stresses that make it more difficult to fully engage in school. Given such factors, one might ask how some low-income students are able to successfully access and persist in higher education. Similar to how immigration shaped socioeconomic opportunities, SES is also compounded by other factors. For students of color, SES correlates with other factors, namely race, which together shape educational opportunities.

FILIPINO RACIALIZATION AND PATHWAYS AWAY FROM EDUCATION

Race is an important factor to consider when examining the educational experiences of underrepresented students of color because they suffer from greater disparities in postsecondary access and retention than their White counterparts (Chang et al., 2003; Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003; Yosso, 2005). Research in this area focuses on the negative racialization of students of color (Valenzuela, 1999; Yosso, 2005). Racialization leads students of color to be tracked out of school and off pathways leading to further educational attainment.

U.S. Filipinos experience a dichotomous racialization. As Asian Americans, they are often considered “model minorities”—academically and socioeconomically successful regardless of their racial minority status (Chou & Feagin, 2008). Such racialization is detrimental to Filipinos and other Asian American students, who suffer from a lack of academic and social support services from education practitioners who overlook or are unfamiliar with their issues (Nakanishi & Nishida, 1995). However, although Filipinos are generally perceived as Asian American model minorities, in geographic locations where they are largely concentrated, they are distinctly racialized as gang members, criminals, and deviants (Alsaybar, 2002; Teranishi, 2002; Tintiangco-Cubales, 2007). Such negative perceptions contribute to Filipino youth being characterized as not college-bound and apathetic to education (Teranishi, 2002). Although scholarship tends to focus on the negative impact of model minority racialization for Asian Americans as a whole (Chou & Feagin, 2008), in the following I focus on the ways in which U.S. Filipinos are criminalized and how such racialization affects postsecondary opportunities.

Violence, Deviant Behaviors and Filipino Youth

Under the model minority stereotype, Asian Americans are assumed to be problem-free within academic and social contexts. However, Filipinos may suffer from various mental health issues

stemming from difficulties associated with immigration, socioeconomic status, and racism (Tompar-Tiu & Sustento-Seneriches, 1995). In one of the first larger scale studies of its kind to focus on disaggregated Asian Pacific Islander ethnic groups, researchers surveyed 326 Filipino, Hawaiian, Japanese, and Samoan public high school students in Hawai'i regarding their participation in violent behavior, substance abuse, and other so-called "deviant" behaviors (Mayeda, Hishinuma, Nishimura, Garcia-Santiago, & Mark, 2006). Overall, Filipinos, Hawaiians, and Samoans reported that they engaged in deviant behavior at significantly higher rates than Japanese; Filipinos also demonstrated negative public health and social welfare trends.

Filipinos reported higher rates of deviant behavior and minor delinquency than Japanese Americans. Deviance and minor delinquency included but were not limited to behaviors ranging from "taken a car ride without the owner's permission" to "run away from home" (Mayeda et al., 2006, p. 276.e4). There were also gender differences among youth. The most notable concerned drug use: Young Filipinos (32.6%) were more likely to use marijuana than Filipinas (7.5%). Filipino youth also reported experience with violence. A substantial number of young Filipino men (27.9%) and women (22.4%) reported hitting a family member and/or partner, and almost one in five young men reported having been involved in gang fights. However, it is important to note that, although some U.S. Filipino youth demonstrated deviance, such behaviors often serve as a sociocultural response to socioeconomic and racial marginalization in the United States (Alsaybar, 2002).

The Negative Racialization of Filipino Youth

Although some U.S. Filipino youth are subject to deviant behaviors, even those who do not demonstrate problematic behavior are subject to being criminalized. Education scholar Robert Teranishi (2002) conducted a comparative study of 80 Chinese and 80 Filipino high school students in California, in which he highlighted the impact of racialization on Asian American students. Through surveys and in-depth interviews, Teranishi found that Chinese students had high academic goals, including enrollment and graduation from selective four-year institutions, as well as graduate school aspirations. However, Filipino students had lower academic aspirations to attend less selective institutions, such as vocational schools and local public institutions, and considered non-academic options like the workforce and the military.

Filipino aspirations were influenced by how teachers and counselors racialized them as delinquents. Although Chinese students described overall positive experiences with teachers and counselors, Filipino students recalled a persistent pattern of being criminalized and school staff assuming they lacked academic potential. They reported being discouraged from enrolling in a college preparatory curriculum, which led many off the college-bound track. They also had negative counseling experiences, which contributed to low academic self-confidence. Perhaps the most interesting was the finding that negative racialization by teachers and counselors were also detrimental to the racial/ethnic identity development of Filipino youth, leading many to associate with countercultures (e.g., hip-hop culture) rather than with their own ethnic identity.

Race and Postsecondary Opportunities

Many Filipinos, regardless of their immigration or socioeconomic status, have been negatively racialized. The criminalization of Filipino youth aligns with educational research that has

highlighted the link between racial constructions and educational access, in which stereotypes of students of color can detrimentally influence their postsecondary opportunities. Filipinos have been perceived as distinct from other Asian American ethnic groups, representing model minority outliers. Such a distinction has led to challenges in preparedness for and participation in higher education. Although the Asian American model minority stereotype obscures U.S. Filipino educational issues, examination of disaggregated information also demonstrates the centrality of race and racism in preventing their postsecondary opportunities.

CONCLUSION

There are several issues affecting U.S. Filipino student access to postsecondary education. U.S. Filipinos are primarily an immigrant community and their lack of access to resources that accommodate their language diversity may prevent them from being adequately prepared for higher education. Undocumented status also increases educational disparities for immigrants and their families. U.S. Filipinos are often subject to occupational downgrading and underemployment, and undocumented status makes it more difficult for many Filipinos to participate in the economy because they are not authorized to work. Although practices like family consolidation serve as a socioeconomic strategy to sustain the basic livelihood of U.S. Filipinos, such practices can also directly conflict with the ways in which youth are able to participate and persist in school. Additionally, Filipino youth are subject to negative racialization in schools and often are tracked off the college pathway.

A review of the limited literature from multiple disciplines reveals that U.S. Filipinos' experiences with immigration, socioeconomic status, and race show ample barriers to postsecondary education. Although educational discourse often discusses how these factors independently shape student experiences, CRT, when brought to bear on U.S. Filipino experiences, demonstrates how these factors intersect to influence student educational trajectories. Through CRT, we can contextualize Filipino experiences in the United States as a result of the neocolonial relationship between the United States and the Philippines. For example, language difficulties in schools can be understood as the continued miseducation of Filipinos; low SES can be seen as a result of the simultaneous labor recruitment and occupational downgrading of U.S. Filipinos. Therefore, subsequent educational barriers represent vestiges of American colonization of the Philippines—a complex circumstance that uniquely characterizes U.S. Filipino experiences as distinct from their ethnic and racial counterparts. Such an analysis demonstrates how CRT can serve as a useful guide in comprehensively examining issues affecting U.S. Filipino access to postsecondary education.

Unfortunately, due to color-blind approaches that deemphasize the significance of examining the educational experiences of youth from specific ethnic and racial communities, there is a lack of awareness of the social, historical, and political contexts that often prevent U.S. Filipinos from participating in postsecondary education. Therefore, beyond highlighting the experiences of students often absent in education research, I also wanted to demonstrate how CRT enables education practitioners to better consider the complicated relationship between factors that shape educational opportunities for students not necessarily on the higher education track. Further, although exposing the experiences of marginalized students is an important starting point in understanding the factors that shape participation in postsecondary education, empirical research

that conceptually and methodologically centralizes the role of race and racism offer opportunities to develop education policies and practices that may explicitly address racial marginalization in American education.

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