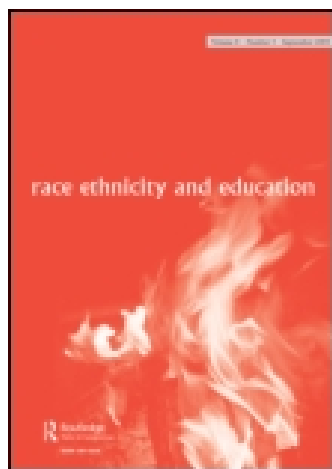


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Liberating Filipino Americans through decolonizing curriculum

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As Filipino Americans continue to struggle academically in our public schools, we must seek alternative frameworks to understand how their historical backgrounds and cultural identities have impacted their educational experience. Filipino Americans have a colonial history that has produced what scholars termed as ‘colonial mentality’, a denigration of self and aspiration to be like the colonizer. Given the historical legacy of colonialism, educators have begun to look at developing curriculums and pedagogy with decolonization framework with the aim to emancipate students from ignorance and ignite a commitment to social change. In 1996, the multicultural teacher education program, entitled Pinoy Teach, was launched to empower college students to teach Filipino American history and culture to middle school students. This article presents findings and implications from a survey research study that examined the long term impact on its college student teachers ten years later. Though the Pinoy Teach curriculum was not originally developed from a decolonization framework, the results showed that the program served as a tool to decolonize the college student teachers. The outcomes have implications for the conceptualization and implementation of decolonizing pedagogy and curriculum.

Keywords: Filipino Americans; decolonizing pedagogy and curriculum; libratory education; curriculum development; cultural diversity

‘I understand myself more because I understand my history and I am not afraid to speak up’.

Filipina reflecting on her Pinoy Teach experience.

Introduction

Filipino Americans comprise the second largest Asian American ethnic group (2.3 million) and the third largest immigrating group to the United States. Consequently, Filipino American students have become a significant presence in our schools. Despite their increased numbers, Filipino American students overall have remain overlooked and underserved in U.S. schools (NaFFAA 2008). Teachers rarely incorporate their perspectives and backgrounds in curriculum and pedagogy. Their high drop-out rates and low attainment of higher educational degrees show that the needs of Filipino American students are not being met.

As Filipino Americans continue to struggle academically in our public schools, we must seek alternative frameworks to understand how their historical backgrounds and cultural identities have impacted their educational experience. Filipino Americans, like African Americans, Latinos, and indigenous peoples, share a colonial history that

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has produced what scholars termed as ‘colonial mentality’, a denigration of self and an aspiration to be like the colonizer. With the historical legacy of colonialism, educators from formerly colonized groups have begun looking at developing curricula and pedagogy with a decolonization framework in mind to emancipate students from ignorance and to ignite a commitment to social change (Tejeda, Gutierrez, and Espinoza 2003; Strobel 2001).

This paper shares findings and implications from a survey research study that examined the long-term impact of Pinoy¹ Teach, a multicultural teacher education program that sought to empower college students to teach Filipino American history and culture to middle-school students. As the co-developer and instructor of the program, I was interested in learning how Pinoy Teach transformed the college participants’ lives 10 years later.

The study’s results showed that Pinoy Teach had an impact on their personal and professional lives, it served as a tool of decolonization during and after their experience in the program. Over 50% of the respondents pursued careers and advanced degrees in education with one third stating that Pinoy Teach had a direct impact on their decision to go into teaching. Four major themes emerged from participants’ responses: Pinoy Teach was responsible for (1) love and appreciation of ethnic history, culture, and identity; (2) feelings of lasting empowerment and self-efficacy; (3) life-long embodiment and commitment to principles of diversity and multiculturalism; and (4) continued activism in teaching profession and/or involvement in social and civic issues in the community.

While I did not set out to develop a decolonizing curriculum, the results from this study showed that I did exactly that. In retrospect, this should not come as a surprise since no curriculumist can divorce herself from her background. It was inevitable that a curriculum I would create about Filipino Americans would be in response to my own journey of liberation and decolonization as a Filipina² American. In this paper, I reflect on the development and effects of Pinoy Teach. Based on the results of this research, I provide suggestions on developing the scholarship around decolonizing curriculum and pedagogy.

Literature review

Colonialism and colonial mentality

There is a growing body of work that examines decolonization as a theoretical framework in understanding the experiences of formerly colonized people as they undergo unlearning colonial mentality. However, to understand decolonization, we must first understand the roots, process and effects of colonialism. In Fanon’s (1963) seminal book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, he lays out the four general stages of colonialism. In the first stage, the colonizer purposefully takes over a country. The second stage is when the colonizer exploits, appropriates and belittles the country’s culture. The third stage substitutes the indigenous culture with the dominant culture. The fourth stage justifies colonialism in the name of nobility and uplifting ‘uncivilized’ people.

Virgilio Enriquez (cited in Laenui 2000) breaks down the process of colonization into six steps: (1) ‘denial/ withdrawal’: the indigenous people are denied the existence of their culture and withdraws from identifying with their culture; (2) ‘destruction/ eradication’: the physical elements of the indigenous culture are eradicated; (3) ‘denigration/ belittlement/insult’: the cultural practice of the traditional culture are treated as criminal; (4) ‘surface accommodation/ tokenism’: surviving cultural elements are

folkloricized; (5) 'transformation': indigenous cultural practice is infused into the dominate culture; and (6) 'exploitation': indigenous culture is sought for commercial, artistic, and political gain.

The historical legacy of colonialism has resulted in causing negative psychological effects, which scholars termed as the 'colonial mentality'. A colonial mentality attributes everything positive and desirable to the colonizers and reinforces the belief that the colonized peoples are psychologically and intellectually subordinate (Memmi 1967). Strobel (2001, ix) believes a colonial mentality is a 'state of marginal consciousness, which lacks critical awareness of the forces of domination and oppression that shaped attitudes, values, and behavior in the colonized'. A colonized people reject their self and 'impoverishes himself, tearing himself from his true self' (Memmi 1965, 122). They do not think for themselves because they are trained to depend on others. Their histories are erased from them so that 'he has forgotten how to participate actively in history and no longer even asks to do so' (Memmi 1965, 92).

Fanon's (1963) and Enriquez's (1994) models of colonialism are helpful in understanding the process of colonization of the Philippines. Over 350 years of Spanish, 50 years of U.S. colonialism and Japanese occupation during World War II were debilitating. Karnow's (1989) book, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines*, reiterates Fanon's theory that the United States took over the Philippines for its own gains and exploitation in the name of saving their 'little brown brothers'. Each colonizer implanted the indigenous culture with their own moving Filipinos along what Enriquez describes as a process of denigration and objectification.

Colonialism negatively affected the culture, identity, historical memory, economy, education, and religion of the Philippines which produced a 'colonial mentality'. Lott (1980, 133) finds that 'the Pilipino community in the United States has been and continues to be shaped by the influences of a mentality that had its origins in the Philippines'. Most Filipinos carry a colonial mentality unknowingly but it manifests in cultural inferiority, inability to articulate one's ethnic identity, and lack of ethnic pride (Strobel 2001). It results in the denigration of self and downing of your own ethnic cultural group (David and Okazaki 2006).

Lott (1980) believes that the Filipino colonial mentality is 'the greatest issue facing the Filipino American community'. As a result of colonialism, there is the need to 'rebuild his people, whatever be their authentic nature, to reform their unity, communicate with it and to feel that they belong' (Memmi 1965, 135). Strobel (2001) believes that Filipino Americans must shed the 'jacket of imperialism' by unlearning the internalized oppression garnered from colonialism by undergoing decolonization.

Decolonization

Decolonization is the process of humanizing the dehumanized. Its process is similar to ethnic identity models where people of colour undergo stages of self-denigration, ethnocentrism, and ultimately an acceptance of self and others. However, it speaks more directly to the experiences of those who were colonized. Laenui (2000) developed a decolonization framework based on his experiences as a native Hawaiian and sovereignty activist. He describes five stages: (1) rediscovery/ recovery; (2) mourning; (3) dreaming; (4) commitment and (5) action.

Decolonization begins with the individual 'rediscovering' their own history and 'recovery' of ethnic roots by way of an accident, curiosity or anger. It is an epiphany

of awareness. Laenui (2000) emphasizes how substance needs to win out over form in this stage. Rediscovery of roots needs more than merely wearing traditional clothes.

In the second stage, formerly colonized people ‘mourn’ or are in a state of longing for what was taken away from them. This stage can be compared to having a victim mentality where people would remain in helpless or angry states for being denied learning about their history, if not provided an alternative to this stage. According to Laenui (2000), it is important for people to move on to the ‘dreaming’ stage when they can imagine a world free from self-denigration. At a political level, they imagine a social order that includes their people as equals who can re-examine their history and advance as a people. He also cautions people not to rush out of this stage because people need to be given the opportunity to think outside the box. This is so as not to replicate colonial model solutions. The next two stages advance people into making a ‘commitment’ to a focused direction after considering all possibilities. Finally it is to take ‘action’ toward realizing the dream and vision.

Based on Freire’s (1989) model, Strobel (2001) offers a condensed version of decolonization based on her research study of post-1965 Filipino Americans. She characterizes the stages simply into: naming, reflecting and acting. Naming the oppression and articulating its impact on one’s identity – that is, loss of ‘cultural memory’, and ‘loss of language’ – are the first steps to healing (Strobel 2001, 122). The next stage of reflection is to look deeply and think critically of one’s position. But, unless moved to action, the reflection stage can be self-consuming and non-productive. The final step is to become a leader and to ‘give back to the Filipino American community’ by ongoing questioning and spreading ‘one’s story’ (123). As Freire (1989) says, ‘Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both’ (28).

Libratory pedagogy and curriculum

Education is not a neutral venture. It has been used to ‘mis-educate’ the enslaved and the colonized (Woodson 1969; Constantino 1982). Likewise, education can also be used to liberate and decolonize when using transformative theory and practices like the pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire 1989), culturally responsive teaching (Gay 2000), emancipatory pedagogy (Gordon 1985), critical pedagogy (McLaren 1995), anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro 2001), and engaged pedagogy (hooks 1994).

A pedagogy and curriculum for liberation or what Freire might call ‘emancipation’ is more than the acquisition of historical and cultural knowledge. Knowledge is acquired not for the sake of ‘banking it’ but for the purposes of empowerment, reflection and improving reality. As Freire (1989, 36) believes, ‘liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it’.

Others have named a pedagogy called ‘decolonizing pedagogy’ that is liberating, anti-neocolonial, and intended to decolonize (Tejeda, Gutierrez, and Espinoza 2003). They outline an ‘emergent theory of pedagogy’ different from other forms of social-justice pedagogies. They describe it as developing a critical decolonizing consciousness, explicit attention to the history, roots and legacy manifestations of internal neocolonialism, and introducing theoretical frameworks that help to analyze their own history and examine the present. These theories are situational and specific to the particular groups that experienced colonialism. For example, they explain that decolonizing pedagogy is different in an Indian reservation versus the urban spaces of Los Angeles. The authors believe decolonizing practices cut across the curriculum but still

encourage students to master the traditional canon so as to survive and thrive academically. The decolonizing practices help students reach their full potential with guidance. The authors state that ‘the integrity of the indigenous mind/body is the standard by which we measure the success of any decolonizing pedagogy’ (9).

Methodology

Program curriculum

The curriculum at the focus of this research study is Pinoy Teach,³ which was co-developed in 1996 by this author and the activist Timoteo Cordova to address the absence of Filipino Americans in social-studies curriculum. In naming Pinoy Teach, we were upfront about our ‘positionality’ as Filipino Americans whose different backgrounds impacted the research, conceptualization and implementation of the curriculum. Thus, the inspiration and development behind Pinoy Teach was organic, personal, and reflected the differing ways decolonization played out in our lives. As a third-generation Filipino American whose parents were the nation’s foremost Filipino American historians, Cordova describes, ‘he was not a thankful Filipino’. He represented more advanced stages of decolonization because he benefited from positive role models and was surrounded by notions of social justice and empowerment. Cordova demanded equality and translated his ideals and thoughts through his revolutionary musical plays, community work, and curriculum.

While Cordova operated from a place of strength, I grew up insecure in my ethnic identity. My path to decolonization occurred later in life. I was the daughter of two physicians who immigrated to the United States in 1969. I grew up in the Midwest where I experienced self-rejection as a result of racism, marginalization, and disconnect from a largely White community. It was not until I attended college that I began to re-discover and reclaim my identity as a Filipino American. Everything I did thereafter as a teacher, graduate student of multicultural education, and currently as a professor focused on perpetuating social justice.

During my graduate program, I had the opportunity to take my first class on Filipino American history and culture. When the course ended, I felt enlightened and inspired to do something with what I learned. I moved into Laenui’s (2000) ‘commitment’ phase when I realized that as an educator, I wanted to assure students would not wait until college to learn about their ethnic history and culture. It became my mission to create a curriculum conceived by Filipinos, about Filipinos, and for Filipinos to liberate them from the shackles of ignorance.

When I reflect on my journey, I see the development of Pinoy Teach as the vehicle for my own decolonization. Strobel (2001, 188) writes: ‘Decolonization means to reconnect with the past, to understand the present, and to be able to envision the future’. Pinoy Teach kept me looking backward to challenge the roots of my colonial mentality and pushed me forward to translate my liberation into professional practice. As Freire (1989, 39) purports, ‘the pedagogy of the oppressed cannot be developed or practiced by the oppressors ... the oppressed must be their own examples in the struggle for their redemption’.

Ultimately Cordova’s and my contrasting backgrounds and perspectives created a curriculum grounded in personal history, theory, activism, and resistance to the norm. As Audre Lorde advises in Minh-ha’s book (1989) *Women, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, ‘the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house’. We drew on Cordova’s critical perspective and my graduate background in

multicultural education to construct a 'new house'. Unlike most ethnic-studies curricula that focused on a single-study approach, our curriculum was structured around Banks' (2007) 'transformative approach' which allowed universal concepts to be viewed from multiple perspectives, including the students' view.

In *Pinoy Teach*, curricular concepts preceded content. Beginning our lesson with concepts gave students a framework to understand their own cultural experiences, the Filipino experience, and other ethnic group experiences. For example, when students studied the concept of revolution, they first experienced the stages of revolution in the classroom helping them sympathize with actors and events of the Philippine Revolution. Next, students compared the stages of revolution to the American Revolution or to another revolution like the Women's movement or Civil Rights movement.

While concepts are universal and timeless, we deliberately chose particular concepts to tell the story of Filipinos. Our curriculum focused on diversity, multiculturalism, perspective, revolution, imperialism, immigration, racism, and identity. We began with diversity and multiculturalism to celebrate the beauty of our diverse culture. In formerly colonized cultures, it was important to recognize the indigenous and pre-colonial influences and confront inaccurate notions that we were uncivilized. The curriculum then focused on the concepts of perspective, revolution, and imperialism to tell the story of a resilient, strong, and dynamic culture. Its concluding emphasis on immigration, racism and identity taught about the harsh realities and universal struggles of immigrant communities. Learning Filipino content was secondary to understanding how these concepts related to students and their fellow classmates.

Pinoy Teach advocated critical pedagogy, which encouraged students to think critically of what they learn instead of being mere receptacles of knowledge (Freire 1989). We helped students challenge the colonial representation of Philippine and Eurocentric view of Filipino American history and culture by problematizing the way history has been taught. However, *Pinoy Teach* was not intended to replace one master narrative with another, but rather to give students the tools to challenge the construction of history.

We showed history wrought with struggle, contradiction, conflict, and perseverance instead of as a nicely constructed package. *Pinoy Teach* became what Freire (1989) describes as a 'problem posing education'

In a problem posing education, men develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. (Freire 1989, 71)

Rather than approaching our history in *Pinoy Teach* as truth, we encouraged critical thinking, perspective-taking and inquiry. For example, we asked: Was the Philippines an ancient civilization? Can a place and people be discovered? Can a country be a democracy and an imperialist nation at the same time? Why did Filipinos immigrate to America? What does it mean to be brown in America? Can you have a self-identity without an ethnic identity?

Finally, we believed in John Dewey's (1938) idea that learning occurs essentially in community with others. The lessons were activity-based and involved techniques such as cooperative learning, jigsaws, structured academic controversy, skits, and discussions that promoted collaborative spirit in the classroom. We fostered emotional exploration through poetry writing and art. We found that when we worked together in a community, we scaffold one's learning. Group dialogue allowed us to name the

realities in order to change and was a 'recondition for true humanization'. Freire (1989, 81) states: 'Without dialogue there is no community, and without community there can be no true education'.

Program's pedagogical practice

Freire (1989, 33) poses the question: 'How can the oppressed, as divided unauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation?' Our answer was to put our own people, in this case college students, into positions where they were empowered to teach their ethnic history and culture to others. Pinoy Teach exemplified Banks' (2002) 'social actions' approach which encourages 'taking action related to the issues, concepts and problems they are studying' (25). After naming our internalized oppression and reflecting on the construction of these colonial narratives, the final step in decolonization is to take action and give back to the Filipino American community (Strobel 2001). Strobel (2001, 118) states that 'decolonization is a source of courage and agency to choose and act in ways that uplift the Filipino American community...'

The idea of using college students to mentor and teach younger students is not new. But linking service learning, teaching, multiculturalism and ethnic content made our program's pedagogical practice unique. What better way to spread these principles than to use eager, energetic, intelligent college students to take their recently claimed knowledge and teach it to the younger generation. After all, understandably teachers were too tired, too overwhelmed, and ignorant to pass on this specific knowledge. Therefore, we developed Pinoy Teach as a school-based partnership program that harnessed the passion and knowledge of college students for the betterment of our community.

Cordova and I prepared the college students in a two-quarter undergraduate multicultural curriculum and teacher education course at a major research university in the Pacific northwest. In the first quarter, college students learned the concepts, content, and pedagogy of Pinoy Teach. In the second quarter, they exemplified Banks' (2007) social-actions approach by putting theory into practice. We placed teams of three college students into mainstream social-studies classrooms in public and private middle schools where they taught Pinoy Teach to students once a week for 10 weeks. Pinoy Teach students engaged students in learning about concepts that related to themselves while subversively including Filipino and Filipino American content. The classroom with all its limitations, became a 'location of possibility' (hooks 1994, 207). To conclude the program and expose middle-school students to college, over 1000 participating students experienced 'Pinoy Teach Day' at the university, where they engaged in academic and artistic competitions.

Data collection

In this study, survey methods were used to examine the impact that Pinoy Teach had on the college students. Survey method is a quick data-collection method to gather information from participants who are spread out geographically. Furthermore, it is a useful tool to evaluate and generalize from a sample to a population so that inferences can be made about some characteristic, attitude or behavior (Babbie 1973).

The survey population consisted of 87 college students who participated in Pinoy Teach from 1996–2001. Seventy nine students were Filipino Americans and eight

were non-Filipino. Of the non-Filipinos, seven were European Americans and two were Latino Americans. Fifty nine students were female and 28 were male with a ratio of approximately 3:1. All of the respondents have since graduated from college.

In an earlier research study on Pinoy Teach, I found that the Filipino American respondents inherited a colonial mentality from their parents or from ignorance (Halagao 2004). One student believed: 'the Philippines wanted independence from Spain because they wanted to be under American rule'. Another admitted her colonial mentality stemmed from ignorance: 'Filipinos were passive and accepted colonial rule and believed Spain brought civilization to Ancient Philippines' (468–9). Students began their journey of decolonization when Pinoy Teach challenged these colonial beliefs.

Data was collected through the use of a questionnaire survey. The survey was a self-designed instrument. My cover letter explained that the purpose of the research was to find out the effects of Pinoy Teach on their professional and personal lives. The survey instrument contained two sections. The first section asked for demographic information. The second section included five open-ended questions to understand the memory and impact of Pinoy Teach on the college student teachers (see Table 1 in Appendix 1 for survey questions). Open-ended questions were chosen because the answers often yield interesting quotes which helps when the surveyor does not know the answer (Fink 1995). Because the curriculum aimed to foster the intellectual and emotional well-being of the student as a whole (Erickson 2007), open-ended questions (Table 1) encouraged more information that gleaned feelings, attitudes and understanding of the impact of Pinoy Teach in their lives.

In conducting the survey, I used non-probability methods to target past Pinoy Teach college participants from 1996–2001. I conducted haphazard sampling to access subjects to invite them to participate in the survey. I used cross-sectional survey methods to gather information at a single point in time. Data was collected in three phases. In the first phase, I handed out the survey to participants at a reunion. Participants were asked to fill out a survey and mail it to me. In order to collect more responses, I employed an electronic survey method and sent out a mass email to all former participants who were described in the study and requested participation in the survey. If one participant was aware of other Pinoy Teach alumni, I asked for more non-private information and requested email addresses. In my final push to get results, I sent out a reminder email to non-responding participants and requested email responses.

Data analysis

I used Miles and Huberman's (1994) six steps for qualitative data analysis to examine the five open-ended questions. First, I did a general review of all the information to get an overall sense of the data (Creswell 2002). I analyzed the data according to demographics and divided the data between Filipino and non-Filipino respondents. I created a table to organize my findings according to each of the five questions. Respondent's answers for each question were reviewed which formed the initial encoding to each response. For example, answers to the question 'Why did you do Pinoy Teach?' were coded as Filipino history, identity, teaching experience, personal growth. Secondly, I noted any personal reflections or comments in the table. Third, I sorted through the data to look for similar phrases, patterns, differences, and themes between subgroups. Fourth, I identified broader categories such as historical, cultural

knowledge and pride (see Tables 5–9 in Appendix 1). The frequency of categories was identified. Fifth, I began elaborating generalizations from the categories to discuss patterns I saw on the effects of Pinoy Teach. Finally, I examined these generalizations in light of existing constructs or theories.

Findings

I received 35 surveys out of 87 past Pinoy Teach students giving a 40% response return rate (see Table 2 in Appendix 1). Out of the 35 survey respondents, 25 were female and 10 were male. This was in direct proportion to the 3:1 ratio of female to male in the total 1996–2001 Pinoy Teach student population. Thirty Filipino Americans and five non-Filipinos (all European Americans) responded to the survey giving non-Filipino students a higher response rate of 62%. Of those who responded, 18 were currently working as teachers with 6 pursuing or completed advanced degrees in education. The remaining respondents were broken into two categories: professionals such as doctors, lawyers, social workers (6) and other fields such as graphic designers or administrators (11).

In this survey, I asked five questions that strove to understand the impact of Pinoy Teach on past participants. The first question asked: ‘Why did you do Pinoy Teach?’ The answers gave me insight into the students’ background in terms of their starting historical and cultural knowledge, sense of identity and professional interests (see Table 6 in Appendix 1 for patterns of respondent answers). Most of the Filipino respondents’ (n = 19) answers were geared towards learning more about Filipino history and culture because it was absent in their K–12 schooling. One European American respondent wanted to learn more about Filipino history and ‘do some of my own racial identity work’. Out of these 20 respondents, 10 wanted to learn and then share their history so as to inspire and make a difference in society. For example, one respondent wrote, ‘I wanted to learn my own history to change things for the better’. Nineteen respondents were equally interested in Pinoy Teach because it provided them an opportunity to experience teaching and learn about multicultural curriculum and pedagogy. One non-Filipino student had heard about Pinoy Teach curriculum ‘as an example of multicultural theory into practice’. For some Filipino students, Pinoy Teach allowed them to ‘teach something I am passionate about’. A small number of students joined Pinoy Teach for building personal skills and specifically to improve public-speaking skills.

The second question was a broad question that asked respondents to recall their experience with Pinoy Teach: ‘What do you remember most about Pinoy Teach?’ (see Table 7 in Appendix 1 for patterns of respondent answers). Respondents’ answers were divided along memories of people, Pinoy Teach curriculum, and emotional feelings people mentioned were classmates, the middle-school students they taught, and the instructor. Twenty-one described the ‘passionate’ sense of community, ‘feeling of family’ and ‘bonds and friendships’. Two of the non-Filipinos described their classmates as ‘amazing people’. Fourteen described their memorable experiences with their middle-school students. One Filipino shared, ‘On the last day of class, we received a standing ovation from our students. That moved me. It really swayed my career path into teaching’.

Twelve respondents recalled specific Pinoy Teach content, concepts and activities and how they were applied to other group experiences. Most recalled the simulation activity on oppression and revolution. Others remembered the impact the Pinoy Teach curriculum had on their students. One Filipino wrote, ‘I remember at the end of our

lessons on racism and discrimination, the children thought that racism was “uncool” and learning about ethnic identity was “way cool”. Six respondents described the feelings they experienced. A Filipina explained that she went through ‘enlightenment, struggle, and revolution’. Most talked about the confidence and empowerment they gained from teaching their history to others.

In the third question, respondents were asked: ‘What did you learn from Pinoy Teach?’ Asking the question made respondents think about the specific impact of the curriculum on learning outcomes. Most answers tended to center on lessons gained from content knowledge and/or pedagogy (see Table 8 in Appendix 1 for patterns of respondent answers). Twelve respondents wrote about what they learned of Filipino history and culture. Few elaborated that learning meant ‘to be in love with my history and culture’, ‘about myself and my relationship with others’, and ‘appreciate those who laid the foundation and paved the way for me’.

For two European American respondents, their eyes were opened to issues of racism, identity, and social justice. One non-Filipino wrote, ‘I learned what it is to be real honest about life in America and for ALL Americans’. Another wrote that she:

Learned a lot about my own identity ... how important it is to claim a cultural and ethnic self- that often white people deny they have a cultural or ethnicity because it has become normalized and invisible for them – I learned a lot about developing a critical white identity through this process. (European American female)

The understanding of multicultural theory and pedagogy of Pinoy Teach remained with 11 respondents. Respondents wrote about Pinoy Teach’s focus on concept-based teaching and making connections to others. One Filipino respondent wrote, ‘Pinoy Teach can be applied to different ethnic groups that share the same issues’. Another wrote: ‘Making connections is the key to global understanding of systemic social injustices’. Five respondents recognized the power of multicultural pedagogy. One Filipino respondent wrote,

I learned that 7th grade is not too early to be teaching the real history of this country and their people ... I refuse to live life knowing that I did not do my part and try and work towards creating change.

Finally, respondents described the life skills they gained such as leadership, social interaction, organizational skill, public speaking and critical thinking.

The fourth question asked respondents directly about the present effects of Pinoy Teach on them. This question revealed answers that related to the impact on their personal and professional lives (see Table 9 in Appendix 1 for patterns of respondent answers). Fifteen respondents expressed feelings of increased self-confidence as a result of their participation. One Filipino respondent reflected,

The actual teaching experience was complete hell, but looking back on it, it was so good for me and it was something that I needed. I learned how to push myself to the limits and I learned a lot about myself and capabilities.

Many felt empowered to ‘use my voice’. One Filipino respondent shared, ‘I understand myself more because I understand my history and I am not afraid to speak up’. Others expressed more pride in being Filipino. One shared,

Before Pinoy Teach, all I knew about was Filipino food and folk-dancing. And since that was the only thing I could base my culture off of that, I wasn’t too impressed with being Filipino. But after PT, I gained pride.

Eight respondents credit Pinoy Teach for giving them the tools and igniting the fire for political activism in their lives here and globally. One Filipino shared,

Pinoy Teach has affected me in that it really planted the seed of activism in me. It was a starting point of thinking critically about our conditions and today has flourished into a life long commitment to creating social change for the people of the Philippines.

For one European American, Pinoy Teach ‘expanded her world outside suburbia and showed me how to be an activist’.

Pinoy Teach was a ‘life-changing’ experience for eight and has touched every aspect of their lives. One Filipino respondent expressed, ‘I live and breathe the Pinoy Teach philosophy. Lessons I’ve learned contributed to my character’. In more concrete aspects, the lessons are also found in their professional work. All practicing teachers wrote about using the knowledge and pedagogy from Pinoy Teach in their teaching today. One Filipino teacher says she uses what she learned in Pinoy Teach ‘all the time’. One European American teacher who is pursuing her PhD in multicultural education expressed:

Pinoy Teach HAS affected me today. Wow – I truly realize what this kind of powerful undergraduate experience influenced my drive towards critical pedagogy, my passion for teaching and developing an anti-racist identity ... I believe it also impacted my research interests as a doctoral student; to find new ways to better prepare white teachers to work with students of color, when they often come with a deficit perspective.

The program has even influenced their teacher-student relationships in the classroom. One European American respondent even confessed that Pinoy Teach has ‘given him more of a connection with my Filipino students, they are my favorites’. For non-teachers, Pinoy Teach helped them with their work with underserved communities as a doctor, lawyer or social worker.

Finally, question five prompted respondents to close with any lasting remarks about their experience with Pinoy Teach. Ten people chose not to answer this question (see Table 10 in Appendix 1 for patterns of respondent answers). Most respondents concluded with enthusiastic responses like ‘best experience in college’ and ‘life changing’. For one European American respondent, she described it as a ‘powerful way to introduce teaching infused with a culturally relevant pedagogy’. Many were disappointed that the program did not continue. One Filipino respondent expressed that the ‘family generation of taking the course would come to an end’. Another encouraged:

Spread the PT love! PT opened a door that doesn’t open for many Filipino kids who grow up in the US. It filled me with something that I did not realize I was hungry for until I came across it ... identity.

Finally, one respondent answered: ‘I cannot say enough about the benefits of Pinoy Teach. It goes beyond content knowledge and the experience in the classroom. I’ve seen it as an agent for positive social change’.

In the final stage of data analysis, I identified four themes that embodied the effects Pinoy Teach had on the respondents:

- (1) Deeper love and appreciation of ethnic history, culture, identity, and community.

- (2) Feelings of empowerment (to realize fully one's potential) and self-efficacy (power to produce an effect) – belief in themselves.
- (3) Life commitment to philosophies of diversity and multiculturalism.
- (4) Continued activism in teaching profession and/or involvement in social and civic issues in the community.

Discussion

When a people are colonized, they become subjects – acted upon by the colonizer. They have lost their identities. Their histories and cultures are stripped from them to the point that they do not even know their yearning and desire for this knowledge. It is almost as if a hole is dug out of one's character. Colonized people lose confidence in themselves and their abilities. They lose their voice and feel powerless to imagine and make change. Memmi (1965, 135) describes of colonized people: 'He is restored to a not very glorious history pierced through with frightful holes, to a moribund culture which he had planned to abandoned, to frozen traditions, to a rusted tongue'.

Although the political act of colonialism is gone in the Philippines today, the psychology of colonialism exists internally among many Filipinos today. Even Filipino Americans today are still colonized with a colonial mentality. Many of the respondents in this study came into Pinoy Teach with some form of a colonial mentality. They were searching to fill up the empty hole with their history and culture and were 'reclaiming a people that is suffering deficiencies in its body and spirit' (Memmi 1965, 137). Although many had successfully reached college, they wanted more than what the traditional school curriculum provided them. They sought an experience that made them stronger persons and were enticed into a program that gave them the opportunity to teach and enact social change.

The four major themes from this study showed that Pinoy Teach became the catalyst for moving students through the journey of decolonization. During and after their experience with Pinoy Teach, the college students continued to cycle through the decolonization framework of naming, reflecting and acting (Strobel 2001). Laenui's (2000) more extensive framework on decolonization is the useful tool to note the present impact of Pinoy Teach on them. Respondents' answers show that they experienced the decolonization process: (1) rediscovery and recovery, (2) mourning, (3) dreaming, (4) commitment, and (5) action.

When asked what respondents remembered most and learned from Pinoy Teach, they overwhelmingly talked about the content, Filipino American history, culture and activities. The program allowed them to reach Laenui's (2000) first phase of 'rediscovery and recovery' of their roots and filled themselves up with powerful knowledge. But Pinoy Teach was so much more than this as attested by the responses. The program did not just pass on knowledge, but passed on powerful feelings. There was a powerful awareness of wrong and injustice around them. There was the powerful belief in oneself. There were powerful feelings that they could conduct change in their profession and the larger community. In sum, respondent's answers recalled of a curriculum that focused on the particulars of Filipino history and culture, the general aspects of multiculturalism, universal concepts and issues that helped students to look inward and rediscover their roots, yet at the same time see themselves as part of a larger picture of a social movement.

Many respondents' answers revealed that they did not stay at the 'mourning' phase very long, where they could have stayed at a state of longing or anger when they

learned a different perspective about their history or learned why they were denied learning about this. The social action and teaching component gave respondents a constructive outlet to manage their disappointment and anger of being denied their histories. They were provided with the skills to become better persons both personally and professionally. They moved to the 'dreaming' phase where they could envision a world where they were not any less than others. Gaining skills of public speaking, social interaction, and critical thinking gave them feelings of empowerment and self-efficacy. Today, many have fulfilled their dreams of pursuing teaching degrees and others still imagine themselves pursuing advanced degrees in education.

The positive effects of Pinoy Teach are seen greatest in the respondents' positive outlook in life and active community involvement. In Laenui's (2000) 'commitment' phase, there is focused dedication to uplifting one's people. In contrast, the commitment went beyond one's own ethnic community and even extended the principles of diversity and multiculturalism in one's everyday life in this study. This is a significant departure from Laenui's decolonization framework which is focused more on one's own people.

Finally, as a result of awareness of injustices and dreaming of a better life and education for the future generation, Pinoy Teach ignited the activist spirit in many of them. They reached Laenui's (2000) advanced phase of 'action'. For those involved in global movements, especially in the Philippines, they drew on anger and awareness brought by Pinoy Teach to work against oppression around the world.

For one third of the respondents who were teachers, Pinoy Teach impacted their decision to go into the teaching profession, which by its very nature has the potential to influence social change. All the respondent teachers expressed that they used their background knowledge and pedagogy to encourage their own students to value diversity, critical thinking of what they read and learn, and to develop connections with others. They did not perpetuate the status quo in their teaching, what makes them activist teachers who promoted a multicultural doctrine.

For the non-Filipino students who were descendants of colonizers, the impact that the curriculum had on their lives was equally powerful. However, instead of 'rediscovery' they 'discovered' the beauty of Filipino history, culture, and people. They imagined, committed and took action on ways to advocate for people of color. For the one European American teacher who wrote that Pinoy Teach taught her to be an activist, she 'dreams of opening a Christian arts academy in South Central LA for underprivileged youth'. For another European American respondent, Pinoy Teach was the reason for her becoming the editor for a large educational publisher, so that she could influence textbooks content positively.

Implications of Pinoy Teach as a decolonizing curriculum and pedagogy

While Pinoy Teach was developed out of a multicultural theoretical framework, it in effect also became a decolonizing curriculum and pedagogy for Filipino Americans and descendants of the colonizer. The curriculum and pedagogy was integral in moving participants through stages of decolonization. Admittedly, designing a decolonizing curriculum was not intentional. But after becoming aware of the decolonization framework, the theory of decolonization fit my practice. I had found a home for theorizing and articulating the decisions that were made when designing the curriculum. As hooks explains: 'Theory comes out of experience'. Along with Cordova's background, I theorized from my decolonization experiences of pain, passion and

hope (Halagao 2008) to develop an intellectual and feeling-based curricula and pedagogy. Harnessing the pain from colonialism, capitalizing on the passion of a renewed commitment to oneself, and inspiring hope for change became the basis of this decolonizing curriculum.

Filipino scholar, Strobel (2001) asks: ‘How can teachers of Filipino American students create opportunities for decolonization within the classroom discourse? What elements should be integrated in a curriculum that would make decolonization possible for Filipino American students?’ Based on this research, I now attempt to answer the question, ‘What does a decolonizing curriculum and pedagogy look like?’ I offer the following elements to add to Tejeda, Gutierrez, and Espinoza’s (2003) decolonizing pedagogy framework that are specific ways to develop a liberating and decolonizing curriculum and pedagogy among formerly colonized groups, specifically Filipino Americans:

- (1) A decolonizing curriculum requires deep and critical thinking of one’s history and culture within a multicultural and global context so as to see how concepts such as diversity, multiculturalism, imperialism, oppression and revolution, and racism are universal.
- (2) A decolonizing curriculum must be feeling-based with activities that promote love of self, empathy, perspective-taking, and stirs up anger. Mixed emotions of mourning, dreaming, confusion, struggle, excitement, passion, and empathy are natural feelings to encounter, discuss openly, and help students move forward in the decolonization process.
- (3) A decolonizing curriculum needs to create an academic and social space for formerly colonized people to gather, unite, and fight systems of oppression.
- (4) A decolonizing curriculum teaches life skills such as critical thinking, public speaking, and social interaction that enhance one personally and professionally.
- (5) A decolonizing curriculum must have a social-action component that develops leadership, models activism, produces empowerment, self-efficacy, and inspires carving one’s own niche in giving back to the community to effect social change.

Limitations and conclusion

Few studies explore the long-term effect that multicultural curricula have on their participants. This study aimed to fill this void by studying the impact of Pinoy Teach, a transformative multicultural teacher-education program, on the college students who were empowered to teach Filipino American history and culture to middle-school students over time. While this study gives insight to the curricular experiences of Filipino Americans, it is limited in that the sample size was relatively small. It was difficult to contact participants due to the lack of current contact information and because the population sample of college graduates tends to be more transient. In the end, 35 respondents answered a paper-based and electronic survey and provided short answers to questions on their remembered experiences, learned lessons and the program’s long-term impact on their lives. The results revealed continued appreciation of their ethnic background which in turn led to long-lasting feelings of empowerment and commitment to social action.

Another limitation in the study might be that the types of responses may be more indicative of the kind of participants who chose to respond to the survey in the

first place. The study's participants who would respond to the survey would more likely tend to have had a positive experience with the program, thus influencing the results to reflect a positive impact. Though the questions were open-ended, the procedure for collecting the data might have inhibited any negative responses. Participants might have felt uncomfortable sharing anything negative about Pinoy Teach.

One way to get around this in a future study would be to have participants submit their surveys anonymously through mail with no identifying markers. However, this would not allow me to contact participants for clarification or further probing. In addition, postage would cost monies. Regardless of the participation level and the kinds of groups who might have responded to the survey, the results showed that Pinoy Teach did impact a significant number of college students whose future professional and community work will serve to liberate the Filipino American community from the shackles of colonialism.

This study hopes to generate discussion and action around colonization, identity formation of colonized people, decolonization, and curriculum. The four kinds of responses from the participants in this study correlated with the steps of decolonization, which points to the idea that Pinoy Teach could be considered as a decolonizing curriculum and pedagogy. In turn, the findings highlight the importance of developing and supporting decolonizing curriculum material that is liberating, purposeful, practical, grounded in multicultural educational theory, ethnic studies, critical pedagogy, community-based, and with historical cross-cultural connections (Halagao, Tintiangco-Cubales, and Cordova 2009). It must link learning about one's ethnic history with social action so that there is immediate and long-lasting impact on the individual and community as a whole. Finally, this study contributes to the conceptualization and application of the emerging field of decolonizing pedagogy and curriculum.

Notes

1. Pinoy is a shortened name coined in the early 1920s that refers to Filipinos.
2. Filipina refers to the female gender.
3. Visit www.pinoyteach.com for more information. Pinoy Teach is currently a professional development program for pre-service and in-service teachers. For a more updated online multimedia curriculum on Filipino Americans co-developed by the author and sponsored by the Smithsonian Institute, please see: www.iJeepney.com. For more resources, check out the Sistan C. Alhambra Filipino American Education Institute at www.filameducation.com.

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Appendix 1

Table 1. Survey questions.

Q1: Why did you do Pinoy Teach?
Q2: What do you remember most about Pinoy Teach?
Q3: What did you learn from Pinoy Teach?
Q4: Has Pinoy Teach affected you today? If so, how?
Q5: Is there anything else I should know about your experience with Pinoy Teach?

Table 2. Number of respondents.

Respondents	Non-respondents
35	52

Table 3. Respondents by gender.

Female	Male
25	10

Table 4. Respondents by ethnicity.

Filipino	Non-Filipino (European Americans)
30	5

Table 5. Respondents' current careers.

Teaching + education Advanced degree (PhD, MEd, MA in Counseling)	Education/ teaching	Professional (doctor, lawyer, social worker)	Other (graphic designer, administrator)
6	12	6	11

Table 6. Survey question 1.

Q1: Why did you do Pinoy Teach?	
20/35	Historical, cultural knowledge and pride
19/35	Teaching experience
10/35	Make a difference
5/35	Personal skill building

Table 7. Survey question 2.

Q2: What do you remember most about Pinoy Teach?	
21/35	Sense of class community
14/35	Middle-school students
12/35	Pinoy Teach content and curriculum
6/35	Feelings of empowerment
5/35	Instructors
5/35	Collaborative lesson planning and curriculum

Table 8. Survey question 3.

Q3: What did you learn from Pinoy Teach?	
14/35	Love and appreciation of critical history, culture, identity
11/35	Importance and application of multicultural curriculum and pedagogy
7/33	Life skills (i.e. leadership, social interaction, organizational, public speaking)
5/35	Critical thinking
5/25	Power of teaching
5/25	Life-long lessons

Table 9. Survey question 4.

Q4: Has Pinoy Teach affected you today? If so, how?	
15/35	Feelings of empowerment, voice, pride
12/35	Influences current teaching
8/35	Community activism
8/35	Everyday life
5/35	Direct impact on becoming a teacher
5/35	Influences current non-education profession
5/35	Critical thinking
4/35	Life-long relationships

Table 10. Survey question 5.

Q5: Is there anything else I should know about your experience with Pinoy Teach?	
8/30	'Best experience in college'
6/30	Life-changing
5/30	Continuity
3/30	Empowerment
3/30	Professional advantage
1	Political activism