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**Nagugutom Sila/They're Hungry: Affirming Filipina/x/o Students' Identities
with Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy**

Abstract

Hegemonic educational practices have roots in Western imperialism and U.S. colonial rule effectually marginalizing and invisibilizing Filipina/x/o students, and contributing to academic inequities and poor mental health. The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences, impacts, and meanings of cultural and linguistically responsive pedagogy that affirms Filipina/x/o students' identities. Qualitative data analysis from interviews, a public hearing, and program artifacts demonstrates that culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy fosters positive identity development, confidence, and sense of belonging for Filipina/x/o students. Implications can inform leadership decisions of programs and policies that build upon and sustain students' cultural and linguistic wealth.

Purpose

In San Francisco's Filipino Cultural Heritage District, Filipina/x/o students have benefited from programs that center their history, language, and culture as early as the late 1970's. These include the: 1) Filipino Education Center (FEC), whose inception was a response to *Lau vs. Nichols* asserting a newcomer student's right to learn in their primary language; 2) FEC Galing Bata, which was organized by the community to extend Filipino instruction beyond the school day; and 3) Filipino as a Foreign Language in Elementary School (FLES) pathway, which subsequently replaced FEC's bilingual program. All three programs are the focal point for this study which aims to answer:

- What are the experiences of Filipina/x/o K-5 students in culturally and linguistically responsive educational programs (CLRP)?
- From the perspective of student alumni, families, and teachers, what does CLRP mean for them, their families, and the Filipina/x/o community?

- What are the impacts on Filipina/x/o students?

Embedded within this research focus is an inquiry that centers identity development, wellness, and sense of belonging.

Theoretical Framework

As a minoritized group, the educational experiences of Filipina/x/o students must be understood within a Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework which argues that racial inequities are maintained by social, economic, and legal structures constructed by White interests and power (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Buenavista (2010) uses CRT to analyze Filipinas/xes/os' access to postsecondary education and asserts that Filipina/x/o educational experiences need to be framed within the context of colonization and coloniality, immigration, socio-economic status, and racialization. They reason that the unit of analysis must be from a global systems perspective that begins with Philippines-U.S. history, spans trends in migration to the U.S., and interrogates contemporary U.S. race relations (So, 1990). Similarly, Paik, Mamaril Choe, and Witenstein (2016) use modes of incorporation to historically contextualize the varied educational outcomes for Filipinas/xes/os in the U.S., highlighting the overlapping relationships between education, government policies, immigration patterns, differences in societal reception and treatment, and the establishment or lack of supportive co-ethnic communities. Global perspectives such as these provide a robust analysis of Filipina/x/o educational experiences that are viewed through a social-economic-political gaze.

The historical racialization of Filipinas/xes/os has led to E.J.R. David's (2013) conceptualization of colonial mentality, which is understood as internalized oppression experienced by Filipinas/xes/os and includes feelings of inferiority, shame, and self-hate towards one's heritage; denigration of the Filipina/x/o body; discrimination towards less assimilated Filipinas/xes/os; and tolerance and acceptance of historical and contemporary oppression. David

and Okazaki (2006) argue that colonial mentality impacts the Filipina/x/o psyche affecting their emotional and physical well-being, and recommend programs that support decoloniality.

Routinely aggregating Filipina/x/o students' outcomes within the Asian American (AA) racial category invisibilizes their experiences and holds Filipinas/xes/os to model minority myth stereotypes of academic achievement (Pang, V.O., Han, & Pang, J.M., 2011). The *model minority myth* is the general perception that Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) students are well assimilated, no longer experience racism as a barrier to social mobility, and are able to excel academically. *Ethnic minority viewpoint* further counters the model minority myth and, "posits that as members of underrepresented groups, AAPIs are victims of social bias and so face perennial obstacles to equity" (Pang et al., 2011, p. 379). Their complex experiences of racialization within school settings, where teachers and peers stereotype Filipinas/xes/os as either Asian or Latinx further impact their educational experiences and opportunities (Ocampo, 2016).

These interrelated constructs are important to understand when studying Filipina/x/o students as they are often categorized as AAPI's, despite their unique historical, cultural, and social backgrounds. In effect, Filipina/x/o students and their families may internalize AA stereotypes of education and upward mobility which do not accurately reflect their minoritized lived experiences and social realities more closely associated with Latinxes (Ocampo, 2016).

Methods & Data Sources

This study aims to understand the impact and meanings of CLRP for Filipina/x/o students, their families, and the community. Data sources include interviews with a student alum, parent, and teacher; an audio recording from a Board of Education meeting, where families provided public comment in response to recent program cuts; and a 42-slide presentation that combines text and images, providing an overview of FEC Galing Bata's mission and vision, demographic data of students served, history, program accomplishments and challenges, and

personal testimonies. The interviews and public meeting were chosen as they present perspectives from all three of the aforementioned groups, and the presentation reveals its program content. Interviewees were asked:

- What is your family's U.S. migration story?
- What is your connection to CLRP for Filipina/x/o students in San Francisco? Share your knowledge of these programs' history/background.
- Why did you choose CLRP?
- What are your perceptions of students' experiences in CLRP?
- Are there specific stories from students or students' families that speak to their experiences?
- How do these students' experiences compare to your own educational experiences growing up?
- What does it mean for you, your family, and for the Filipina/x/o community to have CLRP specific to Filipina/x/o students?

Identifying in vivo, process, and descriptive codes have been an effective method of analyzing transcript data (Saldaña, 2016). Observational notes and jottings were utilized for the program artifacts. These tools and analysis strategies were chosen to match the specific types of data gathered. Focused coding helped to conceptualize emerging themes and categories, their relationships, and to make connections to the research literature (Saldaña, 2016).

Results

The overarching finding is that *culturally and linguistically responsive programming is a "gift"* to students, families, and the community. One of the interviewees who is an alum and former teacher of CLRP for Filipina/x/o students said, "They're hungry...for learning about culture. They're hungry...for mentorship. They're hungry...for family connections." These programs are not only a gift to Filipinas/xes/os, they feed and nurture the soul.

CLRP create a "sense of family, community," and youth experience feelings of "pride and connectedness." One parent says that their son is "comfortable in his own life experience, in his skin" - - in direct contrast to the interviewee's own childhood feelings of being different, not

belonging, and initially wanting to push away from their cultural heritage and language - - sentiments reminiscent of colonial mentality. This parent's positive descriptions and remarks demonstrate the "gifts" and strengths of CLRP for their child and for other Filipinx students.

"Gifts" or offerings - - such as sense of family, community, pride, and connection - - are exemplified throughout images and text in FEC Galing Bata's presentation. In one slide, two smiling children are holding up handwritten signs. The first says, "I am malakas/strong because I know who I am. My story is important because my Filipino story matters. My family is strong because we know our rights." References to strength, identity, history, and family demonstrates the young girl's values and community pride. Similarly, the boy's sign says, "My story is important because Filipinos [are] important." The two students' affirmation of their cultural heritage, history, and identity are a testament of the "gifts" that CLRP provide to its students. Further, another presentation slide emphasizes: "Students expressed that being in Galing Bata helped them develop a healthy bicultural identity." Compared to the parent interviewee, who described their own negative educational experiences, lack of identity, and loss of language as a youth, their son and other Filipina/x/o students are receiving "gifts" - - culturally and linguistically responsive programming that lifts up their language, history, and culture - - which foster and nurture healthy identity development.

"Knowing oneself" is a common thread which emerges in the various data sources, and is succinctly and eloquently expressed by this fifth grader:

Magandang gabi. Ako si Dora Cordova¹. Good evening, everyone. My name is Dora Cordova a Galing Bata fifth grade student at Bessie Carmichael Filipino Education Center. FEC Galing Bata is a safe place to learn about our roots as Filipinos. If FEC Galing Bata was reduced to an enrichment, we would only have two to three hours a week to learn our Filipino culture. Since I'm in fifth grade now we always don't have enough time for Filipino FLES class during the day. Galing Bata is important to me because it is like a second family to me. Our staff and teachers are super nice and kind to my classmates and I. Also, all of the Galing Bata staff and teachers have

¹ Pseudonym

taught me how to read and write Filipino words and stories. Before all of these changes, I was able to be with my Ates from school dismissal to six o'clock. Ate, is a term that we call our teachers, and it means older sister in Filipino. As a result of these changes, my classmates and I only get to learn from them two or three times a week. If Galing Bata is going to be reduced like this forever, our students will learn too little about the Filipino culture. Bessie Carmichael FEC is supposed to be a Filipino school in the SOMA Pilipinas San Francisco Filipino cultural heritage district and FEC Galing Bata is the only Filipino bilingual program in San Francisco. Galing Bata is here to support our school. If you let them take away Galing Bata, this will be a great loss to the youth, the families, our school, and the community here in SOMA Pilipinas. "Know history, know self; no history, no self" is a quote that my Galing Bata teacher Ate Victoria² taught me to recognize. In this quote, "know" as in you know something, is a homophone for "no," as in you're saying no to something. This quote means that if you don't know the story of your people and of your ancestors, then you don't know yourself. I have learned a lot of things in Galing Bata about our history. Without Galing Bata, I would have never learned about all these things, and I would have never known myself. In conclusion, we all demand for FEC Galing Bata, to be a full after school program and full summer program, Monday to Friday from school dismissal to 6pm. I am asking your full support for Galing Bata to go back to the way it was before. Thank you, maraming salamat po.

The student speaks of identity, the legacy of the cultural heritage district, and the sense of connection and family developed as a result of CLRP. This young person's testimony demonstrates the importance and meaning such programs holds for them. They share how learning one's history, language, and culture shapes and strengthens their sense of self and identity. Moreover, the student looks beyond their own individual benefits from FEC Galing Bata and extends the program's positive reach and impact to the larger school community and neighborhood. From this brief comment, the child's feelings of safety, comfort, and familiarity are expressed when describing FEC Galing Bata. Terms and expressions such as "safe place," "second family," and "super nice and kind," as well as referring to teachers and staff as Ate, or older sister, suggest a sense of belonging to and deep connections within this community. The student shares a powerful quote and her critical understanding of it. "Know history, know self" is a profound statement and varying iterations can be found in stories, proverbs, and sayings from

² Pseudonym

all over the globe. As educational leaders, we wish for all young people to know themselves, their cultures, and to develop a healthy identity.

Study Significance

This qualitative research study has the potential to elevate students' experiences with pedagogy that affirms and values their history, language, and culture. This qualitative inquiry can bring to light the successes of CLRP, such as student confidence and civic engagement. Such findings can support leadership decisions of program and funding sustainability. This study's findings can impact teacher recruitment and hiring practices, help prioritize multicultural education, and highlight the cultural wealth of multilingual speakers (Marshall & Toohey, 2010). Findings can support transformative leadership decisions to decolonialize how we view educational institutions, shedding our focus on achievement outcomes such as test scores, graduation rates, and college attainment, and highlight instead the importance of wellness, identity, and sense of purpose.

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