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A CRITICAL REVIEW: THE DIALOGUE OF FILIPINO AMERICAN FACULTY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Edward Joaquin¹

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study is to illuminate the tenure experiences of Filipino American faculty in U.S. colleges and universities, exploring how race, gender, and their cultural influences have impacted their respective journeys.

Research questions asked in the research are:

1. What societal and institutional barriers did Filipino scholars encounter in their academic pursuits?
2. How did Filipino scholars negotiate societal and institutional barriers in obtaining their education and faculty positions?
3. In what ways did culture impact their experience?

This study is in the preliminary stages of conducting a pilot and constructing a literature review. Therefore this presentation will be limited to presenting the research questions, relevant literature, and a sketch of the methodology, the theoretical perspective, and a discussion of the preliminary findings.

Introduction

As a first-generation, Filipino American college student and having over 20 years of formal, informal and non-formal learning drives my inquiry and passion in this study. There is an assumption that all Asian cultures emphasize educational attainment as the great equalizer and as a vehicle for upward mobility for personal and professional gain (Endo, 1980) or as some may refer to as a sliver of the elusive American dream. However, educational attainment is not always so elusive as many would believe. There is a perception or stereotype of the Asian model minority that depicts many Asian as achieving high levels of academic and socioeconomic success. In fact, there are many Asian cultures that perform well below African American and Latina/o levels and are considered an *invisible* or *colonial* model. According to statistical data (Min, 2009), Filipino Americans tend to underperform in many of these achievement scales. Although, college acceptance rates are nominal at best, completion rates for undergraduates are dismal. The small percentage that do graduate and pursue a graduate degree, are faced with a myriad of barriers in the academy. To offset these obstacles, Manansala (2002) suggests a concerted effort to identify challenges Filipino American learners face and support the educational pipeline for future students through facilitation from Filipino American faculty in the academy. Unfortunately, as Filipino students face barriers in the academy, Filipino educators face similar barriers in securing tenure at many college and universities. Thus the pipeline to facilitate and empower both Filipino students in the learning process and faculty in the tenure process is stifled difficulties that require attention and resolution. Emergent results of this study may help to address challenges Filipino Americans face in higher education.

Literature Review

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Asian American faculty faces a glass ceiling in higher education (Lee, 2000). Generally, there is sparse literature on the experiences of Asian American faculty and virtually non-existent for Filipino American faculty. Many reporting agencies such as U. S. Census and the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) combine Asian Americans into a homogenous group, masking heterogeneity among Asian subgroups. As a result of this, aggregated statistics on Asian Americans are often vague, obscured and loosely interpreted. Although there are anecdotal accounts of Filipino American faculty in higher education, empirical studies regarding their experiences in the academy are virtually non-existent. Studies at the graduate level have been conducted on Filipino American graduate students that indicate their academic experiences as isolating, lacking in mentorship and hostile (Maramba, 2008; Nadal, 2011) with similar experiences for Asian American faculty (Turner, 2008). Thus, there is a gap in the literature between Filipino American graduate students and Asian American faculty, that exclude the voices and experiences specifically of Filipino American faculty. Identifying this gap may illuminate the notion that incivility and exclusivity are fundamental and endemic towards Asian Americans, Filipino Americans and other faculty of color in colleges and universities.

Methodology

The method for this interpretative study will engage semistructured interviews of 7-10 Filipino American tenured professors at institutes of higher learning throughout the United States to understand how they negotiate and legitimize their positionality, using Critical Race Theory as a framework. Key informants have been identified that may elicit other Filipino American faculty participants and “snowball” into a network of other qualified sample participants. This conversation with a purpose, according to Guba and Lincoln (1981), will allow tapping into the experience of others in their own natural setting, while utilizing their value and belief frameworks during a face-to-face interview.

Preliminary Findings

Higher education is an elitist environment. Although many colleges and programs claim egalitarian ideal and suggest open access and support of all students, few institutions provide an even playing field (Sissel, Hansman & Kasworm, 2001). Without any empirical data specific to Filipino Americans, the extant literature paves a way to illustrate themes that may emerge from this study such as lack of support for a diverse faculty (Adams & Bargerhuff, 2005; Stanley, 2007; Turner, 2003); hostile campus climates (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2008; Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero & Bowles, 2009).

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